There can be no series of letters in English that charts the relations of author and publishers with the immediacy and detail of Charlotte’s. The letters that survive obviously represent just a small fraction of her correspondence over a lifetime. Mostly we have only her side in the publishing wars, though occasionally Thomas Cadell Senior, his son or William Davies would add a terse note to the bottom of a letter, and Joseph Bell responded in print.

Her career of course began in a dispute with Dodsley over advance payment. She switched to Cadell and Davies on Hayley’s advice, then to the liberal G.G. & J. Robinson firm for Desmond. Everyone who has thought about Charlotte’s life has regretted she did not approach the most distinguished publisher of his time, Joseph Johnson, when she was seeking another publisher for Desmond. His experience and encouragement would have been valuable in the promotion of her career. It is possible she tried, and that the reluctance was on his side. He had probably heard rather often that she never hesitated to ask for advance payment from Cadell, or to use his firm as a delivery service and corporate agony aunt. He may have thought her too innately county for his list and his Tuesday evening dinner parties. Whatever the reason, it is sad she missed him and the circle that eddied around that imperturbable centre.

Bell’s contract with her for The Old Manor House included a two-volume sequel; Charlotte was writing this in tandem with The Banished Man in the summer and autumn of 1793 when Augusta married and Charles came home from France. Not surprisingly, The Banished Man with its self-portrait of the author as Charlotte Denzil, its fictionalisation of Augusta’s and Alexandre’s courtship and revisioning of the Revolution engaged her completely. The Wanderings of Warwick is her most cursory piece of writing and she could not take it beyond one volume. Though she wanted to believe, and indeed claimed, she had fulfilled her contract with Bell, he thought otherwise. While writing The Banished Man she hoped to go back to Cadell’s
firm, which was still the publisher for continuing editions of her *Sonnets*, but she was embarrassed about making the overtures. She was very close to Cadell Senior in some ways, and treated him like an elder brother, confiding her anxieties and attacking him when he slighted her. On 16 December 1793 she writes that she has a first volume that will be completed soon; her tone is quite conciliatory, conceding that he cannot be expected to pay anything in advance:

The truth is that my expences are very considerably encreas’d by the return of my poor Charles, for whom I am under the necessity of keeping a ManServant; & Government has yet done nothing for him, nor has he any prospect at present, but of an Ensign’s pay, on which he could not exist unless he lived with me. I am inform’d by the Medical Men that the contraction of the poor remains of his leg – which is now drawn up close to the ham (& prevents his having an artificial Leg either of wood or cork) – might be removed & his misfortune greatly alleviated if he could have the benefit of the Bath Waters. I have been desired to go thither myself for my own health but cannot afford it, as all I receive from my own labour is not sufficient for the common purposes of my family, & from Mr [John] Robinson and the other Men who have so long detain’d my unfortunate children’s property, I now receive nothing, nor can I obtain any remedy against their injustice and oppression. If I could sell the Book I am writing for a certain Sum to be paid for on the delivery of each volume, I might possibly continue to pay for a lodging there for a month or six weeks, which is all the difference between living there & at home. I have no right to expect however that you will break thro any resolution you may have formed to oblige me. But merely propose it to satisfy myself that I have endeavour’d to do for the best.

The work in question is to be call’d ‘The Exile’ and is a story partly founded in Truth, & as I beleive myself will be particularly interesting & somewhat on a new plan, for it will be partly narrative and partly Letters. It is some satisfaction to me to possess twenty volumes of my own writing (without reckoning the Sonnets) all of which are in the second and one in the third Edition. As to the work I sold to Messrs G G & J Robinson, it has been in a second Edition a long time tho they never advertis’d it, & of ‘The Old Manor House’ a new edition was call’d for in two months, tho Mr Bell for some reasons or strange management of his own never got it ready till lately. I do not like for many reasons to continue my dealing with Mr Bell with whom I have now compleated my whole engagement. And should you adhere to your resolution of withdrawing your property from the purchase of Copy right, and either for that or any other cause decline this proposal, I shall either endeavour to print the work at my own expence or seek some purchaser or publisher who is in a more respectable line of business than it seems to me Mr Bell adheres to.