

Confessions of J. J. Rousseau, the — Volume 09 eBook

Confessions of J. J. Rousseau, the — Volume 09 by Jean-Jacques Rousseau

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.



Contents

Confessions of J. J. Rousseau, the — Volume 09 eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	5
Page 1.....	6
Page 2.....	7
Page 3.....	8
Page 4.....	9
Page 5.....	11
Page 6.....	12
Page 7.....	13
Page 8.....	14
Page 9.....	15
Page 10.....	16
Page 11.....	17
Page 12.....	18
Page 13.....	19
Page 14.....	20
Page 15.....	21
Page 16.....	22
Page 17.....	23
Page 18.....	24
Page 19.....	25
Page 20.....	26
Page 21.....	27
Page 22.....	29



Page 23..... 30

Page 24..... 31

Page 25..... 32

Page 26..... 33

Page 27..... 34

Page 28..... 35

Page 29..... 37

Page 30..... 38

Page 31..... 39

Page 32..... 40

Page 33..... 41

Page 34..... 42

Page 35..... 43

Page 36..... 44

Page 37..... 45

Page 38..... 46

Page 39..... 47

Page 40..... 48

Page 41..... 49

Page 42..... 50

Page 43..... 51

Page 44..... 52

Page 45..... 53

Page 46..... 54

Page 47..... 55

Page 48..... 57



Page 49..... 59
Page 50..... 60
Page 51..... 61
Page 52..... 62
Page 53..... 63
Page 54..... 64
Page 55..... 65
Page 56..... 66
Page 57..... 67
Page 58..... 68
Page 59..... 69
Page 60..... 70
Page 61..... 71
Page 62..... 72
Page 63..... 74
Page 64..... 75
Page 65..... 76
Page 66..... 77
Page 67..... 78
Page 68..... 79
Page 69..... 80
Page 70..... 81
Page 71..... 83



Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
BOOK IX.		1
THIRD LETTER FROM THE SAME.		43
NOTE FROM DIDEROT.		61



Page 1

BOOK IX.

My impatience to inhabit the Hermitage not permitting me to wait until the return of fine weather, the moment my lodging was prepared I hastened to take possession of it, to the great amusement of the 'Coterie Holbachaque', which publicly predicted I should not be able to support solitude for three months, and that I should unsuccessfully return to Paris, and live there as they did. For my part, having for fifteen years been out of my element, finding myself upon the eve of returning to it, I paid no attention to their pleasantries. Since contrary to my inclinations, I have again entered the world, I have incessantly regretted my dear Charmettes, and the agreeable life I led there. I felt a natural inclination to retirement and the country: it was impossible for me to live happily elsewhere. At Venice, in the train of public affairs, in the dignity of a kind of representation, in the pride of projects of advancement; at Paris, in the vortex of the great world, in the luxury of suppers, in the brilliancy of spectacles, in the rays of splendor; my groves, rivulets, and solitary walks, constantly presented themselves to my recollection, interrupted my thought, rendered me melancholy, and made me sigh with desire. All the labor to which I had subjected myself, every project of ambition which by fits had animated my ardor, all had for object this happy country retirement, which I now thought near at hand. Without having acquired a genteel independence, which I had judged to be the only means of accomplishing my views, I imagined myself, in my particular situation, to be able to do without it, and that I could obtain the same end by a means quite opposite. I had no regular income; but I possessed some talents, and had acquired a name. My wants were few, and I had freed myself from all those which were most expensive, and which merely depended on prejudice and opinion. Besides this, although naturally indolent, I was laborious when I chose to be so. and my idleness was less that of an indolent man, than that of an independent one who applies to business when it pleases him. My profession of a copyist of music was neither splendid nor lucrative, but it was certain. The world gave me credit for the courage I had shown in making choice of it. I might depend upon having sufficient employment to enable me to live. Two thousand livres which remained of the produce of the 'Devin du Village', and my other writings, were a sum which kept me from being straitened, and several works I had upon the stocks promised me, without extorting money from the booksellers, supplies sufficient to enable me to work at my ease without exhausting myself, even by turning to advantage the leisure of my walks. My little family, consisting of three persons, all of whom were usefully employed, was not expensive to support. Finally, from my resources, proportioned to my wants and desires, I might reasonably expect a happy and permanent existence, in that manner of life which my inclination had induced me to adopt.



Page 2

I might have taken the interested side of the question, and, instead of subjecting my pen to copying, entirely devoted it to works which, from the elevation to which I had soared, and at which I found myself capable of continuing, might have enabled me to live in the midst of abundance, nay, even of opulence, had I been the least disposed to join the manoeuvres of an author to the care of publishing a good book. But I felt that writing for bread would soon have extinguished my genius, and destroyed my talents, which were less in my pen than in my heart, and solely proceeded from an elevated and noble manner of thinking, by which alone they could be cherished and preserved. Nothing vigorous or great can come from a pen totally venal. Necessity, nay, even avarice, perhaps, would have made me write rather rapidly than well. If the desire of success had not led me into cabals, it might have made me endeavor to publish fewer true and useful works than those which might be pleasing to the multitude; and instead of a distinguished author, which I might possibly become, I should have been nothing more than a scribbler. No: I have always felt that the profession of letters was illustrious in proportion as it was less a trade. It is too difficult to think nobly when we think for a livelihood. To be able to dare even to speak great truths, an author must be independent of success. I gave my books to the public with a certainty of having written for the general good of mankind, without giving myself the least concern about what was to follow. If the work was thrown aside, so much the worse for such as did not choose to profit by it. Their approbation was not necessary to enable me to live, my profession was sufficient to maintain me had not my works had a sale, for which reason alone they all sold.

It was on the ninth of August, 1756, that I left cities, never to reside in them again: for I do not call a residence the few days I afterwards remained in Paris, London, or other cities, always on the wing, or contrary to my inclinations. Madam d'Epinau came and took us all three in her coach; her farmer carted away my little baggage, and I was put into possession the same day. I found my little retreat simply furnished, but neatly, and with some taste. The hand which had lent its aid in this furnishing rendered it inestimable in my eyes, and I thought it charming to be the guest of my female friend in a house I had made choice of, and which she had caused to be built purposely for me.

Although the weather was cold, and the ground lightly covered with snow, the earth began to vegetate: violets and primroses already made their appearance, the trees began to bud, and the evening of my arrival was distinguished by the song of the nightingale, which was heard almost under my window, in a wood adjoining the house. After a light sleep, forgetting when I awoke my change of abode, I still thought myself in the Rue Grenelle, when suddenly this warbling made



Page 3

me give a start, and I exclaimed in my transport: "At length, all my wishes are accomplished!" The first thing I did was to abandon myself to the impression of the rural objects with which I was surrounded. Instead of beginning to set things in order in my new habitation, I began by doing it for my walks, and there was not a path, a copse, a grove, nor a corner in the environs of my place of residence that I did not visit the next day. The more I examined this charming retreat, the more I found it to my wishes. This solitary, rather than savage, spot transported me in idea to the end of the world. It had striking beauties which are but seldom found near cities, and never, if suddenly transported thither, could any person have imagined himself within four leagues of Paris.

After abandoning myself for a few days to this rural delirium, I began to arrange my papers, and regulate my occupations. I set apart, as I had always done, my mornings to copying, and my afternoons to walking, provided with my little paper book and a pencil, for never having been able to write and think at my ease except 'sub dio', I had no inclination to depart from this method, and I was persuaded the forest of Montmorency, which was almost at my door, would in future be my closet and study. I had several works begun; these I cast my eye over. My mind was indeed fertile in great projects, but in the noise of the city the execution of them had gone on but slowly. I proposed to myself to use more diligence when I should be less interrupted. I am of opinion I have sufficiently fulfilled this intention; and for a man frequently ill, often at La Chevrette, at Epinay, at Raubonne, at the castle of Montmorency, at other times interrupted by the indolent and curious, and always employed half the day in copying, if what I produced during the six years I passed at the Hermitage and at Montmorency be considered, I am persuaded it will appear that if, in this interval, I lost my time, it was not in idleness.

Of the different works I had upon the stocks, that I had longest resolved in my mind which was most to my taste; to which I destined a certain portion of my life, and which, in my opinion, was to confirm the reputation I had acquired, was my 'Institutions Politiques'. I had, fourteen years before, when at Venice, where I had an opportunity of remarking the defects of that government so much boasted of, conceived the first idea of them. Since that time my views had become much more extended by the historical study of morality. I had perceived everything to be radically connected with politics, and that, upon whatever principles these were founded, a people would never be more than that which the nature of the government made them; therefore the great question of the best government possible appeared to me to be reduced to this: What is the nature of a government the most proper to form the most virtuous and enlightened, the wisest and best people, taking the last epithet

Page 4

in its most extensive meaning? I thought this question was much if not quite of the same nature with that which follows: What government is that which, by its nature, always maintains itself nearest to the laws, or least deviates from the laws. Hence, what is the law? and a series of questions of similar importance. I perceived these led to great truths, useful to the happiness of mankind, but more especially to that of my country, wherein, in the journey I had just made to it, I had not found notions of laws and liberty either sufficiently just or clear. I had thought this indirect manner of communicating these to my fellow-citizens would be least mortifying to their pride, and might obtain me forgiveness for having seen a little further than themselves.

Although I had already labored five or six years at the work, the progress I had made in it was not considerable. Writings of this kind require meditation, leisure and tranquillity. I had besides written the 'Institutions Politiques', as the expression is, 'en bonne fortune', and had not communicated my project to any person; not even to Diderot. I was afraid it would be thought too daring for the age and country in which I wrote, and that the fears of my friends would restrain me from carrying it into execution.

[It was more especially the wise severity of Duclos which inspired me with this fear; as for Diderot, I know not by what means all my conferences with him tended to make me more satirical than my natural disposition inclined me to be. This prevented me from consulting him upon an undertaking, in which I wished to introduce nothing but the force of reasoning without the least appearance of ill humor or partiality. The manner of this work may be judged of by that of the 'Contrat Social', which is taken from it.]

I did not yet know that it would be finished in time, and in such a manner as to appear before my decease. I wished fearlessly to give to my subject everything it required; fully persuaded that not being of a satirical turn, and never wishing to be personal, I should in equity always be judged irreprehensible. I undoubtedly wished fully to enjoy the right of thinking which I had by birth; but still respecting the government under which I lived, without ever disobeying its laws, and very attentive not to violate the rights of persons, I would not from fear renounce its advantages.

I confess, even that, as a stranger, and living in France, I found my situation very favorable in daring to speak the truth; well knowing that continuing, as I was determined to do, not to print anything in the kingdom without permission, I was not obliged to give to any person in it an account of my maxims nor of their publication elsewhere. I should have been less independent even at Geneva, where, in whatever place my books might have been printed, the magistrate had a right to criticise their contents. This consideration had greatly contributed to make me yield to the solicitations of Madam d'Epainay, and abandon the project of fixing my residence at Geneva. I felt, as I have remarked in my Emilius, that unless an author be a man of intrigue, when he wishes to

render his works really useful to any country whatsoever, he must compose them in some other.



Page 5

What made me find my situation still more happy, was my being persuaded that the government of France would, perhaps, without looking upon me with a very favorable eye, make it a point to protect me, or at least not to disturb my tranquillity. It appeared to me a stroke of simple, yet dexterous policy, to make a merit of tolerating that which there was no means of preventing; since, had I been driven from France, which was all government had the right to do, my work would still have been written, and perhaps with less reserve; whereas if I were left undisturbed, the author remained to answer for what he wrote, and a prejudice, general throughout all Europe, would be destroyed by acquiring the reputation of observing a proper respect for the rights of persons.

They who, by the event, shall judge I was deceived, may perhaps be deceived in their turn. In the storm which has since broken over my head, my books served as a pretence, but it was against my person that every shaft was directed. My persecutors gave themselves but little concern about the author, but they wished to ruin Jean Jacques; and the greatest evil they found in my writings was the honor they might possibly do me. Let us not encroach upon the future. I do not know that this mystery, which is still one to me, will hereafter be cleared up to my readers; but had my avowed principles been of a nature to bring upon me the treatment I received, I should sooner have become their victim, since the work in which these principles are manifested with most courage, not to call it audacity, seemed to have had its effect previous to my retreat to the Hermitage, without I will not only say my having received the least censure, but without any steps having been taken to prevent the publication of it in France, where it was sold as publicly as in Holland. The New Eloisa afterwards appeared with the same facility, I dare add; with the same applause: and, what seems incredible, the profession of faith of this Eloisa at the point of death is exactly similar to that of the Savoyard vicar. Every strong idea in the Social Contract had been before published in the discourse on Inequality; and every bold opinion in Emilius previously found in Eloisa. This unrestrained freedom did not excite the least murmur against the first two works; therefore it was not that which gave cause to it against the latter.

Another undertaking much of the same kind, but of which the project was more recent, then engaged my attention: this was the extract of the works of the Abbe de Saint Pierre, of which, having been led away by the thread of my narrative, I have not hitherto been able to speak. The idea was suggested to me, after my return from Geneva, by the Abbe Malby, not immediately from himself, but by the interposition of Madam Dupin, who had some interest in engaging me to adopt it. She was one of the three or four-pretty women of Paris, of whom the Abbe de Saint Pierre had been the spoiled child, and although she



Page 6

had not decidedly had the preference, she had at least partaken of it with Madam d'Aiguillon. She preserved for the memory of the good man a respect and an affection which did honor to them both; and her self-love would have been flattered by seeing the still-born works of her friend brought to life by her secretary. These works contained excellent things, but so badly told that the reading of them was almost insupportable; and it is astonishing the Abbe de Saint Pierre, who looked upon his readers as schoolboys, should nevertheless have spoken to them as men, by the little care he took to induce them to give him a hearing. It was for this purpose that the work was proposed to me as useful in itself, and very proper for a man laborious in manoeuvre, but idle as an author, who finding the trouble of thinking very fatiguing, preferred, in things which pleased him, throwing a light upon and extending the ideas of others, to producing any himself. Besides, not being confined to the functions of a translator, I was at liberty sometimes to think for myself; and I had it in my power to give such a form to my work, that many important truths would pass in it under the name of the Abbe de Saint Pierre, much more safely than under mine. The undertaking also was not trifling; the business was nothing less than to read and meditate twenty-three volumes, diffuse, confused, full of long narrations and periods, repetitions, and false or little views, from amongst which it was necessary to select some few that were good and useful, and sufficiently encouraging to enable me to support the painful labor. I frequently wished to have given it up, and should have done so, could I have got it off my hands with a great grace; but when I received the manuscripts of the abbe, which were given to me by his nephew, the Comte de Saint Pierre, I had, by the solicitation of St. Lambert, in some measure engaged to make use of them, which I must either have done, or have given them back. It was with the former intention I had taken the manuscripts to the Hermitage, and this was the first work to which I proposed to dedicate my leisure hours.

I had likewise in my own mind projected a third, the idea of which I owed to the observations I had made upon myself and I felt the more disposed to undertake this work, as I had reason to hope I could make it a truly useful one, and perhaps, the most so of any that could be offered to the world, were the execution equal to the plan I had laid down. It has been remarked that most men are in the course of their lives frequently unlike themselves, and seem to be transformed into others very different from what they were. It was not to establish a thing so generally known that I wished to write a book; I had a newer and more important object. This was to search for the causes of these variations, and, by confining my observations to those which depend on ourselves, to demonstrate in what manner it might be possible to direct them,



Page 7

in order to render us better and more certain of our dispositions. For it is undoubtedly more painful to an honest man to resist desires already formed, and which it is his duty to subdue, than to prevent, change, or modify the same desires in their source, were he capable of tracing them to it. A man under temptation resists once because he has strength of mind, he yields another time because this is overcome; had it been the same as before he would again have triumphed.

By examining within myself, and searching in others what could be the cause of these different manners of being, I discovered that, in a great measure they depended on the anterior impressions of external objects; and that, continually modified by our senses and organs, we, without knowing it, bore in our ideas, sentiments, and even actions, the effect of these modifications. The striking and numerous observations I had collected were beyond all manner of dispute, and by their natural principle seemed proper to furnish an exterior regimen, which varied according to circumstances, might place and support the mind in the state most favorable to virtue. From how many mistakes would reason be preserved, how many vices would be stifled in their birth, were it possible to force animal economy to favor moral order, which it so frequently disturbs! Climate, seasons, sounds, colors, light, darkness, the elements, ailments, noise, silence, motion, rest, all act on the animal machine, and consequently on the mind: all offer a thousand means, almost certain of directing in their origin the sentiments by which we suffer ourselves to be governed. Such was the fundamental idea of which I had already made a sketch upon paper, and whence I hoped for an effect the more certain, in favor of persons well disposed, who, sincerely loving virtue, were afraid of their own weakness, as it appeared to me easy to make of it a book as agreeable to read as it was to compose. I have, however, applied myself but very little to this work, the title of which was to have been 'Morale Sensitive' ou le Materialisme du Sage. —[Sensitive Morality, or the Materialism of the Sage.]—Interruptions, the cause of which will soon appear, prevented me from continuing it, and the fate of the sketch, which is more connected with my own than it may appear to be, will hereafter be seen.

Besides this, I had for some time meditated a system of education, of which Madam de Chenonceaux, alarmed for her son by that of her husband, had desired me to consider. The authority of friendship placed this object, although less in itself to my taste, nearer to my heart than any other. On which account this subject, of all those of which I have just spoken, is the only one I carried to its utmost extent. The end I proposed to myself in treating of it should, I think, have procured the author a better fate. But I will not here anticipate this melancholy subject. I shall have too much reason to speak of it in the course of my work.



Page 8

These different objects offered me subjects of meditation for my walks; for, as I believed I had already observed, I am unable to reflect when I am not walking: the moment I stop, I think no more, and as soon as I am again in motion my head resumes its workings. I had, however, provided myself with a work for the closet upon rainy days. This was my dictionary of music, which my scattered, mutilated, and unshapen materials made it necessary to rewrite almost entirely. I had with me some books necessary to this purpose; I had spent two months in making extracts from others, I had borrowed from the king's library, whence I was permitted to take several to the Hermitage. I was thus provided with materials for composing in my apartment when the weather did not permit me to go out, and my copying fatigued me. This arrangement was so convenient that it made it turn to advantage as well at the Hermitage as at Montmorency, and afterwards even at Motiers, where I completed the work whilst I was engaged in others, and constantly found a change of occupation to be a real relaxation.

During a considerable time I exactly followed the distribution I had prescribed myself, and found it very agreeable; but as soon as the fine weather brought Madam d'Epinay more frequently to Epinay, or to the Chervette, I found that attentions, in the first instance natural to me, but which I had not considered in my scheme, considerably deranged my projects. I have already observed that Madam d'Epinay had many amiable qualities; she sincerely loved her friends; served them with zeal; and, not sparing for them either time or pains, certainly deserved on their part every attention in return. I had hitherto discharged this duty without considering it as one, but at length I found that I had given myself a chain of which nothing but friendship prevented me from feeling the weight, and this was still aggravated by my dislike to numerous societies. Madam d' Epinay took advantage of these circumstances to make me a proposition seemingly agreeable to me, but which was more so to herself; this was to let me know when she was alone, or had but little company. I consented, without perceiving to what a degree I engaged myself. The consequence was that I no longer visited her at my own hour—but at hers, and that I never was certain of being master of myself for a day together. This constraint considerably diminished the pleasure I had in going to see her. I found the liberty she had so frequently promised was given me upon no other condition than that of my never enjoying it; and once or twice when I wished to do this there were so many messages, notes, and alarms relative to my health, that I perceived that I could have no excuse but being confined to my bed, for not immediately running to her upon the first intimation. It was necessary I should submit to this yoke, and I did it, even more voluntarily than could be expected from so great an enemy to dependence:



Page 9

the sincere attachment I had to Madam D'Epina y preventing me, in a great measure, from feeling the inconvenience with which it was accompanied. She, on her part, filled up, well or ill, the void which the absence of her usual circle left in her amusements. This for her was but a very slender supplement, although preferable to absolute solitude, which she could not support. She had the means of doing it much more at her ease after she began with literature, and at all events to write novels, letters, comedies, tales, and other trash of the same kind. But she was not so much amused in writing these as in reading them; and she never scribbled over two or three pages—at one sitting—without being previously assured of having, at least, two or three benevolent auditors at the end of so much labor. I seldom had the honor of being one of the chosen few except by means of another. When alone, I was, for the most part, considered as a cipher in everything; and this not only in the company of Madam D'Epina y, but in that of M. d'Holbach, and in every place where Grimm gave the 'ton'. This nullity was very convenient to me, except in a tete-a-tete, when I knew not what countenance to put on, not daring to speak of literature, of which it was not for me to say a word; nor of gallantry, being too timid, and fearing, more than death, the ridiculousness of an old gallant; besides that, I never had such an idea when in the company of Madam D'Epina y, and that it perhaps would never have occurred to me, had I passed my whole life with her; not that her person was in the least disagreeable to me; on the contrary, I loved her perhaps too much as a friend to do it as a lover. I felt a pleasure in seeing and speaking to her. Her conversation, although agreeable enough in a mixed company, was uninteresting in private; mine, not more elegant or entertaining than her own, was no great amusement to her. Ashamed of being long silent, I endeavored to enliven our tete-a-tete and, although this frequently fatigued me, I was never disgusted with it. I was happy to show her little attentions, and gave her little fraternal kisses, which seemed not to be more sensual to herself; these were all. She was very thin, very pale, and had a bosom which resembled the back of her hand. This defect alone would have been sufficient to moderate my most ardent desires; my heart never could distinguish a woman in a person who had it; and besides other causes useless to mention, always made me forget the sex of this lady.

Having resolved to conform to an assiduity which was necessary, I immediately and voluntarily entered upon it, and for the first year at least, found it less burthensome than I could have expected. Madam d'Epina y, who commonly passed the summer in the country, continued there but a part of this; whether she was more detained by her affairs in Paris, or that the absence of Grimm rendered the residence of the Chevette less agreeable to her, I know not.



Page 10

I took the advantage of the intervals of her absence, or when the company with her was numerous, to enjoy my solitude with my good Theresa and her mother, in such a manner as to taste all its charms. Although I had for several years passed been frequently in the country, I seldom had enjoyed much of its pleasures; and these excursions, always made in company with people who considered themselves as persons of consequence, and rendered insipid by constraint, served to increase in me the natural desire I had for rustic pleasures. The want of these was the more sensible to me as I had the image of them immediately before my eyes. I was so tired of saloons, jets d'eau, groves, parterres, and of more fatiguing persons by whom they were shown; so exhausted with pamphlets, harpsichords, trios, unravellings of plots, stupid bon mots, insipid affections, pitiful storytellers, and great suppers; that when I gave a side glance at a poor simple hawthorn bush, a hedge, a barn, or a meadow; when, in passing through a hamlet, I scented a good chervil omelette, and heard at a distance the burden of a rustic song of the Bisquieres; I wished all rouge, furbelows and amber at the d—l, and envying the dinner of the good housewife, and the wine of her own vineyard, I heartily wished to give a slap on the chaps to Monsieur le Chef and Monsieur le Maitre, who made me dine at the hour of supper, and sup when I should have been asleep, but especially to Messieurs the lackeys, who devoured with their eyes the morsel I put into my mouth, and upon pain of my dying with thirst, sold me the adulterated wine of their master, ten times dearer than that of a better quality would have cost me at a public house.

At length I was settled in an agreeable and solitary asylum, at liberty to pass there the remainder of my days, in that peaceful, equal, and independent life for which I felt myself born. Before I relate the effects this situation, so new to me, had upon my heart, it is proper I should recapitulate its secret affections, that the reader may better follow in their causes the progress of these new modifications.

I have always considered the day on which I was united to Theresa as that which fixed my moral existence. An attachment was necessary for me, since that which should have been sufficient to my heart had been so cruelly broken. The thirst after happiness is never extinguished in the heart of man. Mamma was advancing into years, and dishonored herself! I had proofs that she could never more be happy here below; it therefore remained to me to seek my own happiness, having lost all hopes of partaking of hers. I was sometimes irresolute, and fluctuated from one idea to another, and from project to project. My journey to Venice would have thrown me into public life, had the man with whom, almost against my inclination, I was connected there had common sense. I was easily discouraged, especially in undertakings of length and difficulty. The ill success of this disgusted me with every other; and, according to my old maxims, considering distant objects as deceitful allurements, I resolved in future to provide for immediate wants, seeing nothing in life which could tempt me to make extraordinary efforts.



Page 11

It was precisely at this time we became acquainted. The mild character of the good Theresa seemed so fitted to my own, that I united myself to her with an attachment which neither time nor injuries have been able to impair, and which has constantly been increased by everything by which it might have been expected to be diminished. The force of this sentiment will hereafter appear when I come to speak of the wounds she has given my heart in the height of my misery, without my ever having, until this moment, once uttered a word of complaint to any person whatever.

When it shall be known, that after having done everything, braved everything, not to separate from her; that after passing with her twenty years in despite of fate and men; I have in my old age made her my wife, without the least expectation or solicitation on her part, or promise or engagement on mine, the world will think that love bordering upon madness, having from the first moment turned my head, led me by degrees to the last act of extravagance; and this will no longer appear doubtful when the strong and particular reasons which should forever have prevented me from taking such a step are made known. What, therefore, will the reader think when I shall have told him, with all the truth he has ever found in me, that, from the first moment in which I saw her, until that wherein I write, I have never felt the least love for her, that I never desired to possess her more than I did to possess Madam de Warrens, and that the physical wants which were satisfied with her person were, to me, solely those of the sex, and by no means proceeding from the individual? He will think that, being of a constitution different from that of other men, I was incapable of love, since this was not one of the sentiments which attached me to women the most dear to my heart. Patience, O my dear reader! the fatal moment approaches in which you will be but too much undeceived.

I fall into repetitions; I know it; and these are necessary. The first of my wants, the greatest, strongest and most insatiable, was wholly in my heart; the want of an intimate connection, and as intimate as it could possibly be: for this reason especially, a woman was more necessary to me than a man, a female rather than a male friend. This singular want was such that the closest corporal union was not sufficient: two souls would have been necessary to me in the same body, without which I always felt a void. I thought I was upon the point of filling it up forever. This young person, amiable by a thousand excellent qualities, and at that time by her form, without the shadow of art or coquetry, would have confined within herself my whole existence, could hers, as I had hoped it would, have been totally confined to me. I had nothing to fear from men; I am certain of being the only man she ever really loved and her moderate passions seldom wanted another not even after I ceased in this respect to be one to her. I had no family;



Page 12

she had one; and this family was composed of individuals whose dispositions were so different from mine, that I could never make it my own. This was the first cause of my unhappiness. What would I not have given to be the child of her mother? I did everything in my power to become so, but could never succeed. I in vain attempted to unite all our interests: this was impossible. She always created herself one different from mine, contrary to it, and to that even of her daughter, which already was no longer separated from it. She, her other children, and grand-children, became so many leeches, and the least evil these did to Theresa was robbing her. The poor girl, accustomed to submit, even to her nieces, suffered herself to be pilfered and governed without saying a word; and I perceived with grief that by exhausting my purse, and giving her advice, I did nothing that could be of any real advantage to her. I endeavored to detach her from her mother; but she constantly resisted such a proposal. I could not but respect her resistance, and esteemed her the more for it; but her refusal was not on this account less to the prejudice of us both. Abandoned to her mother and the rest of her family, she was more their companion than mine, and rather at their command than mistress of herself. Their avarice was less ruinous than their advice was pernicious to her; in fact, if, on account of the love she had for me, added to her good natural disposition, she was not quite their slave, she was enough so to prevent in a great measure the effect of the good maxims I endeavored to instil into her, and, notwithstanding all my efforts, to prevent our being united.

Thus was it, that notwithstanding a sincere and reciprocal attachment, in which I had lavished all the tenderness of my heart, the void in that heart was never completely filled. Children, by whom this effect should have been produced, were brought into the world, but these only made things worse. I trembled at the thought of intrusting them to a family ill brought up, to be still worse educated. The risk of the education of the foundling hospital was much less. This reason for the resolution I took, much stronger than all those I stated in my letter to Madam de Francueil, was, however, the only one with which I dared not make her acquainted; I chose rather to appear less excusable than to expose to reproach the family of a person I loved. But by the conduct of her wretched brother, notwithstanding all that can be said in his defence, it will be judged whether or not I ought to have exposed my children to an education similar to his.

Not having it in my power to taste in all its plentitude the charms of that intimate connection of which I felt the want, I sought for substitutes which did not fill up the void, yet they made it less sensible. Not having a friend entirely devoted to me, I wanted others, whose impulse should overcome my indolence; for this reason I cultivated and strengthened my connection with Diderot and the Abbe de Condillac, formed with Grimm a new one still more intimate, till at length by the unfortunate discourse, of which I have related some particulars, I unexpectedly found myself thrown back into a literary circle which I thought I had quitted forever.

Page 13

My first steps conducted me by a new path to another intellectual world, the simple and noble economy of which I cannot contemplate without enthusiasm. I reflected so much on the subject that I soon saw nothing but error and folly in the doctrine of our sages, and oppression and misery in our social order. In the illusion of my foolish pride, I thought myself capable of destroying all imposture; and thinking that, to make myself listened to, it was necessary my conduct should agree with my principles, I adopted the singular manner of life which I have not been permitted to continue, the example of which my pretended friends have never forgiven me, which at first made me ridiculous, and would at length have rendered me respectable, had it been possible for me to persevere.

Until then I had been good; from that moment I became virtuous, or at least infatuated with virtue. This infatuation had begun in my head, but afterwards passed into my heart. The most noble pride there took root amongst the ruins of extirpated vanity. I affected nothing; I became what I appeared to be, and during four years at least, whilst this effervescence continued at its greatest height, there is nothing great and good that can enter the heart of man, of which I was not capable between heaven and myself. Hence flowed my sudden eloquence; hence, in my first writings, that fire really celestial, which consumed me, and whence during forty years not a single spark had escaped, because it was not yet lighted up.

I was really transformed; my friends and acquaintance scarcely knew me. I was no longer that timid, and rather bashful than modest man, who neither dared to present himself, nor utter a word; whom a single pleasantry disconcerted, and whose face was covered with a blush the moment his eyes met those of a woman. I became bold, haughty, intrepid, with a confidence the more firm, as it was simple, and resided in my soul rather than in my manner. The contempt with which my profound meditations had inspired me for the manners, maxims and prejudices of the age in which I lived, rendered me proof against the raillery of those by whom they were possessed, and I crushed their little pleasantries with a sentence, as I would have crushed an insect with my fingers.

What a change! All Paris repeated the severe and acute sarcasms of the same man who, two years before, and ten years afterwards, knew not how to find what he had to say, nor the word he ought to employ. Let the situation in the world the most contrary to my natural disposition be sought after, and this will be found. Let one of the short moments of my life in which I became another man, and ceased to be myself, be recollected, this also will be found in the time of which I speak; but, instead of continuing only six days, or six weeks, it lasted almost six years, and would perhaps still continue, but for the particular circumstances which caused it to cease, and restored me to nature, above which I had, wished to soar.

Page 14

The beginning of this change took place as soon as I had quitted Paris, and the sight of the vices of that city no longer kept up the indignation with which it had inspired me. I no sooner had lost sight of men than I ceased to despise them, and once removed from those who designed me evil, my hatred against them no longer existed. My heart, little fitted for hatred, pitied their misery, and even their wickedness. This situation, more pleasing but less sublime, soon allayed the ardent enthusiasm by which I had so long been transported; and I insensibly, almost to myself even, again became fearful, complaisant and timid; in a word, the same Jean Jacques I before had been.

Had this resolution gone no further than restoring me to myself, all would have been well; but unfortunately it rapidly carried me away to the other extreme. From that moment my mind in agitation passed the line of repose, and its oscillations, continually renewed, have never permitted it to remain here. I must enter into some detail of this second revolution; terrible and fatal era, of a fate unparalleled amongst mortals.

We were but three persons in our retirement; it was therefore natural our intimacy should be increased by leisure and solitude. This was the case between Theresa and myself. We passed in conversations in the shade the most charming and delightful hours, more so than any I had hitherto enjoyed. She seemed to taste of this sweet intercourse more than I had until then observed her to do; she opened her heart, and communicated to me, relative to her mother and family, things she had had resolution enough to conceal for a great length of time. Both had received from Madam Dupin numerous presents, made them on my account, and mostly for me, but which the cunning old woman, to prevent my being angry, had appropriated to her own use and that of her other children, without suffering Theresa to have the least share, strongly forbidding her to say a word to me of the matter: an order the poor girl had obeyed with an incredible exactness.

But another thing which surprised me more than this had done, was the discovery that besides the private conversations Diderot and Grimm had frequently had with both to endeavor to detach them from me, in which, by means of the resistance of Theresa, they had not been able to succeed, they had afterwards had frequent conferences with the mother, the subject of which was a secret to the daughter. However, she knew little presents had been made, and that there were mysterious goings backward and forward, the motive of which was entirely unknown to her. When we left Paris, Madam le Vasseur had long been in the habit of going to see Grimm twice or thrice a month, and continuing with him for hours together, in conversation so secret that the servant was always sent out of the room.



Page 15

I judged this motive to be of the same nature with the project into which they had attempted to make the daughter enter, by promising to procure her and her mother, by means of Madam d'Epinau, a salt huckster's license, or snuff-shop; in a word, by tempting her with the allurements of gain. They had been told that, as I was not in a situation to do anything for them, I could not, on their account, do anything for myself. As in all this I saw nothing but good intentions, I was not absolutely displeased with them for it. The mystery was the only thing which gave me pain, especially on the part of the old woman, who moreover daily became more parasitical and flattering towards me. This, however, did not prevent her from reproaching her daughter in private with telling me everything, and loving me too much, observing to her she was a fool and would at length be made a dupe.

This woman possessed, to a supreme degree, the art of multiplying the presents made her, by concealing from one what she received from another, and from me what she received from all. I could have pardoned her avarice, but it was impossible I should forgive her dissimulation. What could she have to conceal from me whose happiness she knew principally consisted in that of herself and her daughter? What I had done for the daughter I had done for myself, but the services I rendered the mother merited on her part some acknowledgment. She ought, at least, to have thought herself obliged for them to her daughter, and to have loved me for the sake of her by whom I was already beloved. I had raised her from the lowest state of wretchedness; she received from my hands the means of subsistence, and was indebted to me for her acquaintance with the persons from whom she found means to reap considerable benefit. Theresa had long supported her by her industry, and now maintained her with my bread. She owed everything to this daughter, for whom she had done nothing, and her other children, to whom she had given marriage portions, and on whose account she had ruined herself, far from giving her the least aid, devoured her substance and mine. I thought that in such a situation she ought to consider me as her only friend and most sure protector, and that, far from making of my own affairs a secret to me, and conspiring against me in my house, it was her duty faithfully to acquaint me with everything in which I was interested, when this came to her knowledge before it did to mine. In what light, therefore, could I consider her false and mysterious conduct? What could I think of the sentiments with which she endeavored to inspire her daughter? What monstrous ingratitude was hers, to endeavor to instil it into her from whom I expected my greatest consolation?

These reflections at length alienated my affections from this woman, and to such a degree that I could no longer look upon her but with contempt. I nevertheless continued to treat with respect the mother of the friend of my bosom, and in everything to show her almost the reverence of a son; but I must confess I could not remain long with her without pain, and that I never knew how to bear restraint.



Page 16

This is another short moment of my life, in which I approached near to happiness without being able to attain it, and this by no fault of my own. Had the mother been of a good disposition we all three should have been happy to the end of our days; the longest liver only would have been to be pitied. Instead of which, the reader will see the course things took, and judge whether or not it was in my power to change it.

Madam le Vasseur, who perceived I had got more full possession of the heart of Theresa, and that she had lost ground with her, endeavored to regain it; and instead of striving to restore herself to my good opinion by the mediation of her daughter attempted to alienate her affections from me. One of the means she employed was to call her family to her aid. I had begged Theresa not to invite any of her relations to the Hermitage, and she had promised me she would not. These were sent for in my absence, without consulting her, and she was afterwards prevailed upon to promise not to say anything of the matter. After the first step was taken all the rest were easy. When once we make a secret of anything to the person we love, we soon make little scruple of doing it in everything; the moment I was at the Chevrette the Hermitage was full of people who sufficiently amused themselves. A mother has always great power over a daughter of a mild disposition; yet notwithstanding all the old woman could do, she was never able to prevail upon Theresa to enter into her views, nor to persuade her to join in the league against me. For her part, she resolved upon doing it forever, and seeing on one side her daughter and myself, who were in a situation to live, and that was all; on the other, Diderot, Grimm, D' Holbach and Madam d'Epinay, who promised great things, and gave some little ones, she could not conceive it was possible to be in the wrong with the wife of a farmer-general and baron. Had I been more clear sighted, I should from this moment have perceived I nourished a serpent in my bosom. But my blind confidence, which nothing had yet diminished, was such that I could not imagine she wished to injure the person she ought to love. Though I saw numerous conspiracies formed on every side, all I complain of was the tyranny of persons who called themselves my friends, and who, as it seemed, would force me to be happy in the manner they should point out, and not in that I had chosen for myself.

Although Theresa refused to join in the confederacy with her mother, she afterwards kept her secret. For this her motive was commendable, although I will not determine whether she did it well or ill. Two women, who have secrets between them, love to prattle together; this attracted them towards each other, and Theresa, by dividing herself, sometimes let me feel I was alone; for I could no longer consider as a society that which we all three formed.

Page 17

I now felt the neglect I had been guilty of during the first years of our connection, in not taking advantage of the docility with which her love inspired her, to improve her talents and give her knowledge, which, by more closely connecting us in our retirement would agreeably have filled up her time and my own, without once suffering us to perceive the length of a private conversation. Not that this was ever exhausted between us, or that she seemed disgusted with our walks; but we had not a sufficient number of ideas common to both to make ourselves a great store, and we could not incessantly talk of our future projects which were confined to those of enjoying the pleasures of life. The objects around us inspired me with reflections beyond the reach of her comprehension. An attachment of twelve years' standing had no longer need of words: we were too well acquainted with each other to have any new knowledge to acquire in that respect. The resource of puns, jests, gossiping and scandal, was all that remained. In solitude especially is it, that the advantage of living with a person who knows how to think is particularly felt. I wanted not this resource to amuse myself with her; but she would have stood in need of it to have always found amusement with me. The worst of all was our being obliged to hold our conversations when we could; her mother, who became importunate, obliged me to watch for opportunities to do it. I was under constraint in my own house: this is saying everything; the air of love was prejudicial to good friendship. We had an intimate intercourse without living in intimacy.

The moment I thought I perceived that Theresa sometimes sought for a pretext to elude the walks I proposed to her, I ceased to invite her to accompany me, without being displeased with her for not finding in them so much amusement as I did. Pleasure is not a thing which depends upon the will. I was sure of her heart, and the possession of this was all I desired. As long as my pleasures were hers, I tasted of them with her; when this ceased to be the case I preferred her contentment to my own.

In this manner it was that, half deceived in my expectation, leading a life after my own heart, in a residence I had chosen with a person who was dear to me, I at length found myself almost alone. What I still wanted prevented me from enjoying what I had. With respect to happiness and enjoyment, everything or nothing, was what was necessary to me. The reason of these observations will hereafter appear. At present I return to the thread of my narrative.



Page 18

I imagined that I possessed treasures in the manuscripts given me by the Comte de St. Pierre. On examination I found they were a little more than the collection of the printed works of his uncle, with notes and corrections by his own hand, and a few other trifling fragments which had not yet been published. I confirmed myself by these moral writings in the idea I had conceived from some of his letters, shown me by Madam de Crequi, that he had more sense and ingenuity than at first I had imagined; but after a careful examination of his political works, I discerned nothing but superficial notions, and projects that were useful but impracticable, in consequence of the idea from which the author never could depart, that men conducted themselves by their sagacity rather than by their passions. The high opinion he had of the knowledge of the moderns had made him adopt this false principle of improved reason, the basis of all the institutions he proposed, and the source of his political sophisms. This extraordinary man, an honor to the age in which he lived, and to the human species, and perhaps the only person, since the creation of mankind, whose sole passion was that of reason, wandered in all his systems from error to error, by attempting to make men like himself, instead of taking them as they were, are, and will continue to be. He labored for imaginary beings, while he thought himself employed for the benefit of his contemporaries.

All these things considered, I was rather embarrassed as to the form I should give to my work. To suffer the author's visions to pass was doing nothing useful; fully to refute them would have been unpolite, as the care of revising and publishing his manuscripts, which I had accepted, and even requested, had been intrusted to me; this trust had imposed on me the obligation of treating the author honorably. I at length concluded upon that which to me appeared the most decent, judicious, and useful. This was to give separately my own ideas and those of the author, and, for this purpose, to enter into his views, to set them in a new light, to amplify, extend them, and spare nothing which might contribute to present them in all their excellence.

My work therefore was to be composed of two parts absolutely distinct: one, to explain, in the manner I have just mentioned, the different projects of the author; in the other, which was not to appear until the first had had its effect, I should have given my opinion upon these projects, which I confess might sometimes have exposed them to the fate of the sonnet of the misanthrope. At the head of the whole was to have been the life of the author. For this I had collected some good materials, and which I flattered myself I should not spoil in making use of them. I had been a little acquainted with the Abbe de St. Pierre, in his old age, and the veneration I had for his memory warranted to me, upon the whole, that the comte would not be dissatisfied with the manner in which I should have treated his relation.

Page 19

I made my first essay on the 'Perpetual Peace', the greatest and most elaborate of all the works which composed the collection; and before I abandoned myself to my reflections I had the courage to read everything the abbe had written upon this fine subject, without once suffering myself to be disgusted either by his slowness or his repetitions. The public has seen the extract, on which account I have nothing to say upon the subject. My opinion of it has not been printed, nor do I know that it ever will be; however, it was written at the same time the extract was made. From this I passed to the 'Polysynodie', or Plurality of Councils, a work written under the regent to favor the administration he had chosen, and which caused the Abbe de Saint Pierre to be expelled from the academy, on account of some remarks unfavorable to the preceding administration, and with which the Duchess of Maine and the Cardinal de Polignac were displeased. I completed this work as I did the former, with an extract and remarks; but I stopped here without intending to continue the undertaking which I ought never to have begun.

The reflection which induced me to give it up naturally presents itself, and it was astonishing I had not made it sooner.

Most of the writings of the Abbe de Saint Pierre were either observations, or contained observations, on some parts of the government of France, and several of these were of so free a nature, that it was happy for him he had made them with impunity. But in the offices of all the ministers of state the Abbe de St. Pierre had ever been considered as a kind of preacher rather than a real politician, and he was suffered to say what he pleased, because it appeared that nobody listened to him. Had I procured him readers the case would have been different. He was a Frenchman, and I was not one; and by repeating his censures, although in his own name, I exposed myself to be asked, rather rudely, but without injustice, what it was with which I meddled. Happily before I proceeded any further, I perceived the hold I was about to give the government against me, and I immediately withdrew. I knew that, living alone in the midst of men more powerful than myself, I never could by any means whatever be sheltered from the injury they chose to do me. There was but one thing which depended upon my own efforts: this was, to observe such a line of conduct that whenever they chose to make me feel the weight of authority they could not do it without being unjust. The maxim which induced me to decline proceeding with the works of the Abbe de Saint Pierre, has frequently made me give up projects I had much more at heart. People who are always ready to construe adversity into a crime, would be much surprised were they to know the pains I have taken, that during my misfortunes it might never with truth be said of me, Thou hast deserved them.



Page 20

After having given up the manuscript, I remained some time without determining upon the work which should succeed it, and this interval of inactivity was destructive; by permitting me to turn my reflections on myself, for want of another object to engage my attention. I had no project for the future which could amuse my imagination. It was not even possible to form any, as my situation was precisely that in which all my desires were united. I had not another to conceive, and yet there was a void in my heart. This state was the more cruel, as I saw no other that was to be preferred to it. I had fixed my most tender affections upon a person who made me a return of her own. I lived with her without constraint, and, so to speak, at discretion. Notwithstanding this, a secret grief of mind never quitted me for a moment, either when she was present or absent. In possessing Theresa, I still perceived she wanted something to her happiness; and the sole idea of my not being everything to her had such an effect upon my mind that she was next to nothing to me.

I had friends of both sexes, to whom I was attached by the purest friendship and most perfect esteem; I depended upon a real return on their part, and a doubt of their sincerity never entered my mind; yet this friendship was more tormenting than agreeable to me, by their obstinate perseverance and even by their affectation, in opposing my taste, inclinations and manner of living; and this to such a degree, that the moment I seemed to desire a thing which interested myself only, and depended not upon them, they immediately joined their efforts to oblige me to renounce it. This continued desire to control me in all my wishes, the more unjust, as I did not so much as make myself acquainted with theirs, became so cruelly oppressive, that I never received one of their letters without feeling a certain terror as I opened it, and which was but too well justified by the contents. I thought being treated like a child by persons younger than myself, and who, of themselves, stood in great need of the advice they so prodigally bestowed on me, was too much: "Love me," said I to them, "as I love you, but, in every other respect, let my affairs be as indifferent to you, as yours are to me: this is all I ask." If they granted me one of these two requests, it was not the latter.

I had a retired residence in a charming solitude, was master of my own house, and could live in it in the manner I thought proper, without being controlled by any person. This habitation imposed on me duties agreeable to discharge, but which were indispensable. My liberty was precarious. In a greater state of subjection than a person at the command of another, it was my duty to be so by inclination. When I arose in the morning, I never could say to myself, I will employ this day as I think proper. And, moreover, besides my being subject to obey the call of Madam d'Epinau, I was exposed to the still



Page 21

more disagreeable importunities of the public and chance comers. The distance I was at from Paris did not prevent crowds of idlers, not knowing how to spend their time, from daily breaking in upon me, and, without the least scruple, freely disposing of mine. When I least expected visitors I was unmercifully assailed by them, and I seldom made a plan for the agreeable employment of the day that was not counteracted by the arrival of some stranger.

In short, finding no real enjoyment in the midst of the pleasures I had been most desirous to obtain, I, by sudden mental transitions, returned in imagination to the serene days of my youth, and sometimes exclaimed with a sigh: "Ah! this is not Les Charmettes!"

The recollection of the different periods of my life led me to reflect upon that at which I was arrived, and I found I was already on the decline, a prey to painful disorders, and imagined I was approaching the end of my days without having, tasted, in all its plenitude, scarcely anyone of the pleasures after which my heart had so much thirsted, or having given scope to the lively sentiments I felt it had in reserve. I had not favored even that intoxicating voluptuousness with which my mind was richly stored, and which, for want of an object, was always compressed, and never exhaled but by sighs.

How was it possible that, with a mind naturally expansive, I, with whom to live was to love, should not hitherto have found a friend entirely devoted to me; a real friend: I who felt myself so capable of being such a friend to another? How can it be accounted for that with such warm affections, such combustible senses, and a heart wholly made up of love, I had not once, at least, felt its flame for a determinate object? Tormented by the want of loving, without ever having been able to satisfy it, I perceived myself approaching the eve of old age, and hastening on to death without having lived.

These melancholy but affecting recollections led me to others, which, although accompanied with regret, were not wholly unsatisfactory. I thought something I had not yet received was still due to me from destiny.

To what end was I born with exquisite faculties? To suffer them to remain unemployed? the sentiment of conscious merit, which made me consider myself as suffering injustice, was some kind of reparation, and caused me to shed tears which with pleasure I suffered to flow.

These were my meditations during the finest season of the year, in the month of June, in cool shades, to the songs of the nightingale, and the warbling of brooks. Everything concurred in plunging me into that too seducing state of indolence for which I was born, and from which my austere manner, proceeding from a long effervescence, should

forever have delivered me. I unfortunately remembered the dinner of the Chateau de Toune, and my meeting with the two charming girls in the same season, in places much

Page 22

resembling that in which I then was. The remembrance of these circumstances, which the innocence that accompanied them rendered to me still more dear, brought several others of the nature to my recollection. I presently saw myself surrounded by all the objects which, in my youth, had given me emotion. Mademoiselle Galley, Mademoiselle de Graffenried, Mademoiselle de Breil, Madam Basile, Madam de Larnage, my pretty scholars, and even the bewitching Zulietta, whom my heart could not forget. I found myself in the midst of a seraglio of houris of my old acquaintance, for whom the most lively inclination was not new to me. My blood became inflamed, my head turned, notwithstanding my hair was almost gray, and the grave citizen of Geneva, the austere Jean Jacques, at forty-five years of age, again became the fond shepherd. The intoxication, with which my mind was seized, although sudden and extravagant, was so strong and lasting, that, to enable me to recover from it, nothing less than the unforeseen and terrible crisis it brought on was necessary.

This intoxication, to whatever degree it was carried, went not so far as to make me forget my age and situation, to flatter me that I could still inspire love, nor to make me attempt to communicate the devouring flame by which ever since my youth I had felt my heart in vain consumed. For this I did not hope; I did not even desire it. I knew the season of love was past; I knew too well in what contempt the ridiculous pretensions of superannuated gallants were held, ever to add one to the number, and I was not a man to become an impudent coxcomb in the decline of life, after having been so little such during the flower of my age. Besides, as a friend to peace, I should have been apprehensive of domestic dissensions; and I too sincerely loved Theresa to expose her to the mortification of seeing me entertain for others more lively sentiments than those with which she inspired me for herself.

What step did I take upon this occasion? My reader will already have guessed it, if he has taken the trouble to pay the least attention to my narrative. The impossibility of attaining real beings threw me into the regions of chimera, and seeing nothing in existence worthy of my delirium, I sought food for it in the ideal world, which my imagination quickly peopled with beings after my own heart. This resource never came more apropos, nor was it ever so fertile. In my continual ecstasy I intoxicated my mind with the most delicious sentiments that ever entered the heart of man. Entirely forgetting the human species, I formed to myself societies of perfect beings, whose virtues were as celestial as their beauty, tender and faithful friends, such as I never found here below. I became so fond of soaring in the empyrean, in the midst of the charming objects with which I was surrounded, that I thus passed hours and days without perceiving it; and, losing the remembrance of all other things, I scarcely had

Page 23

eaten a morsel in haste before I was impatient to make my escape and run to regain my groves. When ready to depart for the enchanted world, I saw arrive wretched mortals who came to detain me upon earth, I could neither conceal nor moderate my vexation; and no longer master of myself, I gave them so uncivil a reception, that it might justly be termed brutal. This tended to confirm my reputation as a misanthrope, from the very cause which, could the world have read my heart, should have acquired me one of a nature directly opposite.

In the midst of my exultation I was pulled down like a paper kite, and restored to my proper place by means of a smart attack of my disorder. I recurred to the only means that had before given me relief, and thus made a truce with my angelic amours; for besides that it seldom happens that a man is amorous when he suffers, my imagination, which is animated in the country and beneath the shade of trees, languishes and becomes extinguished in a chamber, and under the joists of a ceiling. I frequently regretted that there existed no dryads; it would certainly have been amongst these that I should have fixed my attachment.

Other domestic broils came at the same time to increase my chagrin. Madam le Vasseur, while making me the finest compliments in the world, alienated from me her daughter as much as she possibly could. I received letters from my late neighborhood, informing me that the good old lady had secretly contracted several debts in the name of Theresa, to whom these became known, but of which she had never mentioned to me a word. The debts to be paid hurt me much less than the secret that had been made of them. How could she, for whom I had never had a secret, have one from me? Is it possible to dissimulate with persons whom we love? The 'Coterie Holbachique', who found I never made a journey to Paris, began seriously to be afraid I was happy and satisfied in the country, and madman enough to reside there.

Hence the cabals by which attempts were made to recall me indirectly to the city. Diderot, who did not immediately wish to show himself, began by detaching from me De Leyre, whom I had brought acquainted with him, and who received and transmitted to me the impressions Diderot chose to give without suspecting to what end they were directed.

Everything seemed to concur in withdrawing me from my charming and mad reverie. I was not recovered from the late attack I had when I received the copy of the poem on the destruction of Lisbon, which I imagined to be sent by the author. This made it necessary I should write to him and speak of his composition. I did so, and my letter was a long time afterwards printed without my consent, as I shall hereafter have occasion to remark.



Page 24

Struck by seeing this poor man overwhelmed, if I may so speak, with prosperity and honor, bitterly exclaiming against the miseries of this life, and finding everything to be wrong, I formed the mad project of making him turn his attention to himself, and of proving to him that everything was right. Voltaire, while he appeared to believe in God, never really believed in anything but the devil; since his pretended deity is a malicious being, who, according to him, had no pleasure but in evil. The glaring absurdity of this doctrine is particularly disgusting from a man enjoying the greatest prosperity; who, from the bosom of happiness, endeavors, by the frightful and cruel image of all the calamities from which he is exempt, to reduce his fellow creatures to despair. I, who had a better right than he to calculate and weigh all the evils of human life, impartially examine them, and proved to him that of all possible evils there was not one to be attributed to Providence, and which had not its source rather in the abusive use man made of his faculties than in nature. I treated him, in this letter, with the greatest respect and delicacy possible. Yet, knowing his self-love to be extremely irritable, I did not send the letter immediately to himself, but to Doctor Tronchin, his physician and friend, with full power either to give it him or destroy it. Voltaire informed me in a few lines that being ill, having likewise the care of a sick person, he postponed his answer until some future day, and said not a word on the subject. Tronchin, when he sent me the letter, inclosed in it another, in which he expressed but very little esteem for the person from whom he received it.

I have never published, nor even shown, either of these two letters, not liking to make a parade of such little triumphs; but the originals are in my collections. Since that time Voltaire has published the answer he promised me, but which I never received. This is the novel of 'Candide', of which I cannot speak because I have not read it.

All these interruptions ought to have cured me of my fantastic amours, and they were perhaps the means offered me by Heaven to prevent their destructive consequences; but my evil genius prevailed, and I had scarcely begun to go out before my heart, my head, and my feet returned to the same paths. I say the same in certain respects; for my ideas, rather less exalted, remained this time upon earth, but yet were busied in making so exquisite a choice of all that was to be found there amiable of every kind, that it was not much less chimerical than the imaginary world I had abandoned.

Page 25

I figured to myself love and friendship, the two idols of my heart, under the most ravishing images. I amused myself in adorning them with all the charms of the sex I had always adored. I imagined two female friends rather than two of my own sex, because, although the example be more rare, it is also more amiable. I endowed them with different characters, but analogous to their connection, with two faces, not perfectly beautiful, but according to my taste, and animated with benevolence and sensibility. I made one brown and the other fair, one lively and the other languishing, one wise and the other weak, but of so amiable a weakness that it seemed to add a charm to virtue. I gave to one of the two a lover, of whom the other was the tender friend, and even something more, but I did not admit either rivalry, quarrels, or jealousy: because every painful sentiment is painful for me to imagine, and I was unwilling to tarnish this delightful picture by anything which was degrading to nature. Smitten with my two charming models, I drew my own portrait in the lover and the friend, as much as it was possible to do it; but I made him young and amiable, giving him, at the same time, the virtues and the defects which I felt in myself.

That I might place my characters in a residence proper for them, I successively passed in review the most beautiful places I had seen in my travels. But I found no grove sufficiently delightful, no landscape that pleased me. The valleys of Thessaly would have satisfied me had I but once had a sight of them; but my imagination, fatigued with invention, wished for some real place which might serve it as a point to rest upon, and create in me an illusion with respect to the real existence of the inhabitants I intended to place there. I thought a good while upon the Boromean Islands, the delightful prospect of which had transported me, but I found in them too much art and ornament for my lovers. I however wanted a lake, and I concluded by making choice of that about which my heart has never ceased to wander. I fixed myself upon that part of the banks of this lake where my wishes have long since placed my residence in the imaginary happiness to which fate has confined me. The native place of my poor mamma had still for me a charm. The contrast of the situations, the richness and variety of the sites, the magnificence, the majesty of the whole, which ravishes the senses, affects the heart, and elevates the mind, determined me to give it the preference, and I placed my young pupils at Vervey. This is what I imagined at the first sketch; the rest was not added until afterwards.

I for a long time confined myself to this vague plan, because it was sufficient to fill my imagination with agreeable objects, and my heart with sentiments in which it delighted. These fictions, by frequently presenting themselves, at length gained a consistence, and took in my mind a determined form. I then had an inclination to express upon paper some of the situations fancy presented to me, and, recollecting everything I had felt during my youth, thus, in some measure, gave an object to that desire of loving, which I had never been able to satisfy, and by which I felt myself consumed.



Page 26

I first wrote a few incoherent letters, and when I afterwards wished to give them connection, I frequently found a difficulty in doing it. What is scarcely credible, although most strictly true, is my having written the first two parts almost wholly in this manner, without having any plan formed, and not foreseeing I should one day be tempted to make it a regular work. For this reason the two parts afterwards formed of materials not prepared for the place in which they are disposed, are full of unmeaning expressions not found in the others.

In the midst of my reveries I had a visit from Madam d'Houdetot, the first she had ever made me, but which unfortunately was not the last, as will hereafter appear. The Comtesse d'Houdetot was the daughter of the late M. de Bellegarde, a farmer-general, sister to M. d'Epinay, and Messieurs de Lalive and De la Briche, both of whom have since been introductors to ambassadors. I have spoken of the acquaintance I made with her before she was married: since that event I had not seen her, except at the fetes at La Chevrette, with Madam d'Epinay, her sister-in-law. Having frequently passed several days with her, both at La Chevrette and Epinay, I always thought her amiable, and that she seemed to be my well-wisher. She was fond of walking with me; we were both good walkers, and the conversation between us was inexhaustible. However, I never went to see her in Paris, although she had several times requested and solicited me to do it. Her connections with M. de St. Lambert, with whom I began to be intimate, rendered her more interesting to me, and it was to bring me some account of that friend who was, I believe, then at Mahon, that she came to see me at the Hermitage.

This visit had something of the appearance of the beginning of a romance. She lost her way. Her coachman, quitting the road, which turned to the right, attempted to cross straight over from the mill of Clairvaux to the Hermitage: her carriage stuck in a quagmire in the bottom of the valley, and she got out and walked the rest of the road. Her delicate shoes were soon worn through; she sunk into the dirt, her servants had the greatest difficulty in extricating her, and she at length arrived at the Hermitage in boots, making the place resound with her laughter, in which I most heartily joined. She had to change everything. Theresa provided her with what was necessary, and I prevailed upon her to forget her dignity and partake of a rustic collation, with which she seemed highly satisfied. It was late, and her stay was short; but the interview was so mirthful that it pleased her, and she seemed disposed to return. She did not however put this project into execution until the next year: but, alas! the delay was not favorable to me in anything.

Page 27

I passed the autumn in an employment no person would suspect me of undertaking: this was guarding the fruit of M. d'Epinay. The Hermitage was the reservoir of the waters of the park of the Chevrette; there was a garden walled round and planted with espaliers and other trees, which produced M. d'Epinay more fruit than his kitchen-garden at the Chevrette, although three-fourths of it were stolen from him. That I might not be a guest entirely useless, I took upon myself the direction of the garden and the inspection of the conduct of the gardener. Everything went on well until the fruit season, but as this became ripe, I observed that it disappeared without knowing in what manner it was disposed of. The gardener assured me it was the dormice which eat it all. I destroyed a great number of these animals, notwithstanding which the fruit still diminished. I watched the gardener's motions so narrowly, that I found he was the great dormouse. He lodged at Montmorency, whence he came in the night with his wife and children to take away the fruit he had concealed in the daytime, and which he sold in the market at Paris as publicly as if he had brought it from a garden of his own. The wretch whom I loaded with kindness, whose children were clothed by Theresa, and whose father, who was a beggar, I almost supported, robbed us with as much ease as effrontery, not one of the three being sufficiently vigilant to prevent him: and one night he emptied my cellar.

Whilst he seemed to address himself to me only, I suffered everything, but being desirous of giving an account of the fruit, I was obliged to declare by whom a great part of it had been stolen. Madam d'Epinay desired me to pay and discharge him, and look out for another; I did so. As this rascal rambled about the Hermitage in the night, armed with a thick club staff with an iron ferrule, and accompanied by other villains like himself, to relieve the governesses from their fears, I made his successor sleep in the house with us; and this not being sufficient to remove their apprehensions, I sent to ask M. d'Epinay for a musket, which I kept in the chamber of the gardener, with a charge not to make use of it except an attempt was made to break open the door or scale the walls of the garden, and to fire nothing but powder, meaning only to frighten the thieves. This was certainly the least precaution a man indisposed could take for the common safety of himself and family, having to pass the winter in the midst of a wood, with two timid women. I also procured a little dog to serve as a sentinel. De Leyre coming to see me about this time, I related to him my situation, and we laughed together at my military apparatus. At his return to Paris he wished to amuse Diderot with the story, and by this means the 'Coterie d'Holbachique' learned that I was seriously resolved to pass the winter at the Hermitage. This perseverance, of which they had not imagined me to be capable, disconcerted

Page 28

them, and, until they could think of some other means of making my residence disagreeable to me, they sent back, by means of Diderot, the same De Leyre, who, though at first he had thought my precautions quite natural, now pretended to discover that they were inconsistent with my principles, and styled them more than ridiculous in his letters, in which he overwhelmed me with pleasantries sufficiently bitter and satirical to offend me had I been the least disposed to take offence. But at that time being full of tender and affectionate sentiments, and not susceptible of any other, I perceived in his biting sarcasms nothing more than a jest, and believed him only jocose when others would have thought him mad.

By my care and vigilance I guarded the garden so well, that, although there had been but little fruit that year the produce was triple that of the preceding years; it is true, I spared no pains to preserve it, and I went so far as to escort what I sent to the Chevrette and to Epinay, and to carry baskets of it myself. The aunt and I carried one of these, which was so heavy that we were obliged to rest at every dozen steps, and which we arrived with it we were quite wet with perspiration.

As soon as the bad season began to confine me to the house, I wished to return to my indolent amusements, but this I found impossible. I had everywhere two charming female friends before my eyes, their friend, everything by which they were surrounded, the country they inhabited, and the objects created or embellished for them by my imagination. I was no longer myself for a moment, my delirium never left me. After many useless efforts to banish all fictions from my mind, they at length seduced me, and my future endeavors were confined to giving them order and coherence, for the purpose of converting them into a species of novel.

What embarrassed me most was, that I had contradicted myself so openly and fully. After the severe principles I had just so publicly asserted, after the austere maxims I had so loudly preached, and my violent invectives against books, which breathed nothing but effeminacy and love, could anything be less expected or more extraordinary, than to see me, with my own hand, write my name in the list of authors of those books I had so severely censured? I felt this incoherence in all its extent. I reproached myself with it, I blushed at it and was vexed; but all this could not bring me back to reason. Completely overcome, I was at all risks obliged to submit, and to resolve to brave the What will the world say of it? Except only deliberating afterwards whether or not I should show my work, for I did not yet suppose I should ever determine to publish it.

This resolution taken, I entirely abandoned myself to my reveries, and, by frequently resolving these in my mind, formed with them the kind of plan of which the execution has been seen. This was certainly the greatest advantage that could be drawn from my follies; the love of good which has never once been effaced from my heart, turned them towards useful objects, the moral of which might have produced its good effects. My

voluptuous descriptions would have lost all their graces, had they been devoid of the coloring of innocence.



Page 29

A weak girl is an object of pity, whom love may render interesting, and who frequently is not therefore the less amiable; but who can see without indignation the manners of the age; and what is more disgusting than the pride of an unchaste wife, who, openly treading under foot every duty, pretends that her husband ought to be grateful for her unwillingness to suffer herself to be taken in the fact? Perfect beings are not in nature, and their examples are not near enough to us. But whoever says that the description of a young person born with good dispositions, and a heart equally tender and virtuous, who suffers herself, when a girl, to be overcome by love, and when a woman, has resolution enough to conquer in her turn, is upon the whole scandalous and useless, is a liar and a hypocrite; hearken not to him.

Besides this object of morality and conjugal chastity which is radically connected with all social order, I had in view one more secret in behalf of concord and public peace, a greater, and perhaps more important object in itself, at least for the moment for which it was created. The storm brought on by the 'Encyclopedie', far from being appeased, was at the time at its height. Two parties exasperated against each other to the last degree of fury soon resembled enraged wolves, set on for their mutual destruction, rather than Christians and philosophers, who had a reciprocal wish to enlighten and convince each other, and lead their brethren to the way of truth. Perhaps nothing more was wanting to each party than a few turbulent chiefs, who possessed a little power, to make this quarrel terminate in a civil war; and God only knows what a civil war of religion founded on each side upon the most cruel intolerance would have produced. Naturally an enemy to all spirit of party, I had freely spoken severe truths to each, of which they had not listened. I thought of another expedient, which, in my simplicity, appeared to me admirable: this was to abate their reciprocal hatred by destroying their prejudices, and showing to each party the virtue and merit which in the other was worthy of public esteem and respect. This project, little remarkable for its wisdom, which supported sincerity in mankind, and whereby I fell into the error with which I reproached the Abbe de Saint Pierre, had the success that was to be expected from it: It drew together and united the parties for no other purpose than that of crushing the author. Until experience made me discover my folly, I gave my attention to it with a zeal worthy of the motive by which I was inspired; and I imagined the two characters of Wolmar and Julia in an ecstasy, which made me hope to render them both amiable, and, what is still more, by means of each other.



Page 30

Satisfied with having made a rough sketch of my plan, I returned to the situations in detail, which I had marked out; and from the arrangement I gave them resulted the first two parts of the Eloisa, which I finished during the winter with inexpressible pleasure, procuring gilt-paper to receive a fair copy of them, azure and silver powder to dry the writing, and blue narrow ribbon to tack my sheets together; in a word, I thought nothing sufficiently elegant and delicate for my two charming girls, of whom, like another Pygmalion, I became madly enamoured. Every evening, by the fireside, I read the two parts to the governesses. The daughter, without saying a word, was like myself moved to tenderness, and we mingled our sighs; her mother, finding there were no compliments, understood nothing of the matter, remained unmoved, and at the intervals when I was silent always repeated: "Sir, that is very fine."

Madam d'Epinau, uneasy at my being alone, in winter, in a solitary house, in the midst of woods, often sent to inquire after my health. I never had such real proofs of her friendship for me, to which mine never more fully answered. It would be wrong in me were not I, among these proofs, to make special mention of her portrait, which she sent me, at the same time requesting instructions from me in what manner she might have mine, painted by La Tour, and which had been shown at the exhibition. I ought equally to speak of another proof of her attention to me, which, although it be laughable, is a feature in the history of my character, on account of the impression received from it. One day when it froze to an extreme degree, in opening a packet she had sent me of several things I had desired her to purchase for me, I found a little under-petticoat of English flannel, which she told me she had worn, and desired I would make of it an under-waistcoat.

This care, more than friendly, appeared to me so tender, and as if she had stripped herself to clothe me, that in my emotion I repeatedly kissed, shedding tears at the same time, both the note and the petticoat. Theresa thought me mad. It is singular that of all the marks of friendship Madam d'Epinau ever showed me this touched me the most, and that ever since our rupture I have never recollected it without being very sensibly affected. I for a long time preserved her little note, and it would still have been in my possession had not it shared the fate of my other notes received at the same period.

Although my disorder then gave me but little respite in winter, and a part of the interval was employed in seeking relief from pain, this was still upon the whole the season which since my residence in France I had passed with most pleasure and tranquillity. During four or five months, whilst the bad weather sheltered me from the interruptions of importunate visits, I tasted to a greater degree than I had ever yet or have since done, of that equal simple and independent



Page 31

life, the enjoyment of which still made it more desirable to me; without any other company than the two governesses in reality, and the two female cousins in idea. It was then especially that I daily congratulated myself upon the resolution I had had the good sense to take, unmindful of the clamors of my friends, who were vexed at seeing me delivered from their tyranny; and when I heard of the attempt of a madman, when De Leyre and Madam d'Epinaÿ spoke to me in letters of the trouble and agitation which reigned in Paris, how thankful was I to Heaven for having placed me at a distance from all such spectacles of horror and guilt. These would have been continued and increased the bilious humor which the sight of public disorders had given me; whilst seeing nothing around me in my retirement but gay and pleasing objects, my heart was wholly abandoned to sentiments which were amiable.

I remark here with pleasure the course of the last peaceful moments that were left me. The spring succeeding to this winter, which had been so calm, developed the germ of the misfortunes I have yet to describe; in the tissue of which, alike interval, wherein I had leisure to respite, will not be found.

I think however, I recollect, that during this interval of peace, and in the bosom of my solitude, I was not quite undisturbed by the Holbachians. Diderot stirred me up some strife, and I am much deceived if it was not in the course of this winter that the 'Fils Naturel'—[Natural Son]—of which I shall soon have occasion to speak, made its appearance. Independently of the causes which left me but few papers relative to that period, those even which I have been able to preserve are not very exact with respect to dates. Diderot never dated his letters—Madam d'Epinaÿ and Madam d' Houdetot seldom dated theirs except the day of the week, and De Leyre mostly confined himself to the same rules. When I was desirous of putting these letters in order I was obliged to supply what was wanting by guessing at dates, so uncertain that I cannot depend upon them. Unable therefore to fix with certainty the beginning of these quarrels, I prefer relating in one subsequent article everything I can recollect concerning them.

The return of spring had increased my amorous delirium, and in my melancholy, occasioned by the excess of my transports, I had composed for the last parts of Eloisa several letters, wherein evident marks of the rapture in which I wrote them are found. Amongst others I may quote those from the Elysium, and the excursion upon the lake, which, if my memory does not deceive me, are at the end of the fourth part. Whoever, in reading these letters, does not feel his heart soften and melt into the tenderness by which they were dictated, ought to lay down the book: nature has refused him the means of judging of sentiment.



Page 32

Precisely at the same time I received a second unforeseen visit from Madam d'Houdetot, in the absence of her husband, who was captain of the Gendarmarie, and of her lover, who was also in the service. She had come to Eaubonne, in the middle of the Valley of Montmorency, where she had taken a pretty house, from thence she made a new excursion to the Hermitage. She came on horseback, and dressed in men's clothes. Although I am not very fond of this kind of masquerade, I was struck with the romantic appearance she made, and, for once, it was with love. As this was the first and only time in all my life, the consequence of which will forever render it terrible to my remembrance, I must take the permission to enter into some particulars on the subject.

The Countess d'Houdetot was nearly thirty years of age, and not handsome; her face was marked with the smallpox, her complexion coarse, she was short-sighted, and her eyes were rather round; but she had fine long black hair, which hung down in natural curls below her waist; her figure was agreeable, and she was at once both awkward and graceful in her motions; her wit was natural and pleasing; to this gayety, heedlessness and ingenuousness were perfectly suited: she abounded in charming sallies, after which she so little sought, that they sometimes escaped her lips in spite of herself. She possessed several agreeable talents, played the harpsichord, danced well, and wrote pleasing poetry. Her character was angelic—this was founded upon a sweetness of mind, and except prudence and fortitude, contained in it every virtue. She was besides so much to be depended upon in all intercourse, so faithful in society, even her enemies were not under the necessity of concealing from her their secrets. I mean by her enemies the men, or rather the women, by whom she was not beloved; for as to herself she had not a heart capable of hatred, and I am of opinion this conformity with mine greatly contributed towards inspiring me with a passion for her. In confidence of the most intimate friendship, I never heard her speak ill of persons who were absent, nor even of her sister-in-law. She could neither conceal her thoughts from anyone, nor disguise any of her sentiments, and I am persuaded she spoke of her lover to her husband, as she spoke of him to her friends and acquaintances, and to everybody without distinction of persons. What proved, beyond all manner of doubt, the purity and sincerity of her nature was, that subject to very extraordinary absences of mind, and the most laughable inconsiderateness, she was often guilty of some very imprudent ones with respect to herself, but never in the least offensive to any person whatsoever.



Page 33

She had been married very young and against her inclinations to the Comte d'Houdetot, a man of fashion, and a good officer; but a man who loved play and chicane, who was not very amiable, and whom she never loved. She found in M. de Saint Lambert all the merit of her husband, with more agreeable qualities of mind, joined with virtue and talents. If anything in the manners of the age can be pardoned, it is an attachment which duration renders more pure, to which its effects do honor, and which becomes cemented by reciprocal esteem. It was a little from inclination, as I am disposed to think, but much more to please Saint Lambert, that she came to see me. He had requested her to do it, and there was reason to believe the friendship which began to be established between us would render this society agreeable to all three. She knew I was acquainted with their connection, and as she could speak to me without restraint, it was natural she should find my conversation agreeable. She came; I saw her; I was intoxicated with love without an object; this intoxication fascinated my eyes; the object fixed itself upon her. I saw my Julia in Madam d'Houdetot, and I soon saw nothing but Madam d'Houdetot, but with all the perfections with which I had just adorned the idol of my heart. To complete my delirium she spoke to me of Saint Lambert with a fondness of a passionate lover. Contagious force of love! while listening to her, and finding myself near her, I was seized with a delicious trembling, which I had never before experienced when near to any person whatsoever. She spoke, and I felt myself affected; I thought I was nothing more than interested in her sentiments, when I perceived I possessed those which were similar; I drank freely of the poisoned cup, of which I yet tasted nothing more than the sweetness. Finally, imperceptibly to us both, she inspired me for herself with all she expressed for her lover. Alas! it was very late in life, and cruel was it to consume with a passion not less violent than unfortunate for a woman whose heart was already in the possession of another.

Notwithstanding the extraordinary emotions I had felt when near to her, I did not at first perceive what had happened to me; it was not until after her departure that, wishing to think of Julia, I was struck with surprise at being unable to think of anything but Madam d' Houdetot. Then was it my eyes were opened: I felt my misfortune, and lamented what had happened, but I did not foresee the consequences.

I hesitated a long time on the manner in which I should conduct myself towards her, as if real love left behind it sufficient reason to deliberate and act accordingly. I had not yet determined upon this when she unexpectedly returned and found me unprovided. It was this time, perfectly acquainted with my situation, shame, the companion of evil, rendered me dumb, and made me tremble in her presence; I neither dared to open my mouth or raise my eyes; I was in an inexpressible confusion which it was impossible she should not perceive. I resolved to confess to her my troubled state of mind, and left her to guess the cause whence it proceeded: this was telling her in terms sufficiently clear.



Page 34

Had I been young and amiable, and Madam d' Houdetot, afterwards weak, I should here blame her conduct; but this was not the case, and I am obliged to applaud and admire it. The resolution she took was equally prudent and generous. She could not suddenly break with me without giving her reasons for it to Saint Lambert, who himself had desired her to come and see me; this would have exposed two friends to a rupture, and perhaps a public one, which she wished to avoid. She had for me esteem and good wishes; she pitied my folly without encouraging it, and endeavored to restore me to reason. She was glad to preserve to her lover and herself a friend for whom she had some respect; and she spoke of nothing with more pleasure than the intimate and agreeable society we might form between us three the moment I should become reasonable. She did not always confine herself to these friendly exhortations, and, in case of need, did not spare me more severe reproaches, which I had richly deserved.

I spared myself still less: the moment I was alone I began to recover; I was more calm after my declaration—love, known to the person by whom it is inspired, becomes more supportable.

The forcible manner in which I approached myself with mine, ought to have cured me of it had the thing been possible. What powerful motives did I not call to my mind to stifle it? My morals, sentiments and principles; the shame, the treachery and crime, of abusing what was confided to friendship, and the ridiculousness of burning, at my age, with the most extravagant passion for an object whose heart was preengaged, and who could neither make me a return, nor least hope; moreover with a passion which, far from having anything to gain by constancy, daily became less sufferable.

We would imagine that the last consideration which ought to have added weight to all the others, was that whereby I eluded them! What scruple, thought I, ought I to make of a folly prejudicial to nobody but myself? Am I then a young man of whom Madam d'Houdetot ought to be afraid? Would not it be said by my presumptive remorse that, by my gallantry, manner and dress, I was going to seduce her? Poor Jean Jacques, love on at thy ease, in all safety of conscience, and be not afraid that thy sighs will be prejudicial to Saint Lambert.

It has been seen that I never was a coxcomb, not even in my youth. The manner of thinking, of which I have spoken, was according to my turn of mind, it flattered my passions; this, was sufficient to induce me to abandon myself to it without reserve, and to laugh even at the impertinent scruple I thought I had made from vanity, rather than from reason. This is a great lesson for virtuous minds, which vice never attacks openly; it finds means to surprise them by masking itself with sophisms, and not unfrequently with a virtue.



Page 35

Guilty without remorse, I soon became so without measure; and I entreat it may be observed in what manner my passion followed my nature, at length to plunge me into an abyss. In the first place, it assumed the air of humility to encourage me; and to render me intrepid it carried this humility even to mistrust. Madam d'Houdetot incessantly putting in mind of my duty, without once for a single moment flattering my folly, treated me with the greatest mildness, and remained with me upon the footing of the most tender friendship. This friendship would, I protest, have satisfied my wishes, had I thought it sincere; but finding it too strong to be real, I took it into my head that love, so ill-suited to my age and appearance, had rendered me contemptible in the eyes of Madam d'Houdetot; that this young mad creature only wished to divert herself with me and my superannuated passion; that she had communicated this to Saint Lambert; and that the indignation caused by my breach of friendship, having made her lover enter into her views, they were agreed to turn my head and then to laugh at me. This folly, which at twenty-six years of age, had made me guilty of some extravagant behavior to Madam de Larnage, whom I did not know, would have been pardonable in me at forty-five with Madam d' Houdetot had not I known that she and her lover were persons of too much uprightness to indulge themselves in such a barbarous amusement.

Madam d' Houdetot continued her visits, which I delayed not to return. She, as well as myself, was fond of walking, and we took long walks in an enchanting country. Satisfied with loving and daring to say I loved, I should have been in the most agreeable situation had not my extravagance spoiled all the charm of it. She, at first, could not comprehend the foolish pettishness with which I received her attentions; but my heart, incapable of concealing what passed in it, did not long leave her ignorant of my suspicions; she endeavored to laugh at them, but this expedient did not succeed; transports of rage would have been the consequence, and she changed her tone. Her compassionate gentleness was invincible; she made me reproaches, which penetrated my heart; she expressed an inquietude at my unjust fears, of which I took advantage. I required proofs of her being in earnest. She perceived there was no other means of relieving me from my apprehensions. I became pressing: the step was delicate. It is astonishing, and perhaps without example, that a woman having suffered herself to be brought to hesitate should have got herself off so well. She refused me nothing the most tender friendship could grant; yet she granted me nothing that rendered her unfaithful, and I had the mortification to see that the disorder into which the most trifling favors had thrown all my senses had not the least effect upon hers.



Page 36

I have somewhere said, that nothing should be granted to the senses, when we wished to refuse them anything. To prove how false this maxim was relative to Madam d' Houdetot, and how far she was right to depend upon her own strength of mind, it would be necessary to enter into the detail of our long and frequent conversations, and follow them, in all their liveliness during the four months we passed together in an intimacy almost without example between two friends of different sexes who contain themselves within the bounds which we never exceeded. Ah! if I had lived so long without feeling the power of real love, my heart and senses abundantly paid the arrears. What, therefore, are the transports we feel with the object of our affections by whom we are beloved, since the passions of which my idol did not partake inspired such as I felt?

But I am wrong in saying Madam Houdetot did not partake of the passion of love; that which I felt was in some measure confined to myself; yet love was equal on both sides, but not reciprocal. We were both intoxicated with the passion, she for her lover, and I for herself; our sighs and delicious tears were mingled together. Tender confidants of the secrets of each other, there was so great a similarity in our sentiments that it was impossible they should not find some common point of union. In the midst of this delicious intoxication, she never forgot herself for a moment, and I solemnly protest that, if ever, led away by my senses, I have attempted to render her unfaithful, I was never really desirous of succeeding. The vehemence itself of my passion restrained it within bounds. The duty of self-denial had elevated my mind. The lustre of every virtue adorned in my eyes the idol of my heart; to have soiled their divine image would have been to destroy it. I might have committed the crime; it has been a hundred times committed in my heart; but to dishonor my Sophia! Ah! was this ever possible? No! I have told her a hundred times it was not. Had I had it in my power to satisfy my desires, had she consented to commit herself to my discretion, I should, except in a few moments of delirium, have refused to be happy at the price of her honor. I loved her too well to wish to possess her.

The distance from the Hermitage to Raubonne is almost a league; in my frequent excursions to it I have sometimes slept there. One evening after having supped tete-a-tete we went to walk in the garden by a fine moonlight. At the bottom of the garden a considerable copse, through which we passed on our way to a pretty grove ornamented with a cascade, of which I had given her the idea, and she had procured it to be executed accordingly.



Page 37

Eternal remembrance of innocence and enjoyment! It was in this grove that, seated by her side upon a seat of turf under an acacia in full bloom, I found for the emotions of my heart a language worthy of them. It was the first and only time of my life; but I was sublime: if everything amiable and seducing with which the most tender and ardent love can inspire the heart of man can be so called. What intoxicating tears did I shed upon her knees! how many did I make her to shed involuntarily! At length in an involuntary transport she exclaimed: "No, never was a man so amiable, nor ever was there one who loved like you! But your friend Saint Lambert hears us, and my heart is incapable of loving twice." I exhausted myself with sighs; I embraced her—what an embrace! But this was all. She had lived alone for the last six months, that is absent from her husband and lover; I had seen her almost every day during three months, and love seldom failed to make a third. We had supped tete-a-tete, we were alone, in the grove by moonlight, and after two hours of the most lively and tender conversation, she left this grove at midnight, and the arms of her lover, as morally and physically pure as she had entered it. Reader, weigh all these circumstances; I will add nothing more.

Do not, however, imagine that in this situation my passions left me as undisturbed as I was with Theresa and mamma. I have already observed I was this time inspired not only with love, but with love and all its energy and fury. I will not describe either the agitations, tremblings, palpitations, convulsionary emotions, nor faintings of the heart, I continually experienced; these may be judged of by the effect her image alone made upon me. I have observed the distance from the Hermitage to Eaubonne was considerable; I went by the hills of Andilly, which are delightful; I mused, as I walked, on her whom I was going to see, the charming reception she would give me, and upon the kiss which awaited me at my arrival. This single kiss, this pernicious embrace, even before I received it, inflamed my blood to such a degree as to affect my head, my eyes were dazzled, my knees trembled, and were unable to support me; I was obliged to stop and sit down; my whole frame was in inconceivable disorder, and I was upon the point of fainting. Knowing the danger, I endeavored at setting out to divert my attention from the object, and think of something else. I had not proceeded twenty steps before the same recollection, and all that was the consequence of it, assailed me in such a manner that it was impossible to avoid them, and in spite of all my efforts I do not believe I ever made this little excursion alone with impunity. I arrived at Eaubonne, weak, exhausted, and scarcely able to support myself. The moment I saw her everything was repaired; all I felt in her presence was the importunity of an inexhaustible and useless ardor. Upon the road to Raubonne there was a pleasant terrace called



Page 38

Mont Olympe, at which we sometimes met. I arrived first, it was proper I should wait for her; but how dear this waiting cost me! To divert my attention, I endeavored to write with my pencil billets, which I could have written with the purest drops of my blood; I never could finish one which was eligible. When she found a note in the niche upon which we had agreed, all she learned from the contents was the deplorable state in which I was when I wrote it. This state and its continuation, during three months of irritation and self-denial, so exhausted me, that I was several years before I recovered from it, and at the end of these it left me an ailment which I shall carry with me, or which will carry me to the grave. Such was the sole enjoyment of a man of the most combustible constitution, but who was, at the same time, perhaps, one of the most timid mortals nature ever produced. Such were the last happy days I can reckon upon earth; at the end of these began the long train of evils, in which there will be found but little interruption.

It has been seen that, during the whole course of my life, my heart, as transparent as crystal, has never been capable of concealing for the space of a moment any sentiment in the least lively which had taken refuge in it. It will therefore be judged whether or not it was possible for me long to conceal my affection for Madam d'Houdetot. Our intimacy struck the eyes of everybody, we did not make of it either a secret or a mystery. It was not of a nature to require any such precaution, and as Madam d'Houdetot had for me the most tender friendship with which she did not reproach herself, and I for her an esteem with the justice of which nobody was better acquainted than myself; she frank, absent, heedless; I true, awkward, haughty, impatient and choleric; We exposed ourselves more in deceitful security than we should have done had we been culpable. We both went to the Chevrette; we sometimes met there by appointment. We lived there according to our accustomed manner; walking together every day talking of our amours, our duties, our friend, and our innocent projects; all this in the park opposite the apartment of Madam d'Epinay, under her windows, whence incessantly examining us, and thinking herself braved, she by her eyes filled her heart with rage and indignation.

Women have the art of concealing their anger, especially when it is great. Madam d'Epinay, violent but deliberate, possessed this art to an eminent degree. She feigned not to see or suspect anything, and at the same time that she doubled towards me her cares, attention, and allurements, she affected to load her sister-in-law with incivilities and marks of disdain, which she seemingly wished to communicate to me. It will easily be imagined she did not succeed; but I was on the rack. Torn by opposite passions, at the same time that I was sensible of her caresses, I could scarcely contain my anger when I saw her wanting in good manners to Madam d'Houdetot. The angelic sweetness of this lady made her endure everything without complaint, or even without being offended.



Page 39

She was, in fact, so absent, and always so little attentive to these things, that half the time she did not perceive them.

I was so taken up with my passion, that, seeing nothing but Sophia (one of the names of Madam d'Houdetot), I did not perceive that I was become the laughing-stock of the whole house, and all those who came to it. The Baron d'Holbach, who never, as I heard of, had been at the Chevrette, was one of the latter. Had I at that time been as mistrustful as I am since become, I should strongly have suspected Madam d'Epinay to have contrived this journey to give the baron the amusing spectacle of an amorous citizen. But I was then so stupid that I saw not that even which was glaring to everybody. My stupidity did not, however, prevent me from finding in the baron a more jovial and satisfied appearance than ordinary. Instead of looking upon me with his usual moroseness, he said to me a hundred jocose things without my knowing what he meant. Surprise was painted in my countenance, but I answered not a word: Madam d'Epinay shook her sides with laughing; I knew not what possessed them. As nothing yet passed the bounds of pleasantry, the best thing I could had done, had I been in the secret, would have been to have humored the joke. It is true I perceived amid the rallying gayety of the baron, that his eyes sparkled with a malicious joy, which could have given me pain had I then remarked it to the degree it has since occurred to my recollection.

One day when I went to see Madam d'Houdetot, at Eaubonne, after her return from one of her journeys to Paris, I found her melancholy, and observed that she had been weeping. I was obliged to put a restraint on myself, because Madam de Blainville, sister to her husband, was present; but the moment I found an opportunity, I expressed to her my uneasiness. "Ah," said she, with a sigh, "I am much afraid your follies will cost me the repose of the rest of my days. St. Lambert has been informed of what has passed, and ill informed of it. He does me justice, but he is vexed; and what is still worse, he conceals from me a part of his vexation. Fortunately I have not concealed from him anything relative to our connection which was formed under his auspices. My letters, like my heart, were full of yourself; I made him acquainted with everything, except your extravagant passion, of which I hoped to cure you; and which he imputes to me as a crime. Somebody has done us ill offices. I have been injured, but what does this signify? Either let us entirely break with each other, or do you be what you ought to be. I will not in future have anything to conceal from my lover."



Page 40

This was the first moment in which I was sensible of the shame of feeling myself humbled by the sentiment of my fault, in presence of a young woman of whose just reproaches I approved, and to whom I ought to have been a mentor. The indignation I felt against myself would, perhaps, have been sufficient to overcome my weakness, had not the tender passion inspired me by the victim of it, again softened my heart. Alas! was this a moment to harden it when it was overflowed by the tears which penetrated it in every part? This tenderness was soon changed into rage against the vile informers, who had seen nothing but the evil of a criminal but involuntary sentiment, without believing or even imagining the sincere uprightness of heart by which it was counteracted. We did not remain long in doubt about the hand by which the blow was directed.

We both knew that Madam d'Epinay corresponded with St. Lambert. This was not the first storm she had raised up against Madam d'Houdetot, from whom she had made a thousand efforts to detach her lover, the success of some of which made the consequences to be dreaded. Besides, Grimm, who, I think, had accompanied M. de Castries to the army, was in Westphalia, as well as Saint Lambert; they sometimes visited. Grimm had made some attempts on Madam d'Houdetot, which had not succeeded, and being extremely piqued, suddenly discontinued his visits to her. Let it be judged with what calmness, modest as he is known to be, he supposed she preferred to him a man older than himself, and of whom, since he had frequented the great, he had never spoken but as a person whom he patronized.

My suspicions of Madam d'Epinay were changed into a certainty the moment I heard what had passed in my own house. When I was at the Chevette, Theresa frequently came there, either to bring me letters or to pay me that attention which my ill state of health rendered necessary. Madam d'Epinay had asked her if Madam d'Houdetot and I did not write to each other. Upon her answering in the affirmative, Madam d'Epinay pressed her to give her the letters of Madam d'Houdetot, assuring her that she would reseal them in such a manner as it should never be known. Theresa, without showing how much she was shocked at the proposition, and without even putting me upon my guard, did nothing more than seal the letters she brought me more carefully; a lucky precaution, for Madam d'Epinay had her watched when she arrived, and, waiting for her in the passage, several times carried her audaciousness as far as to examine her tucker. She did more even than this: having one day invited herself with M. de Margency to dinner at the Hermitage, for the first time since I resided there, she seized the moment I was walking with Margency to go into my closet with the mother and daughter, and to press them to show her the letters of Madam d'Houdetot. Had the mother known where the letters were, they would have been given to her; fortunately, the daughter was



Page 41

the only person who was in the secret, and denied my having preserved any one of them. A virtuous, faithful and generous falsehood; whilst truth would have been a perfidy. Madam d' Epinay, perceiving Theresa was not to be seduced, endeavored to irritate her by jealousy, reproaching her with her easy temper and blindness. "How is it possible," said she to her, "you cannot perceive there is a criminal intercourse between them? If besides what strikes your eyes you stand in need of other proofs, lend your assistance to obtain that which may furnish them; you say he tears the letters from Madam d'Houdetot as soon as he has read them. Well, carefully gather up the pieces and give them to me; I will take upon myself to put them together."

Such were the lessons my friend gave to the partner of my bed.

Theresa had the discretion to conceal from me, for a considerable time, all these attempts; but perceiving how much I was perplexed, she thought herself obliged to inform me of everything, to the end that knowing with whom I had to do, I might take my measures accordingly. My rage and indignation are not to be described. Instead of dissembling with Madam d'Epainay, according to her own example, and making use of counterplots, I abandoned myself without reserve to the natural impetuosity of my temper; and with my accustomed inconsiderateness came to an open rupture. My imprudence will be judged of by the following letters, which sufficiently show the manner of proceeding of both parties on this occasion:

Note from madam D'EPINAY. "Why, my dear friend, do I not see you? You make me uneasy. You have so often promised me to do nothing but go and come between this place and the Hermitage! In this I have left you at liberty; and you have suffered a week to pass without coming. Had not I been told you were well I should have imagined the contrary. I expected you either the day before yesterday, or yesterday, but found myself disappointed. My God, what is the matter with you? You have no business, nor can you have any uneasiness; for had this been the case, I flatter myself you would have come and communicated it to me. You are, therefore, ill! Relieve me, I beseech you, speedily from my fears. Adieu, my dear friend: let this adieu produce me a good-morning from you."

Answer. "I cannot yet say anything to you. I wait to be better informed, and this I shall be sooner or later. In the meantime be persuaded that innocence will find a defender sufficiently powerful to cause some repentance in the slanderers, be they who they may."



Page 42

Second note from the same. “Do you know that your letter frightens me? What does it mean? I have read it twenty times. In truth I do not understand what it means. All I can perceive is, that you are uneasy and tormented, and that you wait until you are no longer so before you speak to me upon the subject. Is this, my dear friend, what we agreed upon? What then is become of that friendship and confidence, and by what means have I lost them? Is it with me or for me that you are angry? However this may be, come to me this evening I conjure you; remember you promised me no longer than a week ago to let nothing remain upon your mind, but immediately to communicate to me whatever might make it uneasy. My dear friend, I live in that confidence—There—I have just read your letter again; I do not understand the contents better, but they make me tremble. You seem to be cruelly agitated. I could wish to calm your mind, but as I am ignorant of the cause whence your uneasiness arises, I know not what to say, except that I am as wretched as yourself, and shall remain so until we meet. If you are not here this evening at six o’clock, I set off to morrow for the Hermitage, let the weather be how it will, and in whatever state of health I may be; for I can no longer support the inquietude I now feel. Good day, my dear friend, at all risks I take the liberty to tell you, without knowing whether or not you are in need of such advice, to endeavor to stop the progress uneasiness makes in solitude. A fly becomes a monster. I have frequently experienced it.”

Answer. “I can neither come to see you nor receive your visit so long as my present inquietude continues. The confidence of which you speak no longer exists, and it will be easy for you to recover it. I see nothing more in your present anxiety than the desire of drawing from the confessions of others some advantage agreeable to your views; and my heart, so ready to pour its overflowings into another which opens itself to receive them, is shut against trick and cunning. I distinguish your ordinary address in the difficulty you find in understanding my note. Do you think me dupe enough to believe you have not comprehended what it meant? No: but I shall know how to overcome your subtleties by my frankness. I will explain myself more clearly, that you may understand me still less.

“Two lovers closely united and worthy of each other’s love are dear to me; I expect you will not know who I mean unless I name them. I presume attempts have been made to disunite them, and that I have been made use of to inspire one of the two with jealousy. The choice was not judicious, but it appeared convenient to the purposes of malice, and of this malice it is you whom I suspect to be guilty. I hope this becomes more clear.



Page 43

“Thus the woman whom I most esteem would, with my knowledge, have been loaded with the infamy of dividing her heart and person between two lovers, and I with that of being one of these wretches. If I knew that, for a single moment in your life, you ever had thought this, either of her or myself, I should hate you until my last hour. But it is with having said, and not with having thought it, that I charge you. In this case, I cannot comprehend which of the three you wished to injure; but, if you love peace of mind, tremble lest you should have succeeded. I have not concealed either from you or her all the ill I think of certain connections, but I wish these to end by a means as virtuous as their cause, and that an illegitimate love may be changed into an eternal friendship. Should I, who never do ill to any person, be the innocent means of doing it to my friends? No, I should never forgive you; I should become your irreconcilable enemy. Your secrets are all I should respect; for I will never be a man without honor.

“I do not apprehend my present perplexity will continue a long time. I shall soon know whether or not I am deceived; I shall then perhaps have great injuries to repair, which I will do with as much cheerfulness as that with which the most agreeable act of my life has been accompanied. But do you know in what manner I will make amends for my faults during the short space of time I have to remain near to you? By doing what nobody but myself would do; by telling you freely what the world thinks of you, and the breaches you have to repair in your reputation. Notwithstanding all the pretended friends by whom you are surrounded, the moment you see me depart you may bid adieu to truth, you will no longer find any person who will tell it to you.”

THIRD LETTER FROM THE SAME.

“I did not understand your letter of this morning; this I told you because it was the case. I understand that of this evening; do not imagine I shall ever return an answer to it; I am too anxious to forget what it contains; and although you excite my pity, I am not proof against the bitterness with which it has filled my mind. !! descend to trick and cunning with you! !! accused of the blackest of all infamies! Adieu, I regret your having the adieu. I know not what I say adieu: I shall be very anxious to forgive you. You will come when you please; you will be better received than your suspicions deserve. All I have to desire of you is not to trouble yourself about my reputation. The opinion of the world concerning me is of but little importance in my esteem. My conduct is good, and this is sufficient for me. Besides, I am ignorant of what has happened to the two persons who are dear to me as they are to you.”



Page 44

This last letter extricated me from a terrible embarrassment, and threw me into another of almost the same magnitude. Although these letters and answers were sent and returned the same day with an extreme rapidity, the interval had been sufficient to place another between my rage and transport, and to give me time to reflect on the enormity of my imprudence. Madam d'Houdetot had not recommended to me anything so much as to remain quiet, to leave her the care of extricating herself, and to avoid, especially at that moment, all noise and rupture; and I, by the most open and atrocious insults, took the properest means of carrying rage to its greatest height in the heart of a woman who was already but too well disposed to it. I now could naturally expect nothing from her but an answer so haughty, disdainful, and expressive of contempt, that I could not, without the utmost meanness, do otherwise than immediately quit her house. Happily she, more adroit than I was furious, avoided, by the manner of her answer, reducing me to that extremity. But it was necessary either to quit or immediately go and see her; the alternative was inevitable; I resolved on the latter, though I foresaw how much I must be embarrassed in the explanation. For how was I to get through it without exposing either Madam d'Houdetot or Theresa? and woe to her whom I should have named! There was nothing that the vengeance of an implacable and an intriguing woman did not make me fear for the person who should be the object of it. It was to prevent this misfortune that in my letter I had spoken of nothing but suspicions, that I might not be under the necessity of producing my proofs. This, it is true, rendered my transports less excusable; no simple suspicions being sufficient to authorize me to treat a woman, and especially a friend, in the manner I had treated Madam d'Epinay. But here begins the noble task I worthily fulfilled of expiating my faults and secret weaknesses by charging myself with such of the former as I was incapable of committing, and which I never did commit.

I had not to bear the attack I had expected, and fear was the greatest evil I received from it. At my approach, Madam d' Epinay threw her arms about my neck, bursting into tears. This unexpected reception, and by an old friend, extremely affected me; I also shed many tears. I said to her a few words which had not much meaning; she uttered others with still less, and everything ended here. Supper was served; we sat down to table, where, in expectation of the explanation I imagined to be deferred until supper was over, I made a very poor figure; for I am so overpowered by the most trifling inquietude of mind that I cannot conceal it from persons the least clear-sighted. My embarrassed appearance must have given her courage, yet she did not risk anything upon that foundation. There was no more explanation after than before supper: none took place on the next day, and our little tete-a-tete



Page 45

conversations consisted of indifferent things, or some complimentary words on my part, by which, while I informed her I could not say more relative to my suspicions, I asserted, with the greatest truth, that, if they were ill-founded, my whole life should be employed in repairing the injustice. She did not show the least curiosity to know precisely what they were, nor for what reason I had formed them, and all our peacemaking consisted, on her part as well as on mine, in the embrace at our first meeting. Since Madam d'Epinay was the only person offended, at least in form, I thought it was not for me to strive to bring about an *eclaircissement* for which she herself did not seem anxious, and I returned as I had come; continuing, besides, to live with her upon the same footing as before, I soon almost entirely forgot the quarrel, and foolishly believed she had done the same, because she seemed not to remember what had passed.

This, it will soon appear, was not the only vexation caused me by weakness; but I had others not less disagreeable which I had not brought upon myself. The only cause of these was a desire of forcing me from my solitude,

[That is to take from it the old woman who was wanted in the conspiracy. It is astonishing that, during this long quarrel, my stupid confidence presented me from comprehending that it was not me but her whom they wanted in Paris.]

by means of tormenting me. These originated from Diderot and the d'Holbachiens. Since I had resided at the Hermitage, Diderot incessantly harrassed me, either himself or by means of De Leyre, and I soon perceived from the pleasantries of the latter upon my ramblings in the groves, with what pleasure he had travestied the hermit into the gallant shepherd. But this was not the question in my quarrels with Diderot; the cause of these were more serious. After the publication of *Fils Naturel* he had sent me a copy of it, which I had read with the interest and attention I ever bestowed on the works of a friend. In reading the kind of poem annexed to it, I was surprised and rather grieved to find in it, amongst several things, disobliging but supportable against men in solitude, this bitter and severe sentence without the least softening: 'Il n'y a que le mechant qui fail feul.'—[The wicked only is alone.]—This sentence is equivocal, and seems to present a double meaning; the one true, the other false, since it is impossible that a man who is determined to remain alone can do the least harm to anybody, and consequently he cannot be wicked. The sentence in itself therefore required an interpretation; the more so from an author who, when he sent it to the press, had a friend retired from the world. It appeared to me shocking and uncivil, either to have forgotten that solitary friend, or, in remembering him, not to have made from the general maxim the honorable and just exception which he owed, not only to his friend, but to so many respectable sages, who, in all ages, have sought for peace and tranquillity in retirement, and of whom, for the first time since the creation of the world, a writer took it into his head indiscriminately to make so many villains.



Page 46

I had a great affection and the most sincere esteem for Diderot, and fully depended upon his having the same sentiments for me. But tired with his indefatigable obstinacy in continually opposing my inclinations, taste, and manner of living, and everything which related to no person but myself; shocked at seeing a man younger than I was wish, at all events, to govern me like a child; disgusted with his facility in promising, and his negligence in performing; weary of so many appointments given by himself, and capriciously broken, while new ones were again given only to be again broken; displeased at uselessly waiting for him three or four times a month on the days he had assigned, and in dining alone at night after having gone to Saint Denis to meet him, and waited the whole day for his coming; my heart was already full of these multiplied injuries. This last appeared to me still more serious, and gave me infinite pain. I wrote to complain of it, but in so mild and tender a manner that I moistened my paper with my tears, and my letter was sufficiently affecting to have drawn others from himself. It would be impossible to guess his answer on this subject: it was literally as follows: "I am glad my work has pleased and affected you. You are not of my opinion relative to hermits. Say as much good of them as you please, you will be the only one in the world of whom I shall think well: even on this there would be much to say were it possible to speak to you without giving you offence. A woman eighty years of age! *etc.* A phrase of a letter from the son of Madam d'Epinau which, if I know you well, must have given you much pain, has been mentioned to me."

The last two expressions of this letter want explanation.

Soon after I went to reside at the Hermitage, Madam le Vasseur seemed dissatisfied with her situation, and to think the habitation too retired. Having heard she had expressed her dislike to the place, I offered to send her back to Paris, if that were more agreeable to her; to pay her lodging, and to have the same care taken of her as if she remained with me. She rejected my offer, assured me she was very well satisfied with the Hermitage, and that the country air was of service to her. This was evident, for, if I may so speak, she seemed to become young again, and enjoyed better health than at Paris. Her daughter told me her mother would, on the whole, had been very sorry to quit the Hermitage, which was really a very delightful abode, being fond of the little amusements of the garden and the care of the fruit of which she had the handling, but that she had said, what she had been desired to say, to induce me to return to Paris.



Page 47

Failing in this attempt they endeavored to obtain by a scruple the effect which complaisance had not produced, and construed into a crime my keeping the old woman at a distance from the succors of which, at her age, she might be in need. They did not recollect that she, and many other old people, whose lives were prolonged by the air of the country, might obtain these succors at Montmorency, near to which I lived; as if there were no old people, except in Paris, and that it was impossible for them to live in any other place. Madam le Vasseur who eat a great deal, and with extreme voracity, was subject to overflowings of bile and to strong diarrhoeas, which lasted several days, and served her instead of clysters. At Paris she neither did nor took anything for them, but left nature to itself. She observed the same rule at the Hermitage, knowing it was the best thing she could do. No matter, since there were not in the country either physicians or apothecaries, keeping her there must, no doubt, be with the desire of putting an end to her existence, although she was in perfect health. Diderot should have determined at what age, under pain of being punished for homicide, it is no longer permitted to let old people remain out of Paris.

This was one of the atrocious accusations from which he did not except me in his remark; that none but the wicked were alone: and the meaning of his pathetic exclamation with the *et cetera*, which he had benignantly added: A woman of eighty years of age, *etc.*

I thought the best answer that could be given to this reproach would be from Madam le Vasseur herself. I desired her to write freely and naturally her sentiments to Madam d'Epinay. To relieve her from all constraint I would not see her letter. I showed her that which I am going to transcribe. I wrote it to Madam d'Epinay upon the subject of an answer I wish to return to a letter still more severe from Diderot, and which she had prevented me from sending.

Thursday.

"My good friend. Madam le Vasseur is to write to you: I have desired her to tell you sincerely what she thinks. To remove from her all constraint, I have intimated to her that I will not see what she writes, and I beg of you not to communicate to me any part of the contents of her letter.

"I will not send my letter because you do not choose I should; but, feeling myself grievously offended, it would be baseness and falsehood, of either of which it is impossible for me to be guilty, to acknowledge myself in the wrong. Holy writ commands him to whom a blow is given, to turn the other cheek, but not to ask pardon. Do you remember the man in comedy who exclaims, while he is giving another blows with his staff, 'This is the part of a philosopher!'



“Do not flatter yourself that he will be prevented from coming by the bad weather we now have. His rage will give him the time and strength which friendship refuses him, and it will be the first time in his life he ever came upon the day he had appointed.



Page 48

“He will neglect nothing to come and repeat to me verbally the injuries with which he loads me in his letters; I will endure them all with patience—he will return to Paris to be ill again; and, according to custom, I shall be a very hateful man. What is to be done? Endure it all.

“But do not you admire the wisdom of the man who would absolutely come to Saint Denis in a hackney-coach to dine there, bring me home in a hackney-coach, and whose finances, eight days afterwards, obliges him to come to the Hermitage on foot? It is not possible, to speak his own language, that this should be the style of sincerity. But were this the case, strange changes of fortune must have happened in the course of a week.

“I join in your affliction for the illness of madam, your mother, but you will perceive your grief is not equal to mine. We suffer less by seeing the persons we love ill than when they are unjust and cruel.

“Adieu, my good friend, I shall never again mention to you this unhappy affair. You speak of going to Paris with an unconcern, which, at any other time, would give me pleasure.”

I wrote to Diderot, telling him what I had done, relative to Madam le Vasseur, upon the proposal of Madam d’Epinay herself; and Madam le Vasseur having, as it may be imagined, chosen to remain at the Hermitage, where she enjoyed a good state of health, always had company, and lived very agreeably, Diderot, not knowing what else to attribute to me as a crime, construed my precaution into one, and discovered another in Madam le Vasseur continuing to reside at the Hermitage, although this was by her own choice; and though her going to Paris had depended, and still depended upon herself, where she would continue to receive the same succors from me as I gave her in my house.

This is the explanation of the first reproach in the letter of Diderot. That of the second is in the letter which follows: “The learned man (a name given in a joke by Grimm to the son of Madam d’Epinay) must have informed you there were upon the rampart twenty poor persons who were dying with cold and hunger, and waiting for the farthing you customarily gave them. This is a specimen of our little babbling.....And if you understand the rest it will amuse you perhaps.”

My answer to this terrible argument, of which Diderot seemed so proud, was in the following words:

“I think I answered the learned man; that is, the farmer-general, that I did not pity the poor whom he had seen upon the rampart, waiting for my farthing; that he had probably amply made it up to them; that I appointed him my substitute, that the poor of Paris would have no reason to complain of the change; and that I should not easily find so good a one for the poor of Montmorency, who were in much greater need of

assistance. Here is a good and respectable old man, who, after having worked hard all his lifetime, no longer being able to continue his labors, is in



Page 49

his old days dying with hunger. My conscience is more satisfied with the two sous I give him every Monday, than with the hundred farthings I should have distributed amongst all the beggars on the rampart. You are pleasant men, you philosophers, while you consider the inhabitants of the cities as the only persons whom you ought to befriend. It is in the country men learn how to love and serve humanity; all they learn in cities is to despise it.”

Such were the singular scruples on which a man of sense had the folly to attribute to me as a crime my retiring from Paris, and pretended to prove to me by my own example, that it was not possible to live out of the capital without becoming a bad man. I cannot at present conceive how I could be guilty of the folly of answering him, and of suffering myself to be angry instead of laughing in his face. However, the decisions of Madam d’Epinay and the clamors of the ‘Cote in Holbachique’ had so far operated in her favor, that I was generally thought to be in the wrong; and the D’Houdetot herself, very partial to Diderot, insisted upon my going to see him at Paris, and making all the advances towards an accommodation which, full and sincere as it was on my part, was not of long duration. The victorious argument by which she subdued my heart was, that at that moment Diderot was in distress. Besides the storm excited against the ‘Encyclopedie’, he had then another violent one to make head against, relative to his piece, which, notwithstanding the short history he had printed at the head of it, he was accused of having entirely taken from Goldoni. Diderot, more wounded by criticisms than Voltaire, was overwhelmed by them. Madam de Grasigny had been malicious enough to spread a report that I had broken with him on this account. I thought it would be just and generous publicly to prove the contrary, and I went to pass two days, not only with him, but at his lodgings. This, since I had taken up my abode at the Hermitage, was my second journey to Paris. I had made the first to run to poor Gauffecourt, who had had a stroke of apoplexy, from which he has never perfectly recovered: I did not quit the side of his pillow until he was so far restored as to have no further need of my assistance.

Diderot received me well. How many wrongs are effaced by the embraces of a friend! after these, what resentment can remain in the heart? We came to but little explanation. This is needless for reciprocal invectives. The only thing necessary is to know how to forget them. There had been no underhand proceedings, none at least that had come to my knowledge: the case was not the same with Madam d’Epinay. He showed me the plan of the ‘Pere de Famille’. “This,” said I to him, “is the best defence to the ‘Fils Naturel’. Be silent, give your attention to this piece, and then throw it at the head of your enemies as the only answer you think proper to make them.” He did so, and was satisfied with what he had done.



Page 50

I had six months before sent him the first two parts of my 'Eloisa' to have his opinion upon them. He had not yet read the work over. We read a part of it together. He found this 'feuilleton', that was his term, by which he meant loaded with words and redundancies. I myself had already perceived it; but it was the babbling of the fever: I have never been able to correct it. The last parts are not the same. The fourth especially, and the sixth, are master-pieces of diction.

The day after my arrival, he would absolutely take me to sup with M. d'Holbach. We were far from agreeing on this point; for I wished even to get rid of the bargain for the manuscript on chemistry, for which I was enraged to be obliged to that man. Diderot carried all before him. He swore D'Holbach loved me with all his heart, said I must forgive him his manner, which was the same to everybody, and more disagreeable to his friends than to others. He observed to me that, refusing the produce of this manuscript, after having accepted it two years before, was an affront to the donor which he had not deserved, and that my refusal might be interpreted into a secret reproach, for having waited so long to conclude the bargain. "I see," added he, "D'Holbach every day, and know better than you do the nature of his disposition. Had you reason to be dissatisfied with him, do you think your friend capable of advising you to do a mean thing?" In short, with my accustomed weakness, I suffered myself to be prevailed upon, and we went to sup with the baron, who received me as he usually had done. But his wife received me coldly and almost uncivilly. I saw nothing in her which resembled the amiable Caroline, who, when a maid, expressed for me so many good wishes. I thought I had already perceived that since Grimm had frequented the house of D'Aine, I had not met there so friendly a reception.

Whilst I was at Paris, Saint Lambert arrived there from the army. As I was not acquainted with his arrival, I did not see him until after my return to the country, first at the Chevrette, and afterwards at the Hermitage; to which he came with Madam d'Houdetot, and invited himself to dinner with me. It may be judged whether or not I received him with pleasure! But I felt one still greater at seeing the good understanding between my guests. Satisfied with not having disturbed their happiness, I myself was happy in being a witness to it, and I can safely assert that, during the whole of my mad passion, and especially at the moment of which I speak, had it been in my power to take from him Madam d'Houdetot I would not have done it, nor should I have so much as been tempted to undertake it. I found her so amiable in her passion for Saint Lambert, that I could scarcely imagine she would have been as much so had she loved me instead of him; and without wishing to disturb their union, all I really desired of her was to permit herself to be loved. Finally, however violent my passion may have been for this lady, I found it as agreeable to be the confidant, as the object of her amours, and I never for a moment considered her lover as a rival, but always as my friend. It will be said this was not love: be it so, but it was something more.



Page 51

As for Saint Lambert, he behaved like an honest and judicious man: as I was the only person culpable, so was I the only one who was punished; this, however, was with the greatest indulgence. He treated me severely, but in a friendly manner, and I perceived I had lost something in his esteem, but not the least part of his friendship. For this I consoled myself, knowing it would be much more easy to me to recover the one than the other, and that he had too much sense to confound an involuntary weakness and a passion with a vice of character. If even I were in fault in all that had passed, I was but very little so. Had I first sought after his mistress? Had not he himself sent her to me? Did not she come in search of me? Could I avoid receiving her? What could I do? They themselves had done the evil, and I was the person on whom it fell. In my situation they would have done as much as I did, and perhaps more; for, however estimable and faithful Madam d'Houdetot might be, she was still a woman; her lover was absent; opportunities were frequent; temptations strong; and it would have been very difficult for her always to have defended herself with the same success against a more enterprising man. We certainly had done a great deal in our situation, in placing boundaries beyond which we never permitted ourselves to pass.

Although at the bottom of my heart I found evidence sufficiently honorable in my favor, so many appearances were against me, that the invincible shame always predominant in me, gave me in his presence the appearance of guilt, and of this he took advantage for the purpose of humbling me: a single circumstance will describe this reciprocal situation. I read to him, after dinner, the letter I had written the preceding year to Voltaire, and of which Saint Lambert had heard speak. Whilst I was reading he fell asleep, and I, lately so haughty, at present so foolish, dared not stop, and continued to read whilst he continued to snore. Such were my indignities and such his revenge; but his generosity never permitted him to exercise them; except between ourselves.

After his return to the army, I found Madam d'Houdetot greatly changed in her manner with me. At this I was as much surprised as if it had not been what I ought to have expected; it affected me more than it ought to have done, and did me considerable harm. It seemed that everything from which I expected a cure, still plunged deeper into my heart the dart, which I at length broke in rather than draw out.

I was quite determined to conquer myself, and leave no means untried to change my foolish passion into a pure and lasting friendship. For this purpose I had formed the finest projects in the world; for the execution of which the concurrence of Madam d'Houdetot was necessary. When I wished to speak to her I found her absent and embarrassed; I perceived I was no longer agreeable to her, and that something had passed which she would not communicate to me, and which I have never yet known. This change, and the impossibility of knowing the reason of it, grieved me to the heart.



Page 52

She asked me for her letters; these I returned her with a fidelity of which she did me the insult to doubt for a moment.

This doubt was another wound given to my heart, with which she must have been so well acquainted. She did me justice, but not immediately: I understood that an examination of the packet I had sent her, made her perceive her error; I saw she reproached herself with it, by which I was a gainer of something. She could not take back her letters without returning me mine. She told me she had burnt them: of this I dared to doubt in my turn, and I confess I doubt of it at this moment. No, such letters as mine to her were, are never thrown into the fire. Those of Eloisa have been found ardent.

Heavens! what would have been said of these! No, No, she who can inspire a like passion, will never have the courage to burn the proofs of it. But I am not afraid of her having made a bad use of them: of this I do not think her capable; and besides I had taken proper measures to prevent it. The foolish, but strong apprehension of raillery, had made me begin this correspondence in a manner to secure my letters from all communication. I carried the familiarity I permitted myself with her in my intoxication so far as to speak to her in the singular number: but what theeing and thouing! she certainly could not be offended with it. Yet she several times complained, but this was always useless: her complaints had no other effect than that of awakening my fears, and I besides could not suffer myself to lose ground. If these letters be not yet destroyed, and should they ever be made public, the world will see in what manner I have loved.

The grief caused me by the coldness of Madam d'Houdetot, and the certainty of not having merited it, made me take the singular resolution to complain of it to Saint Lambert himself. While waiting the effect of the letter I wrote to him, I sought dissipations to which I ought sooner to have had recourse. Fetes were given at the Chevrette for which I composed music. The pleasure of honoring myself in the eyes of Madam d'Houdetot by a talent she loved, warmed my imagination, and another object still contributed to give it animation, this was the desire the author of the 'Devin du Village' had of showing he understood music; for I had perceived some persons had, for a considerable time past, endeavored to render this doubtful, at least with respect to composition. My beginning at Paris, the ordeal through which I had several times passed there, both at the house of M. Dupin and that of M. de la Popliniere; the quantity of music I had composed during fourteen years in the midst of the most celebrated masters and before their eyes:—finally, the opera of the 'Muses Gallantes', and that even of the 'Devin'; a motet I had composed for Mademoiselle Fel, and which she had sung at the spiritual concert; the frequent conferences I had had upon this fine art with the



Page 53

first composers, all seemed to prevent or dissipate a doubt of such a nature. This however existed even at the Chevrette, and in the mind of M. d'Epinay himself. Without appearing to observe it, I undertook to compose him a motet for the dedication of the chapel of the Chevrette, and I begged him to make choice of the words. He directed de Linant, the tutor to his son, to furnish me with these. De Linant gave me words proper to the subject, and in a week after I had received them the motet was finished. This time, spite was my Apollo, and never did better music come from my hand. The words began with: 'Ecce sedes hic tonantis'. (I have since learned these were by Santeuil, and that M. de Linant had without scruple appropriated them to himself.) The grandeur of the opening is suitable to the words, and the rest of the motet is so elegantly harmonious that everyone was struck with it. I had composed it for a great orchestra. D'Epinay procured the best performers. Madam Bruna, an Italian singer, sung the motet, and was well accompanied. The composition succeeded so well that it was afterwards performed at the spiritual concert, where, in spite of secret cabals, and notwithstanding it was badly executed, it was twice generally applauded. I gave for the birthday of M. d'Epinay the idea of a kind of piece half dramatic and half pantomimical, of which I also composed the music. Grimm, on his arrival, heard speak of my musical success. An hour afterwards not a word more was said on the subject; but there no longer remained a doubt, not at least that I know of, of my knowledge of composition.

Grimm was scarcely arrived at the Chevrette, where I already did not much amuse myself, before he made it insupportable to me by airs I never before saw in any person, and of which I had no idea. The evening before he came, I was dislodged from the chamber of favor, contiguous to that of Madam d'Epinay; it was prepared for Grimm, and instead of it, I was put into another further off. "In this manner," said I, laughingly, to Madam d'Epinay, "new-comers displace those which are established." She seemed embarrassed. I was better acquainted the same evening with the reason for the change, in learning that between her chamber and that I had quitted there was a private door which she had thought needless to show me. Her intercourse with Grimm was not a secret either in her own house or to the public, not even to her husband; yet, far from confessing it to me, the confidant of secrets more important to her, and which was sure would be faithfully kept, she constantly denied it in the strongest manner. I comprehended this reserve proceeded from Grimm, who, though intrusted with all my secrets, did not choose I should be with any of his.



Page 54

However prejudiced I was in favor of this man by former sentiments, which were not extinguished, and by the real merit he had, all was not proof against the cares he took to destroy it. He received me like the Comte de Tuffiere; he scarcely deigned to return my salute; he never once spoke to me, and prevented my speaking to him by not making me any answer; he everywhere passed first, and took the first place without ever paying me the least attention. All this would have been supportable had he not accompanied it with a shocking affectation, which may be judged of by one example taken from a hundred. One evening Madam d'Epinau, finding herself a little indisposed, ordered something for her supper to be carried into her chamber, and went up stairs to sup by the side of the fire. She asked me to go with her, which I did. Grimm came afterwards. The little table was already placed, and there were but two covers. Supper was served; Madam d' Epinau took her place on one side of the fire, Grimm took an armed chair, seated himself at the other, drew the little table between them, opened his napkin, and prepared himself for eating without speaking to me a single word.

Madam d' Epinau blushed at his behavior, and, to induce him to repair his rudeness, offered me her place. He said nothing, nor did he ever look at me. Not being able to approach the fire, I walked about the chamber until a cover was brought. Indisposed as I was, older than himself, longer acquainted in the house than he had been, the person who had introduced him there, and to whom as a favorite of the lady he ought to have done the honors of it, he suffered me to sup at the end of the table, at a distance from the fire, without showing me the least civility. His whole behavior to me corresponded with this example of it. He did not treat me precisely as his inferior, but he looked upon me as a cipher. I could scarcely recognize the same Grimm, who, to the house of the Prince de Saxe-Gotha, thought himself honored when I cast my eyes upon him. I had still more difficulty in reconciling this profound silence and insulting haughtiness with the tender friendship he possessed for me to those whom he knew to be real friends. It is true the only proofs he gave of it was pitying my wretched fortune, of which I did not complain; compassionating my sad fate, with which I was satisfied; and lamenting to see me obstinately refuse the benevolent services he said, he wished to render me. Thus was it he artfully made the world admire his affectionate generosity, blame my ungrateful misanthropy, and insensibly accustomed people to imagine there was nothing more between a protector like him and a wretch like myself, than a connection founded upon benefactions on one part and obligations on the other, without once thinking of a friendship between equals. For my part, I have vainly sought to discover in what I was under an obligation to this new protector. I had lent



Page 55

him money, he had never lent me any; I had attended him in his illness, he scarcely came to see me in mine; I had given him all my friends, he never had given me any of his; I had said everything I could in his favor, and if ever he has spoken of me it has been less publicly and in another manner. He has never either rendered or offered me the least service of any kind. How, therefore, was he my Mecaenas? In what manner was I protected by him? This was incomprehensible to me, and still remains so.

It is true, he was more or less arrogant with everybody, but I was the only person with whom he was brutally so. I remember Saint Lambert once ready to throw a plate at his head, upon his, in some measure, giving him the lie at table by vulgarly saying, "That is not true." With his naturally imperious manner he had the self-sufficiency of an upstart, and became ridiculous by being extravagantly impertinent. An intercourse with the great had so far intoxicated him that he gave himself airs which none but the contemptible part of them ever assume. He never called his lackey but by "Eh!" as if amongst the number of his servants my lord had not known which was in waiting. When he sent him to buy anything, he threw the money upon the ground instead of putting it into his hand. In short, entirely forgetting he was a man, he treated him with such shocking contempt, and so cruel a disdain in everything, that the poor lad, a very good creature, whom Madam d'Epina y had recommended, quitted his service without any other complaint than that of the impossibility of enduring such treatment. This was the la Fleur of this new presuming upstart.

As these things were nothing more than ridiculous, but quite opposite to my character, they contributed to render him suspicious to me. I could easily imagine that a man whose head was so much deranged could not have a heart well placed. He piqued himself upon nothing so much as upon sentiments. How could this agree with defects which are peculiar to little minds? How can the continued overflowings of a susceptible heart suffer it to be incessantly employed in so many little cares relative to the person? He who feels his heart inflamed with this celestial fire strives to diffuse it, and wishes to show what he internally is. He would wish to place his heart in his countenance, and thinks not of other paint for his cheeks.

I remember the summary of his morality which Madam d'Epina y had mentioned to me and adopted. This consisted in one single article; that the sole duty of man is to follow all the inclinations of his heart. This morality, when I heard it mentioned, gave me great matter of reflection, although I at first considered it solely as a play of wit. But I soon perceived it was a principle really the rule of his conduct, and of which I afterwards had, at my own expense, but too many convincing proofs. It is the interior doctrine Diderot has so frequently intimated to me, but which I never heard him explain.



Page 56

I remember having several years before been frequently told that Grimm was false, that he had nothing more than the appearance of sentiment, and particularly that he did not love me. I recollected several little anecdotes which I had heard of him by M. de Francueil and Madam de Chenonceaux, neither of whom esteemed him, and to whom he must have been known, as Madam de Chenonceaux was daughter to Madam de Rochechouart, the intimate friend of the late Comte de Friese, and that M. de Francueil, at that time very intimate with the Viscount de Polignac, had lived a good deal at the Palais Royal precisely when Grimm began to introduce himself there. All Paris heard of his despair after the death of the Comte de Friese. It was necessary to support the reputation he had acquired after the rigors of Mademoiselle Fel, and of which I, more than any other person, should have seen the imposture, had I been less blind. He was obliged to be dragged to the Hotel de Castries where he worthily played his part, abandoned to the most mortal affliction. There, he every morning went into the garden to weep at his ease, holding before his eyes his handkerchief moistened with tears, as long as he was in sight of the hotel, but at the turning of a certain alley, people, of whom he little thought, saw him instantly put his handkerchief in his pocket and take out of it a book. This observation, which was repeatedly made, soon became public in Paris, and was almost as soon forgotten. I myself had forgotten it; a circumstance in which I was concerned brought it to my recollection. I was at the point of death in my bed, in the Rue de Grenelle, Grimm was in the country; he came one morning, quite out of breath, to see me, saying, he had arrived in town that very instant; and a moment afterwards I learned he had arrived the evening before, and had been seen at the theatre.

I heard many things of the same kind; but an observation, which I was surprised not to have made sooner, struck me more than anything else. I had given to Grimm all my friends without exception, they were become his. I was so inseparable from him, that I should have had some difficulty in continuing to visit at a house where he was not received. Madam de Crequi was the only person who refused to admit him into her company, and whom for that reason I have seldom since seen. Grimm on his part made himself other friends, as well by his own means, as by those of the Comte de Friese. Of all these not one of them ever became my friend: he never said a word to induce me even to become acquainted with them, and not one of those I sometimes met at his apartments ever showed me the least good will; the Comte de Friese, in whose house he lived, and with whom it consequently would have been agreeable to me to form some connection, not excepted, nor the Comte de Schomberg, his relation, with whom Grimm was still more intimate.

Add to this, my own friends, whom I made his, and who were all tenderly attached to me before this acquaintance, were no longer so the moment it was made. He never gave me one of his. I gave him all mine, and these he has taken from me. If these be the effects of friendship, what are those of enmity?



Page 57

Diderot himself told me several times at the beginning that Grimm in whom I had so much confidence, was not my friend. He changed his language the moment he was no longer so himself.

The manner in which I had disposed of my children wanted not the concurrence of any person. Yet I informed some of my friends of it, solely to make it known to them, and that I might not in their eyes appear better than I was. These friends were three in number: Diderot, Grimm, and Madam d'Epinau. Duclos, the most worthy of my confidence, was the only real friend whom I did not inform of it. He nevertheless knew what I had done. By whom? This I know not. It is not very probable the perfidy came from Madam d'Epinau, who knew that by following her example, had I been capable of doing it, I had in my power the means of a cruel revenge. It remains therefore between Grimm and Diderot, then so much united, especially against me, and it is probable this crime was common to them both. I would lay a wager that Duclos, to whom I never told my secret, and who consequently was at liberty to make what use he pleased of his information, is the only person who has not spoken of it again.

Grimm and Diderot, in their project to take from me the governesses, had used the greatest efforts to make Duclos enter into their views; but this he refused to do with disdain. It was not until sometime afterwards that I learned from him what had passed between them on the subject; but I learned at the time from Theresa enough to perceive there was some secret design, and that they wished to dispose of me, if not against my own consent, at least without my knowledge, or had an intention of making these two persons serve as instruments of some project they had in view. This was far from upright conduct. The opposition of Duclos is a convincing proof of it. They who think proper may believe it to be friendship.

This pretended friendship was as fatal to me at home as it was abroad. The long and frequent conversations with Madam le Vasseur, for, several years past, had made a sensible change in this woman's behavior to me, and the change was far from being in my favor. What was the subject of these singular conversations? Why such a profound mystery? Was the conversation of that old woman agreeable enough to take her into favor, and of sufficient importance to make of it so great a secret? During the two or three years these colloquies had, from time to time, been continued, they had appeared to me ridiculous; but when I thought of them again, they began to astonish me. This astonishment would have been carried to inquietude had I then known what the old creature was preparing for me.



Page 58

Notwithstanding the pretended zeal for my welfare of which Grimm made such a public boast, difficult to reconcile with the airs he gave himself when we were together, I heard nothing of him from any quarter the least to my advantage, and his feigned commiseration tended less to do me service than to render me contemptible. He deprived me as much as he possibly could of the resource I found in the employment I had chosen, by decrying me as a bad copyist. I confess he spoke the truth; but in this case it was not for him to do it. He proved himself in earnest by employing another copyist, and prevailing upon everybody he could, by whom I was engaged, to do the same. His intention might have been supposed to be that of reducing me to a dependence upon him and his credit for a subsistence, and to cut off the latter until I was brought to that degree of distress.

All things considered, my reason imposed silence upon my former prejudice, which still pleaded in his favor. I judged his character to be at least suspicious, and with respect to his friendship I positively decided it to be false. I then resolved to see him no more, and informed Madam d'Epinau of the resolution I had taken, supporting it with several unanswerable facts, but which I have now forgotten.

She strongly combated my resolution without knowing how to reply to the reasons on which it was founded. She had not concerted with him; but the next day, instead of explaining herself verbally, she, with great address, gave me a letter they had drawn up together, and by which, without entering into a detail of facts, she justified him by his concentrated character, attributed to me as a crime my having suspected him of perfidy towards his friend, and exhorted me to come to an accommodation with him. This letter staggered me. In a conversation we afterwards had together, and in which I found her better prepared than she had been the first time, I suffered myself to be quite prevailed upon, and was inclined to believe I might have judged erroneously. In this case I thought I really had done a friend a very serious injury, which it was my duty to repair. In short, as I had already done several times with Diderot, and the Baron d'Holbach, half from inclination, and half from weakness, I made all the advances I had a right to require; I went to M. Grimm, like another George Dandin, to make him my apologies for the offence he had given me; still in the false persuasion, which, in the course of my life has made me guilty of a thousand meannesses to my pretended friends, that there is no hatred which may not be disarmed by mildness and proper behavior; whereas, on the contrary, the hatred of the wicked becomes still more envenomed by the impossibility of finding anything to found it upon, and the sentiment of their own injustice is another cause of offence against the person who is the object of it. I have, without going further than my own history, a strong proof of this maxim in Grimm, and in Tronchin; both became my implacable enemies from inclination, pleasure and fancy, without having been able to charge me with having done either of them the most trifling injury,



Page 59

[I did not give the surname of Jongleur only to the latter until a long time after his enmity had been declared, and the persecutions he brought upon me at Geneva and elsewhere. I soon suppressed the name the moment I perceived I was entirely his victim. Mean vengeance is unworthy of my heart, and hatred never takes the least root in it.]

and whose rage, like that of tigers, becomes daily more fierce by the facility of satiating it.

I expected that Grimm, confused by my condescension and advances, would receive me with open arms, and the most tender friendship. He received me as a Roman Emperor would have done, and with a haughtiness I never saw in any person but himself. I was by no means prepared for such a reception. When, in the embarrassment of the part I had to act, and which was so unworthy of me, I had, in a few words and with a timid air, fulfilled the object which had brought me to him; before he received me into favor, he pronounced, with a deal of majesty, an harangue he had prepared, and which contained a long enumeration of his rare virtues, and especially those connected with friendship. He laid great stress upon a thing which at first struck me a great deal: this was his having always preserved the same friends. Whilst he was yet speaking, I said to myself, it would be cruel for me to be the only exception to this rule. He returned to the subject so frequently, and with such emphasis, that I thought, if in this he followed nothing but the sentiments of his heart, he would be less struck with the maxim, and that he made of it an art useful to his views by procuring the means of accomplishing them. Until then I had been in the same situation; I had preserved all my first friends, those even from my tenderest infancy, without having lost one of them except by death, and yet I had never before made the reflection: it was not a maxim I had prescribed myself. Since, therefore, the advantage was common to both, why did he boast of it in preference, if he had not previously intended to deprive me of the merit? He afterwards endeavored to humble me by proofs of the preference our common friends gave to me. With this I was as well acquainted as himself; the question was, by what means he had obtained it? whether it was by merit or address? by exalting himself, or endeavoring to abase me? At last, when he had placed between us all the distance that he could add to the value of the favor he was about to confer, he granted me the kiss of peace, in a slight embrace which resembled the accolade which the king gives to newmade knights. I was stupefied with surprise: I knew not what to say; not a word could I utter. The whole scene had the appearance of the reprimand a preceptor gives to his pupil while he graciously spares inflicting the rod. I never think of it without perceiving to what degree judgments, founded upon appearances to which the vulgar give so much weight, are deceitful, and how frequently audaciousness and pride are found in the guilty, and shame and embarrassment in the innocent.



Page 60

We were reconciled: this was a relief to my heart, which every kind of quarrel fills with anguish. It will naturally be supposed that a like reconciliation changed nothing in his manners; all it effected was to deprive me of the right of complaining of them. For this reason I took a resolution to endure everything, and for the future to say not a word.

So many successive vexations overwhelmed me to such a degree as to leave me but little power over my mind. Receiving no answer from Saint Lambert, neglected by Madam d'Houdetot, and no longer daring to open my heart to any person, I began to be afraid that by making friendship my idol, I should sacrifice my whole life to chimeras. After putting all those with whom I had been acquainted to the test, there remained but two who had preserved my esteem, and in whom my heart could confide: Duclos, of whom since my retreat to the Hermitage I had lost sight, and Saint Lambert. I thought the only means of repairing the wrongs I had done the latter, was to open myself to him without reserve, and I resolved to confess to him everything by which his mistress should not be exposed. I have no doubt but this was another snare of my passions to keep me nearer to her person; but I should certainly have had no reserve with her lover, entirely submitting to his direction, and carrying sincerity as far as it was possible to do it. I was upon the point of writing to him a second letter, to which I was certain he would have returned an answer, when I learned the melancholy cause of his silence relative to the first. He had been unable to support until the end the fatigues of the campaign. Madam d'Epinay informed me he had had an attack of the palsy, and Madam d'Houdetot, ill from affliction, wrote me two or three days after from Paris, that he was going to Aix-la-Chapelle to take the benefit of the waters. I will not say this melancholy circumstance afflicted me as it did her; but I am of opinion my grief of heart was as painful as her tears. The pain of knowing him to be in such a state, increased by the fear least inquietude should have contributed to occasion it, affected me more than anything that had yet happened, and I felt most cruelly a want of fortitude, which in my estimation was necessary to enable me to support so many misfortunes. Happily this generous friend did not long leave me so overwhelmed with affliction; he did not forget me, notwithstanding his attack; and I soon learned from himself that I had ill judged his sentiments, and been too much alarmed for his situation. It is now time I should come to the grand revolution of my destiny, to the catastrophe which has divided my life in two parts so different from each other, and, from a very trifling cause, produced such terrible effects.



Page 61

One day, little thinking of what was to happen, Madam d'Epina y sent for me to the Chevrette. The moment I saw her I perceived in her eyes and whole countenance an appearance of uneasiness, which struck me the more, as this was not customary, nobody knowing better than she did how to govern her features and her movements. "My friend," said she to me, "I am immediately going to set off for Geneva; my breast is in a bad state, and my health so deranged that I must go and consult Tronchin." I was the more astonished at this resolution so suddenly taken, and at the beginning of the bad season of the year, as thirty-six hours before she had not, when I left her, so much as thought of it. I asked her who she would take with her. She said her son and M. de Linant; and afterwards carelessly added, "And you, dear, will not you go also?" As I did not think she spoke seriously, knowing that at the season of the year I was scarcely in a situation to go to my chamber, I joked upon the utility of the company, of one sick person to another. She herself had not seemed to make the proposition seriously, and here the matter dropped. The rest of our conversation ran upon the necessary preparations for her journey, about which she immediately gave orders, being determined to set off within a fortnight. She lost nothing by my refusal, having prevailed upon her husband to accompany her.

A few days afterwards I received from Diderot the note I am going to transcribe. This note, simply doubled up, so that the contents were easily read, was addressed to me at Madam d'Epina y's, and sent to M. de Linant, tutor to the son, and confidant to the mother.

NOTE FROM DIDEROT.

"I am naturally disposed to love you, and am born to give you trouble. I am informed Madam d'Epina y is going to Geneva, and do not hear you are to accompany her. My friend, you are satisfied with Madam d'Epina y, you must go, with her; if dissatisfied you ought still less to hesitate. Do you find the weight of the obligations you are under to her uneasy to you? This is an opportunity of discharging a part of them, and relieving your mind. Do you ever expect another opportunity like the present one, of giving her proofs of your gratitude? She is going to a country where she will be quite a stranger. She is ill, and will stand in need of amusement and dissipation. The winter season too! Consider, my friend. Your ill state of health may be a much greater objection than I think it is; but are you now more indisposed than you were a month ago, or than you will be at the beginning of spring? Will you three months hence be in a situation to perform the journey more at your ease than at present? For my part I cannot but observe to you that were I unable to bear the shaking of the carriage I would take my staff and follow her. Have you no fears lest your conduct should be misinterpreted? You will be suspected of



Page 62

ingratitude or of a secret motive. I well know, that let you do as you will you will have in your favor the testimony of your conscience, but will this alone be sufficient, and is it permitted to neglect to a certain degree that which is necessary to acquire the approbation of others? What I now write, my good friend, is to acquit myself of what I think I owe to us both. Should my letter displease you, throw it into the fire and let it be forgotten. I salute, love and embrace you.”

Although trembling and almost blind with rage whilst I read this epistle, I remarked the address with which Diderot affected a milder and more polite language than he had done in his former ones, wherein he never went further than “My dear,” without ever deigning to add the name of friend. I easily discovered the secondhand means by which the letter was conveyed to me; the subscription, manner and form awkwardly betrayed the manoeuvre; for we commonly wrote to each other by post, or the messenger of Montmorency, and this was the first and only time he sent me his letter by any other conveyance.

As soon as the first transports of my indignation permitted me to write, I, with great precipitation, wrote him the following answer, which I immediately carried from the Hermitage, where I then was, to Chevrette, to show it to Madam d’Epinay; to whom, in my blind rage, I read the contents, as well as the letter from Diderot.

“You cannot, my dear friend, either know the magnitude of the obligations I am under to Madam d’Epinay, to what a degree I am bound by them, whether or not she is desirous of my accompanying her, that this is possible, or the reasons I may have for my noncompliance. I have no objection to discuss all these points with you; but you will in the meantime confess that prescribing to me so positively what I ought to do, without first enabling yourself to judge of the matter, is, my dear philosopher, acting very inconsiderately. What is still worse, I perceive the opinion you give comes not from yourself. Besides my being but little disposed to suffer myself to be led by the nose under your name by any third or fourth person, I observe in this secondary advice certain underhand dealing, which ill agrees with your candor, and from which you will on your account, as well as mine, do well in future to abstain.

“You are afraid my conduct should be misinterpreted; but I defy a heart like yours to think ill of mine. Others would perhaps speak better of me if I resembled them more. God preserve me from gaining their approbation! Let the vile and wicked watch over my conduct and misinterpret my actions, Rousseau is not a man to be afraid of them, nor is Diderot to be prevailed upon to hearken to what they say.

“If I am displeased with your letter, you wish me to throw it into the fire, and pay no attention to the contents. Do you imagine that anything coming from you can be forgotten in such a manner? You hold, my dear friend, my tears as cheap in the pain



you give me, as you do my life and health, in the cares you exhort me to take. Could you but break yourself of this, your friendship would be more pleasing to me, and I should be less to be pitied.”



Page 63

On entering the chamber of Madam d'Epinau I found Grimm with her, with which I was highly delighted. I read to them, in a loud and clear voice, the two letters, with an intrepidity of which I should not have thought myself capable, and concluded with a few observations not in the least derogatory to it. At this unexpected audacity in a man generally timid, they were struck dumb with surprise; I perceived that arrogant man look down upon the ground, not daring to meet my eyes, which sparkled with indignation; but in the bottom of his heart he from that instant resolved upon my destruction, and, with Madam d' Epinau, I am certain concerted measures to that effect before they separated.

It was much about this time that I at length received, by Madam d'Houdetot, the answer from Saint Lambert, dated from Wolfenbuttle, a few days after the accident had happened to him, to my letter which had been long delayed upon the road. This answer gave me the consolation of which I then stood so much in need; it was full of assurance of esteem and friendship, and these gave me strength and courage to deserve them. From that moment I did my duty, but had Saint Lambert been less reasonable, generous and honest, I was inevitably lost.

The season became bad, and people began to quit the country. Madam d'Houdetot informed me of the day on which she intended to come and bid adieu to the valley, and gave me a rendezvous at Laubonne. This happened to be the same day on which Madam d'Epinau left the Chevrette to go to Paris for the purpose of completing preparations for her journey. Fortunately she set off in the morning, and I had still time to go and dine with her sister-in-law. I had the letter from Saint Lambert in my pocket, and read it over several times as I walked along, This letter served me as a shield against my weakness. I made and kept to the resolution of seeing nothing in Madam d'Houdetot but my friend and the mistress of Saint Lambert; and I passed with her a tete-a-fete of four hours in a most delicious calm, infinitely preferable, even with respect to enjoyment, to the paroxysms of a burning fever, which, always, until that moment, I had had when in her presence. As she too well knew my heart not to be changed, she was sensible of the efforts I made to conquer myself, and esteemed me the more for them, and I had the pleasure of perceiving that her friendship for me was not extinguished. She announced to me the approaching return of Saint Lambert, who, although well enough recovered from his attack, was unable to bear the fatigues of war, and was quitting the service to come and live in peace with her. We formed the charming project of an intimate connection between us three, and had reason to hope it would be lasting, since it was founded on every sentiment by which honest and susceptible hearts could be united; and we had moreover amongst us all the knowledge and talents necessary to be sufficient to ourselves without the aid of any foreign supplement. Alas! in abandoning myself to the hope of so agreeable a life I little suspected that which awaited me.



Page 64

We afterwards spoke of my situation with Madam d'Epinay. I showed her the letter from Diderot, with my answer to it; I related to her everything that had passed upon the subject, and declared to her my resolution of quitting the Hermitage.

This she vehemently opposed, and by reasons all powerful over my heart. She expressed to me how much she could have wished I had been of the party to Geneva, foreseeing she should inevitably be considered as having caused the refusal, which the letter of Diderot seemed previously to announce. However, as she was acquainted with my reasons, she did not insist upon this point, but conjured me to avoid coming to an open rupture let it cost me what mortification it would, and to palliate my refusal by reasons sufficiently plausible to put away all unjust suspicions of her having been the cause of it. I told her the task she imposed on me was not easy; but that, resolved to expiate my faults at the expense of my reputation, I would give the preference to hers in everything that honor permitted me to suffer. It will soon be seen whether or not I fulfilled this engagement.

My passion was so far from having lost any part of its force that I never in my life loved my Sophia so ardently and tenderly as on that day, but such was the impression made upon me by the letter of Saint Lambert, the sentiment of my duty and the horror in which I held perfidy, that during the whole time of the interview my senses left me in peace, and I was not so much as tempted to kiss her hand. At parting she embraced me before her servants. This embrace, so different from those I had sometimes stolen from her under the foliage, proved I was become master of myself; and I am certain that had my mind, undisturbed, had time to acquire more firmness, three months would have cured me radically.

Here ends my personal connections with Madam d'Houdetot; connections of which each has been able to judge by appearance according to the disposition of his own heart, but in which the passion inspired me by that amiable woman, the most lively passion, perhaps, man ever felt, will be honorable in our own eyes by the rare and painful sacrifice we both made to duty, honor, love, and friendship. We each had too high an opinion of the other easily to suffer ourselves to do anything derogatory to our dignity. We must have been unworthy of all esteem had we not set a proper value upon one like this, and the energy of my sentiments which have rendered us culpable, was that which prevented us from becoming so.

Thus after a long friendship for one of these women, and the strongest affection for the other, I bade them both adieu the same day, to one never to see her more, to the other to see her again twice, upon occasions of which I shall hereafter speak.



Page 65

After their departure, I found myself much embarrassed to fulfill so many pressing and contradictory duties, the consequences of my imprudence; had I been in my natural situation, after the proposition and refusal of the journey to Geneva, I had only to remain quiet, and everything was as it should be. But I had foolishly made of it an affair which could not remain in the state it was, and an explanation was absolutely necessary, unless I quitted the Hermitage, which I had just promised Madam d'Houdetot not to do, at least for the present. Moreover she had required me to make known the reasons for my refusal to my pretended friends, that it might not be imputed to her. Yet I could not state the true reason without doing an outrage to Madam d'Epinay, who certainly had a right to my gratitude for what she had done for me. Everything well considered, I found myself reduced to the severe but indispensable necessity of failing in respect, either to Madam d'Upinay, Madam d'Houdetot or to myself; and it was the last I resolved to make my victim. This I did without hesitation, openly and fully, and with so much generosity as to make the act worthy of expiating the faults which had reduced me to such an extremity. This sacrifice, taken advantage of by my enemies, and which they, perhaps, did not expect, has ruined my reputation, and by their assiduity, deprived me of the esteem of the public; but it has restored to me my own, and given me consolation in my misfortune. This, as it will hereafter appear, is not the last time I made such a sacrifice, nor that advantages were taken of it to do me an injury.

Grimm was the only person who appeared to have taken no part in the affair, and it was to him I determined to address myself. I wrote him a long letter, in which I set forth the ridiculousness of considering it as my duty to accompany Madam d' Epinay to Geneva, the inutility of the measure, and the embarrassment even it would have caused her, besides the inconvenience to myself. I could not resist the temptation of letting him perceive in this letter how fully I was informed in what manner things were arranged, and that to me it appeared singular I should be expected to undertake the journey whilst he himself dispensed with it, and that his name was never mentioned. This letter, wherein, on account of my not being able clearly to state my reasons, I was often obliged to wander from the text, would have rendered me culpable in the eyes of the public, but it was a model of reservedness and discretion for the people who, like Grimm, were fully acquainted with the things I forbore to mention, and which justified my conduct. I did not even hesitate to raise another prejudice against myself in attributing the advice of Diderot, to my other friends. This I did to insinuate that Madam d'Houdetot had been in the same opinion as she really was, and in not mentioning that, upon the reasons I gave her, she thought differently, I could not better remove the suspicion of her having connived at my proceedings than appearing dissatisfied with her behavior.



Page 66

This letter was concluded by an act of confidence which would have had an effect upon any other man; for, in desiring Grimm to weigh my reasons and afterwards to give me his opinion, I informed him that, let this be what it would, I should act accordingly, and such was my intention had he even thought I ought to set off; for M. d'Epinay having appointed himself the conductor of his wife, my going with them would then have had a different appearance; whereas it was I who, in the first place, was asked to take upon me that employment, and he was out of the question until after my refusal.

The answer from Grimm was slow incoming; it was singular enough, on which account I will here transcribe it.

“The departure of Madam d'Epinay is postponed; her son is ill, and it is necessary to wait until his health is re-established. I will consider the contents of your letter. Remain quiet at your Hermitage. I will send you my opinion as soon as this shall be necessary. As she will certainly not set off for some days, there is no immediate occasion for it. In the meantime you may, if you think proper, make her your offers, although this to me seems a matter of indifference. For, knowing your situation as well as you do yourself, I doubt not of her returning to your offer such an answer as she ought to do; and all the advantage which, in my opinion, can result from this, will be your having it in your power to say to those by whom you may be importuned, that your not being of the travelling party was not for want of having made your offers to that effect. Moreover, I do not see why you will absolutely have it that the philosopher is the speaking-trumpet of all the world, nor because he is of opinion you ought to go, why you should imagine all your friends think as he does? If you write to Madam d'Epinay, her answer will be yours to all your friends, since you have it so much at heart to give them all an answer. Adieu. I embrace Madam le Vasseur and the Criminal.”

[M. le Vasseur, whose wife governed him rather rudely, called her the Lieutenant Criminal. Grimm in a joke gave the same name to the daughter, and by way of abridgment was pleased to retrench the first word.]

Struck with astonishment at reading this letter I vainly endeavored to find out what it meant. How! instead of answering me with simplicity, he took time to consider of what I had written, as if the time he had already taken was not sufficient! He intimates even the state of suspense in which he wishes to keep me, as if a profound problem was to be resolved, or that it was of importance to his views to deprive me of every means of comprehending his intentions until the moment he should think proper to make them known. What therefore did he mean by these precautions, delays, and mysteries? Was this manner of acting consistent with honor and uprightness? I vainly sought for some favorable interpretation of his conduct; it was impossible to



Page 67

find one. Whatever his design might be, were this inimical to me, his situation facilitated the execution of it without its being possible for me in mine to oppose the least obstacle. In favor in the house of a great prince, having an extensive acquaintance, and giving the tone to common circles of which he was the oracle, he had it in his power, with his usual address, to dispose everything in his favor; and I, alone in my Hermitage, far removed from all society, without the benefit of advice, and having no communication with the world, had nothing to do but to remain in peace. All I did was to write to Madam d'Epinay upon the illness of her son, as polite a letter as could be written, but in which I did not fall into the snare of offering to accompany her to Geneva.

After waiting for a long time in the most cruel uncertainty, into which that barbarous man had plunged me, I learned, at the expiration of eight or ten days, that Madam d'Epinay was set off, and received from him a second letter. It contained not more than seven or eight lines which I did not entirely read. It was a rupture, but in such terms as the most infernal hatred only can dictate, and these became unmeaning by the excessive degree of acrimony with which he wished to charge them. He forbade me his presence as he would have forbidden me his states. All that was wanting to his letter to make it laughable, was to be read over with coolness. Without taking a copy of it, or reading the whole of the contents, I returned it him immediately, accompanied by the following note:

"I refused to admit the force of the just reasons I had of suspicion: I now, when it is too late, am become sufficiently acquainted with your character.

"This then is the letter upon which you took time to meditate: I return it to you, it is not for me. You may show mine to the whole world and hate me openly; this on your part will be a falsehood the less."

My telling he might show my preceding letter related to an article in his by which his profound address throughout the whole affair will be judged of.

I have observed that my letter might inculpate me in the eyes of persons unacquainted with the particulars of what had passed. This he was delighted to discover; but how was he to take advantage of it without exposing himself? By showing the letter he ran the risk of being reproached with abusing the confidence of his friend.

To relieve himself from this embarrassment he resolved to break with me in the most violent manner possible, and to set forth in his letter the favor he did me in not showing mine. He was certain that in my indignation and anger I should refuse his feigned discretion, and permit him to show my letter to everybody; this was what he wished for, and everything turned out as he expected it would. He sent my letter all over Paris, with his own commentaries upon it, which, however, were not so successful as he had expected



Page 68

them to be. It was not judged that the permission he had extorted to make my letter public exempted him from the blame of having so lightly taken me at my word to do me an injury. People continually asked what personal complaints he had against me to authorize so violent a hatred. Finally, it was thought that if even my behavior had been such as to authorize him to break with me, friendship, although extinguished, had rights which he ought to have respected. But unfortunately the inhabitants of Paris are frivolous; remarks of the moment are soon forgotten; the absent and unfortunate are neglected; the man who prospers secures favor by his presence; the intriguing and malicious support each other, renew their vile efforts, and the effects of these, incessantly succeeding each other, efface everything by which they were preceded.

Thus, after having so long deceived me, this man threw aside his mask; convinced that, in the state to which he had brought things, he no longer stood in need of it. Relieved from the fear of being unjust towards the wretch, I left him to his reflections, and thought no more of him. A week afterwards I received an answer from Madam d'Epina, dated from Geneva. I understood from the manner of her letter, in which for the first time in her life, she put on airs of state with me, that both depending but little upon the success of their measures, and considering me a man inevitably lost, their intentions were to give themselves the pleasure of completing my destruction.

In fact, my situation was deplorable. I perceived all my friends withdrew themselves from me without knowing how or for why. Diderot, who boasted of the continuation of his attachment, and who, for three months past, had promised me a visit, did not come. The winter began to make its appearance, and brought with it my habitual disorders. My constitution, although vigorous, had been unequal to the combat of so many opposite passions. I was so exhausted that I had neither strength nor courage sufficient to resist the most trifling indisposition. Had my engagements; and the continued remonstrances of Diderot and Madam de Houdetot then permitted me to quit the Hermitage, I knew not where to go, nor in what manner to drag myself along. I remained stupid and immovable. The idea alone of a step to take, a letter to write, or a word to say, made me tremble. I could not however do otherwise than reply to the letter of Madam d'Epina without acknowledging myself to be worthy of the treatment with which she and her friend overwhelmed me. I determined upon notifying to her my sentiments and resolutions, not doubting a moment that from humanity, generosity, propriety, and the good manner of thinking, I imagined I had observed in her, notwithstanding her bad one, she would immediately subscribe to them. My letter was as follows:

Hermitage 23d Nov., 1757.

"Were it possible to die of grief I should not now be alive.



Page 69

“But I have at length determined to triumph over everything. Friendship, madam, is extinguished between us, but that which no longer exists still has its rights, and I respect them.

“I have not forgotten your goodness to me, and you may, on my part, expect as much gratitude as it is possible to have towards a person I no longer can love. All further explanation would be useless. I have in my favor my own conscience, and I return you your letter.

“I wished to quit the Hermitage, and I ought to have done it. My friends pretend I must stay there until spring; and since my friends desire it I will remain there until that season if you will consent to my stay.”

After writing and despatching this letter all I thought of was remaining quiet at the Hermitage and taking care of my health; of endeavoring to recover my strength, and taking measures to remove in the spring without noise or making the rupture public. But these were not the intentions either of Grimm or Madam d’Epinay, as it will presently appear.

A few days afterwards, I had the pleasure of receiving from Diderot the visit he had so frequently promised, and in which he had as constantly failed. He could not have come more opportunely; he was my oldest friend: almost the only one who remained to me; the pleasure I felt in seeing him, as things were circumstanced, may easily be imagined. My heart was full, and I disclosed it to him. I explained to him several facts which either had not come to his knowledge, or had been disguised or suppressed. I informed him, as far as I could do it with propriety, of all that had passed. I did not affect to conceal from him that with which he was but too well acquainted, that a passion equally unreasonable and unfortunate, had been the cause of my destruction; but I never acknowledged that Madam d’Houdetot had been made acquainted with it, or at least that I had declared it to her. I mentioned to him the unworthy manoeuvres of Madam d’Epinay to intercept the innocent letters her sister-in-law wrote to me. I was determined he should hear the particulars from the mouth of the persons whom she had attempted to seduce. Theresa related them with great precision; but what was my astonishment when the mother came to speak, and I heard her declare and maintain that nothing of this had come to her knowledge? These were her words from which she would never depart. Not four days before she herself had recited to me all the particulars Theresa had just stated, and in presence of my friend she contradicted me to my face. This, to me, was decisive, and I then clearly saw my imprudence in having so long a time kept such a woman near me. I made no use of invective; I scarcely deigned to speak to her a few words of contempt. I felt what I owed to the daughter, whose steadfast uprightness was a perfect contrast to the base manoeuvres of the mother. But from the instant my resolution was taken relative to the old woman, and I waited for nothing but the moment to put it into execution.



Page 70

This presented itself sooner than I expected. On the 10th of December I received from Madam d'Epinay the following answer to my preceding letter:

Geneva, 1st December, 1757.

"After having for several years given you every possible mark of friendship all I can now do is to pity you. You are very unhappy. I wish your conscience may be as calm as mine. This may be necessary to the repose of your whole life.

"Since you are determined to quit the Hermitage, and are persuaded that you ought to do it, I am astonished your friends have prevailed upon you to stay there. For my part I never consult mine upon my duty, and I have nothing further to say to you upon your own."

Such an unforeseen dismissal, and so fully pronounced, left me not a moment to hesitate. It was necessary to quit immediately, let the weather and my health be in what state they might, although I were to sleep in the woods and upon the snow, with which the ground was then covered, and in defiance of everything Madam d'Houdetot might say; for I was willing to do everything to please her except render myself infamous.

I never had been so embarrassed in my whole life as I then was; but my resolution was taken. I swore, let what would happen, not to sleep at the Hermitage on the night of that day week. I began to prepare for sending away my effects, resolving to leave them in the open field rather than not give up the key in the course of the week: for I was determined everything should be done before a letter could be written to Geneva, and an answer to it received. I never felt myself so inspired with courage: I had recovered all my strength. Honor and indignation, upon which Madam d'Epinay had not calculated, contributed to restore me to vigor. Fortune aided my audacity. M. Mathas, fiscal procurer, heard of my embarrassment. He sent to offer me a little house he had in his garden of Mont Louis, at Montmorency. I accepted it with eagerness and gratitude. The bargain was soon concluded: I immediately sent to purchase a little furniture to add to that we already had. My effects I had carted away with a deal of trouble, and a great expense: notwithstanding the ice and snow my removal was completed in a couple of days, and on the fifteenth of December I gave up the keys of the Hermitage, after having paid the wages of the gardener, not being able to pay my rent.

With respect to Madam le Vasseur, I told her we must part; her daughter attempted to make me renounce my resolution, but I was inflexible. I sent her off, to Paris in a carriage of the messenger with all the furniture and effects she and her daughter had in common. I gave her some money, and engaged to pay her lodging with her children, or elsewhere to provide for her subsistence as much as it should be possible for me to do it, and never to let her want bread as long as I should have it myself.

Finally the day after my arrival at Mont Louis, I wrote to Madam d'Epinau the following letter:

Page 71

Montmorency, 17th December 1757.

“Nothing, madam, is so natural and necessary as to leave your house the moment you no longer approve of my remaining there. Upon your refusing your consent to my passing the rest of the winter at the Hermitage I quitted it on the fifteenth of December. My destiny was to enter it in spite of myself and to leave it the same. I thank you for the residence you prevailed upon me to make there, and I would thank you still more had I paid for it less dear. You are right in believing me unhappy; nobody upon earth knows better than yourself to what a degree I must be so. If being deceived in the choice of our friends be a misfortune, it is another not less cruel to recover from so pleasing an error.”

Such is the faithful narrative of my residence at the Hermitage, and of the reasons which obliged me to leave it. I could not break off the recital, it was necessary to continue it with the greatest exactness; this epoch of my life having had upon the rest of it an influence which will extend to my latest remembrance.