Eloisa: or, A Series of Original Letters

by Jean-Jacques Rousseau

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Eloisa: Or, a Series of Original Letters

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Table of Contents

Translation of M. Rousseau's Preface Preface by the Translator A Dialogue Between a Man of Letters and Mr. J. J. Rousseau Advertisement Volume I Volume II Volume III Volume IV

Translation of M. Rousseau’s Preface

Great cities require public theatres, and romances are necessary to a corrupt people. I saw the manners of the times, and have published these letters. Would to heaven I had lived in an age when I ought rather to have thrown them in the fire!

Though I appear only as the editor of this work, I confess that I have had some share in the composition. But am I the sole author, and is the entire correspondence fictitious? Ye people of the world, of what importance is it to you? Certainly, to you, it is all a fiction.

Every honest man will avow the books which he publishes. I have prefixed my name to these letters, not with a design to appropriate them to myself, but that I might be answerable for them. If they deserve censure, let it fall on me; if they have any merit, I am not ambitious of the praise. If it is a bad book, I am the more obliged to own it: I do not wish to pass for better than I am.

As to the reality of the history, I declare that, though I have been several times in the country of the two lovers, I never heard either of Baron D’Etange, his daughter, Mr. Orbe, Lord B——, or Mr. Wolmar. I must also inform the reader that there are several topographical errors in this work; but whether they are the effect of

ignorance or design, I leave undetermined. This is all I am at liberty to say: let every one think as he pleases.

The book seems not calculated for an extensive circulation, as it is not adapted to the generality of readers. The stile will offend people of taste, to austere men the matter will be alarming, and all the sentiments will seem unnatural to those who know not what is meant by the word virtue. It ought to displease the devotee, the libertine, the philosopher; to shock all the ladies of gallantry, and to scandalize every modest woman. By whom, therefore, will it be approved? Perhaps only by myself: certain I am, however, that it will not meet with moderate approbation from any one.

Whoever may resolve to read these letters ought to arm himself with patience against faults of language, rusticity of stile, and pedantry of expression; he ought to remember that the writers are neither natives of France, wits, academicians, nor philosophers; but that they are young and unexperienced inhabitants of a remote village, who mistake the romantic extravagance of their own imagination, for philosophy.

Why should I fear to speak my thoughts? This collection of letters, with all their gothic air, will better suit a married lady than books of philosophy: it may even be of service to those who, in an irregular course of life, have yet preserved some affection for virtue. As to young ladies, they are out of the question; no chaste virgin ever read a romance: but if perchance any young girl should dare to read a single page of this, she is inevitably lost. Yet let her not accuse me as the cause of her perdition: the mischief was done before; and since she has begun, let her proceed, for she has nothing worse to fear.

May the austere reader be disgusted in the first volume, revile the Editor, and throw the book into the fire. I shall not complain of injustice; for probably, in his place, I might have acted in the same manner. But if after having read to the end, any one should think fit to blame me for having published the book, let him, if he pleases,

declare his opinion to all the world, except to me; for I perceive it would never be in my power to esteem such a man.

Preface by the Translator

It is by no means my design to swell the volume, or detain the reader from the pleasure he may reasonably expect in the perusal of this work: I say reasonably, because the author is a writer of great reputation. My sole intention is to give a concise account of my conduct in the execution of this arduous task; and to anticipate such accusations as may naturally be expected from some readers: I mean those who are but imperfectly acquainted with the French language, or who happen to entertain improper ideas of translation in general.

If I had chosen to preserve the original title, it would have stood thus: Julia, or the New Eloisa, in the general title-page; and in the particular one, Letters of two Lovers, inhabitants of a small village at the foot of the Alps, collected and published, &c. Whatever objection I might have to this title, upon the whole, my principal reason for preferring the name of Eloisa to that of Julia, was, because the public seemed unanimous in distinguishing the work by the former rather than the latter, and I was the more easily determined, as it was a matter of no importance to the reader.

The English nobleman who acts a considerable part in this romance, is called in the original, Lord Bomston, which I suppose Mr. Rousseau thought to be an English name, or at least very like one. It may possibly sound well enough in the ears of a Frenchman; but I believe the English reader will not be offended with me for having substituted that of Lord B—— in its room. It is amazing that the French novelists should be as ignorant of our common names, and the titles of our nobility, as they are of our manners. They seldom mention our country, or attempt to introduce an English character, without exposing themselves to our ridicule. I have seen one of

their celebrated romances, in which a British nobleman, called the Duke of Workinsheton, is a principal personage; and another, in which the one identical lover of the heroine is sometimes a Duke, sometimes an Earl, and sometimes a simple Baronet; Catombridge is, with them, an English city: and yet they endeavour to impose upon their readers by pretending that their novels are translations from the English.

With regard to this Chef d'oeuvre of Mr. Rousseau, it was received with uncommon avidity in France, Italy, Germany, Holland, and, in short, through every part of the Continent where the French language is understood. In England, besides a very considerable number first imported, it has been already twice reprinted; but how much soever the world might be delighted with the original, I found it to be the general opinion of my countrymen, that it was one of those books which could not possibly be translated with any tolerable degree of justice to the author: and this general opinion, I own, was my chief motive for undertaking the work.

There are, in this great city, a considerable number of industrious labourers, who maintain themselves, and perhaps a numerous family, by writing for the booksellers, by whom they are ranged in separate classes, according to their different abilities; and the very lowest class of all, is that of Translators. Now it cannot be supposed that such poor wretches as are deemed incapable of better employment, can be perfectly acquainted either with their own or with any other language: besides, were they ever so well qualified, it becomes their duty to execute as much work, in as little time, as possible; for, at all events, their children must have bread: therefore it were unreasonable to expect that they should spend their precious moments in poring over a difficult sentence in order to render their version the more elegant. This I take to be the true reason why our translations from the French are, in general, so extremely bad.

I confess, the idioms of the two languages are very different, and therefore that it

will, in some instances, be impossible to reach the sublime delicacy of expression in an elegant French writer; but in return, their language is frequently so vague and diffuse, that it must be entirely the fault of the English translator if he does not often improve upon his original; but this will never be the case, unless we sit down with a design to translate the ideas rather than the words of our author.

Most of the translations which I have read, appear like a thin gauze spread over the original: the French language appears through every paragraph; but it is entirely owing to the want of bread, the want of attention, or want of ability in the translator. Mr. Pope, and some few others, have shewn the world, that not only the ideas of the most sublime writers may be accurately expressed in a translation, but that it is possible to improve and adorn them with beauties peculiar to the English language.

If in the following pages, the reader expects to find a servile, literal, translation, he will be mistaken. I never could, and never will, copy the failings of my author, be his reputation ever so great, in those instances where they evidently proceed from want of attention. Mr. Rousseau writes with great ease and elegance, but he sometimes wants propriety of thought, and accuracy of expression.

As to the real merit of this performance, the universal approbation it has met with is a stronger recommendation than any thing I could say in its praise.

A Dialogue Between a Man of Letters and Mr. J. J. Rousseau

N. There, take your Manuscript: I have read it quite through.

R. Quite through? I understand you: you think there are not many readers will follow your example.

N. Vel duo, vel nemo.

R. Turpe & miserabile. But let me have your sincere opinion.

N. I dare not.

R. You have dared to the utmost by that single word: Pray explain yourself.

N. My opinion depends upon your answer to this question: is it a real, or fictitious, correspondence?

R. I cannot perceive the consequence. In order to give one's sentiments of a book, of what importance can it be to know how it was written?

N. In this case it is of great importance. A portrait has its merit if it resembles the original, be that original ever so strange; but in a picture which is the produce of imagination, every human figure should resemble human nature, or the picture is of no value: yet supposing them both good in their kind, there is this difference, the portrait is interesting but to a few people, whilst the picture will please the public in general.

R. I conceive your meaning. If these letters are portraits, they are uninteresting; if they are pictures, they are ill done. Is it not so?

N. Precisely.

R. Thus I shall snatch your answers before you speak. But, as I cannot reply, directly to your question, I must beg leave to propose one in my turn. Suppose the worst: my Eloisa——

N. Oh! if she had really existed.

R. Well.

N. But certainly it is no more than a fiction.

R. Be it so.

N. Why then, there never was any thing more absurd: the letters are no letters, the romance is no romance, and the personages are people of another world.

R. I am sorry for it, for the sake of this.

N. Console yourself; there is no want of fools among us; but yours have no existence

in nature.

R. I could——No, I perceive the drift of your curiosity. But why do you judge so precipitately? Can you be ignorant how widely human nature differs from itself? how opposite its characteristics? how prejudice and manners vary according to times, places, and age. Who is it that can prescribe bounds to nature and say, Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther?

N. If such reasoning were allowed, monsters, giants, pygmies and chimeras of all kinds might be specifically admitted into nature: every object would be disfigured, and we should have no common model of ourselves. I repeat it, in a picture of human nature, every figure should resemble man.

R. I confess it; but then we should distinguish between the variety in human nature and that which is essential to it. What would you say of one who should only be able to know mankind in the picture of a Frenchman?

N. What would you say of one who, without expressing features or shape, should paint a human figure covered with a veil? Should we not have reason to ask, where is the man?

R. Without expressing features or shape? Is this just? There is no perfection in human nature: that is indeed chimerical. A young virgin in love with virtue, yet swerving from its dictates, but reclaimed by the horror of a greater crime; a too easy friend punished at last by her own heart for her culpable indulgence; a young man, honest and sensible, but weak, yet in words a philosopher; an old gentleman bigotted to his nobility, and sacrificing every thing to opinion; a generous and brave Englishman, passionately wise, and, without reason, always reasoning.

N. A husband, hospitable and gay, eager to introduce into his family his wife’s quondam paramour.

R. I refer you to the inscription of the plate.[1]

N. Les belles ames——Vastly fine!

R. O philosophy! What pains thou takest to contract the heart and lessen human nature!

N. It is fallaciously elevated by a romantic imagination. But to the point. The two friends——What do you say of them?——and that sudden conversion at the altar?——divine grace, no doubt.——

R. But Sir.

N. A pious Christian, not instructing her children in their catechism; who dies without praying; whose death nevertheless edifies the parson, and converts an Atheist——Oh!

R. Sir——

N. As to the reader being interested, his concern is universal, and therefore next to none. Not one bad action; not one wicked man to make us fear for the good. Events so natural, and so simple, that they scarce deserve the name of events; no surprize; no dramatic artifice; every thing happens just as it was expected. Is it worth while to register such actions as every man may see any day of his life in his own house or in that of his neighbour?

R. So that you would have common men, and uncommon events? Now I should rather desire the contrary. You took it for a romance: it is not a romance: but, as you said before, a collection of letters.

N. Which are no letters at all: this, I think, I said also. What an epistolary stile! how full of bombast! What exclamations! What preparation! How emphatical to express common ideas! What big words and weak reasoning! Frequently neither sense, accuracy, art, energy, nor depth. Sublime language and groveling thoughts. If your personages are in nature, confess, at least, that their stile is unnatural.

R. I own that in the light in which you are pleased to view them, it must appear so.

N. Do you suppose the public will not judge in the same manner; and did you not

ask my opinion?

R. I did, and I answer you with a design to have it more explicitly: now it appears that you would be better pleased with letters written on purpose to be printed.

N. Perhaps I might; at least I am of opinion that nothing should be printed which is not fit for the press.

R. So that in books we should behold mankind only as they chuse to appear.

N. Most certainly, as to the author; those whom he represents, such as they are. But in these letters this is not the case. Not one strong delineation; not a single personage strikingly characterized; no solid observations; no knowledge of the world. What can be learnt in the little sphere of two or three lovers or friends constantly employed in matters only relative to themselves?

R. We may learn to love human nature, whilst in extensive society we learn to hate mankind. Your judgment is severe; that of the public ought to be still more so. Without complaining of injustice, I will tell you, in my turn, in what light these letters appear to me; not so much to excuse their defects, as to discover their source.

The perceptions of persons in retirement are very different from those of people in the great world; their passions being differently modified, are differently exprest; their imaginations constantly imprest by the same objects, are more violently affected. The same small number of images constantly return, mix with every idea, and create those strange and false notions so remarkable in people who spend their lives in solitude; but does it follow that their language is energic? No; ’tis only extraordinary: it is in our conversation with the world that we learn to speak with energy; first, because we must speak differently and better than others, and then, being every moment obliged to affirm what may not be believed, and to express sentiments which we do not feel, we endeavour at a persuasive manner which supplies the place of interior persuasion. Do you believe that people of real sensibility express themselves with that vivacity, energy, and ardor which you so

much admire in our drama and romances? No; true passion, full of itself, is rather diffusive than emphatical; it does not even think of persuasion, as it never supposes that its existence can be doubtful. In expressing its feelings it speaks rather for the sake of its own ease, than to inform others. Love is painted with more vivacity in large cities, but is it in the village therefore less violent?

N. So that the weakness of the expression is a proof of the strength of their passion.

R. Sometimes, at least, it is an indication of its reality. Read but a love letter written by an author who endeavours to shine as a man of wit; if he has any warmth in his brain, his words will set fire to the paper; but the flame will spread no farther: you may be charmed, and perhaps a little moved, but it will be a fleeting agitation which will leave nothing except the remembrance of words. On the contrary, a letter really dictated by love, written by a lover influenced by a real passion, will be tame, diffuse, prolix, unconnected, and full of repetitions: his heart overflowing with the same sentiment, constantly returns to the same expressions, and like a natural fountain flows continually without being exhausted. Nothing brilliant, nothing remarkable; one remembers neither words nor phrases; there is nothing to be admired, nothing striking: yet we are moved without knowing why. Though we are not struck with strength of sentiment, we are touched with its truth, and our hearts, in spite of us, sympathize with the writer. But men of no sensibility, who know nothing more than the flowery jargon of the passions, are ignorant of those beauties and despise them.

N. I am all attention.

R. Very well. I say, that in real love letters, the thoughts are common, yet the stile is not familiar. Love is nothing more than an illusion; it creates for itself another universe; it is surrounded with objects which have no existence but in imagination, and its language is always figurative; but its figures are neither just nor regular: its eloquence consists in its disorder, and when it reasons least it is most convincing.

Enthusiasm is the last degree of this passion. When it is arrived at its greatest height, its object appears in a state of perfection; it then becomes its idol; it is placed in the heavens; and as the enthusiasm of devotion borrows the language of love, the enthusiasm of love also borrows the language of devotion. Its ideas present nothing but Paradise, angels, the virtue of saints, and the delights of heaven. In such transport, surrounded by such images, is it not natural to expect sublime language? Can it possibly debase its ideas by vulgar expressions? Will it not on the contrary raise its stile, and speak with adequate dignity? What then becomes of your epistolary stile? it would do mighty well, to be sure, in writing to the object of one's adoration: in that case they are not letters, but hymns.

N. We shall see what the world will say.

R. No: rather see the winter on my head. There is an age for experience, and another for recollection. Our sensibility may be extinguished by time; but the soul which was once capable of that sensibility remains. But to return to our letters: if you read them as the work of an author who endeavours to please, or piques himself on his writing, they are certainly detestable. But take them for what they are, and judge of them in their kind. Two or three young people, simple, if you will, but sensible, who mutually expressing the real sentiments of their hearts, have no intention to display their wit. They know and love each other too well for self-admiration to have any influence among them. They are children, and therefore think like children. They are not natives of France, how then can they be supposed to write correctly? They lived in solitude, and therefore could know but little of the world. Entirely filled with one single sentiment, they are in a constant delirium, and yet presume to philosophise. Would you have them know how to observe, to judge, and to reflect? No: of these they are ignorant; but they are versed in the art of love, and all their words and actions are connected with that passion. Their ideas are extravagant, but is not the importance which they give to these romantic notions more amusing than all the wit they could have displayed. They speak of every thing; they are constantly mistaken;

they teach us nothing, except the knowledge of themselves; but in making themselves known, they obtain our affection. Their errors are more engaging than the wisdom of the wise. Their honest hearts, even in their transgressions, bear still the prejudice of virtue, always confident and always betrayed. Nothing answers their expectations; every event serves to undeceive them. They are deaf to the voice of discouraging truth: they find nothing correspond with their own feelings, and therefore, detaching themselves from the rest of the universe, they create, in their separate society, a little world of their own, which presents an entire new scene.

N. I confess, that a young fellow of twenty, and girls of eighteen, though not; uninstructed, ought not to talk like philosophers, even though they may suppose themselves such. I own also, for this distinction has not escaped me, that these girls became wives of merit, and the young man a better observer. I make no comparison between the beginning and the end of the work. The detail of domestic occurrences may efface, in some measure, the faults of their younger years: the chaste and sensible wife, the worthy matron, may obliterate the remembrance of former weakness. But even this is a subject for criticism: the conclusion of the work renders the beginning reprehensible: one would imagine them to be two different books, which ought not to be read by the same people. If you intended to exhibit rational personages, why would you expose them before they were become so? Our attention to the lessons of wisdom is destroyed by the child’s play by which they are preceded: we are scandalized at the bad, before the good can edify us. In short, the reader is offended and throws the book aside in the very moment when it might become serviceable.

R. On the contrary, I am of opinion, that to those who are disgusted with the beginning, the end would be entirely superstitious: and that the beginning will be agreeable to those readers to whom the conclusion can be useful. So that, those who do not read to the end will have left nothing, because it was an improper book for them; and those to whom it may be of service would never have read it, if it had

begun with more gravity. Our lessons can never be useful unless they are so written as to catch the attention of those for whose benefit they were calculated.

I may have changed the means, and not the object. When I endeavoured to speak to men, I was not heard; perhaps in speaking to children I shall gain more attention; and children would have no more relish for naked reason, than for medicines ill disguised.

Cosi all’ egro fanciul porgiamo aspersi Di soave licor gl’orli del vaso; Succhi amari ingannato in tanto ei beve, E da l’ inganno suo vita riceve.

N. Here again I am afraid you are deceived: they will sip on the edge of the vessel, but will not drink the liquor.

R. Be it so; it will not be my fault: I shall have done all in my power to make it palatable. My young folks are amiable; but to love them at thirty it is necessary to have known them when they were ten years younger: One must have lived with them a long time to be pleased with their company; and to taste their virtues, it is necessary we should first have deplored their failings. Their letters are not interesting at first; but we grow attached by degrees, and can neither continue nor quit them. They are neither elegant, easy, rational, sensible, nor eloquent; but there is sensibility which gradually communicates itself to our hearts, and which at last is found to supply the place of all the rest. It is a long romance, of which no one part has power to move us, and yet the whole produces a proper effect. At least, such were its effects upon me: pray were not you touched in reading it?

N. No; yet I can easily conceive your being affected: if you are the author, nothing can be more natural; and if not, I can still account for it. A man of the world can have no taste for the extravagant ideas, the affected pathos, and false reasoning of your good folks; but they will suit a recluse, for the reason which you have given: now, before you determine to publish the manuscript, you would do well to remember that the world is not composed of hermits. All you can expect is that your

young gentleman will be taken for a Celadon, your Lord B—— for a Don Quixote, your young damsels for two Astreas, and that the world will laugh at them for a company of fools. But a continued folly cannot be entertaining. A man should write like Cervantes before he can expect to engage his reader to accompany him through six volumes of nonsense.

R. The very reason which would make you suppress this work, will induce me to print it.

N. What! the certainty of its not being read?

R. A little patience, and you will understand me. As to morals, I believe that all kinds of reading are useless to people of the world: first, because the number of new books which they run through, so generally contradict each other, that their effect is reciprocally destroyed. The few choice books which deserve a second perusal, are equally ineffectual: for, if they are written in support of received opinions, they are superfluous; and if in opposition, they are of no use; they are too weak to break the chain which attaches the reader to the vices of society. A man of the world may possibly, for a moment, be led from his wonted path by the dictates of morality; but he will find so many obstacles in the way, that he will speedily return to his former course. I am persuaded there are few people, who have had a tolerable education, that have not made this essay, at least once in their lives; but, finding their efforts vain, they are discouraged from any future attempt, and consider the morality of books as the jargon of idleness. The farther we retreat from business, great cities, and numerous societies, the more the obstacles to morality diminish. There is a certain point of distance where these obstacles cease to be insurmountable and there it is that books may be of use. When we live in solitude, as we do not then read with a design to display our reading, we are less anxious to change our books, and bestow on them more reflection; and as their principles find less opposition from without, their internal impression is more effectual. In retirement, the want of occupation,

obliges those who have no resource in themselves, to have recourse to books of amusement. Romances are more read in the provincial towns than at Paris, in towns less than in the country, and there they make the deepest impression: the reason is plain.

Now it happens unfortunately that the books which might amuse, instruct, and console the people in retirement, who are unhappy only in their own imagination, are generally calculated to make them still more dissatisfied with their situation. People of rank and fashion are the sole personages of all our romances. The refined taste of great cities, court maxims, the splendour of luxury, and epicurean morality; these are their precepts, these their lesson of instruction. The colouring of their false virtues tarnishes their real ones. Polite manners are substituted for real duties, fine sentiments for good actions, and virtuous simplicity is deemed want of breeding.

What effect must such representations produce in the mind of a country gentleman, in which his freedom and hospitality is turned into ridicule, and the joy which he spreads through his neighbourhood is pronounced to be a low and contemptible amusement? What influence must they not have upon his wife, when she is taught, that the care of her family is beneath a lady of her rank; and on his daughter, who being instructed in the jargon and affectation of the city, disdains for his clownish behaviour, the honest neighbour whom she would otherwise have married. With one consent, ashamed of their rusticity, and disgusted with their village, they leave their ancient mansion, which soon becomes a ruin, to reside in the metropolis; where the father, with his cross of St. Lewis, from a gentleman becomes a sharper; the mother keeps a gaming house; the daughter amuses herself with a circle of gamesters: and frequently all three, after having led a life of infamy, die in misery and dishonour.

Authors, men of letters, and philosophers are constantly insinuating, that in order to fulfil the duties of society, and to serve our fellow creatures, it is necessary that we should live in great cities: according to them, to fly from Paris, is to hate mankind;

people in the country are nobody in their eyes; to hear them talk, one would imagine that where there are no pensions, academies, nor open tables, there is no existence.

All our productions verge to the same goal. Tales, romances, comedies, all are levelled at the country; all conspire to ridicule rustic simplicity; they all display and extol the pleasures of the great world; it is a shame not to know them; and not to enjoy them, a misfortune. How many of those sharpers and prostitutes, with which Paris is so amply provided, were first seduced by the expectations of these imaginary pleasures? Thus prejudice and opinion contribute to effect the political system by attracting the inhabitants of each country to a single point of territory, leaving all the rest a desert: thus nations are depopulated, that their capitals may flourish; and this frivolous splendor with which fools are captivated, makes Europe verge with celerity towards its ruin. The happiness of mankind requires that we should endeavour to stop this torrent of pernicious maxims. The employment of the clergy is to tell us that we must be good and wise, without concerning themselves about the success of their discourses; but a good citizen, who is really anxious to promote virtue, should not only tell us to be good, but endeavour to make the path agreeable which will lead us to happiness.

N. Pray, my good friend, take breath for a moment. I am no enemy to useful designs; and I have been so attentive to your reasoning, that I believe it will be in my power to continue your argument. You are clearly of opinion, that to give to works of imagination the only utility of which they are capable, they must have an effect diametrically opposite to that which their authors generally propose; they must combat every human institution, reduce all things to a state of nature, make mankind in love with a life of peace and simplicity, destroy their prejudices and opinions, inspire them with a taste for true pleasure, keep them distant from each other, and instead of exciting people to crowd into large cities, persuade them to spread themselves all over the kingdom, that every part may be equally enlivened. I also comprehend, that it is not your intention to create a world of Arcadian shepherds, of

illustrious peasants labouring on their own acres and philosophising on the works of nature, nor any other romantic beings which exist only in books; but to convince mankind that in rural life there are many pleasures which they know not how to enjoy; that these pleasures are neither so insipid nor so gross as they imagine; that they are susceptible of taste and delicacy; that a sensible man, who should retire with his family into the country, and become his own farmer, might enjoy more rational felicity, than in the midst of the amusements of a great city; that a good housewife may be a most agreeable woman, that she may be as graceful and as charming as any town coquet of them all; in short, that the most tender sentiments of the heart will more effectually animate society, than the artificial language of polite circles, where the ill-natured laugh of satyr is the pitiful substitute of that real mirth which no longer exists. Have I not hit the mark?

R. 'Tis the very thing; to which I will add but one reflection. We are told that romances disturb the brain: I believe it true. In continually displaying to the reader the ideal charms of a situation very different from his own, he becomes dissatisfied, and makes an imaginary exchange for that which he is taught to admire. Desiring to be that which he is not, he soon believes himself actually metamorphosed, and so becomes a fool. If, on the contrary, romances were only to exhibit the pictures of real objects, of virtues and pleasures within our reach, they would then make us wiser and better. Books which are designed to be read in solitude, should be written in the language of retirement: if they are meant to instruct, they should make us in love with our situation; they should combat and destroy the maxims of the great world, by shewing them to be false and despicable, as they really are. Thus, Sir, a romance, if it be well written, or at least if it be useful, must be hissed, damned, and despised by the polite world, as being a mean, extravagant and ridiculous performance; and thus what is folly in the eyes of the world is real wisdom.

N. Your conclusion is self-evident. It is impossible better to anticipate your fall, nor to be better prepared to fall with dignity. There remains but one difficulty. People in

the country, you know, take their cue from us. A book calculated for them must first pass the censure of the town: if we think fit to damn it, its circulation is entirely stopt. What do you say to that?

R. The answer is quite simple. You speak of wits who reside in the country; whilst I would be understood to mean real country folks. You gentlemen who shine in the capital, have certain prepossessions of which you must be cured: you imagine that you govern the taste of all France, when in fact three fourths of the kingdom do not know that you exist. The books which are damned at Paris often make the fortune of country booksellers.

N. But why will you enrich them at the expense of ours?

R. Banter me as you please, I shall persist. Those who aspire to fame must calculate their works for the meridian of Paris; but those who write with a view to do good, must write for the country. How many worthy people are there who pass their lives in cultivating a few paternal acres, far distant from the metropolis, and who think themselves exiled by the partiality of fortune? During the long winter evenings, deprived of society, they pass the time in reading such books of amusement as happen to fall into their hands. In their rustic simplicity they do not pride themselves on their wit or learning; they read for entertainment rather than instruction; books of morality and philosophy are entirely unknown to them. As to your romances, they are so far from being adapted to their situation, that they serve only to render it insupportable. Their retreat is represented to be a desert, so that whilst they afford a few hours amusement, they prepare for them whole months of regret and discontent. Why may I not suppose that, by some fortunate accident, this book, like many others of still less merit, will fall into the hands of those inhabitants of the fields, and that the pleasing picture of a life exactly resembling theirs will render it more tolerable? I have great pleasure in the idea of a married couple reading this novel together, imbibing fresh courage to support their common labours, and perhaps new designs

to render them useful. How can they possibly contemplate the representation of a happy family without attempting to imitate the pleasing model? How can they be affected with the charms of conjugal union, even where love is wanting, without increasing and confirming their own attachment? In quitting their book, they will neither be discontented with their situation, nor disgusted at their labour: on the contrary, every object around them will assume a more delightful aspect, their duties will seem ennobled, their taste for the pleasures of nature will revive; her genuine sensations will be rekindled in their hearts, and perceiving happiness within their reach, they will learn to taste it as they ought: they will perform the same functions, but with another soul; and what they did before as peasants only, they will now transact as real patriarchs.

N. So far, you sail before the wind. Husbands, wives, matrons——but with regard to young girls; d'ye say nothing of those?

R. No. A modest girl will never read books of love. If she should complain of having been injured by the perusal of these volumes, she is unjust: she has lost no virtue; for she had none to lose.

N. Prodigious! attend to this, all ye amorous writers; for thus ye are all justified.

R. Provided they are justified by their own hearts and the object of their writings.

N. And is that the case with you?

R. I am too proud to answer to that question; but Eloisa had a certain rule by which she formed her judgment of books: [2] if you like it, use it in judging of this. Authors have endeavoured to make the reading of romances serviceable to youth. There never was a more idle project. It is just setting fire to the house in order to employ the engines. Having conceived this ridiculous idea, instead of directing the moral of their writings towards its proper object, it is constantly addressed to young girls, [3] without considering that these have no share in the irregularities complained of. In general, though their hearts may be corrupted, their conduct is

blameless. They obey their mothers in expectation of the time when it will be in their power to imitate them. If the wives do their duty, be assured the girls will not be wanting in theirs.

N. Observation is against you in this point. The whole sex seem to require a time for libertinism, either in one state or the other. It is a bad leaven, which must ferment soon or late. Among a civilized people the girls are easy, and the wives difficult, of access; but where mankind are less polite, it is just the reverse: the first consider the crime only, the latter the scandal. The principal question is, how to be left secured from the temptation: as to the crime it is of no consideration.

R. If we were to judge by its consequences, one would be apt to be of another opinion. But let us be just to the women: the cause of their irregularities are less owing to themselves, than to our bad institutions. The extreme inequality in the different members of the same family must necessarily stifle the sentiments of nature. The vices and misfortunes of children are owing chiefly to the father's unnatural despotism. A young wife, unsuitably espoused, and a victim to the avarice or vanity of her parents, glories in effacing the scandal of her former virtue by her present irregularities. If you would remedy this evil, proceed to its source. Public manners can only be reformed by beginning with private vices, which naturally arise from parents. But our reformers never proceed in this manner. Your cowardly authors preach only to the oppressed; and their morality can have no effect, because they have not the art to address the most powerful.

N. You, Sir, however run no risk of being accused of servility; but may you not possibly be too sincere? In striking at the root of this evil, may you not be the cause of more——

R. Evil? to whom? In times of epidemical contagion, when all are infected from their infancy, would it be prudent to hinder the distribution of salutary medicines under a pretence that they might do harm to people in health? You and I, Sir, differ

so widely on this point, that if it were reasonable to expect that these letters can meet with any success, I am persuaded they will do more good than a better book.

N. Certainly your females are excellent preachers. I am pleased to see you reconciled with the ladies; for I was really concerned when you imposed silence on the sex. [4]

R. You are too severe; I must hold my tongue: I am neither so wise nor so foolish as to be always in the right. Let us leave this bone for the critics.

N. With all my heart, lest they should want one. But suppose you had nothing to fear from any other quarter, how will you excuse to a certain severe censor of the stage, those warm descriptions, and impassioned sentiments, which are so frequent in those letters? Shew me a scene in any of our theatrical pieces equal to that in the wood at Clarens, or that of the dressing room. Read the letter on theatrical amusements; read the whole collection. In short, be confident, or renounce your former opinions. What would you have one think?

R. I would have the critics be confident with themselves, and not judge till they have thoroughly examined. Let me intreat you to read once more with attention the parts you have mentioned; read again the preface to Narcisse, and you will there find an answer to the accusation of inconsistency. Those forward gentlemen who pretend to discover that fault in the Devin du Village, will undoubtedly think it much more glaring in this work. They will only act in character; but you——

N. I recollect two passages. [5] You do not much esteem your cotemporaries.

R. Sir, I am also their cotemporary! O why was I not born in an age in which I ought to have burnt this collection!

N. Extravagant as usual! however, to a certain degree, your maxims are just. For instance; if your Eloisa had been chaste from the beginning, she would have afforded us less instruction; for to whom would she have served as a model? In the most corrupt ages mankind are fond of the most perfect lessons of morality: theory

supplies the place of practice, and at the small expense of a little leisure reading, they satisfy the remnant of their taste for virtue.

R. Sublime authors, relax a little your perfect models, if you expect that we should endeavour to imitate them. To what purpose do you vaunt unspotted purity? rather shew us that which may be recovered, and perhaps there are some who will attend to your instructions.

N. Your young hero has already made those reflections; but no matter, you would be thought no less culpable in having shewn us what is done, in order to shew what ought to be done. Besides, to inspire the girls with love, and to make wives reserved, is overturning the order of things, and recalling those trifling morals which are now totally proscribed by philosophy. Say what you will, it is very indecent, nay scandalous for a girl to be in love: nothing but a husband can authorise a lover. It was certainly very impolitic to be indulgent to the unmarried ladies, who are not allowed to read you, and severe upon the married ones, by whom you are to be judged. Believe me, if you were fearful of success, you may be quite easy: you have taken sufficient care to avoid an affront of that nature. Be it as it may, I shall not betray your confidence. I hope your imprudence will not carry you too far. If you think you have written a useful book, publish it; but by all means conceal your name.

R. Conceal my name! Will an honest man speak to the public from behind a curtain? Will he dare to print what he does not dare to own? I am the editor of this book, and I shall certainly fix my name in the title page.

N. Your name in the title-page!

R. Yes, Sir, in the title-page.

V. You are surely in jest.

R. I am positively in earnest.

N. What your real name? Jean Jacques Rousseau, at full length?

R. Jean Jacques Rousseau at full length.

N. You surely don't think. What will the world say of you?

R. What they please. I don't print my name with a design to pass for the author, but to be answerable for the book. If it contains any thing bad, let it be imputed to me; if good, I desire no praise. If the work in general deserves censure, there is so much more reason for prefixing my name. I have no ambition to pass for better than I am.

N. Are you content with that answer?

R. Yes, in an age when it is impossible for any one to be good.

N. Have you forgot les belles ames?

R. By nature belles, but corrupted by your institutions.

N. And so we shall behold, in the title-page of a book of love-epistles, by J.J. Rousseau, Citizen of Geneva!

R. No, not Citizen of Geneva. I shall not profane the name of my country. I never prefix it, but to those writings by which I think it will not be dishonoured.

N. Your own name is no dishonourable one, and you have some reputation to lose. This mean and weak performance will do you no service. I wish it was in my power to dissuade you; but if you are determined to proceed, I approve of your doing it boldly and with a good grace. At least this will be in character. But a propos; do you intend to prefix your motto?

R. My bookseller asked me the same question, and I thought it so humorous that I promised to give him the credit of it. No, Sir, I shall not prefix my motto to this book; nevertheless, I am now less inclined to relinquish it than ever. Remember that I thought of publishing those letters at the very time when I wrote against the theatres, and that a desire of excusing one of my writings, has not made me disguise truth in the other. I have accused myself before hand, perhaps, with more severity than any other person will accuse me. He who prefers truth to fame, may hope to

prefer it to life itself. You say that we ought to be confident: I doubt whether that be possible to man, but it is not impossible to act with invariable truth. This I will endeavour to do.

N. Why then, when I ask whether you are the author of these letters, do you evade the question?

R. I will not lie, even in that case.

N. But you refuse to speak the truth.

R. It is doing honour to truth to keep it secret. You would have less difficulty with one who made no scruple of a lie. Besides, you know men of taste are never mistaken in the pen of an author. How can you ask a question which it is your business to resolve?

N. I have no doubt with regard to some of the letters; they are certainly yours: but in others you are quite invisible, and I much doubt the possibility of disguise in this case. Nature, who does not fear being known, frequently changes her appearance; but art is often discovered, by attempting to be too natural. These epistles abound with faults, which the most arrant scribbler would have avoided. Declamation, repetitions, contradictions, &c. In short, it is impossible that a man, who can write better, could ever resolve to write so ill. What man in his senses would have made that foolish Lord B—— advance such a shocking proposal to Eloisa? Or what author would not have corrected the ridiculous behaviour of his young hero, who though positively resolved to die, takes good care to apprize all the world of his intention, and finds himself at last in perfect health? Would not any writer have known that he ought to support his characters with accuracy, and vary his stile accordingly, and he would then infallibly have excelled even nature herself?

I have observed that in a very intimate society, both stile and characters are extremely similar, and that when two souls are closely united, their thoughts, words, and actions will be nearly the same. This Eloisa, as she is represented, ought to be an

absolute enchantress; all who approach her, ought immediately to resemble her; all her friends should speak one language; but these effects are much easier felt than imagined: and even if it were possible to express them, it would be imprudent to attempt it. An author must be governed by the conceptions of the multitude, and therefore all refinement is improper. This is the touch-stone of truth, and in this it is that a judicious eye will discover real nature.

R. Well, and so you conclude——

N. I do not conclude at all. I am in doubt, and this doubt has tormented me inexpressibly, during the whole time I spent in reading these letters. If it be all a fiction, it is a bad performance; but say that these two women have really existed, and I will read their epistles once a year to the end of my life.

R. Strange! what signifies it whether they ever existed or not? They are no where to be found: they are no more.

N. No more? So they actually did exist.

R. The conclusion is conditional: if they ever did exist, they are now no more.

N. Between you and I, these little subtilties are more conclusive than perplexing.

R. They are such as you force me to use, that I may neither betray myself nor tell an untruth.

N. In short, you may do as you think proper; your Title is sufficient to betray you.

R. It discovers nothing relative to the matter in question; for who can tell whether I did not find this title in the manuscript? Who knows whether I have not the same doubts which you have? Whether all this mystery be not a pretext to conceal my own ignorance?

N. But however you are acquainted with the scene of action. You have been at Vevey, in the Pays de Vaud?

R. Often; and I declare that I never heard either of Baron D'Etange, or his Daughter.

The name of Wolmar is entirely unknown in that country. I have been at Clarens, but never saw any house like that which is described in these letters. I passed through it in my return from Italy, in the very year when the sad catastrophe happened, and I found no body in tears for the death of Eloisa Wolmar. In short, as much as I can recollect of the country, there are, in these letters, several transpositions of places, and topographical errors, proceeding either from ignorance in the author, or from a design to mislead the reader. This is all you will learn from me on this point, and you may be assured that no one else shall draw any thing more from me.

N. All the world will be as curious as I am. If you print this work, tell the public what you have told me. Do more, write this conversation as a Preface: it contains all the information necessary for the reader.

R. You are in the right. It will do better than any thing I could say of my own accord. Though these kind of apologies seldom succeed.

N. True, where the author spares himself. But I have taken care to remove that objection here. Only I would advise you to transpose the parts. Pretend that I wanted to persuade you to publish, and that you objected. This will be more modest, and will have a better effect.

R. Would that be consistent with the character for which you praised me a while ago?

N. It would not. I spoke with a design to try you. Leave things as they are.

Advertisement

The following Dialogue was originally intended as a Preface to Eloisa; but its form and length permitting me to prefix to that Work only a few extracts from it, I now publish it entire, in hopes that it will be found to contain some useful hints concerning Romances in general. Besides, I thought it proper to wait till the Book

had taken its chance, before I discussed its inconveniences and advantages, being unwilling either to injure the Bookseller, or supplicate the indulgence of the Public.

The following Account of this Work is taken from the Journal des Sçavans for June 1761, Printed at Paris.

This work is a strange, but memorable monument of the eloquence of the passions, the charms of virtue, and the force of imagination. Unfeeling spirits may, as long as they please, remark and exaggerate the faults of which the author does not scruple to accuse himself in his two most singular prefaces; they may arraign him for frequent want of taste, call his stile unequal and incorrect, his sentiments too refined, and his paradoxes inexplicable; they may complain that his notes are ludicrous and misplaced, as they frequently break in upon a tender sentiment, a pathetic situation, and that in general they are nothing more than an anticipated parody on the objections, whether just or groundless, which the author seems to expect from certain critics; they may even attempt to undermine the foundation of the work, and accuse the author of cold prolixity in his description of the peace and happiness of Clarens, after the violent agitation of those grand movements by which it is preceded; they may be shocked with the useless and abortive passion of Clara for St. Preux, the negotiation begun concerning their marriage, the impenetrable, obscure, and consequently uninteresting amours of Lord B—— in Italy; they may think the author extravagant in the general choice of his events; but whatever may be the present and future judgment of the public,

Ut cumque ferent ea facta minores, Vincet Amor.

What heart can be unaffected with the dangers, the misfortunes, the weakness, and the virtues of Eloisa? Who can possibly be insensible to the ardor of her lover, the vigilant, active, and impatient friendship of Clara, the noble and encouraging protection of Lord B——, the unshaken wisdom of Wolmar, and all these characters moved by the most extraordinary springs? Who can resist those torrents of pathetic

language which penetrate the inmost soul, and so tyrannically command our tears; those master-strokes of simplicity which open the recesses of the human heart, and excite the pleasure of weeping sensibility? How can we help admiring his talent of giving life to every object, of transporting the reader in the middle of the scene, and engaging him as a party in every action, by the happy choice of incidents, and if I may be allowed the expression, by the use of words the most identical to the things intended to be described? Can there be a reader who is not enamoured of the soul of Eloisa? Can there be a reader who does not feel the loss of her as if she were his own, and who does not join in the general mourning at Clarens, and the despair of Clara on the death of her friend?

A common author would have satisfied himself with giving us, once for all, a beautiful picture of his heroine, in which he would have shewn us, in one general point of view, the accomplishment of every duty, and the expansion of every sentiment, by loading our imagination with all the particular applications of this virtuous principle to every single event. Mr. Rousseau, on the contrary, in one continued adion, always before our eyes, displays his Eloisa fulfilling without study, and without the least confusion, all the duties of a wife, a friend, a daughter, a mother, and mistress of a family; so that we behold her constantly employed in these several situations, without confounding the rights of any of them; without favouring one at the expense of the other. He does not relate her actions, but makes her perform them in our sight, and by that means renders those things real, which in recital would appear hyperbolical, romantic, and incredible.

In the great number of different pictures which the author has here collected, whether he paints the respectable simplicity of Valesian manners, the brilliant corruption of great cities, the restricted impatience of expecting love, the wildness of despair, or the pathetic regret of a generous passion after an extraordinary sacrifice; whether, in the interesting scene of Meillerie, he displays all the eloquence of genius, and every tender emotion of the heart; whether excited by the plausibility of

logic he collects his whole strength to destroy the sophisms of false honour; whether Virtue herself thunders with her respectable and sublime voice against the crime of suicide justified by eloquence; we always find his manner properly adapted both to the subject and to the speaker, which renders the illusion compleat.

Almost every trial which the soul can experience is represented either in the principal or accessory situations, or in the reflections. In short, the human soul is here penetrated and displayed in every point of view; so that every sensible heart may be certain of beholding itself in this mirror.

The nature and form of this work will not allow of a regular extract. It consists entirely of a gradual unfolding of ideas and sensations which admit of no analysis, and which can be pursued only in the work itself. The author in the catastrophe imitates the happy artifice of the artist who painted the sacrifice of Iphigenia. Eloisa dies; they weep round her ashes. The author paints this universal grief; he paints the silent but sincere affliction of her husband, the affecting stupor of the father, the extravagant sorrow of her friend: and now the despair of her lover remains to be described; but that was inexpressible: the author wisely draws a veil before him, and leaves the rest to our imagination.

The picture of Eloisa dying can be compared only to the scene of Alcestes expiring, in Euripides.

Upon the whole, it were needless to say how much this work deserves to be read, since the eagerness of the Public hath already sufficiently prevented us. We cannot better express our approbation of a performance in which even vice itself breathes an air of virtue, than in the words of Eloisa, who in speaking of Lord B—— says, was there ever a man without faults who possessed great virtues? And in like manner we ask, whether there was ever a work without blemish which might boast of such penetrating and sublime beauties?

Eloisa

Volume I

Letter I. To Eloisa.

I must fly from you, madam, in truth I must. I am to blame for continuing with you so long, or rather, I ought never to have beheld you. But, situated as I am, what can I do? How shall I determine? You have promised me your friendship; consider my perplexity, and give me your advice.

You are sensible that I became one of your family in consequence of an invitation from your mother. Believing me possessed of some little knowledge, she thought that I might be of service in the education of her beloved daughter, in a situation where proper masters were not to be obtained. Proud to be instrumental in adding a few embellishments to one of nature’s most beautiful compositions, I dared to engage in the perilous task, unmindful of the danger, or, at least, unapprehensive of the consequence. I will not tell you that I begin to suffer for my presumption. I hope I shall never so far forget myself as to say any thing which you ought not to hear, or fail in that respect which is due to your virtue, rather than to your birth or personal charms. If I must suffer, I have the consolation, at least, that I suffer alone. I can enjoy no happiness at the expense of yours.

And yet I see you and converse with you every day of my life, and am but too sensible that you innocently aggravate a misfortune which you cannot pity, and of which you ought to be ignorant. It is true, I know what prudence would dictate, in a case like this, where there is no hope; and I should certainly follow her advice if I could reconcile it with my notions of probity. How can I with decency quit a family into which I was so kindly invited, where I have received so many obligations, and where, by the tenderest of mothers, I am thought of some utility to a daughter whom

she loves more than all the world? How can I resolve to deprive this affectionate parent of the pleasure she proposes to herself in, one day, surprizing her husband with your progress in the knowledge of things of which he must naturally suppose you ignorant? Shall I impolitely quit the house without taking leave of her? Shall I declare to her the cause of my retreat, and would not she even have reason to be offended with this confession from a man whose inferior birth and fortune must for ever remain insuperable bars to his happiness?

There seems but one method to extricate me from this embarrassment: the hand which involved me in it must also relieve me. As you are the cause of my offence, you must inflict my punishment: out of compassion, at least, deign to banish me from your presence. Shew my letter to your parents; let your doors be shut against me; spurn me from you in what manner you please; from you I can bear any thing; but of my own accord I have no power to fly from you.

Spurn me from you! fly your presence! why? Why should it be a crime to be sensible of merit, and to love that which we cannot fail to honour? No, charming Eloisa; your beauty might have dazzled my eyes, but it never would have misled my heart, had it not been animated with something yet more powerful. It is that captivating union between a lively sensibility and invariable sweetness of disposition; it is that tender feeling for the distresses of your fellow creatures; it is that amazing justness of sentiment, and that exquisite taste which derive their excellence from the purity of your soul; they are, in short, your mental charms much more than those of your person, which I adore. I confess it may be possible to imagine beauties still more transcendently perfect; but more amiable, and more deserving the heart of a wise and virtuous man,——no, no, Eloisa, it is impossible.

I am sometimes inclined to flatter myself that, as in the parity of our years, and similitude of taste, there is also a secret sympathy in our affections. We are both so young that our nature can hitherto have received no false bias from any thing

adventitious, and all our inclinations seem to coincide. Before we have imbibed the uniform prejudices of the world, our general perceptions seem uniform; and why dare I not suppose the same concord in our hearts, which in our judgment is so strikingly apparent? Sometimes it happens that our eyes meet; involuntary sighs betray our feelings, tears steal from——O! my Eloisa! if this unison of soul should be a divine impulse——if heaven should have destined us——all the power on earth——Ah pardon me! I am bewildered: I have mistaken a vain wish for hope: the ardour of my desires gave to their imaginary object a solidity which did not exist. I foresee with horror the torments which my heart is preparing for itself. I do not seek to flatter my misfortune; if it were in my power I would avoid it. You may judge of the purity of my sentiments by the favour I ask. Destroy, if possible, the source of the poison that both supports and kills me. I am determined to effect my cure or my death, and I therefore implore your rigorous injunction, as a lover would supplicate your compassion.

Yes, I promise, I swear, on my part, to do every thing within my power to recover my reason, or to bury my growing anxiety in the inmost recesses of my soul. But, for mercy’s sake, turn from me those lovely eyes that pierce me to the heart; suffer me no longer to gaze upon that face, that air, those arms, those hands, that engaging manner; disappoint the imprudent avidity of my looks; no longer let me hear that enchanting voice, which cannot be heard without emotion; be, alas! in every respect, another woman, that my soul may return to its former tranquillity.

Shall I tell you, without apology? When we are engaged in the puerile amusements of these long evenings, you cruelly permit me, in the presence of the whole family, to increase a flame that is but too violent already. You are not more reserved to me than to any of the rest. Even yesterday you almost suffered me, as a forfeit, to take a kiss: you made but a faint resistance. Happily, I did not persist. I perceived by my increasing palpitation, that I was rushing upon my ruin, and therefore stopped in time. If I had dared to indulge my inclination, that kiss would have proved my last

sigh, and I should have died the happiest of mortals.

For heaven’s sake, let us quit those plays, since they may possibly be attended with such fatal consequences; even the most simple of them all is not without its danger. I tremble as often as our hands meet, and I know not how it happens, but they meet continually. I start the instant I feel the touch of your finger; as the play advances I am seized with a fever, or rather delirium; my senses gradually forsake me, and, in their absence, what can I say, what can I do, where hide myself, or how be answerable for my conduct?

The hours of instruction are not less dangerous. Your mother, or your cousin, no sooner leave the room than I observe a change in your behaviour. You at once assume an air so serious, so cold, that my respect, and the fear of offending, destroys my presence of mind, and deprives me of my judgment: with difficulty and trembling, I babble over a lesson, which even your excellent talents are unable to pursue. This affected change in your behaviour is hurtful to us both: you confound me and deprive yourself of instruction, whilst I am entirely at a loss to account for this sudden alteration in a person naturally so even-tempered and reasonable. Tell me, pray tell me, why you are so sprightly in public, and so reserved when by ourselves? I imagined it ought to be just the contrary, and that one should be more or less upon their guard, in proportion to the number of spectators. But instead of this, when with me alone, you are ceremonious, and familiar when we join in mixed company. If you deign to be more equal, probably my torment will be less.

If that compassion which is natural to elevated minds, can move you in behalf of an unfortunate youth, whom you have honoured with some share in your esteem; you have it in your power, by a small change in your conduct, to render his situation less irksome, and to enable him, with more tranquility, to support his silence and his sufferings: but if you find yourself not touched with his situation, and are determined to exert your power to ruin him, he will acquiesce without murmuring:

he would rather, much rather, perish by your order, than incur your displeasure by his indiscretion. Now, though you are become mistress of my future destiny, I cannot reproach myself with having indulged the least presumptive hope. If you have been so kind as to read my letter, you have complied with all I should have dared to request, even though I had no refusal to fear.

Letter II. To Eloisa.

How strangely was I deceived in my first letter! instead of alleviating my pain, I have increased my distress by incurring your displeasure: and, alas! that, I find, is the least supportable of all misfortunes. Your silence, your cold, and reserved behaviour, but too plainly indicate my doom. You have indeed granted one part of my petition, but it was to punish me with the greater severity.

E poi ch’ amor di me vi fece accorta Fur i biondi capelli allor velati, E l’amorosi sguardo in se raccolto.

You have withdrawn that innocent familiarity in public of which I foolishly complained; and in private you are become still more severe: you are so ingeniously cruel, that your complaisance is as intolerable as your refusal.

Were it possible for you to conceive how much your indifference affects me, you would certainly think my punishment too rigorous. What would I not give to recall that unfortunate letter, and that I had born my former sufferings without complaint! So fearful am I of adding to my offence, that I should never have ventured to write a second letter, if I did not flatter myself with the hopes of expiating the crime I committed in the first. Will you deem it any satisfaction if I confess that I mistook my own intention? or shall I protest that I never was in love with you?——O! no; I can never be guilty of such a horrid perjury! The heart which is impressed with your fair image must not be polluted with a lye. If I am doomed to be unhappy——be it so. I cannot stoop to any thing mean or deceitful to extenuate my fault. My pen refuses to disavow the transgression of which my heart is but too justly accused.

Methinks I already feel the weight of your indignation, and await its final consequence as a favour which I have some right to expect; for the passion which consumes me deserves to be punished, but not despised. For heaven's sake, do not leave me to myself; condescend, at least, to determine my fate; deign to let me know your pleasure. I will obey implicitly whatever you think proper to command. Do you impose eternal silence? I will be silent as the grave. Do you banish me your presence? I swear that I will never see you more. Will my death appease you? that would be, of all, the least difficult. There are no terms which I am not ready to subscribe, unless they should enjoin me not to love you; yet even in that I would obey you if it were possible.

A hundred times a day I am tempted to throw myself at your feet, bathe them with my tears, and to implore your pardon, or receive my death: but a sudden terror damps my resolution; my trembling knees want power to bend; my words expire upon my lips, and my soul finds no support against the dread of offending you.

Was ever mortal in so terrible a situation! My heart is but too sensible of its offence, yet cannot cease to offend: my crime and my remorse conspire in its agitation, and, ignorant of my destiny, I am cruelly suspended between the hope of your compassion and the fear of punishment.

But, no! I do not hope; I have no right to hope: I ask no indulgence, but that you will hasten my sentence. Let your just revenge be satisfied. Do you think me sufficiently wretched to be thus reduced to solicit vengeance on my own head? Punish me, it is your duty; but if you retain the least degree of compassion for me, do not, I beseech you, drive me to despair with those cold looks, and that air of reserve and discontent. When once a criminal is condemned to die, all resentment should cease.

Letter III. To Eloisa.

Do not be impatient, madam; this is the last importunity you will receive from me. Little did I apprehend, in the dawn of my passion, what a train of ills I was preparing

for myself! I then foresaw none greater than that a hopeless passion, which reason, in time, might overcome; but I soon experienced one much more intolerable in the pain which I felt at your displeasure, and now the discovery of your uneasiness is infinitely more afflicting than all the rest. O Eloisa! I perceive it with bitterness of soul, my complaints affect your peace of mind. You continue invincibly silent; but my heart is too attentive not to penetrate into the secret agitations of your mind. Your eyes appear gloomy, thoughtful, and fixed upon the ground; sometimes they wander and fall undesignedly upon me; your bloom fades; an unusual paleness overspreads your cheeks; your gaiety forsakes you; you seem oppressed with grief and the unalterable sweetness of your disposition alone enables you to preserve the shadow of your good humour.

Whether it be sensibility, whether it be disdain, whether it be compassion for my sufferings, I see you are deeply affected. I fear to augment your distress, and I am more unhappy on this account, than flattered with the hope it might possibly occasion; for, if I know myself, your felicity is infinitely dearer to me than my own.

I now begin to be sensible that I judged very erroneously of the feelings of my heart, and, too late, I perceive, that what I at first took for a fleeting phrenzy, is but too inseparably interwoven with my future destiny. It is your late melancholy that has made the increasing progress of my malady apparent. The lustre of your eyes, the delicate glow of your complexion, your excellent understanding, and all the enchantment of your former vivacity, could not have affected me half so much as your present manifest dejection. Be assured, divine maid, if it were possible for you to feel the intolerable flame, which your last eight pensive days of languor and discontent have kindled in my soul, you yourself would shudder at the misery you have caused. But there is now no remedy: my despair whispers, that nothing but the cold tomb will extinguish the raging fire within my breast.

Be it so: he that cannot command felicity may at least deserve it. You may possibly

be obliged to honour with your esteem the man whom you did not deign to answer. I am young, and may, perchance, one day, merit the regard of which I am now unworthy. In the mean time, it is necessary that I should restore to you that repose which I have lost for ever, and of which you are, by my presence, in spite of myself, deprived. It is but just that I alone should suffer, since I alone am guilty. Adieu, too, too charming Eloisa! Resume your tranquillity, and be again happy. Tomorrow I am gone for ever. But be assured, that my violent, spotless passion for you, will end only with my life; that my heart, full of so divine an object, will never debase itself by admitting a second impression; that it will divide all its future homage between you and virtue, and that no other flame shall ever profane the altar where Eloisa was adored.

Billet I. From Eloisa.

Be not too positive in your opinion that your absence is become necessary. A virtuous heart will overcome its folly, or be silent, and so might, perhaps, in time——But you——you may stay.

Answer.

I was a long time silent; your cold indifference forced me to speak at last. Virtue may possibly get the better of folly, but who can bear to be despised by one they love? I must be gone.

Billet II. From Eloisa.

No, Sir; after what you have seemed to feel; after what you have dared to tell me; a man, such as you feign yourself, will not fly; he will do more.

Answer.

I have feigned nothing except the moderate passion of a heart filled with despair. To-morrow you shall be satisfied; and notwithstanding all you can say, the effort

will be less painful than to fly from you.

Billet III. From Eloisa.

Foolish youth! if my life be dear to thee, do not dare to attempt thy own. I am beset, and can neither speak nor write to you till to-morrow. Wait.

Letter IV. From Eloisa.

Must I then, at last, confess, the fatal, the ill-disguised, secret! How often have I sworn that it should never burst from my heart but with my life! Thy danger wrests it from me. It is gone, and my honour is lost for ever. Alas, I have but too religiously performed my vow; can there be a death more cruel than to survive one's honour?

What shall I say, how shall I break the painful silence? or rather, have I not said all, and am I not already too well understood? Alas! thou hast seen too much not to divine the rest; Imperceptibly deluded into the snare of the seducer, I see, without being able to avoid it, the horrid precipice before me. Artful man! It is not thy passion, but mine, that excites thy presumption. Thou observest the distraction of my soul; thou availest thyself of it to accomplish my ruin, and now that thou hast rendered me despicable, my greatest misfortune is, that I am forced to behold thee also in a despicable light. Ungrateful wretch! In return for my esteem, thou hast ruined me. Had I supposed thy heart capable of exulting, believe me, thou hadst never enjoyed this triumph.

Well thou knowest, and it will increase thy remorse, that there was not in my soul one vicious inclination. My virtue and innocence were inexpressibly dear to me, and I pleased myself with the hopes of cherishing them in a life of industrious simplicity. But to what purpose my endeavour, since heaven rejects my offering? The very first day we met, I imbibed the poison which now infects my senses and my reason; I felt it instantly, and thy eyes, thy sentiments, thy discourse, thy guilty pen, daily increase its malignity.

I have neglected nothing to stop the progress of this fatal passion. Sensible of my own weakness, how gladly would I have evaded the attack; but the eagerness of thy pursuit hath baffled my precaution. A thousand times I have resolved to cast myself at the feet of those who gave me being; a thousand times I have determined to open to them my guilty heart: but they can form no judgment of its condition; they would apply but common remedies to a desperate disease; my mother is weak and without authority; I know the inflexible severity of my father, and I should bring down ruin and dishonour upon myself, my family, and thee. My friend is absent, my brother is no more.

I have not a protector in the world to save me from the persecution of my enemy. In vain I implore the assistance of heaven; heaven is deaf to the prayers of irresolution. Every thing conspires to increase my anxiety; every circumstance combines to abandon me to myself, or rather cruelly to deliver me up to thee; all nature seems thy accomplice; my efforts are vain, I adore thee in spite of myself. And shall that heart which, in its full vigour, was unable to resist, shall it only half surrender? Shall a heart which knows no dissimulation attempt to conceal the poor remains of its weakness? No, the first step was the most difficult, and the only one which I ought never to have taken. Shall I now pretend to stop at the rest? No, that first false step plunged me into the abyss, and my degree of misery is entirely in thy power.

Such is my horrid situation, that I am forced to turn to the author of my misfortunes, and implore his protection against himself. I might, I know I might, have deferred this confession of my despair; I might, for some time longer, have disguised my shameful weakness, and by yielding gradually, have imposed upon myself. Vain dissimulation! which could only have flattered my pride, but could not save my virtue: away, away! I see but too plainly whither my first error tends, and shall not endeavour to prepare for, but to escape, perdition.

Well then, if thou art not the very lowest of mankind, if the least spark of virtue lives

within thy soul, if it retains any vestige of those sentiments of honour which seemed to penetrate thy heart, thou canst not possibly be so vile as to take any unjust advantage of a confession forced from me by a fatal distraction of my senses. No, I know thee well; thou wilt support my weakness, thou wilt become my safeguard, thou wilt defend my person against my own heart. Thy virtue is the last refuge of my innocence; my honour dares confide in thine, for thou canst not preserve one without the other. Ah! let thy generous soul preserve them both, and, at least, for thy own sake, be merciful.

Good God! am I thus sufficiently humbled? I write to thee on my knees; I bathe my paper with my tears; I pay to thee my timorous homage: and yet thou art not to believe me ignorant that it was in my power to have reversed the scene; and that, with a little art, which would have rendered me despicable in my own eyes, I might have been obeyed and worshipped. Take the frivolous empire, I relinquish it to my friend, but leave me, ah! leave me my innocence. I had rather live thy slave and preserve my virtue, than purchase thy disobedience at the price of my honour. Shouldst thou deign to hear me, what gratitude mayest thou not claim from her who will owe to thee the recovery of her reason? How charming must be the tender union of two souls unacquainted with guilt! Thy vanquished passions will prove the source of happiness, and thy pleasures will be worthy of heaven itself.

I hope, nay I am confident, that the man to whom I have given my whole heart will not belie my opinion of his generosity; but I flatter myself also, if he is mean enough to take the least unseemly advantage of my weakness, that contempt and indignation will restore my senses, and that I am not yet sunk so low as to fear a lover for whom I should have reason to blush. Thou shalt be virtuous, or be despised; I will be respected, or be myself again; it is the only hope I have left, preferable to the hope of death.

Letter V. To Eloisa.

Celestial powers! I possessed a soul capable of affliction, O inspire me with one that can bear felicity! Divine love! spirit of my existence, O support me! for I sink down opprest with extasy. How inexpressible are the charms of virtue! How invincible the power of a beloved object! fortune, pleasure, transport, how poignant your impression! O how shall I withstand the rapid torrent of bliss which overflows my heart! and how dispel the apprehensions of a timorous maid? Eloisa——no! my Eloisa on her knees! My Eloisa weep!——Shall she, to whom the universe should bend, supplicate the man who adores her, to be careful of her honour, and to preserve his own? Were it possible for me to be out of humour with you, I should be a little angry at your fears; they are disgraceful to us both. Learn, thou chaste and heavenly beauty, to know better the nature of thy empire. If I adore thy charming person, is it not for the purity of that soul by which it is animated, and which bears such ineffable marks of its divine origin? You tremble with apprehension: good God! what hath she to fear, who stamps with reverence and honour every sentiment she inspires? Is there a man upon earth who could be vile enough to offer the least insult to such virtue?

Permit, O permit me, to enjoy the unexpected happiness of being beloved——beloved by such——Ye princes of the world, I now look down upon your grandeur. Let me read a thousand and a thousand times, that enchanting epistle, where thy tender sentiments are painted in such strong and glowing colours; where I observe with transport, notwithstanding the violent agitation of thy soul, that even the most lively passions of a noble heart never lose sight of virtue. What monster, after having read that affecting letter, could take advantage of your generous confession, and attempt a crime which must infallibly make him wretched and despicable even to himself. No, my dearest Eloisa, there can be nothing to fear from a friend, a lover, who must ever be incapable of deceiving you. Though I should entirely have lost my reason, though the discomposure of my senses should hourly increase, your person will always appear to me, not only the most beautiful, but the

most sacred deposit with which mortal was ever instructed. My passion, like its object, is unalterably pure. The horrid idea of incest does not shock me more than the thought of polluting your heavenly charms with a sacrilegious touch: you are not more inviolably safe with your own parent than with your lover. If ever that happy lover should in your presence forget himself but for a moment——O 'tis impossible. When I am no longer in love with virtue, my love for my Eloisa must expire: on my first offence, withdraw your affection and cast me off for ever.

By the purity of our mutual tenderness, therefore, I conjure you, banish all your suspicion. Why should your fear exceed the passions of your lover! To what greater felicity can I aspire, when that with which I am blest, is already more than I am well able to support? We are both young, and in love unexperienced, it is true: but is that honour which conducts us, a deceitful guide? can that experience be needful which is acquired only from vice? I am strangely deceived, if the principles of rectitude are not rooted in the bottom of my heart. In truth, my Eloisa, I am no vile seducer, as, in your despair, you were pleased to call me; but am artless and of great sensibility, easily discovering my feelings, but feeling nothing at which I ought to blush. To say all in one word, my love for Eloisa is not greater than my abhorrence of the crime. I am even doubtful, whether the love which you inspire be not in its nature incompatible with vice; whether a corrupt heart could possibly feel its influence. As for me, the more I love you, the more exalted are my sentiments. Can there be any degree of virtue, however unattainable for its own sake, to which I would not aspire to become more worthy of my Eloisa?

Letter VI. Eloisa To Clara.

Is my dear cousin resolved to spend her whole life in bewailing her poor Chaillot, and will she forget the living because of the dead? I sympathize in your grief, and think it just, but shall it therefore be eternal? Since the death of your mother, she was assiduously careful of your education; she was your friend rather than your

governess. She loved you with great tenderness, and me for your sake; her instructions were all intended to enrich our hearts with principles of honour and virtue. All this I know, my dear, and acknowledge it with gratitude; but confess with me also, that in some respects she acted very imprudently; that she often indiscreetly told us things with which we had no concern; that she entertained us eternally with maxims of gallantry, her own juvenile adventures, the management of amours; and that to avoid the snares of men, though she might tell us not to give ear to their protestations, yet she certainly instructed us in many things with which there was no necessity for young girls to be made acquainted. Reflect therefore upon her death as a misfortune, not without some consolation. To girls of our age, her lessons grew dangerous, and who knows but heaven may have taken her from us the very moment in which her removal became necessary to our future happiness. Remember the salutary advice you gave me when I was deprived of the best of brothers. Was Chaillot dearer to you? Is your loss greater than mine?

Return, my dear, she has no longer any occasion for you. Alas! whilst you are wasting your time in superfluous affliction, may not your absence be productive of greater evils? Why are you not afraid, who know the beatings of my heart, to abandon your friend to misfortunes which your presence might prevent. O Clara! strange things have happened since your departure. You will tremble to hear the danger to which I have been exposed by my imprudence. Thank heaven, I hope I have now nothing to fear: but unhappily I am as it were at the mercy of another. You alone can restore me to myself: haste therefore to my assistance. So long as your attendance was of service to poor Chaillot, I was silent; I should even have been the first to exhort you to such an act of benevolence. Now that she is no more, her family are become the objects of your charity: of this obligation we could better acquit ourselves, if we were together, and your gratitude might be discharged without neglecting your friend.

Since my father took his leave of us we have resumed our former manner of living.

My mother leaves me less frequently alone; not that she has any suspicion. Her visits employ more time than would be proper for me to spare from my little studies, and in her absence Bab fills her place but negligently. Now though I do not think my good mother sufficiently watchful, I cannot resolve to tell her so. I would willingly provide for my own safety, without losing her esteem, and you alone are capable of managing this matter. Return then, my dear Clara, prithee return. I regret every lesson at which you are not present, and am fearful of becoming too learned. Our preceptor is not only a man of great merit, but of exemplary virtue, and therefore more dangerous. I am too well satisfied with him to be so with myself. For girls of our age, it is always safer to be two than one, be the man ever so virtuous.

Letter VII. Answer.

I understand, and tremble for you: not that I think your danger so great as your imagination would suggest. Your fears make me less apprehensive for the present; but I am terrified with the thought of what may hereafter happen: should you be unable to conquer your passion, what will become of you! Alas, poor Chaillot, how often has she foretold, that your first sigh would mark your fortune. Ah! Eloisa, so young, and thy destiny already accomplished? Much I fear we shall find the want of that sensible woman whom, in your opinion, we have lost for our advantage. Sure I am, it would be advantageous for us to fall into still safer hands; but she has made us too knowing to be governed by another, yet not sufficiently so to govern ourselves: she only was able to shield us from the danger to which, by her indiscretion, we are exposed. She was extremely communicative, and, considering our age, we ourselves seem to have thought pretty deeply. The ardent and tender friendship which hath united us, almost from our cradles, expanded our hearts, and ripened them into sensibility perhaps a little premature. We are not ignorant of the passions, as to their symptoms and effects; the art of suppressing them seems to be all we want. Heaven grant that our young philosopher may know this art better than we.

By we you know who I mean: for my part, Chaillot used always to say, that my giddiness would be my security in the place of reason, that I should never have sense enough to be in love, and that I was too constantly foolish to be guilty of a great folly. My dear Eloisa, be careful of yourself! the better she thought of your understanding, the more she was apprehensive of your heart. Nevertheless, let not your courage sink. Your prudence and your honour, I am certain, will exert their utmost, and I assure you, on my part, that friendship shall do every thing in its power. If we are too knowing for our years, yet our manners have been hitherto spotless and irreproachable. Believe me, my dear, there are many girls, who though they may have more simplicity, have less virtue than ourselves: we know what virtue means, and are virtuous by choice; and that seems to me the most secure.

And yet, from what you have told me, I shall not enjoy a moment's repose till we meet; for if you are really afraid, your danger is not entirely chimerical. It is true, the means of preservation are very obvious. One word to your mother, and the thing is done: but I understand you; the expedient is too conclusive: you would willingly be assured of not being vanquished, without losing the honour of having sustained the combat. Alas! my poor cousin——if there was the least glimmering——Baron D'Etange consent to give his daughter, his only child, to the son of an inconsiderable tradesman, without fortune! Dost thou presume to hope he will?——or what dost thou hope? what would'st thou have? poor Eloisa!——Fear nothing however on my account. Your friend will keep your secret. Many people might think it more honest to reveal it, perhaps they are right. For my part, who am no great casuist, I have no notion of that honesty, which is incompatible with confidence, faith, and friendship. I imagine that every relation, every age, have their peculiar maxims, duties, and virtues; but what might be prudence in another, in me would be perfidy; and that to confound these things, would more probably make us wicked than wise and happy. If your love be weak, we will overcome it; but if it be extreme, violent measures may produce a tragical catastrophe, and friendship will attempt nothing for which it

cannot be answerable. After all, I flatter myself that I shall have little reason to complain of your conduct when I have you once under my eye. You shall see what it is to have a duenna of eighteen!

You know, my dear girl, that I am not absent upon pleasure; and really the country is not so agreeable in the spring as you imagine: one suffers at this time both heat and cold; for the trees afford us no shade, and in the house it is too cold to live without fire. My father too, in the midst of his building, begins to perceive that the gazette comes later hither than to town; so that we all wish to return, and I hope to embrace thee in a few days. But what causes my inquietude is, that a few days make I know not what number of hours, many of which are destined to the philosopher: to the philosopher, cousin! you understand me. Think, O think, that the clock strikes those hours entirely for him!

Do not blush, my dear girl, nor drop thy eyes, nor look grave; thy features will not suffer it. Thou knowest I never, in my life, could weep without laughing, and yet I have not less sensibility than other people: I do not feel our separation less severely, nor am less afflicted with the loss of poor Chaillot. Her family I am resolved never to abandon, and I sincerely thank my kind friend for her promise to assist me: but to let slip an opportunity of doing good, were to be no more thyself. I confess the good creature was rather too talkative, free enough on certain occasions, a little indiscreet with young girls, and that she was fond of old stories and times past. So that I do not so much regret the qualities of her mind, though among some bad ones, many of them were excellent: the loss which I chiefly deplore is the goodness of her heart, and that mixture of maternal and sisterly affection, which made her inexpressibly dear to me. My mother I scarce knew; I am indeed loved by my father, as much as is possible for him to love; your amiable brother is no more; and I very seldom see my own. Thus am I left desolate, like an orphan. You are my only consolation. Yes, my Eloisa lives, and I will weep no more!

P. S. For fear of accident, I shall direct this letter to our preceptor.

Letter VIII. [6] To Eloisa.

O, my fair Eloisa, what a strange capricious deity is Love! My present felicity seems far to exceed my most sanguine expectations, and yet I am discontented. You love me, you confess your passion, and yet I sigh. My presumptuous heart dares to wish still farther, though all my wishes are gratified. I am punished with its wild imaginations; they render me unhappy in the very bosom of felicity. Do not, however, believe that I have forgotten the laws you have imposed, or lost the power of obedience: no, but I am displeased to find the observance of those laws irksome to me alone; that you, who not long ago, was all imbecility, are now become so great a heroine; and that you are so excessively careful to prevent every proof of my integrity.

How you are changed, and you alone, within these two months! Where is now your languor, your disgust, your dejected look? The graces have again resumed their post; your charms are all returned; the new-blown rose is not more fresh and blooming; you have recovered your vivacity and wit; you banter, even with me, as formerly; but what hurts me more than all this, is that you swear eternal fidelity with as much gaiety and good humour as if it were something droll, or indifferent.

O, my fair inconstant! is this characteristic of an ungovernable passion? If you were, in any degree, at war with your inclinations, would not the constraint throw a damp upon your enjoyments? O how infinitely more amiable you were, when less beautiful! How do I regret that pathetic paleness, that precious assurance of a lover’s happiness, and hate the indiscretion of that health which you have recovered at the expense of my repose! Yes, I could be much better satisfied with your indisposition, than with that air of content, those sparkling eyes, that blooming complexion, which conspire to insult me. Have you already forgot the time when you were glad to sue for mercy? Eloisa, Eloisa! the violent tempest hath been very suddenly allayed.

But what vexes me most, is that, after having committed yourself entirely to my honour, you should seem apprehensive and mistrustful where there is no danger. Is it thus I am rewarded for my discretion? Does my inviolable respect deserve to be thus affronted? Your father's absence is so far from giving you more liberty, that it is now almost impossible to catch you alone. Your constant cousin never leaves you a moment. I find we are insensibly returning to our former circumspection, with this difference only that what was then irksome to you is now become matter of amusement.

What recompense can I expect for the purity of my adoration, if not your esteem? And to what purpose have I abstained even from the least indulgence, if it produces no gratitude? In short, I am weary of suffering ineffectually, and of living in a state of continued self-denial, without being allowed the merit of it. I cannot bear to be despised whilst you are growing every day more beautiful. Why am I to gaze eternally at those delicious fruits which my lips dare not touch? Must I relinquish all hope, without the satisfaction of a voluntary sacrifice? No, since you depend no longer upon my honour, it stands released from its vain engagement; your own precautions are sufficient. You are ungrateful, and I am too scrupulous; but for the future I am resolved not to reject the happiness which fortune, in spite of you, may throw in my way. Be it as it will, I find that I have taken upon me a charge that is above my capacity. Eloisa, you are once more your own guardian. I must resign the deposit which I cannot preserve without being tempted to a breach of faith, and which you yourself are able to secure with less difficulty than you were pleased to imagine.

I speak seriously; depend upon your own strength, else banish me, or in other words, deprive me of existence. The promise I made, was rash and inconsiderate; and I am amazed how I have been able to keep it so long. I confess it ought to remain for ever inviolable; but of that I now perceive the impossibility. He who wantonly exposes his virtue to such severe trials, deserves to fall. Believe me, fairest among women!

by him who desired life only on your account, you will always be honoured and respected; but reason may forsake me, and my intoxicated senses may hint the perpetration of a crime, which, in my cooler hours, I should abhor. I am however happy in the reflection that I have not hitherto abused your confidence. Two whole months have I triumphed over myself; but I am intitled to the reward due to as many ages of torment.

Letter IX. From Eloisa.

I comprehend you: the pleasures of vice, and the reward of virtue, would just constitute the felicity you wish to enjoy. Are these your morals? Truly, my good friend, your generosity had a short duration. Is it possible that it could be entirely the effect of art? There is something droll, however, in complaining of my health. Was it that you hoped to see it entirely destroyed by my ridiculous passion, and expected to have me at your feet, imploring your pity to save my life? or did you treat me with respect whilst I continued frightful, with an intention to retract your promise as soon as I should, in any degree, become an object of desire? I see nothing so vastly meritorious in such a sacrifice.

With equal justice, you are pleased to reproach me for the care I have lately taken to prevent those painful combats with yourself, when in reality you ought to deem it an obligation. You then retract your engagement, on account of its being too burthensome a duty; so that in the same breath, you complain of having too much trouble, and of not having enough. Recollect yourself a little, and endeavour to be more uniform, that your pretended sufferings may have a less frivolous appearance: or perhaps it would be more advisable to put off that dissimulation which is inconsistent with your character. Say what you will, your heart is much better satisfied with mine than you would have me think. Ungrateful man! you are but too well acquainted with its feelings. Even your own letter contradicts you by the gaiety of its stile; you would not have so much wit if you had less tranquility. But, enough

of vain reproach to you: let me now reproach myself; it will probably be with more reason.

The content and serenity with which I have been blest of late, is inconsistent with my former declaration, and I confess you have cause to be surprized at the contrast. You were then a witness to my despair, and you now behold in me too much tranquility; hence you pronounce me inconstant and capricious. Be not, my good friend, too severe in your judgment. This heart of mine cannot be known in one day. Have patience, and, in time, you may probably discover it to be not unworthy your regard.

Unless you were sensible how much I was shocked when I first detected my heart in its passion for you, it is impossible to form any idea of what I suffered. The maxims I imbibed in my education were so extremely severe, that love, however pure, seemed highly criminal. I was taught to believe, that a young girl of sensibility was ruined the moment she suffered a tender expression to pass her lips: my disordered imagination confounded the crime with the confession of my love, and I had conceived so terrible an idea of the first step, that I saw little or no interval between that and the last. An extreme diffidence of myself increased the alarm; the struggles of modesty appeared to be those of virtue; and the uneasiness of silence seemed the importunity of desire. The moment I had spoke I concluded myself lost beyond redemption; and yet I must have spoken, or have parted with you for ever. Thus, unable to disguise my sentiments, I endeavoured to excite your generosity, and depending rather upon you than on myself, I chose to engage your honour in my defence, as I could have little reliance on a resource of which I believed myself already deprived.

I soon discovered my error: I had scarce opened my mind when I found myself much easier; the instant I received your answer I became perfectly calm; and two months experience has informed me that my too tender heart hath need of love, but

that my senses can rest satisfied without a lover. Now judge, you who are a lover of virtue, what joy I must have felt at this discovery. Emerged from the profound ignominy into which my fears had plunged me, I now taste the delicious pleasure of a guiltless passion: it constitutes all my happiness; it hath influenced my temper and my health, I can conceive no paradise on earth equal to the union of love and innocence.

I feared you no longer; and when I endeavoured to avoid being alone with you, it was rather for your sake than my own. Your eyes, your sighs betrayed more transport than prudence; but though you had forgotten the bounds you yourself prescribed, I should not.

Alas, my friend, I wish I could communicate to you that tranquility of soul which I now enjoy! Would it were in my power to teach you to be contented and happy! What fear, what shame can imbitter our felicity? In the bosom of love we might talk of virtue without a blush.

E v’ è il piacer con l’ onestade accanto.

And yet a strange foreboding whispers to my heart, that these are the only days of happiness allotted us by heaven. Our future prospect presents nothing to my view, but absence, anxiety, dangers and difficulties. The least change in our present situation must necessarily be for the worse. Were we even united for ever, I am not certain whether our happiness would not be destroyed by its excess; the moment of possession is a dangerous crisis.

I conjure thee, my kind, my only friend, endeavour to calm the turbulence of those vain desires which are always followed by regret, repentance and sorrow. Let us peaceably enjoy our present felicity. You have a pleasure in giving me instruction, and you know, but too well, with what delight I listen to be instructed. Let your lessons be yet more frequent, that we may be as little asunder as decency will allow. Our absent moments shall be employed in writing to each other, and thus none of the

precious time will pass in vain, which one day possibly we might give the world to recall. Would to heaven, that our present happiness might end only with our lives! To improve one's understanding, to adorn one's mind, to indulge one's heart: can there possibly be any addition to our felicity?

Letter X. To Eloisa.

How entirely was my Eloisa in the right when she said that I did not yet know her sufficiently! I constantly flatter myself that I have discovered every excellence of her soul, when new beauties daily meet my observation. What woman, but yourself, could ever unite virtue and tenderness so as to add new charms to both? In spite of myself I am forced to admire and approve that prudence which deprives me of all comfort, and there is something so excessively engaging in the manner of imposing your prohibitions, that I almost receive them with delight.

I am every day more positive, that there is no happiness equal to that of being beloved by Eloisa; and so entirely am I of this opinion that I would not prefer even the person of Eloisa to the possession of her heart. But why this bitter alternative? Can things be incompatible which are united in nature? Our time, you say, is precious; let us enjoy our good fortune without troubling its pure stream with our impatience. Be it so: but shall we, because we are moderately happy, reject supreme felicity? Is not all that time lost which might have been better employed? If it were possible to live a thousand years in one quarter of an hour, what purpose would it answer to tell over the tedious number of days when they were past?

Your opinion of our present situation is very just; I am convinced I ought to be happy, and yet I am much the reverse. The dictates of wisdom may continue to flow from your lips, but the voice of nature is stronger than yours: and how can we avoid listening to her, when she speaks the language of our own hearts? Of all sublunary things, I know of nothing, except yourself, which deserves a moment's attention. Without you, nature would have no allurements: her empire is in your charms, and

there she is irresistible.

Your heart, divine Eloisa, feels none of this. You are content to ravish our senses, and are not at war with your own. It should seem that your soul is too sublime for human passions, and that you have not only the beauty but the purity of angels: a purity which murmuring I revere, and to which I would gladly aspire. But, no: I am condemned to creep upon the earth, and to behold Eloisa a constellation in the heavens. O may you continue to be happy though I am wretched; enjoy your virtues; and perdition catch the vile mortal who shall ever attempt to tarnish one of them! Yes, my Eloisa, be happy, and I will endeavour to forget my own misery, in the recollection of your bliss. If I know my heart, my love is as spotless as its adorable object. The passions which your charms have inflamed, are extinguished by the purity of your soul; I dare not disturb its serenity. Whenever I am tempted to take the least liberty, I find myself restrained rather by the dread of interrupting your peace of mind, than by the fear of offending. In my pursuit of happiness, I have considered only in what degree it might affect my Eloisa; and finding it incompatible with hers, I can be wretched without repining.

With what inexplicable, jarring, sentiments you have inspired me! I am at once submissive and daring, mild and impetuous. Your looks inflame my heart with love, and when I hear your voice I am captivated with the charms of innocence. If ever I presume to indulge a wishful idea, it is in your absence. Your image in my mind is the only object of my passionate adoration.

And yet I languish and consume away; my blood is all on fire, and every attempt to damp the flame serves but to increase its fervour. Still I have cause to think myself very happy; and so I do. Surely I have little reason to complain, when I would not change my situation with the greatest monarch on earth. But yet some sad fiend torments me whose pursuits it is impossible to elude. Methinks I would not die, and yet I am daily expiring; for you only I wish to live, and you alone are the cause of

my death.

Letter XI. From Eloisa.

My attachment to my dear friend grows every day stronger; your absence becomes insupportable, and I have no relief but in my pen. Thus my love keeps pace with yours; for I judge of your passion by your real fear of offending: your former fears were only feigned, with an intent to advance your cause. It is an easy matter to distinguish the dictates of an afflicted heart from the phrenzy of a heated imagination, and I see a thousand times more affection in your present constraint than in your former delirium. I know also that your situation, confined as it is, is not entirely bereft of pleasure. A sincere lover must be very happy in making frequent sacrifices to a grateful mistress, when he is assured that not one of them will be forgotten, but that she will treasure the remembrance in her heart.

But who knows whether, presuming on my sensibility, this may not be a deeper, and therefore a more dangerous plot than the former? O, no! the supposition was unjust; you certainly cannot mean to deceive me. And yet prudence tells me to be more suspicious of compassion than even of love; for I find myself more affected by your respect than by all your transport: so that, as you are grown more honest, you are become in proportion more formidable.

In the overflowing of my heart I will tell you a truth, of which your own feelings cannot fail to convince you: it is, that in spite of fortune, parents, and of ourselves, our fates are united for ever, and we can be only happy or miserable together. Our souls, if I may use the expression, touch in all points, and we feel an entire coherence: correct me if I speak unphilosophically. Our destiny may part us, but cannot disunite us. Henceforward our pains and pleasures must be mutual; and, like the magnets, of which I have heard you speak, that have the same motion though in different places, we should have the same sensations at the two extremities of the world.

Banish, therefore, the vain hope, if you ever entertained it, of exclusive happiness to be purchased at the expense of mine. Do not flatter yourself with the idle prospect of felicity founded upon Eloisa's dishonour, or imagine that you could behold my ignominy and my tears, without horror. Believe me, my dear friend, I know your heart better than yourself. A passion so tender and so true, cannot possibly excite an impure wish; but we are so attached, that if we were on the brink of perdition it would be impossible for us to fall singly; of my ruin yours is the inevitable consequence.

I should be glad to convince you how necessary it is for us both that I should be entrusted with the care of our destiny. Can you doubt that you are as dear to me as myself, or that I can enjoy any happiness exclusive of yours? No, my dear friend, our interest is exactly the same, but I have rather more at stake, and have therefore more reason to be watchful. I own I am youngest; but did you never observe that if reason be generally weaker and sooner apt to decay in our sex, it also comes more early to maturity than in yours? as in vegetation the most feeble plants arrive at their perfection and dissolution in the least time. We find ourselves, from our first conception of things, instructed with so valuable a treasure, that our dread of consequences soon unfolds our judgment, and an early sense of our danger excites our vigilance.

In short, the more I reflect upon our situation, the more I am convinced that love and reason join in my request: suffer yourself then to be lead by the gentle deity; for though he is blind, he is not without a guide.

I am not quite certain that this language of my heart will be perfectly intelligible to yours, or that my letter will be read with the same emotion with which it was written: nor am I convinced that particular objects will ever appear to us in the same light; but certain I am, that the advice of either which tends least towards separate happiness, is that which we ought to follow.

Letter XII. To Eloisa.

O my Eloisa, how pathetic is the language of nature! How plainly do I perceive in your last letter, the serenity of innocence and the solicitude of love! Your sentiments are exprest without art or trouble, and convey a more delicious sensation to the mind, than all the refined periods of studied elocution. Your reasons are incontrovertible, but urged with such an air of simplicity, that they seem less cogent at first than they really are; and your manner of expressing the sublimest sentiments is so natural and easy, that without reflection one is apt to mistake them for common opinions.

Yes, my Eloisa, the care of our destiny shall be entirely yours: not because it is your right, but as your duty, and as a piece of justice I expect from your reason, for the injury you have done to mine. From this moment to the end of my life, I resign myself to your will; dispose of me as of one who hath no interest of his own, and whose existence hath no connection but with you. Doubt not that I will fly from my resolution, be the terms you impose ever so rigorous; for though I myself should profit nothing by my obedience, if it adds but one jot to your felicity, I am sufficiently rewarded. Therefore I relinquish to you without reserve, the entire care of our common happiness; secure but your own and I will be satisfied. As for me, who can neither forget you a single moment, nor think of you without forbidden emotion, I will now give my whole attention to the employment you were pleased to assign me.

It is now just a year since we began our studies, and hitherto they have been directed partly by chance, rather with a design to consult your taste than to improve it. Besides, our hearts were too much fluttered to leave us the perfect use of our senses. Our eyes wandered from the book, and our lips pronounced words, without any ideas. I remember, your arch cousin, whose mind was unengaged, used frequently to reproach us with want of conception; she seemed delighted to leave us behind, and

soon grew more knowing than her preceptor. Now though we have sometimes smiled at her pretensions, she is really the only one of the three who retains any part of our reading.

But to retrieve, in some degree, the time we have lost, (Ah! Eloisa, was ever time more happily spent?) I have formed a kind of plan, which may possibly, by the advantage of method, in some measure, compensate our neglect. I send it you inclosed; we will read it together; at present I shall only make a few general observations on the subject.

If, my charming friend, we were inclined to parade with our learning, and to study for the world rather than for ourselves, my system would be a bad one; for it tends only to extract a little from a vast multiplicity of things, and from a large library to select a small number of books.

Science, in general, may be considered as a coin of great value, but of use to the possessor, only in as much as it is communicated to others; it is valuable but as a commodity in traffic. Take from the learned the pleasure of being heard, and their love of knowledge would vanish. They do not study to obtain wisdom, but the reputation of it: philosophy would have no charms if the philosopher had no admirers. For our parts, who have no design but to improve our minds, it will be most advisable, to read little and think much; or, which is better, frequently to talk over the subjects on which we have been reading. I am of opinion, when once the understanding is a little developed by reflection, it is better to reason for ourselves than to depend upon books for the discovery of truth; for by that means it will make a much stronger impression; whilst on the contrary, by taking things for granted, we view objects by halves and in a borrowed light. We are born rich, says Montaigne, and yet our whole education consists in borrowing. We are taught to accumulate continually, and, like true misers, we chuse rather to use the wealth of other men, than break into our own store.

I confess there are many people whom the method I propose would not suit, who ought to read much and think little, because every borrowed reflection is better than any thing they could have produced. But I recommend the contrary to you, who improve upon every book you read. Let us therefore mutually communicate our ideas; I will relate the opinions of others, then you shall tell me yours upon the same subject, and thus shall I frequently gather more instruction from our lecture than yourself.

The more we contract our circle, the more necessary it is to be circumspect in the choice of our authors. The grand error of young students, as I told you before, is a too implicit dependence upon books, and too much diffidence in their own capacity; without reflecting that they are much less liable to be misled by their own reason, than by the sophistry of systematical writers. If we would but consult our own feelings, we should easily distinguish virtue and beauty: we do not want to be taught either of these; but examples of extreme virtue, and superlative beauty are less common, and these are therefore more difficult to be understood. Our vanity leads us to mistake our own peculiar imbecility for that of nature, and to think those qualities chimerical which we do not perceive within ourselves; idleness and vice rest upon pretended impossibility, and men of little genius conclude that things which are uncommon have no existence. These errors we must endeavour to eradicate, and by using ourselves to contemplate grand objects, destroy the notion of their impossibility: thus, by degrees, our emulation is roused by example, our taste refines, and every thing indifferent becomes intolerable.

But let us not have recourse to books for principles which may be found within ourselves. What have we to do with the idle disputes of philosophers, concerning virtue and happiness? Let us rather employ that time in being virtuous and happy, which others waste in fruitless enquiries after the means: let us rather imitate great examples, than busy ourselves with systems and opinions.

I always believed, that virtue was in reality active beauty; or at least that they were intimately connected, and sprung from the same source in nature. From this idea it follows, that wisdom and taste are to be improved by the same means, and that a mind truly sensible of the charms of virtue, must receive an equal impression from every other kind of beauty. Yet accurate and refined perceptions are to be acquired only by habit; and hence it is, that we see a painter, in viewing a fine prospect or a good picture, in raptures at certain objects, which a common observer would not even have seen. How many real impressions do we perceive, which we cannot account for? How many Je-ne-sais-quois frequently occur, which taste only can determine? Taste is, in some degree, the microscope of judgment; it brings small objects to our view, and its operations begin where those of judgment end. How then shall we proceed in its cultivation? By exercising our sight as well as feeling, and by judging of the beautiful from inspection, as we judge of virtue from sensation. I am persuaded there may be some hearts upon which the first sight, even of Eloisa, would make no impression.

For this reason, my lovely scholar, I limit your studies to books of taste and manners. For this reason, changing my precepts into examples, I shall give you no other definitions of virtue than the pictures of virtuous men; nor other rules for writing well, than books which are well written.

Be not surprized that I have thus contracted the circle of your studies; it will certainly render them more useful: I am convinced, by daily experience, that all instruction which tends not to improve the mind, is not worth your attention. We will diminish the languages, except the Italian, which you understand and admire. We will discard our elements of algebra and geometry. We would even quit our philosophy were it not for the utility of its terms. We will, for ever, renounce modern history, except that of our own country, and that only on account of our liberty, and the ancient simplicity of our manners: for let nobody persuade you that the history of one’s own country is the most interesting; it is false. The history of

some countries will not even bear reading. The most interesting history is, that which furnishes the most examples, manners, and characters; in a word, the most instruction. We are told that we possess all these in as great a degree as the ancients; but turn to their histories and you will be convinced that this is also a mistake.

There are people whose faces are so unmeaning, that the best painter cannot catch their likeness, and there are governments so uncharacteristic as to want no historian; but able historians will never be wanting where there is matter deserving the pen of a good writer. In short, they tell us that men are alike in all ages, that their virtues and vices are the same, and that we admire the ancients only because they are ancients. This is also false: in former times great effects were produced by trifling causes, but in our days it is just the reverse. The ancients were cotemporary with their historians, and yet we have learnt to admire them: should posterity ever admire our modern historians, they certainly will not have grounded their opinion upon ours.

Out of regard to our constant companion, I consent to a few volumes of belles lettres, which I should not have recommended to you. Except Petrarch, Tasso, Metastasio, and the best French theatrical authors, I leave you none of those amorous poets, which are the common amusement of your sex. The most inspired of them all cannot teach us to love? Ah, Eloisa, we are better instructed by our own hearts! The phrases borrowed from books are cold and insipid to us who speak the language of our souls. It is a kind of reading which cramps the imagination, enervates the mind, and dims its original brightness. On the contrary, real love influences all our sentiments, and animates them with new vigour.

Letter XIII. From Eloisa.

I told you we were happy, and nothing proves it more than the uneasiness we feel upon the least change in our situation: if it were not true, why should two days separation give us so much pain? I say us, for I know my friend shares my

impatience; he feels my uneasiness, and is unhappy upon his own account; but to tell me this were now superfluous.

We have been in the country since last night only; the hour is not yet come in which I should see you if I were in town; and yet this distance makes me already find your absence almost insupportable. If you had not prohibited geometry, I should say, that my inquietude increases in a compound ratio of the intervals of time and space; so sensible am I that the pain of absence is increased by distance. I have brought with me your letter, and your plan of study, for my meditation; I have read the first already twice over, and own I was a good deal affected with the conclusion. I perceive, my dear friend, that your passion deserves the name of real love, because you still preserve your sense of honour, and are capable of sacrificing every thing to virtue. To delude a woman in the disguise of her preceptor is surely, of all the wiles of seduction, the most unpardonable; and he must have very little resource in himself, who would attempt to move his mistress by the assistance of romance. If you had availed yourself of philosophy to forward your designs, or if you had endeavoured to establish maxims favourable to your interest, those very methods of deceit would soon have undeceived me; but you have more honesty, and are therefore more dangerous. From the first moment I perceived in my heart the least spark of love, and the desire of a lasting attachment, I petitioned heaven to unite me to a man whose soul was amiable rather than his person; for well I knew that the charms of the mind were least liable to disgust, and that probity and honour adorn every sentiment of the heart. I chose with propriety, and therefore, like Solomon, I have obtained, not only what I asked for, but also what I did not ask. I look upon this as a good omen, and I do not despair but I shall, one day, have it in my power to make my dear friend as happy as he deserves. We have indeed many obstacles to surmount, and the expedients are slow, doubtful and difficult. I dare not flatter myself too much; be assured, however, that nothing shall be forgotten which the united efforts of love and patience can accomplish. Mean while, continue to humour

my mother, and prepare yourself for the return of my father, who at last retires, after thirty years services. You must learn to endure the haughtiness of a hasty old gentleman, jealous of his honour, who will love you without flattering, and esteem you without many professions.

I broke off here to take a ramble in the neighbouring woods. You, my amiable friend, you were my companion, or rather I carried thee in my heart. I sought those paths which I imagined we should have trod, and marked the shades which seemed worthy to receive us. The delightful solitude of the groves seemed to heighten our sensibility, and the woods themselves appeared to receive additional beauty from the presence of two such faithful lovers.

Amidst the natural bowers of this charming place, there is one still more beautiful than the rest, with which I am most delighted, and where, for that reason, I intend to surprize you. It must not be said that I want generosity to reward your constant respect. I would convince you, in spite of vulgar opinions, that voluntary favours are more valuable than those obtained by importunity. But lest the strength of your imagination should lead you too far, I must inform you, that we will not visit these pleasant bowers without my constant companion.

Now I have mentioned my cousin, I am determined, if it does not displease you, that you shall accompany her hither on Monday next. You must not fail to be with her at ten o’clock. My mother’s chaise will be there about that time; you shall spend the whole day with us, and we will return all together the next day after dinner.

I had wrote so far when I bethought myself, that I have not the same opportunity here, for the conveyance of my letter, as in town. I once had an inclination to send you one of your books by Gustin the gardener’s son, and to inclose my letter in the cover. But, as there is a possibility that you may not be aware of this contrivance, it would be unpardonably imprudent to risk our all on so precarious a bottom. I must therefore be contented to signify the intended rendezvous on Monday by a billet, and

I will myself give you this letter. Besides, I was a little apprehensive lest you might comment too freely on the mystery of the bower.

Letter XIV. To Eloisa.

Ah! Eloisa, Eloisa! what have you done? You meant to requite me, and you are the cause of my ruin. I am intoxicated, or rather, I am mad. My brains are turned, all my senses are disordered by this fatal kiss. You designed to alleviate my pain; but you have cruelly increased my torment. The poison I have imbibed from your lips will destroy me, my blood boils within my veins; I shall die, and your pity will but hasten my death.

O immortal remembrance of that illusive, frantic, and enchanting moment! Never, never to be effaced so long as Eloisa lives within my soul; till my heart is deprived of all sensation thou wilt continue to be the happiness and torment of my life!

Alas! I possessed an apparent tranquility; resigned myself entirely to your supreme will, and never murmured at the fate you condescended to overrule. I had conquered the impetuous sallies of my imagination; I disguised my looks, and put a lock upon my heart; I but half expressed my desires, and was as content as possible. Thus your billet found me, and I flew to your cousin; we arrived at Clarens, my heart beat quick at the sight of my beloved Eloisa; her sweet voice caused a strange emotion; I became almost transported, and it was lucky for me that your cousin was present to engage your mother’s attention. We rambled in the garden, dined comfortably, you found an opportunity, unperceived, to give me your charming letter, which I durst not open before this formidable witness; the sun began to decline, and we hastened to the woods for the benefit of shade. Alas! I was quite happy, and I did not even conceive a state of greater bliss.

As we approached the bower, I perceived, not without a secret emotion, your significant winks, your mutual smiles, and the increasing glow in thy charming cheeks. Soon as we entered, I was surprized to see your cousin approach me, and

with an affected air of humility, ask me for a kiss. Without comprehending the mystery, I complied with her request; and, charming as she is, I never could have had a more convincing proof of the insipidity of those sensations which proceed not from the heart. But what became of me a moment after, when I felt——My hands shook——A gentle tremor——Thy balmy lips——My Eloisa's lips——touch, pressed to mine, and myself within her arms? Quicker than lightening a sudden fire darted through my soul. I seemed all over sensible of the ravishing condescension, and my heart sunk down oppressed with insupportable delight; when all at once, I perceived your colour change, your eyes close; you leant upon your cousin, and fainted away. Fear extinguished all my joy, and my happiness vanished like a shadow.

I scarce know any thing that has past since that fatal moment. The impression it has made on my heart will never be effaced. A favour?——it is an extreme torment——No, keep thy kisses, I cannot bear them——They are too penetrating, too painful——they distract me. I am no more myself, and you appear to me no more the same object. You seem not as formerly chiding and severe; but methinks I see and feel thee lovely and tender as at that happy instant when I pressed thee to my bosom. O Eloisa! whatever may be the consequence of my ungovernable passion, use me as severely as you please, I cannot exist in my present condition, and I perceive I must at last expire at your feet——or in your arms.

Letter XV. From Eloisa.

It is necessary, my dear friend, that we should part for some time: I ask it as the first proof of that obedience you have so often promised. If I am urgent in my request, you may be assured I have good reason for it: indeed I have, and you are too well convinced that I must to be able to take this resolution; for your part, you will be satisfied, since it is my desire.

You have long talked of taking a journey into Valais. I wish you would determine to

go before the approach of winter. Autumn, in this country, still wears a mild and serene aspect; but you see the tops of the mountains are already white, and six weeks later you should not have my consent to take such a rough journey. Resolve therefore to set out to-morrow: you will write to me by the direction which I shall send, and you will give me yours when you arrive at Sion.

You would never acquaint me with the situation of your affairs; but you are not in your own country; your fortune I know is small, and I am persuaded you must diminish it here, where you stay only upon my account. I look upon myself therefore as your purse-bearer, and send you a small matter in the little box, which you must not open before the bearer. I will not anticipate difficulties, and I have too great an esteem for you to believe you capable of making any on this occasion.

I beg you will not return without my permission, and also that you will take no leave of us. You may write to my mother or me, merely to inform us, that some unforeseen business requires your presence, that you are obliged to depart immediately; and you may, if you please, send me some directions concerning my studies, until you return. You must be careful to avoid the least appearance of mystery. Adieu, my dear friend, and forget not that you take with you the heart and soul of Eloisa.

Letter XVI. Answer.

Every line of your terrible letter made me shudder. But I will obey you; I have promised, and it is my duty: yes, you shall be obeyed. But you cannot conceive, no, barbarous Eloisa, you will never comprehend how this cruel sacrifice affects my heart. There wanted not the trial in the bower to increase my sensibility. It was a merciless refinement of inhumanity, and I now defy you to make me more miserable.

I return your box unopened. To add ignominy to cruelty is too much; you are indeed the mistress of my fate, but not of my honour, I will myself preserve this sacred

deposit; alas! it is the only treasure I have left! and I will never part with it so long as I live.

Letter XVII. Reply.

Your letter excites my compassion; it is the only senseless thing you have ever written.

I affront your honour! I would rather sacrifice my life. Do you believe it possible that I should mean to injure your honour? Ingrate! Too well thou knowest that for thy sake I had almost sacrificed my own. But tell me what is this honour which I have offended? Ask thy groveling heart, thy indelicate soul. How despicable art thou if thou hast no honour but that which is unknown to Eloisa! Shall those whose hearts are one, scruple to share their possessions? Shall he who calls himself mine refuse my gifts? Since when is it become dishonourable to receive from those we love? But the man is despised whose wants exceed his fortune. Despised! by whom? By those abject souls who place their honour in their wealth, and estimate their virtue by their weight of gold. But is this the honour of a good man? Is virtue less honourable because it is poor?

Undoubtedly there are presents which a man of honour ought not to accept; but I must tell you, those are equally dishonourable to the person by whom they are offered; and that what may be given with honour, it cannot be dishonourable to receive: now my heart is so far from reproaching me with what I did, that it glories in the motive. Nothing can be more despicable than a man whose love and assiduities are bought, except the woman by whom they are purchased. But where two hearts are united, it is so reasonable and just that their fortunes should be in common, that if I have reserved more than my share, I think myself indebted to you for the overplus. If the favours of love are rejected, how shall our hearts express their gratitude?

But, lest you should imagine that in my design to supply your wants I was

inattentive to my own, I will give you an indisputable proof of the contrary. Know then, that the purse which I now return contains double the sum it held before, and that I could have redoubled it if I had pleased. My father gives me a certain allowance, moderate indeed, but which my mother's kindness renders it unnecessary for me to touch. As to my lace and embroidery, they are the produce of my own industry. It is true, I was not always so rich; but, I know not how, my attention to a certain fatal passion has of late made me neglect a thousand little expensive superfluities; which is another reason why I should dispose of it in this manner: it is but just that you should be humbled as a punishment for the evil you have caused, and that love should expiate the crimes he occasions.

But to the point. You say your honour will not suffer you to accept my gift. If this be true, I have nothing more to say, and am entirely of opinion that you cannot be too positive in this respect. If therefore you can prove this to be the case, I desire it may be done clearly, incontestably, and without evasion; for you know I hate all appearance of sophistry. You may then return the purse; I will receive it without complaining, and you shall hear no more of this affair.

You will be pleased, however, to remember, that I neither like false honour, nor people who are affectedly punctilious. If you return the box without a justification, or if your justification be not satisfactory, we must meet no more. Think of this. Adieu.

Letter XVIII. To Eloisa.

I received your present, I departed without taking leave, and am now a considerable distance from you. Am I sufficiently obedient? Is your tyranny satisfied?

I can give you no account of my journey; for I remember nothing more than that I was three days in travelling twenty leagues. Every step I took seemed to tear my soul from my body, and thus to anticipate the pain of death. I intended to have given you a description of the country through which I passed. Vain project! I beheld

nothing but you, and can describe nothing but Eloisa. The repeated emotions of my heart threw me into a continued distraction; I imagined myself to be where I was not; I had hardly sense enough left to ask or follow my road, and I am arrived at Sion without ever leaving Vevey.

Thus I have discovered the secret of eluding your cruelty, and of seeing you without disobeying your command. No, Eloisa, with all your rigour, it is not in your power to separate me from you entirely. I have dragged into exile but the most inconsiderable part of myself; my soul must remain with you for ever: with impunity, it explores your beauty, dwells in rapture upon every charm; and I am happier in despite of you than I ever was by your permission.

Unfortunately, I have here some people to visit and some necessary business to transact. I am least wretched in solitude, where I can employ all my thoughts upon Eloisa, and transport myself to her in imagination. Every employment which calls off my attention, is become insupportable. I will hurry over my affairs, that I may be soon at liberty to wander through the solitary wilds of this delightful country. Since I must not live with you, I will shun all society with mankind.

Letter XIX. To Eloisa.

I am now detained here only by your order. Those five days have been more than sufficient to finish my own concerns, if things may be so called in which the heart has no interest: so that now you have no pretence to prolong my exile, unless with design to torment me.

I begin to be very uneasy about the fate of my first letter. It was written and sent by the post immediately upon my arrival, and the direction was exactly copied from that which you transmitted me: I sent you mine with equal care; so that if you had answered me punctually, I must have received your letter before now. Yet this letter does not appear, and there is no possible fatality which I have not supposed to be the cause of its delay. O Eloisa, how many unforeseen accidents may have happened in

the space of one week, to dissolve the most perfect union that ever existed! I shudder to think that there are a thousand means to make me miserable, and only one by which I can possibly be happy. Eloisa, is it that I am forgotten! God forbid! that were to be miserable indeed. I am prepared for any other misfortune; but all the powers of my soul sicken at the bare idea of that.

O no! it cannot be: I am convinced my fears are groundless, and yet my apprehensions continue. The bitterness of my misfortunes increases daily; and as if real evils were not sufficient to depress my soul, my fears supply me with imaginary ones to add weight to the others. At first my grief was much more tolerable. The trouble of a sudden departure, and the journey itself were some sort of dissipation! but this peaceful solitude assembles all my woes. Like a wounded soldier, I felt but little pain till after I had retired from the field.

How often have I laughed at a lover, in romance, bemoaning the absence of his mistress! Little did I imagine that your absence would ever be so intolerable to me! I am now sensible how improper it is for a mind at rest to judge of other men’s passions; and how foolish, to ridicule the sensations we have never felt. I must confess, however, I have great consolation in reflecting that I suffer by your command. The sufferings which you are pleased to ordain, are much less painful than if they were inflicted by the hand of fortune; if they give you any satisfaction, I should be sorry not to have suffered; they are the pledges of their reward; I know you too well to believe you would exercise barbarity for its own sake.

If your design be to put me to the proof, I will murmur no more. It is but just that you should know whether I am constant, endued with patience, docility, and, in short, worthy of the bliss you design me. Gods! if this be your idea, I shall complain that I have not suffered half enough. Ah, Eloisa! for heaven’s sake, support the flattering expectation in my heart, and invent, if you can, some torment better proportioned to the reward.

Letter XX. From Eloisa.

I received both your letters at once, and I perceive, by your anxiety in the second, concerning the fate of the other, that when imagination takes the lead of reason, the latter is not always in haste to follow, but suffers her, sometimes, to proceed alone. Did you suppose, when you reached Sion, that the post waited only for your letter, that it would be delivered to me the instant of his arrival here, and that my answer would be favoured with equal dispatch? No, no, my good friend, things do not always go on so swimmingly. Your two epistles came both together; because the post happened not to set out till after he had received the second. It requires some time to distribute the letters; my agent has not always an immediate opportunity of meeting me alone, and the post from hence does not return the day after his arrival: so that, all things calculated, it must be at least a week before we can receive an answer one from the other. This I have explained to you with design, once for all, to satisfy your impatience. Whilst you are exclaiming against fortune and my negligence, you see that I have been busied in obtaining the information necessary to insure our correspondence, and prevent your anxiety. Which of us hath been best employed, I leave to your own decision.

Let us, my dear friend, talk no more of pain; rather partake the joy I feel at the return of my kind father, after a tedious absence of eight months. He arrived on Thursday evening, since which happy moment I have thought of nobody else. [7] O thou, whom, next to the Author of my being, I love more than all the world! why must thy letters, thy complainings affect my soul, and interrupt the first transports of a reunited happy family?

You expect to monopolize my whole attention. But tell me, could you love a girl, whose passion for her lover could extinguish all affection for her parents? Would you, because you are uneasy, have me insensible to the endearments of a kind father? No, my worthy friend, you must not imbitter my innocent joy by your unjust

reproaches. You, who have so much sensibility, can surely conceive the sacred pleasures of being prest to the throbbing heart of a tender parent. Do you think that in those delightful moments it is possible to divide one's affection?

Sol che son figlia io mi rammento adesso.

Yet you are not to imagine I can forget you. Do we ever forget what we really love? No, the more lively impressions of a moment have no power to efface the other. I was not unaffected with your departure hence, and shall not be displeased to see you return. But——be patient like me, because you must, without asking any other reason. Be assured that I will recall you as soon as it is in my power; and remember, that those who complain loudest of absence, do not always suffer most.

Letter XXI. To Eloisa.

How was I tormented in receiving the letter which I so impatiently expected! I waited at the post-house. The mail was scarce opened before I gave in my name, and begun to importune the man. He told me there was a letter for me; my heart leaped; I asked for it with great impatience, and at last received it. O Eloisa! how I rejoiced to behold the well-known hand! A thousand times would I have kissed the precious characters, but I wanted resolution to press the letter to my lips, or to open it before so many witnesses. Immediately I retired, my knees trembled; I scarce knew my way; I broke the seal the moment I had past the first turning; I run over, or rather devoured, the dear lines, till I came to that part which so movingly speaks your tenderness and affection for your venerable father; I wept; I was observed; I then retired to a place of greater privacy, and there mingled my joyful tears with yours. With transport I embraced your happy father, though I hardly remember him. The voice of nature reminded me of my own, and I shed fresh tears to his memory.

O incomparable Eloisa! what can you possibly learn of me? It is from you only can be learnt every thing that is great and good, and especially that divine union of nature, love, and virtue, which never existed but in you. Every virtuous affection is

distinguished in your heart by a sensibility so peculiar to yourself, that, for the better regulation of my own, as my actions are already submitted to your will, I perceive, my sentiments also must be determined by yours.

Yet what a difference there is between your situation and mine! I do not mean as to rank or fortune; sincere affection, and dignity of soul, want none of these. But you are surrounded by a number of kind friends who adore you; a tender mother, and a father who loves you as his only hope; a friend and cousin who seem to breathe only for your sake: you are the ornament and oracle of an entire family, the boast and admiration of a whole town; these, all these divide your sensibility, and what remains for love is but a small part in comparison of that which is ravished from you by duty, nature and friendship. But I, alas! Eloisa, a wanderer without a family, and almost without country, have no one but you upon earth, and am possessed of nothing, save my love. Be not, therefore, surprized, though your heart may have more sensibility, that mine should know better how to love; and that you, who excel me in every thing else, must yield to me in this respect.

You need not, however, be apprehensive lest I should indiscreetly trouble you with my complaints. No, I will not interrupt your joy, because it adds to your felicity, and is in its nature laudable. Imagination shall represent the pathetic scene; and, since I have no happiness of my own, I will endeavour to enjoy yours.

Whatever may be your reasons for prolonging my absence, I believe them just; but though I knew them to be otherwise, what would that avail? Have I not promised implicit obedience? Can I suffer more in being silent, than in parting from you? But remember, Eloisa, your soul now directs two separate bodies, and that the one she animates by choice will continue the most faithful.

————Nodo piu forte: Fabricato da noi, non dalla forte.

No, Eloisa, you shall hear no repining. Till you are pleased to recall me from exile, I will try to deceive the tedious hours in exploring the mountains of Valais, whilst

they are yet practicable. I am of opinion that this unfrequented country deserves the attention of speculative curiosity, and that it wants nothing to excite admiration, but a skilful spectator. Perhaps my excursion may give rise to a few observations, that may not be entirely undeserving your perusal. To amuse a fine lady one should describe a witty and polite nation; but, I know, my Eloisa will have more pleasure in a picture where simplicity of manners and rural happiness are the principal objects.

Letter XXII. From Eloisa.

At last, the ice is broken: you have been mentioned. Notwithstanding your poor opinion of my learning, it was sufficient to surprize my father; nor was he less pleased with my progress in music and drawing: Indeed, to the great astonishment of my mother, who was prejudiced by your scandal, [8] he was satisfied with my improvement in every thing, except heraldry, which he thinks I have neglected. But all this could not be acquired without a master: I told him mine, enumerating at the same time all the sciences he proposed to teach me, except one. He remembers to have seen you several times on his last journey, and does not appear to retain any impression to your disadvantage.

He then enquired about your fortune; he was told, it was not great: Your birth? he was answered, honest. This word honest sounds very equivocal in the ears of nobility; it excited some suspicions, which were confirmed in the explanation. As soon as he was informed that your birth was not noble, he asked, what you had been paid per month. My mother replied, that you had not only refused to accept a stipend, but that you had even rejected every present she had offered. This pride of yours served but to inflame his own: who indeed could bear the thought of being obliged to a poor plebeian? Therefore it was determined, that a stipend should be offered, and that, in case you refused it, notwithstanding your merit, you should be dismissed. Such, my friend, is the result of a conversation held concerning my most honoured master, during which his very humble scholar was not entirely at ease. I

thought I could not be in too great a hurry to give you this information, that you might have sufficient time to consider it maturely. When you have come to a resolution, do not fail to let me know it; for it is a matter entirely within your own province, and beyond my jurisdiction.

I am not much pleased with your intended excursion to the mountains: not that I think it will prove an unentertaining dissipation, or that your narrative will not give me pleasure; but I am fearful lest you may not be able to support the fatigue. Besides, the season is already too far advanced. The hills will soon be covered with snow, and you may possibly suffer as much from cold as fatigue. If you should fall sick in that distant country, I should be inconsolable. Come therefore, my dear friend, come nearer to your Eloisa: it is not yet time to return to Vevey; but I would have you less rudely situated, and so as to facilitate our correspondence. I leave the choice of place to yourself; only take care that it be kept secret from the people here, and be discreet without being mysterious. I know you will be prudent for your own sake, but doubly so for mine.

Adieu. I am forced to break off. You know I am obliged to be very cautious. But this is not all: my father has brought with him a venerable stranger, his old friend, who once saved his life in a battle. Judge then of the reception he deserves! To-morrow he leaves us, and we are impatient to procure him every sort of entertainment that will best express our gratitude to such a benefactor. I am called, and must finish. Once more, adieu.

Letter XXIII. To Eloisa.

I have employed scarce eight days in surveying a country that would require some years. But, besides that I was driven off by the snow, I chose to be before the post, who brings me, I hope, a letter from Eloisa. In the mean time I begin this, and shall afterwards, if it be necessary, write another in answer to that which I shall receive.

I do not intend to give you an account of my journey in this letter; you shall see my

remarks when we meet; they would take up too much of our precious correspondence. For the present, it will be sufficient to acquaint you with the situation of my heart: it is but just to render you an account of that which is entirely yours.

I set out, dejected with my own sufferings, but consoled with your joy; which held me suspended in a state of languor that is not disagreeable to true sensibility. Under the conduct of a very honest guide, I crawled up the towering hills through many a rugged unfrequented path. Often would I muse, and then, at once, some unexpected object caught my attention. One moment I beheld stupendous rocks hanging ruinous over my head; the next, I was enveloped in a drizling cloud, which arose from a vast cascade that dashing thundered against the rocks below my feet; on one side, a perpetual torrent opened to my view a yawning abyss, which my eyes could hardly fathom with safety; sometimes I was lost in the obscurity of a hanging wood, and then was agreeably astonished with the sudden opening of a flowery plain. A surprising mixture of wild, and cultivated, nature, points out the hand of man, where one would imagine man had never penetrated. Here you behold a horrid cavern, and there a human habitation; vineyards where one would expect nothing but brambles; delicious fruit among barren rocks, and corn fields in the midst of cliffs and precipices.

But it is not labour only that renders this strange country so wonderfully contrasted; for here nature seems to have a singular pleasure in acing contradictory to herself, so different does she appear in the same place, in different aspects. Towards the east, the flowers of spring; to the south; the fruits of autumn; and northwards the ice of winter. She unites all the seasons in the same instant, every climate in the same place, different soils on the same land, and with a harmony elsewhere unknown, joins the produces of the plains to those of the highest Alps. Add to these, the illusions of vision, the tops of the mountains variously the illumined, the harmonious mixture of light and shade, and their different effects in the morning and the evening

as I travelled; you may then form some idea of the scenes which engaged my attention, and which seemed to change, as I past, as on an enchanted theatre; for the prospect of mountains being almost perpendicular to the horizon, strikes the eye at the same instant, and more powerfully, than that of a plane, where the objects are seen obliquely and half concealed behind each other.

To this pleasing variety of scenes I attributed the serenity of my mind during my first day's journey. I wondered to find that inanimate beings should over-rule our most violent passions, and despised the impotence of philosophy for having less power over the soul than a succession of lifeless objects. But finding that my tranquility continued during the night, and even increased with the following day, I began to believe it followed from some other source, which I had not yet discovered. That day I reached the lower mountains, and passing over their rugged tops, at last ascended the highest summit I could possibly attain. Having walked a while in the clouds, I came to a place of greater serenity, whence one may peacefully observe the thunder and the form gathering below: ah! too flattering picture of human wisdom, of which the original never existed, except in those sublime regions whence the emblem is taken.

Here it was that I plainly discovered; in the purity of the air, the true cause of that returning tranquility of soul, to which I had been so long a stranger. This impression is general, though not universally observed. Upon the tops of mountains, the air being subtle and pure, we respire with greater freedom, our bodies are more active, our minds more serene, our pleasures less ardent, and our passions much more moderate. Our meditations acquire a degree of sublimity from the grandeur of the objects around us. It seems as if, being lifted above all human society, we had left every low, terrestrial, sentiment behind; and that as we approach the aethereal regions, the soul imbibes something of their eternal purity. One is grave without being melancholy, peaceful, but not indolent, pensive yet contented: our desires lose their painful violence, and leave only a gentle emotion in our hearts. Thus the

passions which in the lower world are man’s greatest torment, in happier climates contribute to his felicity. I doubt much whether any violent agitation, or vapours of the mind, could hold out against such a situation, and I am surprized that a bath of the reviving and wholesome air of the mountains is not frequently prescribed both by physic and morality.

Quì non palazzi, non teatro o loggia, Ma’n lor vece un’ abete, un faggio, un pino Trà l’erba verde e’l bel monte vicino Levan di terra al Ciel nostr’ intelletto.

Imagine to yourself all these united impressions; the amazing variety, magnitude and beauty of a thousand stupendous objects; the pleasure of gazing at an entire new scene, strange birds, unknown plants, another nature, and a new world. To these even the subtilty of the air is advantageous; it enlivens their natural colours, renders every object more distinct, and brings it nearer to the eye. In short, there is a kind of supernatural beauty in these mountainous prospects which charms both the senses and the mind into a forgetfulness of one’s self and of every thing in the world.

I could have spent the whole time in contemplating these magnificent landskips, if I had not found still greater pleasure in my conversation with the inhabitants. In my observations you will find a slight sketch of their manners, their simplicity, their equality of soul, and of that peacefulness of mind, which renders them happy by an exemption from pain, rather than by the enjoyment of pleasure. But what I was unable to describe, and which is almost impossible to be conceived, is their disinterested humanity, and hospitable zeal to oblige every stranger whom chance or curiosity brings to visit them. This I myself continually experienced, I who was entirely unknown, and who was conducted from place to place only by a common guide. When, in the evening, I arrived in any hamlet at the foot of a mountain, each of the inhabitants was so eager to have me lodge at his house, that I was always embarrassed which to accept; and he who obtained the preference seemed so well pleased that, at first, I supposed his joy to arise from a lucrative prospect. But I was

amazed, after having used the house like an inn, to find my host not only refuse to accept the least gratuity, but offended that it was offered. I found it universally the same. So that it was true hospitality, which, from its unusual ardour, I had mistaken for avarice. So perfectly disinterested are this people, that during eight days, it was not in my power to leave one dollar among them. In short, how is it possible to spend money in a country where the landlord will not be paid for his provisions, nor the servant for his trouble, and where there are no beggars to be found? Nevertheless, money is by no means abundant in the upper Valais, and for that very reason the inhabitants are not in want; for the necessaries of life are plentiful, yet nothing is sent out of the country; they are not luxurious at home, nor is the peasant less laborious. If ever they have more money they will grow poor? and of this they are so sensible that they tread upon mines of gold which they are determined never to open.

I was at first greatly surprized at the difference between the customs and manners of these people and those of the lower Valais; for in the road through that part of the country to Italy, travellers pay dearly enough for their passage. An inhabitant of the place explained the mystery. The strangers, says he, which pass through the lower Valais are chiefly merchants, or people that travel in pursuit of gain; it is but just that they should leave us a part of their profit; and that we should treat them as they treat others; but here our travellers meet with a different reception, because we are assured their journey must have a disinterested motive: they visit us out of friendship, and therefore we receive them as our friends. But indeed our hospitality is not very expensive; we have but few visitors. No wonder, I replied, that mankind should avoid a people, who live only to enjoy life, and not to acquire wealth and excite envy. Happy, deservedly happy, mortals! I am pleased to think that one must certainly resemble you in some degree, in order to approve your manners and taste your simplicity.

What I found particularly agreeable whilst I continued among them was the natural

ease and freedom of their behaviour. They went about their business in the house, as if I had not been there; and it was in my power to act as if I were the sole inhabitant. They are entirely unacquainted with the impertinent vanity of doing the honours of the house, as if to remind the stranger of his dependence. When I said nothing, they concluded I was satisfied to live in their manner; but the least hint was sufficient to make them comply with mine, without any repugnance or astonishment. The only compliment which they made me, when they heard that I was a Swiss, was that they looked upon me as a brother, and I ought therefore to think myself at home. After this, they took but little notice of me, not supposing that I could doubt the sincerity of their offers, or refuse to accept them whenever they could useful. The same simplicity subsists among themselves: when the children are once arrived at maturity, all distinction between them and their parents seems to have ceased; their domestics are seated at the same table with their master; the same liberty reigns in the cottage as in the republic, and each family is an epitome of the state.

They never deprived me of my liberty, except when at table: indeed it was always in my power to avoid the repast; but, being once seated, I was obliged to sit late, and drink much. What a Swiss, and not drink! so they would exclaim. For my own part, I confess, I am no enemy to good wine, and that I have no dislike to a chearful glass; but I dislike compulsion. I have observed that deceitful men are generally sober, and that peculiar reserve at table frequently indicates a duplicity of soul. A guileless heart is not afraid of the unguarded eloquence and affectionate folly which commonly precede drunkenness; but we ought always to avoid the excess. Yet even that was sometimes impossible among these hearty Valaisians, their wine being strong, and water absolutely excluded. Who could act the philosopher here, or be offended with such honest people? In short, I drank to shew my gratitude, and since they refused to take my money, I made them a compliment of my reason.

They have another custom, not less embarrassing, which is practised even in the houses of the magistrates themselves; I mean that of their wives and daughters

standing behind one's chair, and waiting at table like so many servants. This would be insupportable to the gallantry of a Frenchman, especially as the women of this country are in general so extremely handsome that one can hardly bear to be attended by the maid. You may certainly believe them beautiful, since they appeared so to me; for my eyes have been accustomed to Eloisa, and are therefore extremely difficult to please.

As for me, who pay more regard to the manners of the people with whom I reside, than to any rules of politeness, I received their services in silence, and with a degree of gravity equal to that of Don Quixote when he was with the Duchess. I could not however help smiling now and then at the contrast between the rough old grey-beards at the table, and the charming complexions of the fair attendant nymphs, in whom a single word would excite a blush, which rendered their beauty more glowing and conspicuous. Not that I could admire the enormous compass of their necks, which resemble, in their dazzling whiteness only, that perfect model which always formed in my imagination (for though veiled, I have sometimes stolen a glance) that celebrated marble which is supposed to excel in delicate proportion the most perfect work of nature.

Be not surprized to find me so knowing in mysteries which you so carefully conceal: it happens in spite of all your caution; one sense instructs another. Notwithstanding the most jealous vigilance, there will always remain some friendly interstice or other, through which the sight performs the office of the touch. The curious, busy eye insinuates itself with impunity under the flowers of a nosegay, wanders beneath the spreading gauze, and conveys that elastic resistance to the hand which it dares not experience.

Parte appar deble mamme acerbe e crude, Parte altrui ne ricopre invida vesta; Invida, ma s' agli occhi il varco chiude, L'amoroso pensier gia non arresta.

I am also not quite satisfied with the dress of the Valaisian ladies: their gowns are

raised so very high behind, that they all appear round shouldered; yet this, together with their little black coifs, and other peculiarities of their dress, has a singular effect, and wants neither simplicity nor elegance. I shall bring you one of their compleat suits, which I dare say will fit you; it was made to the finest shape in the whole country.

But whilst I traversed with delight these regions which are so little known, and so deserving of admiration, where was my Eloisa? Was she banished my memory? Forget my Eloisa! Forget my own soul! Is it possible for me to be one moment of my life alone, who exist only through her? O no! our souls are inseparable, and, by instinct, change their situation together according to the prevailing state of mine. When I am in sorrow, she takes refuge with yours, and seeks consolation in the place where you are; as was the case the day I left you. When I am happy, being incapable of enjoyment alone, they both attend upon me, and our pleasure becomes mutual: thus it was during my whole excursion. I did not take one step without you, nor admire a single prospect without eagerly pointing its beauties to Eloisa. The same tree spread its shadow over us both, and we constantly reclined against the same flowery bank. Sometimes as we sat I gazed with you at the wonderful scene before us, and sometimes, on my knees I gazed with rapture on an object more worthy the contemplation of human sensibility. If I came to a difficult pass, I saw you skip over it with the activity of the bounding doe. When a torrent happened to cross our path, I presumed to press you in my arms, walked slowly through the water, and was always sorry when I reached the opposite bank. Every thing in that peaceful solitude brought you to my imagination; the pleasing awfulness of nature, the invariable serenity of the air, the grateful simplicity of the people, their constant and natural prudence, the unaffected modesty and innocence of the sex, and every object that gave pleasure to the eye or to the heart, seemed inseparably connected with the idea of Eloisa.

O divine maid! I often tenderly exclaimed, that we might spend our days in there

unfrequented mountains, unenvied and unknown! Why can I not here collect my whole soul into thee alone, and become, in turn, the universe to Eloisa! Thy charms would then receive the homage they deserve; then would our hearts taste without interruption the delicious fruit of the soft passion with which they are filled: the years of our long elysium would pass away untold, and when the frigid hand of age should have calmed our first transports, the constant habit of thinking and acting from the same principle would beget a lasting friendship no less tender than our love, whose vacant place should be filled by the kindred sentiments which grew and were nourished with it in our youth. Like this happy people, we would practice every duty of humanity, we would unite in acts of benevolence, and at last die with the satisfaction of not having lived in vain.

Hark——it is the post. I will close my letter, and fly to receive another from Eloisa. How my heart beats? Why was I roused from my reverie? I was happy at least in idea. Heaven only knows what I am to be in reality.

Letter XXIV. To Eloisa.

I sit down to give you an immediate answer to that article of your letter concerning the stipend; thank God, it requires no reflection. My sentiments, my Eloisa, on this subject, are these.

In what is called honour, there is a material distinction between that which is founded on the opinion of the world, and that which is derived from self esteem. The first is nothing but the loud voice of foolish prejudice, which has no more stability than the wind; but the basis of the latter is fixed in the eternal truth of morality. The honour of the world may be of advantage with regard to fortune but as it cannot reach the soul, it has no influence on real happiness. True honour, on the contrary, is the very essence of felicity; for it is that alone inspires the permanent interior satisfaction which constitutes the happiness of a rational being. Let us, my Eloisa, apply these principles to your question, and it will be soon resolved.

To become an instructor of philosophy, and like the fool in the fable, receive money for teaching wisdom, will appear rather low in the eyes of the world, and, I own, has something in it ridiculous enough. Yet, as no man can subsist merely of himself, and as there can be nothing wrong in eating the fruit of one's labour, we will regard this opinion of mankind as a piece of foolish prejudice, to which it would be madness to sacrifice our happiness. I know you will not esteem me the less on this account, nor shall I deserve more pity for living upon the talents I have cultivated.

But, my Eloisa, there are other things to be considered. Let us leave the multitude and look a little into ourselves. What shall I in reality be to your father, in receiving from him a salary for instructing his daughter? Am I not from that moment a mercenary, a hireling, a servant? and do I not tacitly pledge my faith for his security, like the meanest of his domestics? Now what has a father to lose of greater value than his only daughter, even though she were not an Eloisa? and what should the man do who had thus pledged his faith and sold his service? Ought he to stifle the flame within his breast? Ah! Eloisa, that you know to be impossible: or should he rather indulge this passion, and wound, in the most sensible part, the man who has an undoubted right to his fidelity? In this case I behold a perfidious teacher, trampling under foot every sacred bond of society, [9] a seducer, a domestic traitor, whom the law hath justly condemned to die. I hope Eloisa understands me. I do not fear death, but the ignominy of deserving it, and my own contempt.

When the letters of your name's sake and Abelard fell into your hands, you remember my opinion of the conduct of that priest. I always pitied Eloisa; she had a heart made for love: but Abelard seemed to deserve his fate, as he was a stranger both to love and virtue. Ought I then to follow his example? What wretch dares preach that virtue which he will not practise? Whosoever suffers himself to be thus blinded by his passions, will soon find himself punished in a loathing for those very sensations to which he sacrificed his honour. There can be no pleasure in any enjoyment which the heart cannot approve, and which tends to sink in our estimation

the object of our love. Abstract the idea of perfection, and our enthusiasm vanishes: take away our esteem, and love is at an end. How is it possible for a woman to honour a man who dishonours himself? and how can he adore the person who was weak enough to abandon herself to a vile seducer? Mutual contempt therefore is the consequence; their very passions will grow burthensome, and they will have lost their honour without finding happiness.

But how different, my Eloisa, is it with two lovers of the same age, influenced by the same passion, united by the same bonds, under no particular engagements, and both in possession of their original liberty. The most severe laws can inflict no other punishment, than the natural consequences of their passion: their sole obligation is to love eternally; and if there be in the world some unhappy climate where men's authority dares to break such sacred bonds, they are surely punished by the crimes that must inevitably ensue.

These, my ever prudent and virtuous Eloisa, are many reasons; they are indeed but a frigid commentary on those which you urged with so much spirit and energy in one of your letters; but they are sufficient to shew you how entirely I am of your opinion. You remember that I did not persist in refusing your offer, and that notwithstanding the first scruples of prejudice, being convinced that it was not inconsistent with my honour, I consented to open the box. But in the present case, my duty, my reason, my love, all speak too plainly to be misunderstood. If I must chose between my honour and Eloisa, my heart is prepared to resign her. Oh I love her too well to purchase her at the price of my honour!

Letter XXV. From Eloisa.

You will easily believe, my dear friend, how extremely I was entertained with the agreeable account of your late tour. The elegance of the detail itself, would have engaged my esteem, even though its author had been wholly a stranger; but its coming from you, was a circumstance of additional recommendation. I could,

however, find in my heart to chide you for a certain part of it, which you will easily guess, though I could scarce refrain from laughing at the ridiculous finesse you made use of to shelter yourself under Tasso. Have you never really perceived the wide difference that should be made between a narration intended for the view of the public, and that little sketch of particulars which is solely to be referred to the inspection of your mistress. Or is love, with all its fears, doubts, jealousies, and scruples, to have no more regard paid to it than the mere decencies of good breeding are entitled to? Could you be at a moment's loss to conceive that the dry preciseness of an author must be displeasing, where the passionate sentiments of inspiring tenderness were expected? And could you deliberately resolve to disappoint my expectations? But I fear I have already said too much on a subject which perhaps had better been entirely passed over. Besides, the contents of your last letter have so closely engaged my thoughts, that I have had no leisure to attend to the particulars of the former. Leaving then, my dear friend, the Valais to some future opportunity, let us now fix our attention on what more immediately concerns ourselves; we shall find sufficient matter of employment.

I very clearly foresaw what your sentiments would be, and indeed the time we have known each other, had been spent to little purpose, if now our conjectures were vague or uncertain. If virtue ever should forsake us, be assured, it will not, cannot be in those instances, which require resolution and resignation. [10] When the assault is violent, the first step to be taken is, resistance; and we shall ever triumph, I hope, so long as we are forewarned of our danger. A taste of careless security is the most to be dreaded, and we may be taken by sap, e'er we perceive that the citadel is attacked. The most fatal circumstance of all, is the continuance of misfortunes; their very duration makes them dangerous to a mind that might bear up against the sharpest trials and most vigorous sudden onsets; it may be worn out by the tedious pressure of inferior sufferings, and give way to the length of those afflictions which have quite exhausted its forbearance. This struggle, my dear friend, falls to our lot.

We are not called upon to signalize ourselves by deeds of heroism, or renowned exploits; but we are bound to the more painful task of supporting an indefatigable resistance, and enduring misfortunes without the least relaxation.

I foresaw but too well the melancholy event. Our happiness is passed away like a morning cloud, and our trials are beginning without the least prospect of any alteration for the better. Every circumstance is to me an aggravation of my distress, and what at other times would have passed unheeded and unobserved, now serves but too plainly to increase my dismay: my body sympathises with my mind in distressed situation, the one is as languid and spiritless as the other is alarmed and apprehensive. Involuntary tears are ever stealing down my cheeks, without my being sensible of any immediate cause of sorrow. I do not indeed foresee any very distressful events, but I perceive, alas, too well, my fondest hopes blasted, my most sanguine expectations continually disappointed, and what good purpose can it serve to water the leaves, when the plant is decayed and withered at the root.

I feel myself unable to support your absence; I feel, my dear friend, that I can never live without you, and this is a fresh subject to me of continual apprehensions. How often do I traverse the scenes which were once the witness of our happy interviews; but, alas! you are no where to be found. I constantly expect you at your usual time; but time comes and goes without your return. Every object of my senses presents a new monument, and every object, alas! reminds me that I have lost you. Whatever your sufferings may be in other respects, you are exempted however from this aggravation. Your heart alone is sufficient to remind you of my unhappy absence. Oh, if you did but know what endless pangs these fruitless expectations, there impatient longings perpetually occasion, how they imbitter and increase the torments I already feel, you would, without hesitation, prefer your condition to mine.

If indeed I might give vent to my sad tale, and trust the tender recital of my numberless woes to the kind bosom of a faithful friend, I should in some sort be

eased of my misfortunes. But even this relief is denied me, except when I find an opportunity to pour a few tender sighs into the compassionate bosom of my cousin: but in general I am constrained to speak a language quite foreign to my heart, and to assume an air of thoughtless gaiety, when I am ready to sink into the grave.

Sentirsi, Oh Dei, morir, E non poter mai dir, Morir mi Sento!

A farther circumstance of distress, if any thing more distressful can yet be added, is that my disorder is continually increasing. I have of late thought so gloomily, that I seldom now think otherwise; and the more anxiety I feel at the remembrance of our past pleasures, the more eagerly do I indulge myself in the painful recollection. Tell me, my dear, dear friend, if you can tell me by experience, how nearly allied love is to this tender sorrow, and if disquiet and uneasiness itself be not the cement of the warmest affections?

I have a thousand other things to say, but first I would fain know, precisely where you are. Besides, this train of thinking has awakened my passion, and indeed rendered me unfit for writing any more. Adieu, my dear, and though I am obliged to lay down my pen, be assured, I can never think of parting with you.

Billet.

As this comes to your hands by a waterman, an entire stranger to me, I shall only say at present, that I have taken up my quarters at Meillerie, on the opposite shore. I shall now have an opportunity of seeing at least the dear place, which I dare not approach.

Letter XXVI. To Eloisa.

What a wonderful alteration has a short space of time produced in my affairs! The thoughts of meeting, delightful as they were, are now too much allayed with disquieting apprehensions. What should have been the object of my hopes is now, alas! become the subject of my fears, and the very spirit of discernment, which on

most occasions is so useful, now serves but to dismay, to disquiet and torment me. Ah, Eloisa! too much sensibility, too much tenderness, proves the bitterest curse instead of the most fruitful blessing: vexation and disappointment are its certain consequences. The temperature of the air, the change of the seasons, the brilliancy of the sun, or thickness of the fogs, are so many moving springs to the unhappy possessor, and he becomes the wanton sport of their arbitration: his thoughts, his satisfaction, his happiness, depend on the blowing of the winds, and the different points of east or west can throw him off his bias, or enliven his expectations: swayed as he is by prejudices, and distracted by passions, the sentiments of his heart find continual opposition from the axioms of his head. Should he perchance square his conduct to the undeniable rule of right, and set up truth for his standard, instead of profit and convenience, he is sure to fall a martyr to the maxims of his integrity; the world will join in the cry, and hunt him down as a common enemy. But supposing this not the case, honesty and uprightness, though exempted from persecution, are neither the channels of honour, nor the road to riches; poverty and want are their inseparable attendants; and man, by adhering to the one, necessarily attaches himself to the inheritance of the other; and by this means he becomes his own tormentor. He will search for supreme happiness, without taking into the account the infirmities of his nature. Thus his affections and his reason will be engaged in a perpetual warfare, and unbounded ideas and desires must pave the way for endless disappointments.

This situation, dismal as it is, is nevertheless the true one, in which the hard fate of my worldly affairs, counteracted by the ingenuous and liberal turn of my thoughts, have involved me, and which is aggravated and increased by your father’s contempt and your own milder sentiments, which are at once both the delight and disquiet of my life. Had it not been for thee, thou fatal beauty, I could never have experienced the insupportable contrast between the greatness of my soul, and the low estate of my fortune. I should have lived quietly, and died contented in a situation that would have been even below notice. But to see you without being able to possess you; to

adore you, without raising myself from my obscurity; to live in the same place, and yet be separated from each other, is a struggle, my dearest Eloisa, to which I am utterly unequal. I can neither renounce you, nor get the better of my cruel destiny; I can neither subdue my desires, nor better my fortune.

But, as if this situation itself were not sufficiently tormenting, the horrors of it are increased by the gloomy succession of ideas ever present to my imagination. Perhaps too, this is heightened by the nature of the place I live in; it is dark, it is dreadful; but then it suits the habit of my soul; and a more pleasant prospect of nature would reflect little comfort on the dreary view within me. A ridge of barren rocks surrounds the coast, and my dwelling is still made more dismal, by the uncomfortable face of winter. And yet, Eloisa, I am sensible enough that if I were once forced to abandon you, I should stand in need of no other abode, no other season.

While my mind is distracted with such continual agitations, my body too is moving as it were in sympathy with those emotions. I run to and fro and get upon the rocks, explore my whole district, and find every thing as horrible without, as I experience it within. There is no longer any verdure to be seen, the grass is yellow and withered, the trees are stripped of their soilage, and the north-eastern blast heaps snow and ice around me. In short, the whole face of nature appears as decayed to my outward senses, as I myself from within am dead to hope and joy.

Amidst this rocky coast, I have found out a solitary cleft from whence I have a distinct view of the dear place you inhabit. You may easily imagine how I have feasted on this discovery, and refreshed my sight with so delightful a prospect. I spent a whole day in endeavouring to discern the very house, but the distance, alas, is too great for my efforts; and imagination was forced to supply what my wearied sight was unable to discover. I immediately ran to the curate’s, and borrowed his telescope, which presented to my view, or at least to my thoughts, the exact spot I

desired. My whole time has been taken up ever since in contemplating those walls, that inclose the only source of my comfort, the only object of my wishes: notwithstanding the inclement severity of the season, I continue thus employed from day break until evening. A fire made of leaves and a few dry sticks defends me in some measure from the intenseness of the cold. This place, wild and uncultivated as it is, is so suited to my taste, that I am now writing to you in it, on a summit which the ice has separated from the rock.

Here, my dearest Eloisa, your unhappy lover is enjoying the last pleasure that perhaps he may ever relish on this side the grave. Here, in spite of every obstacle, he can penetrate into your very chamber. He is even dazzled with your beauty, and the tenderness of your looks reanimates his drooping soul; nay he can wish for those raptures which he experienced with you in the grove. Alas! it is all a dream, the idle phantom of a projecting mind. Pleasing as it is, it vanishes like a vision, and I am soon forced to awake from so agreeable a delirium; and yet, even then, I have full employment for my thoughts. I admire and revere the purity of your sentiments, the innocence of your life; I trace out in my mind the method of your daily conduct, by comparing it with what I formerly well knew in happier days, and under more endearing circumstances; I find you ever attentive to engagements, which heighten your character: need I add that such a view most movingly affects me. In the morning I say to myself, she is just now awaking from calm and gentle slumbers, as fresh as the early dew, and as composed as the most spotless innocence, and is dedicating to her Creator a day, which she determines shall not be lost to virtue. She is now going to her mother, and her tender heart is feeling the soft ties of filial duty; she is either relieving her parents from the burthen of domestic cares, soothing their aged sorrows, pitying their infirmities, or excusing those indirections in others, which she knows not how to allow in herself. At another time, she is employing herself in works of genius or of use, storing her mind with valuable knowledge, or reconciling the elegancies of life to its more sober occupations. Sometimes I see a

neat and studied simplicity set off those charms which need no such recommendations, and at others, she is consulting her holy pastor, on the circumstances of indigent merit. Here she is aiding, comforting, relieving the orphan or the widow; there she is the entertainment of the whole circle of her friends, by her prudent and sensible conversation. Now she is tempering the gaiety of youth, with wisdom and discretion: and some few moments (forgive me the presumption) you bestow on my hapless love. I see you melted into tears at the perusal of my letters, and can perceive, it is thy devoted lover is the subject of the lines you are penning, and of the passionate discourse between you and your cousin. O Eloisa, Eloisa! shall we never be united? Shall we never live together? can we, can we part for ever? No, be that thought quite banished from my soul. I start into the phrenzy at the very idea, and my distempered mind hurries me from rock to rock. Involuntary sighs and groans betray my inward disorder; I roar out like a lioness robbed of her young. I can do every thing but lose you; there is nothing, nothing, I would not attempt for you, at the risk of my life.

I had wrote thus far, and was waiting an opportunity to convey it, when your last came to my hands from Sion. The melancholy air it breathes, has lulled my griefs to rest. Now, now am I convinced of what you observed long ago, concerning that wonderful sympathy between lovers. Your sorrow is of the calmer, mine of the more passionate kind, yet though the affection of the mind be the same, it takes its colour in each from the different channels through which it runs; and indeed it is but natural, that the greatest misfortunes should produce the most disquieting anxieties; but why do I talk of misfortunes? They would be absolutely insupportable. No, be assured, my Eloisa, that the irresistible decree of heaven has designed us for each other. This is the first great law we are to obey, and it is the great business of life, to calm, sooth, and sweeten it while we are here. I see, and lament it too, that your designs are too vague and inconclusive for execution. You seem willing to conquer insurmountable difficulties, while at the same time you are neglecting the only

feasible methods: an enthusiastic idea of honour has supplanted your reason, and your virtue is become little better than an empty delirium.

If indeed it were possible for you to remain always as young and beautiful as you are at present, my only wish, my only prayer to heaven would be, to know of your continual happiness, to see you once every year, only once, and then spend the rest of my time in viewing your mansion from afar, and in adoring you among the rocks. But behold, alas, the inconceivable swiftness of that fate which is never at rest. It is constantly pursuing, time flies hastily, the opportunity is irretrievable, and your beauty, even your beauty is circumscribed by very narrow limits of existence: it must some time or other decay and wither away like a flower, that fades before it was gathered. In the mean time, I am consuming my health, youth, strength, in continual sorrow, and waste away my years in complaining. Think, oh think, Eloisa, that we have already lost some time; think too that it will never return, and that the case will be the same with the years that are to come, if we suffer them to pass by neglected and unimproved. O fond, mistaken fair! you are laying plans for a futurity at which you may never arrive, and neglecting the present moments, which can never be retrieved. You are so anxious, and intent on that uncertain hereafter, that you forget that in the mean while, our hearts melt away like snow before the sun. Awake, awake, my dearest Eloisa, from so fatal a delusion! Leave all your concerted schemes, the wanton sallies of a fruitful fancy, and determine to be happy. Come, my only hope, my only joy! to thy fond expecting lover’s arms: come and re-unite the hitherto divided portions of our existence. Come, and before heaven, let us solemnly swear to live and die for each other. You have no need, I am sure, of any encouragement, any exhortations, to bear up against the fear of want. Though poor, provided we are happy, what a treasure will be in our possession! but let us not so insult either the dignity or the humanity of the species, as to suppose that this vast world cannot furnish an Asylum for two unfortunate lovers. But we need not despair while I have health and strength; the bread earned by the sweat of my brow will be

more relishing to you, than the most costly banquet that luxury could prepare. And indeed can any repast, provided and seasoned by love, be insipid? Oh my angel, if our happiness were sure to last us but one day, could you cruelly resolve, to quit this life, without tasting it?

One word more, and I have done. You know, Eloisa, the use which was formerly made of the rock of Leucatia; it was the last sad refuge of disappointed lovers. The place I am now in, and my own distressed situation, bear but too close a resemblance. The rock is craggy, the water deep, and I am in despair.

Letter XXVII. From Clara.

I have been lately so distracted with care and grief, that it is with much difficulty I have been able to summon sufficient strength for writing. Your misfortunes and mine are now at their utmost crisis. In short, the lovely Eloisa is very dangerously ill, and ere this can reach you, may perhaps be no more. The mortification she underwent in parting with you, first brought on her disorder, which was considerably increased by some very interesting discourse she has since had with her father. This has been still heightened by circumstances of additional aggravation, and as if all this were too little, your last letter came in aid, and compleatd, alas, what was already scarce supportable. The perusal of it affected her so sensibly, that after a whole night of violent agitations and cruel struggles, she was seized with a high fever which has increased to such a degree, that she is now delirious. Even in this situation she is perpetually calling for you, and speaks of you with such emotions as plainly point out, that you alone are the object of her more sober thoughts. Her father is kept out of the way as much as possible, which is no inconsiderable proof that my aunt suspects the truth. She has even asked me, with some anxiety, when you intended to return? so entirely does her concern for her daughter outweigh every other consideration! I dare say she would not be sorry to see you here.

Come then, I intreat you, as soon as you possibly can. I have hired a man and boat to

transmit this to you; he will wait your orders, and you may come with him. Indeed if you ever expect to see our devoted Eloisa alive, you must not lose an instant.

Letter XXVIII. From Eloisa to Clara.

Alas, my dear Clara, how is the life you have restored me imbittered by your absence. What satisfaction can there be in my recovery, when I am still preyed upon by a more violent disorder? Cruel Clara! to leave me, when I stand most in need of your assistance. You are to be absent eight days, and perhaps by that time my fate will be determined, and it will be out of your power to see me any more. Oh if you did but know his horrid proposals, and the manner of his stating them! to elope——to follow him——to be carried off——What a wretch! But of whom do I complain, my heart, my own base heart has said a thousand times more than ever he has mentioned. Good God, if he knew all! Oh it would hasten my ruin——I should be hurried to destruction, be forced to go with him——I shudder at the very thought.

But has my father then sold me? Yes, he has considered his daughter as his merchandize, and consigned her with as little remorse, as he would a bale of goods. He purchases his own ease and quiet, at the dear price of all my future comfort, nay of my life itself——for I see but too well, I can never survive it. Barbarous, unnatural, unrelenting father! Does he deserve?——But why do I talk of deserving? he is the best of fathers, and the only crime I can alledge against him, is his desire of marrying me to his friend. But my mother, my dear mother, what has she done? Alas, too much; she has loved me too much, and that very love has been my ruin.

What shall I do, Clara? What will become of me? Hans is not yet come. I am at a loss how to convey this letter to you. Before you receive it, before you return——perhaps a vagabond, abandoned, ruined and forlorn. It is over, it is over: the time is come. A day——an hour——perhaps a moment——but who can resist their fate?——Oh wherever I live, wherever I die, whether in honour or dishonour, in plenty or poverty, in pleasure or in despair, remember, I beseech you, your dear,

dear friend. But misfortunes too frequently produce changes in our affections. If ever I forget you, mine must be altered indeed!

Letter XXIX. From Eloisa to Clara.

Stay, stay, where you are! I intreat, I conjure you, never never think of returning, at least, not to me. I ought never to see you more; for now, alas, I can never behold you as I ought. Where wert thou my tender friend, my only safeguard, my guardian angel? When thou withdrewest, ruin instantly ensued. Was that fatal absence of yours so indispensable, so necessary, and couldest thou leave thy friend in the most critical time of danger? What an inexhaustible fund of remorse hast thou laid up for thyself by so blameable a neglect! It will be as bitter, as lasting, as my unhappy sorrows. Thy loss is indeed as irretrievable as my own, and it were equally difficult to gain another friend as worthy of yourself, as alas! it is impossible to recover my innocence.

Ah! what have I said? I can neither speak nor yet be silent; and to what purpose were my silence, when my very sorrows would cry out against me? And does not all created nature upbraid me with my guilt? Does not every object before me remind me of my shame? I will, I must pour my whole soul into thine, or my poor heart will burst. Canst thou hear all this, my secure and careless friend, without applying some reproaches at the least to thyself? Even thy faith and truth, the blind confidence of thy friendship, but above all thy pernicious indulgencies, have been the unhappy instruments of my destruction.

What evil genius could inspire you to invite him to return; him, alas! who is now the cruel author of my disgrace? And am I indebted to his care for a life, which he has since made insupportable by his cruelty? Inhuman as he is, let him fly from me for ever, and deny himself the savage pleasure, of being an eye witness of my sorrows. But why do I rave thus? He is not to be blamed, I alone am guilty. I alone am the author of my own misfortunes, and should therefore be the only object of anger and

resentment. But vice, new as it is to me, has already infected my very soul; and the first dismal effect of it is displayed in reviling the innocent.

No, no, he was ever incapable of being false to his vows. His virtuous soul disdains the low artifice of imposing upon credulity, or of injuring her he loves. Doubtless, he is much more experienced in the tender passions than I ever was, since he found no difficulty to overcome himself, and I alas fell a victim to my unruly desires. How often have I been a witness of his struggles and his victory, and when the violence of his transports seemed to get the better of his reason, he would stop on a sudden, as if awed and checked by virtue, when he might have led on to certain triumph. I indulged myself too much in beholding so dangerous an object. I was afflicted at his sighs, moved with his intreaties, and melted with his tears; I shared his anxieties when I thought I was only pitying them. I have seen him so affected, that he seemed ready to faint at my feet. Love alone might perhaps have been my security; but compassion, O my Clara! has fatally undone me.

Thus my unhappy passion assumed the form of humanity, the more easily to deprive me of the assistance of my virtue. That very day he had been particularly importunate and pressed me to elope with him. This proposal, connected as it was with the misery and distress of the best of parents, shocked my very soul; nor could I think with any patience, of thus imbittering their comforts. The impossibility of ever fulfilling our plighted troth, the necessity there was of concealing this impossibility from him, the regret which I felt at deceiving so tender and passionate a lover, after having flattered his expectations; all these were dreadful circumstances which lessened my resolution, increased my weakness, blinded and subdued my reason. I was then either to kill my parents, discard my lover, or ruin myself: without knowing what I did, I resolved on the latter; and forgetting every thing else, thought only of my love. Thus one unguarded minute has betrayed me to endless misery. I am fallen into the abyss of infamy from whence there is no return, and if I am to live, it is only to be wretched.

However, while I am here, sorrow shall be my only comfort. You, my dearest friend, are my only resource; oh do not, do not leave me! and since I am lost to the sweets of love, oh never take from me the delicacy of friendship. I have lost all pretensions, but my situation makes it requisite, my distresses now demand it. If you cannot esteem, you may at least pity so wretched a creature. Come then, my dear Clara, and open thy whole heart, that I may pour in my complaints, receive thy friend's tears, and shield, oh shield me from myself! Convince me, by the kind continuance of your soothing friendship, that I am not so entirely forsaken.

Letter XXX. The Answer.

Oh my dear, dear friend, what have you done! you who were the praise of every parent, and the envy of every child! What a mortal blow has virtue itself received through your means, who were the very pattern of discretion! But what can I say to you in so dreadful a situation? Can I think of aggravating your sorrows, and wounding a heart already opprest with grief; or can I give you a comfort, which, alas! I want? Shall I reflect your image in all the dismal colours of your present distress, or shall I have recourse to artifice, and remind you, not of what you are, but of what you ought to be? Do thou, most holy and unspotted friendship, steal thy soft veil over all my awakened senses, and mercifully remove the sight of those disasters, thou wert unable to prevent!

You know I have long feared the misfortune you are bewailing. How often have I foretold it, and alas, how often been disregarded? Do you blame me then for having trusted you too much to your own heart? Oh doubt not but I would have betrayed you, if even that could have been made the means of your preservation; but I knew better than yourself your own tender sensations. I perceived but too plainly that death or ruin were the melancholy alternatives; and even when your apprehensions made you banish your lover, the only matter then in question, was whether you should despair, or he be recalled. You will easily believe how dreadfully I was

alarmed, when I found you determined as it were against living, and just on the verge of death. Charge not then your lover, nor accuse yourself of a crime of which I alone am guilty, since I foresaw the fatal effects, and yet did not prevent them.

I left you indeed against my inclination, but I was cruelly forced to it. Oh could I have foreseen the near approach of your destruction, I would have put every thing to the hazard sooner than have complied. Though certain as to the event, I was mistaken as to the time of it. I thought your weakness and your distemper a sufficient security during so short an absence, and forgot indeed the sad dilemma you was so soon to experience. I never considered that the weakness of your body left your mind more defenceless in itself, and therefore more liable to be betrayed. Mistaken as I was, I can scarce be angry with myself, since this very error is the means of saving your life. I am not, Eloisa, of that hardy temper which can reconcile me to thy loss as thou wert to mine. Had I indeed lost you, my despair would have been endless; and, unfeeling as it may seem, I had rather you should live in sorrow, I had almost said in disgrace, than not live at all.

But my dear, my tender friend, why do you cruelly persist in your disquietude? Wherefore should your repentance exceed your very crime, and your contempt fall on the object which least of all deserves it, yourself? Shall the weakness of one unguarded moment be attended with so black a train of baleful consequences? And are not the very dangers you have been struggling with, a self-evident demonstration of the greatness of your virtue? You lose yourself so entirely in the thought of your defeat, that you have no leisure to consider the triumphs by which it was preceded. If your trials have been sharper, your conquests more numerous, and your resistance more frequent, than those who have escaped, have not you then, I would ask, done more for virtue than they? If you can find no circumstances to justify, dwell on those at least, which extenuate and excuse you. I myself am a tolerable proficient in the art of love, and though my own temper secures me against its violent emotions, if ere I could have felt such a passion as yours was, my struggles would have been much

fainter, my surrender more easy, and more dishonourable. Freed as I have been from the temptation, it reflects no honour on my virtue. You are the chaster of the two, though perhaps the more unfortunate.

You may perchance be offended that I am so unreserved; but unhappily your situation makes it necessary. I wish from my soul, what I have said were not applicable to you; for I detest pernicious maxims, more than bad actions. [11] If the deed were not already done, and I could have been so base to write, and you to read and hear these axioms, we both of us must be numbered in the wretched class of the abandoned. But as matters stand at present, my duty as your friend requires this at my hands, and you must give me the hearing, or you are lost, lost for ever. For you still possess a thousand rare endowments which a proper esteem of yourself can alone cultivate and preserve. Your real worth will ever exceed your own opinion of it.

Forbear then giving way to a self disesteem more dangerous and destructive than any weakness of which you could be guilty. Does true love debase the soul? No: nor can any crime, which is the result of that love, ever rob you of that enthusiastic ardour for truth and honour, which so raised you above yourself? Are there not spots visible in the sun? How many amiable virtues do you still retain, notwithstanding one error, one relaxation in your conduct? Will it make you less gentle, less sincere, less modest, less benevolent? Or will you be less worthy of all our admiration, of all our praise? Will honour, humanity, friendship, and tender love, be less respected by you, or will you cease to revere even that virtue with which you are no longer adorned. No, my dear, my charming Eloisa, thy faithful Clara bewails and yet adores thee; she is convinced that you can never fail admiring what you may be unable to practise. Believe me, you have much yet to lose, before you can sink to a level with the generality of females.

After all, whatever have been your failings, you yourself are still remaining. I want

no other comfort, I dread no other loss than you. Your first letter shocked me extremely, and would have thrown me into despair, had I not been kindly relieved, at the same time, by the arrival of your last. What! and could you leave your friend, could you think of going without me? You never mention this, your greatest crime. It is this you should blush at, this too you should repent of. But the ungrateful Eloisa neglects all friendship, and thinks only of her love.

I am extremely impatient till I see you, and am continually repining at the slow progress of time. We are to stay at Lausanne six days longer; I shall then fly to my only friend, and will then either comfort or sympathize, wipe away, or share her sorrows. I flatter myself I shall be able to make you listen, rather to the soothing tenderness of friendship, than the harsh language of reflection. My dear cousin, we must bewail our misfortunes, and pour out our hearts to each other in silence; and, if possibly by dint of future exemplary virtue, bury in oblivion the memory of a failing which can never be blotted out by our tears.

Letter XXXI. To Eloisa.

What an amazing mystery is the conduct and sentiments of the charming Eloisa! Tell me I beseech you, by what surprizing art you alone can unite such inconsistent counteracting emotions? Intoxicated as I am with love and delight, my soul is overwhelmed with grief and with despair. Amidst the most exquisite pleasures, I feel the most excruciating anxieties; nay the very enjoyment of those pleasures is made the subject of self accusation, and the aggravation of my distress. Heavens! what a torment to be able to indulge no one sensation but in a perpetual struggle of jarring passions; to be ever allaying the soothing tenderness of love, with the bitter pangs of rigorous reflection! A state of certain misery were a thousand times preferable to such doubtful disquietudes. To what purpose is it, alas, that I myself have been happy, when your misfortunes can torment me much more sensibly than my own? In vain do you attempt to disguise your own sad feelings, when your eyes will betray

what your heart labours to conceal; and can those expressive eyes hide any thing from love's all penetrating sight? Notwithstanding your assumed gaiety, I see, I see the cankering anxiety; and your melancholy, veiled, as you may think, by a smile, affects me the more sensibly.

Surely you need no longer disguise any thing from me! While I was in your mother's room yesterday, she was accidentally called out, and left me alone. In the mean time, I heard sighs that pierced my very soul. Could I, think you, be at a loss to guess the fatal cause? I went up to the place from which they seemed to proceed, and on going into your chamber, perceived the goddess of my heart, sitting on the floor, her head reclining on a couch, and almost drowned in tears. Oh! had my blood thus trickled down, I should have felt less pain. Oh how my soul melted at the sight! Remorse stung me to the quick. What had been my supremest bliss, became my excruciating punishment. I felt only then for you, and would have freely purchased with my life, your former tranquility. I would fain have thrown myself at your feet, kissed off your falling tears, and burying them at the bottom of my heart, have died or wiped them away for ever; but your mother's return made me hasten back to my post, and obliged me to carry away your griefs, and that remorse which can never end but in my death.

Oh how am I sunk and mortified by your grief! How you must despise me if our union is the cause of your own self-contempt, and if what has been the utmost of my bliss, proves the destruction of your peace! Be more just to yourself, my dearest Eloisa, and less prejudiced against the sacred ties which your own heart approved. Have you not acted in strict conformity to the purest laws of nature? Have you not voluntarily entered into the most solemn engagements? Tell me then, what you have done, that all laws divine, as well as human, will not sufficiently justify? Is there any thing wanting to confirm the sacred tie, but the mere formal ceremony of a public declaration? Be wholly mine, and you are no longer to blame. O my dear, my lovely wife, my tender and chaste companion, thou soother of all my cares, and object of

all my wishes, oh think it not a crime to have listened to your love; but rather think it will be one to disobey it for the future. To marry any other man, is the only imputation you can fix on your unimpeached honour. Would you be innocent, be ever mine. The tie that unites us is legal, is sacred. The disregarding this tie should be the principal object of your concern. Love from henceforward can be the only guardian of your virtue.

But were the foundation of your sorrows ever so just, ever so necessary, why am I robbed of my property in them? Why should not my eyes too overflow and share your grief? You should have no one pang that I ought not to feel, no one anxiety that ought not to share. My heart then, my jealous heart, but too justly reproaches you for every single tear you pour not into my bosom. Tell me, thou cold dissembling fair, is not every secret of this kind an injury to my passion? Do you so soon forget the promise you so lately made! Oh if you loved as I do, my happiness would comfort you as much as your concern affects me, and you would feel my pleasures as I share your anxieties.

But alas! you consider me as a poor wretch whose reason is lost amidst the transports of delight. You are frightened at the violence of my joy, and compassionate the extravagance of my delirium, without considering that the utmost strength of human nature is not proof against endless pleasures? How, think you, can a poor weak mortal support the ineffable delights of infinite happiness? How do you imagine he can bear such ecstatic raptures without being lost to every other consideration. Do not you know that reason is limited, and that no understanding can command itself at all times, and upon all occasions? Pity then, I beseech you, the distraction you occasion, and forgive the errors you, yourself have thrown me into. I own freely to you I am no longer master of myself. My soul is absorbed totally in yours. However it may affect me in other respects, it fits me at least for the reception of your griefs, and the participation of your sorrows. Oh my dearest Eloisa! no longer conceal any thing from your other self.

Letter XXXII. Answer.

There was a time, my dear friend, when the stile of our letters was as easy to be understood as the subject of them was agreeable and delightful; animated as they were with the warmth of a generous passion, they stood in need of no art to elevate, no colourings of a luxuriant fancy to heighten them. Native simplicity was their best, their only character. That time, alas, is now no more, it is gone beyond the hope of a return; and the first melancholy proof that our hearts are less interested, is, that our correspondence is become less intelligible.

You have been an eye-witness of my concern, and fondly therefore imagine you can discover its true source. You endeavour to relieve me by the mere force of elocution, and while you are thinking to delude me, are yourself the dupe of your own artifice. The sacrifice I have made to my passion is a great one indeed; yet great as it is, it provokes neither my sorrow nor my repentance. But I have deprived this passion of its most engaging circumstances; ah there’s the cause! that virtue which enchanted every thing around it, is itself vanished like a dream. Those inexpressible transports which at once gave both vigour to our affections, and purity to our desires, are now no more. We have made pleasure our sole pursuit, and neglected happiness has bid adieu to us for ever. Call but to mind those Halcyon days, when the fervency of our passion bore a proportion to its innocence, when the violence of our affections gave us weapons against itself; then, the purity of our intentions could reconcile us to restraint, while with comfort we reflected, that even these restraints served to heighten our desires. Compare those charming times with our present situation. Violent emotions, disquieting fears, endless suspicions, perpetual alarms, are the melancholy substitutes of our former gay companions. Where is that zeal for prudence and discretion which inspired every thought, directed every action, and sweetened and refined the delicacy of our love? Is the passion itself altered, or rather are not we most miserably changed? Our enjoyments were formerly both temperate and lasting; they are now degenerated into transports, resembling rather the fury of

madness than the caresses of love. A pure and holy flame once lived in our hearts, but now we are sunk into mere common lovers, through a blind gratification of sensual indulgencies. We can now think ourselves sufficiently happy, if jealousy can give a poignancy to those pleasures, which even the very brutes can taste without it.

This, my dear friend, is the subject which nearly concerns us both, and which indeed pains me more on your account than my own. I say nothing of the distress which is more immediately mine. Your disposition, tender as it is, can sufficiently feel it: consider the shame of my present situation, and if you still love me, give a sigh to my lost honour. My crime is unatonable, my tears then I should hope will be as lasting as my dishonour. Do not you then, who are the cause of this sorrow, seek to deprive me of this also. My only hope is founded in its continuance. Hard as my lot is, it would be still more deplorable if I could ever be comforted. The being reconciled to disgrace is the last, worst state of the abandoned.

I am but too well acquainted with all the circumstances of my condition, and yet amidst all my horror, all my grief, I have one comfort left: it is the only one, but it is solid, it is pleasing. You, my dear friend, are its constant object; and since I dare no longer consider myself, I take the greater satisfaction in thinking of you. The great share of self esteem which you, alas, have taken from me, is now transferred entirely to yourself; and what should have been your crime, is with me your apology, and endearment. Love, even that fatal love which has proved my destruction, is become the material circumstance in your favour. You are exalted while I am abased; nay, my very abasement is the cause of your exaltation. Be henceforward then my only hope. Your business is to justify my crime by your conduct. Excuse it at least by your virtuous demeanor. May your deserts prove a covering to my disgrace, and let the number of your virtues make the loss of mine less sensible to my view. Since I am no longer any thing, be thou my whole existence. The only honour I have left is solely centered in thee; and while thou in any degree art respected, I can never be wholly despised or rejected.

However sorry I may be for the quick recovery of my health, yet my artifice will no longer stand me in any stead. My countenance will soon give the lie to my pretences, and I shall no longer be able to impose on my parents a feigned indisposition. Be quick then in taking the steps we have agreed on; before I am forced to resume my usual business in my family. I perceive but too plainly, that my mother is suspicious, and continually watches us. My father, indeed, seems to know nothing of the matter. His pride has been hitherto our security. Perhaps he thinks it impossible, that a mere common tutor can be in love with his daughter. But after all, you know his temper. If you do not prevent him, he will you; do not then through a fond desire of gaining your usual access, banish yourself entirely from the possibility of a return. Take my advice and speak to my mother in time. Pretend a multiplicity of engagements, in order to prevent your teaching me any longer; and let us give up the satisfaction of such frequent interviews that we may make sure, at least, of meeting sometimes. Consider, if you are once shut out, it is for ever; but if you can resolve to deny yourself for a time, you may then come when you please, and in time and by management may repeat your visits often, without any fear of suspicion. I will tell you this evening some other schemes I have in view for our more frequent meeting, and you will then be convinced that that constant cousin, whom we used so grievously to detest, will now be very useful to two lovers, whom in truth she ought never to have left alone.

Letter XXXIII. From Eloisa.

Ah! my dear friend, what a miserable asylum for lovers is a crowded assembly! What inconceivable torment, to see each other under the restraints of what is called good breeding! Surely absence were a thousand times more supportable! Is calmness and composure compatible with such emotions? Can the lover be self-consistent, or with what attention can he consider such a number of objects, when one alone possesses his whole soul? When the heart is fired, can the body be at rest? You

cannot conceive the anxiety I felt, when I heard you were coming. Your name seemed a reproach to me, and I could not help imagining that the whole company's attention was fixed upon me alone. I was immediately lost, and blushed so exceedingly, that my cousin, who observed me, was obliged to cover me with her fan, and pretend to whisper me in the ear. This very artifice, simple as it was, increased my apprehensions, and I trembled for fear they should perceive it. In short, every the most minute circumstance was a fresh subject for alarm; never did I so fully experience the truth of that well known axiom, that a guilty conscience needs no accuser.

Clara pretended to observe that you was equally embarrassed, uncertain what to do, not daring either to advance or retire, to take notice of me or not, and looking all around the room to give you a pretence, as she said, to look, at last, on me. As I recovered from my confusion by degrees, I perceived your distress, till, by Mrs. Belon's coming up to you, you was relieved.

I perceive, my dear friend, that this manner of living, which is imbittered with so much constraint, and sweetened with so little pleasure, is not suited to us. Our passion is too noble to bear perpetual chains. These public assemblies are only fit for those who are strangers to love, or who can with ease dispense with ceremony. My anxieties are too disquieting, and your indiscretions too dangerous; I cannot always have a Mrs. Belon to make a convenient diversion. Let us return, let us return to that calm state of life from whence I have so inadvertently drawn you. It was that situation which gave rise and vigour to our passion; perhaps too it may be weakened by this dissipated manner of living. The truest passions are formed and nourished in retirement. In the busy circle of the world there is no time for receiving impressions, and even, when received, they are considerably weakened by the variety of avocations which continually occur. Retirement too best suits my melancholy, which like my love can be supported only by thy dear image. I had rather see you tender and passionate in my heart, than under constraint and dissipation in an assembly.

There may perhaps come a time, when I shall be forced to a much closer retreat. O that that time were already come! Common prudence, as well as my own inclinations, require that I should inure myself betimes to habits which necessity may demand. Oh, if the crime itself could produce the cause of its atonement! The pleasing hope of being one day——but I shall inadvertently say more than I am willing on the design I have in view. Forgive me this one secret, my dear friend; my heart shall never conceal any thing that would give you pleasure: yet you must, for a time, be ignorant of this. All I can say of it at present is, that love, which was the occasion of our misfortunes, ought to furnish us with relief. You may reason and comment upon this hint as much as you please; but I positively forbid all questions.

Letter XXXIV. The Answer.

No, non vedrete mai Cambiar gl’ affeti mici, Bei lumi onde imparai A sospirar d’amor.

How greatly am I indebted to dear Mrs. Belon for the pleasure she procured me! Forgive me, my dearest Eloisa, when I tell you, that I even dared to take some pleasure in your distress, and that your very anxiety afforded me most exquisite delight. Oh, what raptures did I feel at those stolen glances, that downcast modesty, that care with which you avoided meeting my eyes! What then, think you, was the employment of your too, too happy lover? Was he indeed converting with Mrs. Belon? Did you really think so, my lovely Eloisa? Oh, no, enchanting fair! he was much more worthily employed. With what an amazing sympathy did my heart share each emotion of thine! With what a greedy impatience did I explore the beautiful symmetry of thy person! Thy love, thy charms, entirely filled my whole soul, which was hardly able to contain the ravishing idea. The only allay to all this pleasure was, that I feasted at your expense, and felt the tender sensations which you, alas, was absolutely unable to participate. Can I tell one word that Mrs. Belon said to me? Could I have told it at the very time she was speaking? Do I know what answers I

made? or did she understand me at all? But indeed how could she comprehend the discourse of one who spoke without thinking, and answered without conceiving the question.

Com’ buom, che par ch’ ascolti, e nulla intende.

I appeal to the event for a confirmation. She has since told all the world, and perhaps you among the rest, that I have not common sense; but what is still worse, not a single grain of wit, and that I am as dull and foolish as my books. But no matter how she thinks, or what she says of me. Is not Eloisa the sole mistress of my fate, and does not she alone determine my future rank and estimation? Let the rest of the world say of me what they think proper; myself, my understanding, and my accomplishments, all absolutely depend on the value you are pleased to fix on them.

Be assured, neither Mrs. Belon, nor any superior beauty, could ever delude my attention from Eloisa. If after all this, you still doubt my sincerity, and can injure my love and your own charms so much as still to suspect me, pray tell me, how I became acquainted with every minute particular of your conduct? Did not I see you shine among the inferior beauties, like the sun among the stars, that were eclipsed by your radiance? Did not I see the young fellows hovering about your chair, and buzzing in your ear? Did not I perceive you singled out from the rest of your sex to be the only object of universal admiration? Did not I perceive their studied assiduities, their continual compliments, and your cold and modest indifference, infinitely more affecting than the most haughty demeanor you could possibly have assumed? Yes, my Eloisa, I saw the effect produced by the sight of your snowy delicate arm, when you pulled off your glove; I saw too that the young stranger who picked it up seemed tempted to kiss the charming hand that received it. And did not I see a still bolder swain, whose steady stare obliged you to add another pin to your tucker? All this may perhaps convince you I was not so absent as you imagine; not that I was the least jealous; for I know your heart was not cast in such a mold as to

be susceptible of every passion: nor will you, I hope, think otherwise of mine.

Let us then return to that calm, blest retirement, which I quitted with such regret. My heart finds no satisfaction in the tumultuous hurry of the world. Its empty tinsel pleasures dispose it only to lament the want of more substantial joys the more feelingly, and make it prefer its own real sufferings to the melancholy train of continual disappointments. Surely, Eloisa, we may attain much more solid satisfaction, in any situation, than under our present restraint. And yet you seem to forget it. To be so near each other for a whole fortnight without meeting! Oh, it is an age of time to an enamoured enraptured heart! Absence itself would be infinitely more supportable. Tell me to what end you can make use of a discretion, which occasions more misfortunes than it is able to prevent? Of what importance can it be to prolong a life, in which every succeeding moment brings fresh punishment? Were it not better, yes surely a thousand times, to meet once more at all events, and then submit to our fate with resignation.

I own freely, my dear friend, I would fain know the utmost of the secret you conceal. There never was a discovery that could interest me so deeply: but all my endeavours are in vain. I can however be as silent as you would wish, and repress my forward curiosity. But may I not hope soon to be satisfied? Perhaps you are still in the castle-building system. Oh thou dear object of my affections! surely now it is high time to improve all our schemes into reality.

P. S. I had almost forgot to tell you that M. Roguin made me the offer of a company in the regiment he is raising for the king of Sardinia. I was highly pleased at this brave man’s signal mark of his esteem, and thanking him for his kindness, told him, the shortness of my sight, and great love of a studious and sedentary life, unfitted me for so active an employment. My love can claim no great share in this sacrifice. Every one in my opinion owes his life to his country, which therefore he should not risk in the service of those princes to whom he is no ways indebted; much less is he

at liberty to let himself out for hire, and turn the noblest profession in the world into that of a vile mercenary. These maxims I claim by inheritance from my father; and happy enough should I be, could I imitate him as well in his steady adherence to his duty, and love to his country. He never would enter into the service of any foreign prince, but in the year 1712, acquired great reputation in fighting for his country: he served in many engagements, in one of which he was wounded, and at the battle of Wilmerghen was so fortunate as, in the fight of general Sacconex, to take a standard from the enemy.

Letter XXXV. From Eloisa.

I could never think, my dear friend, that what I hinted of Mrs. Belon in jest could have excited so long or so serious an explanation. An over eagerness in one's own defence is sometimes productive of the very reverse of its intention, and fixes a lasting suspicion instead of removing or lightening the accusation. The most trifling incidents, when attended to minutely, immediately grow up into events of importance. Our situation indeed secures us from making this case our own; for our hearts are too busy to listen to mere punctilios; though all disputes between lovers on points of little moment, have too often a much deeper foundation than they imagine.

I am rather glad however of the opportunity which this accident has given me, of saying somewhat to you on the subject of jealousy; a subject which, alas, but too nearly concerns me. I see, my dear friend, by the similitude of our tempers and near alliance of our dispositions, that love alone will be the great business of our lives: and surely when such impressions as we feel have been once made, love must either extinguish or absorb every other passion. The least relaxation in our passion must inevitably produce a most dangerous lethargy: a total apathy, an indifference to every enjoyment, and a disrelish of every present comfort would very soon take place if our affections were once cooled, and indeed life itself would then become a

burthen. With respect to myself, you cannot but perceive, that the present transports of my passion could alone veil over the horror of my disastrous situation, and the sad alternative proposed to my choice, is the extravagance of love, or a death of despair. Judge then if after this I am able to determine a point on which the happiness or misery of my future life so absolutely depends.

If I may be allowed to know any thing of my own temper and disposition, though I am oftentimes distracted with violent emotions, it is but seldom that their influence can hurry me into action. My sorrows must have preyed on my heart for a long time before I could ever be prevailed on to discover the source of them to their author; and being firmly persuaded that there can be no offence without intention, I would much rather submit to a thousand real subjects of complaint than ever come to an explanation. A disposition of this kind will neither easily give way to suspicion, nor be anxiously concerned at the jealousy of others. Oh, shield me, gracious heaven, from the tormenting pangs of causeless jealousy! I am fully assured that your heart was made for mine and for no other; but self-deceit is of all others the most easy imposition: a transient liking is often mistaken for a real passion, as it is difficult to distinguish the effects of sudden fancy from the result of a sincere and settled affection. If you yourself can doubt your own constancy without any reason, how could you blame me were I capable of mistrusting you? But that way leads to misery. So cruel a doubt as that would imbitter the remainder of my life. I should sigh in secret without complaining, and die an inconsolable martyr to my passion.

But let me intreat you to prevent a misfortune, the idea of which shocks my very soul. Swear to me, my dear, dear friend! but not by love, for lover’s oaths are never made but with intention to be broken; but swear by the sacred name of honour, which you highly revere, that I shall ever be the confident of your inmost thoughts, the repository of all your secrets, the witness of all your emotions, and if perchance, (which gracious heaven avert!) if any change should take place in your affections, swear moreover that you will instantly inform me of so interesting a revolution.

Think not to excuse yourself by alleging, that such a change is impossible. I believe, I hope, nay, I am well assured of your sincerity; oblige me, however, and prevent all false alarms; take from me the possibility of doubting, and secure my present peace. To hear my fate from you, how hard soever it might be, were much better than through ignorance of the truth to be perpetually exposed to the tortures of imaginary evils. Some comfort, some alleviation of my sorrows would arise from your remorse; though my affections must cease, you would necessarily become the partner of my griefs: and even my own anxiety, when poured into your breast, would seem less distracting.

’Tis on this account, my dear friend, that I congratulate myself more especially on the fond choice of my heart; that honour strengthens and confirms the bond which affection first begun; and that my security depends not on the violence of passion, but the more sober and settled dictates of principle: ’tis this which cements, at the same time that it ensures, the affections; ’tis this virtue that must reconcile us to our woes. Had it been my sad misfortune to have fixed my affections on a lover void of principle, even supposing those affections should continue unchangeable, yet what security should I have of the continuance of his lover? By what methods could I silence those perpetual misgivings that would be ever rising in my mind, and in what manner could I be assured that I was not imposed on, either by his artifice or my own credulity? But thou, my dear, my honourable friend, who hast no dark designs to cover, no secret frauds to practise, thou wilt, I am well assured, preserve the constancy thou hast vowed. You will never be shamed out of your duty, through the false bashfulness of owning an infidelity, and when you can no longer love your Eloisa, you will frankly tell her——yes, you will say, my Eloisa I do not——I cannot; indeed I cannot, finish the sentence.

What do you think of my proposal? I am sure it is the only one I can think of to pluck up jealousy by the root. There is a certain delicacy, a tender confidence which persuades me to rely so entirely on your sincerity, as to make me incapable of

believing any accusation which came not from your own lips. These are the good effects I expect from your promise; for though I should easily believe, that you are as fickle as the rest of your sex, yet I can never be persuaded, that you are equally false and deceitful, and however I might doubt of the constancy of your affections, I can never bring myself to suspect your honour. What a pleasure do I feel in taking precautions in this matter, which I hope will always be useless, and to prevent the very possibility of a change, which I am persuaded will never happen! Oh how delightful is it to talk of jealousy to so faithful a lover! If I thought you capable of inconstancy I should not talk thus. My poor heart would not be so discreet in the time of so much danger, and the least real distrust would deprive me of the prudence necessary for my security.

This subject, honoured master, may be more fully discussed this evening; for your two humble scholars are to have the honour of supping with you at my uncle's. Your learned commentaries on the Gazette have raised you so highly in his esteem, that no great artifice was wanting to persuade him to invite you. The daughter has put her harpsicord in tune, the father has been poring over Lamberti, and I shall perhaps repeat the lesson I first learnt in Clarens grove. You who are a master of every science must adapt your knowledge and instructions to our several capacities. Mr. Orbe (who is invited you may be sure) has had notice given him to prepare a dissertation on the nature of the king of Naples's future homage; this will give us three an opportunity of going into my cousin's apartment. There, vassal, on thy knees, before thy sovereign mistress, thy hands clasped in hers, and in the presence of her chancellor, thou shalt vow truth and loyalty on every occasion; I do not say eternal love, because that is a thing which no one can absolutely promise; but truth, sincerity, and frankness are in every one's disposal; to these therefore thou shalt swear. You need not vow eternal fealty; but you must and shall vow to commit no act of felonious intention, and at least to declare open war before you shake off the yoke. This done, you shall seal it with an embrace and be owned and acknowledged

for a true and loyal knight.

Adieu, my dear friend; the expectations I have formed of this evening have given me all these spirits. I shall be doubly blessed to see you a partaker of my joy.

Letter XXXVI. From Eloisa.

Kiss this welcome letter, and leap for joy at the news I am going to tell you: but be assured that though my emotions should prove less violent, I am not a whit less rejoiced. My father being obliged to go to Bern on account of a law suit, and from thence to Soleure for his pension, proposes to take my mother along with him, to which she is the more willing to consent, as she hopes to receive benefit from the journey and change of air. They were so obliging as to offer to take me along with them. I did not think proper to say all I thought on the occasion; but their not being able to find convenient room for me made them change their intentions with respect to my going, and they are now all endeavouring to comfort me for the disappointment. I was obliged to assume a very melancholy air, as if almost inconsolable; and, ridiculous as it is, I have dissembled so long, that I am sometimes apt to fancy I feel a real sorrow.

I am not however to be absolutely my own mistress while my parents are absent, but to live at my uncle’s; so that during the whole time I shall be always with my constant cousin. My mother choses to leave her own woman behind; Bab, therefore, will be considered as a kind of governess to me. But we need not be very apprehensive of those whom we have no need either to bribe or to trust, but who may be easily got rid of whenever they grow troublesome, by means of any trifling allurement.

You will readily conceive, I dare say, what opportunities we shall have of meeting during their absence; but our discretion must furnish those restraints, which our situation has taken off for a while, and we must then voluntarily submit to that reserve, to which at present we are obliged by sad necessity. You must, when I am at

my cousin's, come no oftener than you did before, for fear of giving her offence, and I hope there will be no need of reminding you of the assiduous respect and civility, which her sex and the sacred laws of hospitality require; and that you yourself will sufficiently consider what is due to the friendship that gives an asylum to your love. I know your eager disposition; but I am convinced, at the same time, that there are bounds which can restrain it. Had you never governed your violence by the known laws of honour, you had not been troubled at present with any admonitions, at least with none from me.

But why that downcast look, that louring air? why repine at the restraints which duty prescribes? Be it thy Eloisa's care to sooth and soften them. Had you ever cause to repent of having listened to my advice? Near the flowery banks of the head of the river Vevey there stands a solitary hut, which serves sometimes as a shelter to sportsmen, and surely may also shelter lovers. Hard by the mansion house which belongs to Mr. Orbe are several thatched dairy houses sufficiently remote, which may serve to cover love and pleasure, ever the truest friends to rustic simplicity. The prudent milkmaids will keep the secret; for they have often need of secrecy. The streams which water the adjoining meadows are bordered with flowering shrubs, and charming shady groves, while at some little distance the thickness of the neighbouring wood seems to promise a more gloomy and secluded retreat.

Al bel seggio riposto, ombroso e fosco, Ne mai pastori appressan, ne bifolci.

In this delightful place, no vestiges are seen of human toil, no appearance of studied and laborious art; every object around presents only a view of the tender care of nature, our common mother. Here then, my dear friend, we shall be only under nature's directions, and know no other laws but hers. At Mr. Orbe's invitation, Clara has already persuaded her father to take the diversion of hunting for two or three days in this part of the world, and to carry the two inseparables with him. These inseparables have others likewise closely connected with them, as you know but too

well. The one assuming the character of master of the house, will consequently do the honours, while the other with less parade will do the honours of a dairy-house, and this rural hut dedicated to love, will be to them the temple of Gnidus. To succeed the more effectually in this charming project, there will be wanting a little previous contrivance, which may be easily settled between us, and the very consideration of which will form a part of those pleasures they are intended to produce. Adieu, my dear life! I leave off abruptly for fear of being surprized. The heart of thy devoted Eloisa anticipates, alas, too eagerly the pleasures of the dairy-house.

P. S. Upon second thoughts, I begin to be of opinion that we may meet every day without any great danger; at my cousin’s every other day, and in the field on every intermediate one.

Letter XXXVII. From Eloisa.

They left me this very morning; my tender father and still fonder mother, took leave of me but just now, overwhelming their beloved daughter (too unworthy, alas, of all their affection) with repeated caresses. For my own part, indeed, I did not feel much reluctance at this separation! I embraced them with an outward appearance of concern, while my ungrateful and unnatural heart was leaping within me for joy. Where, alas, is now that happy time, when I led an innocent life under their continual observation, when my only joy was their approbation, my only concern their absence or neglect? Behold now the melancholy reverse! Guilty and fearful as I now am, the very thought of them gives me pain, and the recollection of myself makes me blush with confusion. All my virtuous ideas now vanish away like a dream, and leave in their stead empty disquietudes and barren remorse, which, bitter as they are, are nevertheless insufficient to lead me to repentance. These cruel reflections have brought on all that sorrow, which the taking leave of my parents was unable to effect. And yet immediately on their departure, I felt an agony of

grief. While Bab was setting the things to rights, I went into my mother's room as it were mechanically, without knowing what I did, and seeing some of her cloaths lying scattered about, I took them up one by one, kissed them and bathed them with my tears. This vent to my anxiety afforded me present ease, and it was some comfort to me to reflect, that I was still awake to nature's soft emotions, and that her gentle fires were not entirely extinguished in my soul. In vain, cruel tyrant! dost thou seek to subject this weak and tender heart, to thy absolute dominion: notwithstanding all thy fond illusions, it still retains the sentiments of duty, still cherishes and reveres parental rights, much more sacred than thy own.

Forgive me, my dear friend, these involuntary emotions, nor imagine that I carry these reflections farther than I ought. Love's soft moments are not to be expected amidst the tortures of anxiety. I cannot conceal my sufferings from you, and yet I would not overwhelm you with them; nay, you must know them, though not to share, yet to soften them. But into whose bosom dare I pour them, if not into, thine? Are not you my faithful friend, my prudent counselor, my tender comfort? Have not you been fostering in my soul the love of virtue, when, alas! that virtue itself was no longer within me? How often should I have sunk under the pressure of my afflictions had not thy pitying hand relieved me from my sorrows, and wiped away my tears? It is your tender care alone supports me. I dare not abuse myself while you continue to esteem me, and I flatter myself, that if I were indeed contemptible, none of you would or could so honour me with your regard. I am flying to the arms of my dear cousin, or rather to the heart of a tender sister, there to repose the load of grief with which I am oppressed. Come thither this evening, and contribute to restore to me that peace and serenity, of which I have long been deprived.

Letter XXXVIII. To Eloisa.

No, Eloisa, it is impossible! I can never bear to see you every day, if I am always to be charmed in the manner I was last night. My affection must ever bear proportion

to the discovery of your beauties, and you are an inexhaustible source of endless wonder and delight, beyond my utmost hopes, beyond my most sanguine expectations! What a delicious evening to me was the last! What amazing raptures did I feel! O enchanting sorrow! How infinitely doth the pleasing languor of a heart softened by concern, surpass the boisterous pleasures, the foolish gaiety, and the extravagant joy with which a boundless passion inspires the ungovernable lover! O peaceful bliss! never, never shall thy pleasing idea be torn from my memory! Heavens, what an enchanting sight! it was extasy itself, to see two such perfect beauties embrace each other so affectionately; your face reclined upon her breast, mixing your tender tears together, and bedewing that charming bosom, just as heaven refreshes a bed of new blown flowers. I grew jealous of such a friendship, and thought there was some thing more interesting in it than even in love itself. I was grieved at the impossibility of consoling you, without disturbing you at the same time by the violence of my emotion. No, nothing, nothing upon earth is capable of exciting so pleasing a sensation as your mutual caresses. Even the sight of two lovers would have been less delightful.

Oh how could I have admired, nay, adored your dear cousin, if the divine Eloisa herself had not taken up all my thoughts! You throw, my dearest angel, an irresistible charm on every thing that surrounds you. Your gown, your gloves, fan, work, nay every thing that was the object of my outward senses, enchanted my very soul; and you yourself compleatd the enchantment. Forbear, forbear, my dear, dear Eloisa, nor deprive me of all sensation, by making my enjoyment too exquisite. My transports approach so nearly to phrenzy, that I begin to be apprehensive I shall lose my reason. Let me, at least, be sensible of my felicity; let me at least have a rational idea of those raptures, which are more sublime, and more penetrating, than my glowing imagination could paint. How can you think yourself disgraced? This very thought is a sure proof that your senses likewise are affected. Oh, you are too perfect for frail mortality! I should believe you to be of a more exalted purer species, if the

violence of my passion did not clearly evince, that we are of a kindred frame. No human being conceives your excellence; you are unknown even to yourself; my heart alone knows and can estimate its Eloisa. Were you only an idol of worship, could you have been enraptured with the dull homage of admiring mortals? Were you only an angel, how much you would lose of your real value!

Tell me, if you can, how such a passion as mine is capable of increasing? I am ignorant of the means, yet am but too sensible of the fact. You are indeed ever present with me, yet there are some days in which thy beautiful image is peculiarly before me, and haunts me as it were with such amazing assiduity that neither time nor place can deprive me of the delightful object. I even believe you left it with me in the dairy-house, at the conclusion of your last letter. Since you mentioned that rural spot, I have been continually rambling in the fields, and am always insensibly led towards the same place. Every time I behold it, it appears still more enchanting.

Non vide il mondo si leggiadri rami, Ne mosse'l vento mai si verdi frondi.

I find the country more delightful, the verdure fresher and livelier, the air more temperate and serene than ever I did before; even the feathered songsters of the sky seem to tune their tender throats with more harmony and pleasure; the murmuring rills invite to love-inspiring dalliance, while the blossoms of the vine regale me from afar with the choicest perfumes. Some secret charm enlivens every object, or raises my sensations to a more exquisite degree. I am tempted to imagine that even the earth adorns herself to make a nuptial bed for your happy lover, worthy of the passion which he feels, and the goddess he adores. O, my Eloisa, my dearer better half! let us immediately add to these beauties of the spring, the presence of two faithful lovers. Let us carry the true sentiments of pleasures to places which comparatively afford but an empty idea of it. Let us animate all nature which is absolutely dead without the genial warmth of love. Am I yet to stay three days, three whole days? Oh what an age to a fond expecting lover! Intoxicated with my passion,

I wait that happy moment with the most melancholy impatience. Oh how happy should we be, if heaven would annihilate those tedious intervals which retard the blissful moment!

Letter XXXIX. From Eloisa.

There is not a single emotion of your heart, which I do not share with the tenderest concern. But talk no more of pleasures, whilst others, who have deserved much better than either of us, are suffering under the pressure of the severest afflictions. Read the inclosed, and then be composed if you can. I indeed, who am well acquainted with the good girl who wrote it, was not able to proceed without shedding tears of sorrow and compassion. The recollection it gave me of my blameable negligence, touched my very soul, and, to my bitter confusion, I perceive but too plainly, that a forgetfulness of the principal points of my duty, has extended itself to all those of inferior consideration. I had promised this poor child to take care of her; I recommended her to my mother, and kept her in some degree under my continual inspection: but, alas! when I became unable to protect myself, I abandoned her too, and exposed her to worse misfortunes than even I myself have fallen into. I shudder to think that had I not been roused from my carelessness, in two days time my ward would have been ruined; her own indigence, and the snares of others, would have ruined, for ever ruined, a modest and discreet girl, who may hereafter possibly prove an excellent parent. O, my dear friend! can there be such vile creatures upon earth, who would extort from the depth of misery what the heart alone should give? That any one can submit to receive the tender embraces of love from the arms of famine itself!

Can you be unmoved at my Fanny’s filial piety, at the integrity of her sentiments, and the simplicity of her innocence? But are you not affected with the uncommon tenderness of the lover, who will sell even himself to assist his poor mistress? Would not you think yourself too happy to be the instrument of uniting a couple so

well formed for each other? If we, alas, (whose situation so much resembles theirs) do not compassionate lovers who are united by nature, but divided by misfortunes, where else can they seek relief with a probability of success? For my own part, I have determined to make some amends for my neglect, by contributing my utmost endeavours to unite these two young people. Heaven will, I hope, assist the generous undertaking, and my success may prove a good omen to us. I desire, nay, conjure you, by all that is good and dear to you, to set out for Neufchatel the very moment you receive this, or to-morrow morning at farthest. You will then go to Mr. Merveilleux, and try to obtain the young man's release; spare neither money nor intreaties. Take Fanny's letter along with you. No breast, that is not absolutely void of all sentiments of humanity, can read it without emotion. In short, whatever money it may cost, whatever pleasure of her own it may defer, be sure not to return without an entire free discharge for Claudius Anet; if you do, you may be assured, I shall never enjoy a single moment's satisfaction during the remainder of my life.

I am aware that your heart will be raising many objections to the proposal I have made; but can you think, that I have not foreseen all those objections? Yet, notwithstanding them all, I repeat my request; for virtue must either be an empty name, or it requires of us some mortifying self-denials. Our appointment, my friend, my dear, dear friend, though lost for the present, may be made again and again. A few hours of the most agreeable intercourse vanish like a flash of lightening; but when the happiness of an honest couple is in your power, think, only think, what you are preparing for hereafter, if you neglect the opportunity; on the use then of the present time, depends an eternity of contentment or remorse. Forgive such frequent repetitions, they are the overflowings of my zeal. I have said, more than was necessary to any honest man, and an hundred times too much to my dear friend. I well know how you abominate that cruel turn of mind which hardens us to the calamities of others. You yourself have told me a thousand times, that he is a wretch indeed who scruples giving up one day of pleasure to the duties of humanity.

Letter XL. From Fanny Regnard to Eloisa.

Honoured Madam,

Forgive this interruption, from a poor girl in despair, who being ignorant what to do, has taken the liberty of addressing herself to your benevolence; for you, Madam, are never weary of comforting the afflicted, and I am so unfortunate, alas, that I have tired all but God Almighty, and you, with my complaints. I am very sorry I was obliged to leave the mistress you had been so kind to put me apprentice to, but on my mother's death, (which happened this winter) I was obliged to return home to my poor father, who is confined to his bed by the palsy.

I have never forgotten the advice you gave my mother, to try to settle me with some honest man, who might be of use to the family. Claud Anet (formerly in your father's service) is a very sober discreet person, master of a good trade, and has taken a liking to me. Having been already so much indebted to your bounty, I did not dare to apply to you for any farther assistance, so that he has been our only support during the whole winter. He was to have married me this spring, and indeed had set his heart on it; but I have been so teased for three years rent due last Easter, that not knowing where to get so much money, the young man listed at once in M. Marveilleux's company, and brought me all the money he had received for enlisting. M. Merveilleux stays at Neufchatel about a week longer, and Claud Anet is to set out in three or four days with the rest of the recruits. So that we have neither time nor money to marry, and he is going to leave me without any help. If, through your interest or the Baron's, five or six weeks longer might be given us, we would endeavour in that time either to get married, or repay the young man his money. But I am sure he can never be prevailed on to take the money again.

I received this morning some great offers from a very rich gentleman, but thank God, I have refused them. He told me, he would come again to-morrow to know my mind; but I desired him not to give himself so much trouble, and that he knew it

already. By God's assistance, he shall have the same answer to-morrow. I might indeed apply to the parish; but one is so despised after that, that my misfortunes are better than such a relief, and Claud Anet has too much pride to think of me after this. Forgive the liberty I have taken; you are the only person I could think of, and I feel so distressed, that I can write no more about it.

I am, Your humble servant to command. Fanny Regnard.

Letter XLI. The Answer.

I have been wanting in point of memory, and you Fanny have been deficient in your confidence in me; in short, we have both of us been to blame, but I am the most inexcusable. However, I shall now endeavour to repair the injury which my neglect may have occasioned. Bab, the bearer of this, has orders to satisfy your more immediate wants, and will be with you again to-morrow, for fear the gentleman should return. My cousin and I propose calling on you in the evening; for I know you cannot leave your poor father alone, and indeed I shall be glad of this opportunity, to inspect your economy a little.

You need not be uneasy on Claud Anet's account; my father is from home, but we shall do all we can towards his immediate release. Be assured, that I will neither forget you, nor your generous lover. Adieu, my dear, and may God ever bless you. I think you much in the right for not having recourse to public charity. Such steps as those, are never to be taken, while the hearts and purses of benevolent individuals are open, and accessible.

Letter XLII. To Eloisa.

I have received your letter, and shall set out this instant. This is all the answer I shall make. O Eloisa! how could you cruelly suppose me possessed of such a selfish unfeeling heart? But you command, and shall be obeyed. I would rather die a thousand times, than forfeit your esteem.

Letter XLIII. To Eloisa.

I arrived at Neufchatel yesterday morning, and on enquiry was told, that M. Merveilleux was just gone into the country. I followed him immediately, but as he was out a hunting all day, I was obliged to wait till the evening, before I could speak with him. I told him the cause of my journey, and desired he would set a price on Claud Anet's discharge; to which he raised a number of objections. I then concluded, that the most effectual method of answering them, would be to increase my offers, which I did in proportion as his difficulties multiplied. But finding, after some time, that I was not likely to succeed, I took my leave, having previously desired the liberty to wait on him the next morning; determined in my own mind not to stir out of the house a second time, till I had obtained my request, by dint of larger offers, frequent importunity, or in short by whatever means I could think most effectual. I arose early next morning to put this resolution in practice, and was just going to mount my horse, when I received a note from M. Merveilleux with the young man's discharge, in due form and order. The contents of the note were these.

"Inclosed, Sir, is the discharge, you request. I denied it to your pecuniary offers, but have granted it in consideration of your charitable design, and desire you would not think that I am to be bribed into a good action."

You will easily conceive by your own satisfaction, what joy I must have felt. But why is it not as compleat as it ought to be? I cannot possibly avoid going to thank, and indeed to reimburse M. Merveilleux, and if this visit, necessary as it is, should retard my return a whole day, as I am apprehensive it will, is he not generous at my expense? But no matter: I have done my duty to Eloisa, and am satisfied. Oh what a happiness it is thus to reconcile benevolence to love! to unite in the same action the charms of conscious virtue, with the soft sensations of the tendered affection. I own freely, Eloisa, that I began my journey, full of sorrow and impatience; I even dared to reproach you with feeling too much the calamities of others, while you remained

insensible to my sufferings, as if I alone of all created beings had been unworthy your compassion. I thought it quite barbarous in you, after having disappointed me of my sweetest hopes, thus unnecessarily and wantonly as it were to deprive me of a happiness which you had voluntarily promised. All these secret repinings are now happily changed into a fund of contentment, and solid satisfaction, to which I have hitherto lived a stranger. I have already enjoyed the recompense you bade me expect; you spake from experience. Oh! what an amazing kind of empire is yours, which can convert even disappointment into pleasure, and cause the same satisfaction in obeying you, as could result from the greatest self-gratification! Oh my dearest, kindest Eloisa, you are indeed an angel; if any thing could be wanting to confirm the truth of this, your unbounded empire over my soul would be a sufficient confirmation. Doubtless it partakes much more of the divine nature, than of the human; and who can resist the power of heaven? And to what purpose should I cease to love you, since you must ever remain the object of my adoration?

P. S. According to my calculation we shall have five or six days to ourselves before your mother returns. Will it be impossible for you during this interval to undertake a pilgrimage to the dairy-house?

Letter XLIV. From Eloisa.

Repine not, my dear friend, at this unexpected return. It is really more advantageous to us than you can possibly imagine, and indeed, supposing our contrivances could have effected what our regard to appearance has induced us to give up, we should have succeeded no better. Judge what would have been the consequence, had we followed our inclinations. I should have gone into the country but the very evening before my mother’s return, should have been sent for them thence, before I could have possibly given you any notice, and must consequently have left you in the most dreadful anxiety; we should have parted just on the eve of our imaginary bliss, and the disappointment would have been cruelly aggravated by the near approach of our

felicity. Besides, notwithstanding the utmost precautions we could have taken, it would have been known that we were both in the country; perhaps too, they might have heard that we were together, it would have been suspected at least, and that were enough. An imprudent avidity of the present moment, would have deprived us of every future resource, and the remorse for having neglected such an act of benevolence, would have imbittered the remainder of our lives.

Compare then, I beseech you, our present situation with that I have been describing. First, your absence has been productive of several good effects. My Argus will not fail to tell my mother, that you have been but seldom at my cousin's. She is acquainted with the motives of your journey; this may probably prove a means of raising you in her esteem, and how think you, can they conceive it possible that two young people who have an affection for each other should agree to separate, at the very time they are left most at liberty? What an artifice have we employed to destroy suspicions which are but too well founded! The only stratagem in my opinion consistent with honour, is the carrying our discretion to such an incredible height, that, what is in reality the utmost effort of self-denial, may be mistaken for a token of indifference. How delightful, my dear friend, must a passion thus concealed be to those who enjoy it! Add to this the pleasing consciousness of having united two despairing lovers, and contributed to the happiness of so deserving a couple. You have seen my Fanny; tell me, is not she a charming girl? Does not she really deserve every thing you have done for her? Is not she too beautiful and too unfortunate to remain long unmarried, without some disaster? And do you think that Claud Anet, whose natural good disposition has miraculously preserved him during three years service, could have resolution to continue three years more without becoming as perfidious, and as wretched as all those of that profession? Instead of that, they love, and will be united, they are poor, and will be relieved; they are honest, and will be enabled to continue so; for my father has promised them a competent provision. What a number of advantages then has your kindness procured to them, and to

ourselves; not to mention the additional obligations you have conferred on me? Such, my friend, are the certain effects of sacrifices to virtue; which, though they are difficult to perform, are always grateful in remembrance. No one ever repented of having performed a good action.

I suppose, you will say, with the constant, that all this is mere preaching, and indeed it is but too true that I no more practise what I preach than those who are preachers by profession. However, if my discourses are not so elegant, I have the satisfaction to find that mine are not so entirely thrown away as theirs. I do not deny it, my dear friend, that I would willingly add as many virtues to your character, as a fatal indulgence to love has taken away from mine; and Eloisa herself having forfeited my regard, I would gladly esteem her in you. Perfect affection is all that is required on your part, and the consequence will flow easy and natural. With what pleasure ought you to reflect, that you are continually increasing those obligations, which love itself engages to pay!

My cousin has been made privy to the conversation you had with her father, about M. Orbe, and seems to think herself as much indebted to you, as if we had never been obliged to her in our lives. Gracious heaven, how every particular incident contributes to my happiness! How dearly am I beloved, and how I am charmed with their affection! Father, mother, friend and lover, all conspire in their tender concern for my happiness, and notwithstanding my eager endeavours to requite them, I am always either prevented or outdone. It should seem, as if all the tenderest feelings in nature verged towards my heart, whilst I, alas, have but one sensation to enjoy them.

I forgot to mention a visit you are to receive to-morrow morning. ’Tis from L. B—— lately come from Geneva, where he has resided about eight months; he told me he had seen you at Sion, in his return from Italy. He found you very melancholy, but speaks of you in general in the manner you yourself would wish, and in which I have long thought. He commended you so a propos to my father yesterday, that he

has prejudiced me already very much in his favour: and indeed his conversation is sensible, lively and spirited. In reciting heroic actions, he raises his voice, and his eyes sparkle as men usually do who are capable of performing the deeds they relate. He speaks also emphatically in matters of taste, especially of the Italian music which he extols to the very skies. He often reminded me of my poor brother. But his lordship seems not to have sacrificed much to the graces; his discourse in general is rather nervous than elegant, and even his understanding seems to want a little polishing.

Letter XLV. To Eloisa.

I was reading your last letter, the second time, only, when Lord B—— came in. But as I have so many other things to say, how can I think of his lordship? When two people are entirely delighted and satisfied with each other, what need is there of a third person? However since you seem to desire it, I will tell you what I know of him. Having passed the Semplon, he came to Sion, to wait for a chaise which was to come from Geneva to Brigue; and as want of employment often makes men seek society, we soon became acquainted, and as intimate, as the reserve of an Englishman, and my natural love of retirement, would permit. Yet we soon perceived, that we were adapted to each other; there is a certain union of souls which is easily discernable. At the end of eight days, we were full as familiar, as we ever were afterwards, and as two Frenchmen would have been in the same number of hours. He entertained me with an account of his travels; and knowing he was an Englishman, I immediately concluded he would have talked of nothing but pictures or buildings. But I was soon pleased to find, that his attention to the politer arts had not made him neglect the study of men and manners: yet whatever he said on those subjects of refinement was judicious, and in taste, but with modesty and diffidence. As far as I could perceive, his opinions seemed rather founded on reflection, than science, and that he judged from effects, rather than rules, which confirmed me in

my idea of his excellent understanding. He spake to me of the Italian music with as much enthusiasm as he did to you, and indeed gave me a specimen of it; his valet plays extremely well on the violin, and he himself tolerably on the violencello. He picked out what he called some very affecting pieces, but whether it was by being unused to it, or that music, which is so soothing in melancholy, loses all its soft charms when our grief is extreme, I must own I was not much delighted; the melody was agreeable, but wild, and without the least expression.

Lord B—— was very anxious to know my situation. I accordingly told him, as much as was necessary for him to know. He made an offer of taking me with him into England, and proposed several advantages, which were no inducements to me in a country where Eloisa was not. He had formerly told me that he intended to pass the winter at Geneva, the summer at Lausanne and that he would come to Vevey before he returned into Italy.

Lord B—— is of a lively hasty temper, but virtuous and steady. He piques himself on being a philosopher, and upon those principles which we have frequently discussed. But I really believe his own disposition leads him naturally to that which he imagines the effect of method and study, and that the varnish of stoicism, which he glosses over all his actions, only covers the inclination of his heart.

I do not know what want of polish you have found in his manner; it is really not very engaging, and yet I cannot say there is any thing disgusting in it. Though his address is not so easy and open as his disposition, and he seems to despise the trifling punctilios of ceremony, yet his behaviour in the main is very agreeable: though he has not that reserved and cautious politeness, which confines itself alone to mere outward form, and which our young officers learn in France, yet he is less solicitous about distinguishing men and their respective situations at first sight, than he is assiduous in paying a proper degree of respect to every one in general. Shall I tell you the plain truth? Want of elegance is a failing which women never overlook, and

I fear that in this instance, Eloisa has been a woman for once in her life.

Since I am now upon a system of plain dealing, give me leave to assure you, my pretty preacher, that it is to no purpose that you endeavour to invalidate my pretensions, and that sermons are but poor food for a famished lover. Think, think of all the compensations you have promised, and which indeed are my due; but though every thing you have said is exceeding just and true, one visit to the dairy-house would have been a thousand times more agreeable.

Letter XLVI. From Eloisa.

What, my friend, still the dairy-house? Surely this dairy house sits heavy on your heart. Well, cost what it will, I find you must be humoured. But is it possible you can be so attached to a place you never saw, that no other will satisfy you? Do you think that Love, who raised Armida's palace in the midst of a desert, cannot give us a dairy-house in the town? Fanny is going to be married, and my father, who has no objection to a little parade and mirth, is resolved it shall be a public wedding. You may be sure there will be no want of noise and tumult, which may not prove unfavourable to a private conversation. You understand me. Do not you think it will be charming to find the pleasures we have denied ourselves in the effect of our benevolence?

Your zeal to apologize for Lord B—— was unnecessary, as I was never inclined to think ill of him. Indeed how should I judge of a man, with whom I spent only one afternoon? or how can you have been sufficiently acquainted with him in the space of a few days? I spoke only from conjecture; nor do I suppose that you can argue on any better foundation: his proposals to you are of that vague kind of which strangers are frequently lavish, from their being easily eluded, and because they give them an air of consequence. But your character of his Lordship is another proof of your natural vivacity, and of that ease with which you are prejudiced for or against people at first sight. Nevertheless, we will think of his proposals more at leisure. If love

should favour my project, perhaps something better may offer. O, my dear friend, patience is exceeding bitter; but its fruits are most delicious!

To return to our Englishman, I told you he appeared to have a truly great and intrepid soul; but that he was rather sensible than agreeable. You seem almost of the same opinion, and then, with that air of masculine superiority, always visible in our humble admirers, you reproach me with being a woman once in my life; as if a woman ought ever to belie her sex.

Have you forgot our dispute, when we were reading your Republic of Plato, about the moral distinction between the sexes? I have still the same difficulty to suppose there can be but one common model of perfection for two beings so essentially different. Attack and defence, the impudence of the men, and female modesty, are by no means effects of the same cause as the philosophers have imagined; but natural institutions which may be easily accounted for, and from which may be deduced every other moral distinction. Besides, the designs of nature being different in each, their inclinations, their perceptions ought necessarily to be directed according to their different views: to till the ground, and to nourish children, require very opposite tastes and constitutions. A higher stature, stronger voice and features, seem indeed to be no indispensable marks of distinction; but this external difference evidently indicates the intention of the Creator in the modification of the mind. The soul of a perfect woman and a perfect man ought to be no more alike than their faces. All our vain imitations of your sex are absurd; they expose us to the ridicule of sensible men, and discourage the tender passions we were made to inspire. In short, unless we are near six foot high, have a bass voice, and a beard upon our chins, we have no business to pretend to be men.

What novices are you lovers in the art of reproaching! You accuse me of a fault which I have not committed, or of which, however, you are as frequently guilty as myself; and you attribute it to a defeat of which I am proud. But in return for your

plain dealing, suffer me to give you my plain and sincere opinion of your sincerity. Why then, it appears to be a refinement of flattery, calculated, under the disguise of an apparent freedom of expression, to justify to yourself the enthusiastic praises which, upon every occasion, you are so liberally pleased to bestow on me. You are so blinded by my imaginary perfections, that you can discover no real ones to excuse your prepossessions in my favour.

Believe me, my friend, you are not qualified to tell me my faults. Do you think the eyes of love, piercing as they are, can discover imperfect? No, ’tis a power which belongs only to honest friendship, and in that your pupil Clara is much your superior. Yes, my dear friend, you shall praise me, admire me, and think me charming and beautiful and spotless. Thy praises please without deceiving me I know it to be the language of error and not of deceit; that you deceive yourself, but have no design to deceive me. O how delightful are the illusions of love! and surely all its flattery is truth; for the heart speaks, though the judgment is silent. The lover who praises in us that which we do not possess, represents our qualities truly as they appear to him; he speaks a falsity without being guilty of a lie; he is a flatterer without meanness, and one may esteem without believing him.

I have heard, not without some little palpitation, a proposal to invite two philosophers to-morrow to supper. One is my Lord B——, and the other a certain sage whose gravity hath sometimes been a little discomposed at the feet of a young disciple. Do you know the man? If you do, pray desire that he will to-morrow preserve the philosophic decorum a little better than usual. I shall take care to order the young damsel to cast her eyes downward, and to appear in his as little engaging as possible.

Letter XLVII. To Eloisa.

Malicious girl! Is this the circumspection you promised? Is it thus you spare my heart, and draw a veil over your charms? How often did you break your

engagement! First, as to your dress; for you were in an undress, though you well know that you are never more bewitching. Secondly, that modest air and sweetness in your manner so calculated for the gradual display of all your graces. Your conversation more refined, more studied, more witty than usual, which made every one so uncommonly attentive, that they seemed impatiently to anticipate every sentence you spoke. That delightful air you sung below your usual pitch, which rendered your voice more enchantingly soft, and which made your song, though French, please even Lord B——. Your down-cast eyes, and your timid glances which pierced me to the soul. In a word, that inexpressible enchantment which seemed spread over your whole person to turn the brains of the company, even without the least apparent design. For my part, I know not how to manage; but if this is the method you take to be as little engaging as possible, I assure you, however, it is being infinitely too much so for people to retain their senses in your company.

I doubt much whether the poor English philosopher has not perceived a little of the same influence. After we had conducted your cousin home, seeing us all in high spirits, he proposed that we should retire to his lodgings and have a little music, and a bowl of punch. While his servants were assembling, he never ceased talking of you; but with so much warmth, that, I confess, I should not hear his praise from your lips with as much pleasure as you did from mine. Upon the whole, I am not fond of hearing any body speak of you, except your cousin. Every word seems to deprive me of a part of my secret, or my pleasure, and whatever they say appears so suspicious, or is so infinitely short of what I feel, that I would hear no discourse upon the subject but my own.

It is not that, like you, I am at all inclined to jealousy: no, I am better acquainted with the soul of my Eloisa; and I have certain sureties that exclude even the possibility of your inconstancy. After your protestations, I have nothing more to say concerning your other pretenders; but this Lord, Eloisa——equality of rank——your father’s prepossession——In short, you know my life is depending.

For heaven's sake, deign to give me a line or two upon this subject: one single word from Eloisa, and I shall be satisfied for ever.

I passed the night in attending to, and playing, Italian music; for there were some duets, and I was forced to take a part. I dare not yet tell you what effect it had on me; but I fear, I fear, the impression of last night's supper influenced the harmony, and that I mistook the effect of your enchantment for the power of music. Why should not the same cause which made it disagreeable at Sion, gave it a contrary effect in a contrary situation? Are not you the source of every affection of my soul, and am I proof against the power of your magic? If it had really been the music which produced the enchantment, every one present must have been affected in the same manner; but whilst I was all rapture and extasy, Mr. Orbe sat snoring in an armed chair, and when I awoke him with my exclamations, all the praise he bestowed was to ask, whether your cousin understood Italian.

All this will be better explained to-morrow; for we are to have another concert this evening. His Lordship is determined to have it compleat, and has sent to Lausanne for a second violin, who, he says, is a tolerable hand. On my part, I shall carry some French scenes and cantatas.

When I first returned to my room I sunk into my chair, quite exhausted and overcome; for want of practice I am but a poor rake: but I no sooner took my pen to write to you, than I found myself gradually recover. Yet I must endeavour to sleep a few hours. Come with me; my sweet friend, and do not leave me whilst I slumber but whether thy image brings me pain or pleasure, whether it reminds me, or not, of Fanny's wedding, it cannot deprive me of that delightful moment, when I shall awake and recollect my felicity.

Letter XLVIII. To Eloisa.

Ah! my Eloisa, how have I been entertained! What melting sounds! what music! delightful source of sensibility and pleasure! Lose not a moment; collect your

operas, your cantatas, in a word all your French music; then make a very hot fire, and cast the wretched, stuff into the flames: be sure you stir it well, that, cold as it is, it may once at least send forth a little warmth. Make this sacrifice to the God of taste, to expiate our mutual crime in having profaned your voice with such doleful psalmody, and so long mistaking a noise that stunned our ears for the pathetic language of the heart. How entirely your worthy brother was in the right; and in what unaccountable ignorance have I lived, concerning the productions of that charming art! It gave me but little pleasure, and therefore I thought it naturally impotent. music, I said, is a vain sound, that only flatters the ear, and makes little or no impression upon the mind. The effect of harmonic sounds is entirely mechanical or physical; and what have these to do with sentiment? Why should I expect to be moved with musical chords more than with a proper agreement of colours? But I never perceived, in the accents of melody applied to those of language, the secret but powerful unison between music and the passions. I had no idea that the same sensations which modulate the voice of an orator, gives the singer a still greater power over our hearts, and that the energic expression of his own feelings is the sympathetic cause of all our emotion.

This lesson I was taught by his lordship’s Italian singer, who, for a musician, talks pretty sensibly of his own art. Harmony, says he, is nothing more than a remote accessory in imitative music; for, properly speaking, there is not in harmony the least principle of imitation. Indeed, it assures the intonations, confirms their propriety, and renders the modulation more distinct; it adds force to the expression and grace to the air. But from melody alone proceeds that invincible power of pathetic accents over the soul. Let there be performed the most judicious succession of chords, without the addition of melody, and you would be tired in less than a quarter of an hour; whilst on the contrary, a single voice, without the assistance of harmony, will continue to please a considerable time. An air, be it ever so simple, if there be any thing of the true pathos in the composition, becomes immediately

interesting; but, on the contrary, melody without expression will have no effect, and harmony alone can never touch the heart.

In this, continued he, consists the error of the French with regard to the power of music. As they can have no peculiar melody in a language void of musical accent, nor in their uniform and unnatural poetry, they have no idea of any other effect than that of harmony and a loud voice, which instead of softening the tones, renders them more intolerably noisy; nay they are even so unfortunate in their pretensions, that they suffer the very harmony they expect to escape them; for in order to render it more compleat, they sacrifice all choice, they no longer distinguish the powers and effects of particular tones, their compositions are overcharged, they have spoilt their ears, and are become insensible to every thing but noise: so that, in their opinion, the finest voice is that which roars the loudest. Having no original stile or taste of their own, they have always followed us heavily and at a great distance, and since their, or rather our Lulli, who imitated the operas which were then quite common in Italy, we have beheld them, thirty or forty years behind us, copying, mutilating and spoiling our ancient compositions, just as other nations do by their fashions. Whenever they boast of their chansons, they pronounce their own condemnation; for if they could express the passions, they would not set wit to music: but because their music is entirely incapable of any expression, it is better adapted to chansons than operas, and ours is more fit for the latter because it is extremely pathetic.

He then repeated a few Italian scenes without singing, made me sensible of the harmony between the music and the words in the recitative, between the sentiment and the music in the airs, and in general the energy which was added to the expression by the exact measure and the proper choice of chords. In short, after joining to my knowledge of the Italian, the most perfect idea in my power of the oratorial and pathetic emphasis, namely the art of speaking to the ear and to the heart in an inarticulate language, I sat down and gave my whole attention to this enchanting music, and, by the emotions I felt, soon perceived that there is a power in

the art infinitely beyond what I imagined. It is impossible to describe the voluptuous sensation which imperceptibly stole upon me. It was not an unmeaning succession of sounds, as in our musical recitals. Every phrase imprest my brain with some new image, or conveyed a fresh sensation to my heart. The pleasure did not stop at the ear; it penetrated my soul. The performance, without any extraordinary effort, seemed to flow with charming facility; and the performers appeared to be all animated by one soul. The singer, who was quite master of his voice, expressed, with ease, all that the music and the words required. Upon the whole, I was extremely happy to find myself relieved from those heavy cadences, those terrible efforts of the voice, that continual combat between the air and the measure which in our music so seldom agree, and which is not less fatiguing to the audience than the musician.

But when, after a succession of agreeable airs, they struck into those grand pieces of expression, which, as they paint, excite the more violent passions, I every moment lost the idea of music, song, imitation; and imagined I heard the real voice of grief, rage, despair. Sometimes methought I saw a weeping disconsolate mother, a lover betrayed, a furious tyrant, and the sympathy was frequently so powerful that I could hardly keep my seat. I was thus affected, because I now fully conceived the ideas of the composer, and therefore his judicious combination of sounds acted upon me with all its force. No, Eloisa, it is impossible to feel those impressions by halves; they are excessive or not at all; one is either entirely insensible or raised to an immoderate degree of enthusiasm: either it is an unintelligible noise, or an impetuosity of sensation that hurries you along, and which the soul cannot possibly resist.

Yet I had one cause of regret throughout the whole: it was, that any other than my Eloisa should form sounds that were capable of giving me pleasure, and to hear the most tender expressions of love from the mouth of a wretched eunuch. O my lovely Eloisa! can there be any kind of sensibility that belongs not to us? Who is there that can feel and express better than we, all that can possibly be exprest or felt by a soul

melting into tenderness and love? Where are those who in softer and more pathetic accents could pronounce the Cor mio, the Idolo amato? Ah! what energy would our hearts add to the expression, if together we should ever sing one of those charming duets which draw such delicious tears from one's eyes! I conjure you to taste this Italian music as soon as possible, either at home or with your cousin. Lord B—— will order his people to attend when and where you shall think proper. With your exquisite sensibility, and more knowledge than I had of the Italian declamation, one single essay will raise you to a degree of enthusiasm at least equal to mine. Let me also persuade you to take a few lessons of this virtuoso: I have begun with him this morning. His manner of instruction is simple, clear, and consists more in example than precept. I already perceive that the principal requisite is to feel and mark the time, to observe the proper emphasis, and instead of swelling every note, to sustain an equality of tone; in short to refine the voice from all that French bellowing, that it may become more just, expressive and flexible. Yours, which is naturally so soft and sweet will be easily reformed, and your sensibility will soon instruct you in that vivacity and expression, which is the soul of Italian music.

E 'l cantar che nell' animo si sente.

Leave then, for ever leave, that tedious and lamentable French sing-song, which bears more resemblance to the cries of the cholic than the transports of the passion; and learn to breathe those divine sounds inspired by sensation, which only are worthy of your voice, worthy of your heart, and which never fail to charm and fire the soul.

Letter XLIX. From Eloisa.

You know, my dear friend, that I write to you by stealth, and in continual apprehension of a surprize. Therefore, as it is impossible for me to write long letters, I must confine myself to those parts of yours which more especially require answering, or to supply what was left unsaid in our conversations, which, alas, are

no less clandestine than our interchange of letters: at least I shall observe this method to day; your mentioning Lord B—— will make me neglect the rest.

And so you are afraid to lose me, yet you talk to me of singing! surely this were sufficient cause for a quarrel between two people who were less acquainted. No, no, you are not jealous it is evident: nor indeed will I be so; for I have dived into your heart, and perceive that which another might mistake for indifference, to be absolute confidence. O what a charming security is that which springs from the sensibility of a perfect union! Hence it is, I know, that from your own heart you derive your good opinion of mine; and hence it is you are so entirely justified, that I should doubt your affection, if you were more alarmed.

I neither know nor care whether Lord B—— has any other regard for me than all men have for girls of my age. But of what consequence are his sentiments of the matter? Mine and my father's are the only proper subjects of enquiry and these are both the same as they were with regard to the two pretended pretenders, of whom you say you will say nothing. If his exclusion and theirs will add to your repose, rest satisfied. How much soever we might think ourselves honoured in the addresses of a man of his Lordship's rank, never, with her own or her father's consent, would Eloisa D'Etange become Lady B——. Of this you may be very certain: not that you are hence to conclude that he was ever thought of in that light. I am positive you are the first person who supposed that he has the least inclination for me. But be that as it will, I know my father's sentiments as well as if he had already declared them. Surely this is sufficient to calm your fears; at least it is as much as it concerns you to know. The rest is matter of mere curiosity, and you know I have resolved that it shall not be satisfied. You may reproach me as you please with reserve, and pretend that our concerns and our interest are the same. If I had always been reserved, it would now have been less important. Had it not been for my indiscretion in repeating to you some of my fathers words, you would never have retired to Meillerie, you would never have written the letter which was the cause of my ruin, I should still

have possessed my innocence, and might yet have aspired to happiness. Judge then, by my sufferings for one indiscretion, how I ought to dread the commission of another! You are too violent to have any prudence. You could with less difficulty conquer your passions than disguise them. The least suspicion would set you mad, and the most trivial circumstance would confirm all your suspicions. Our secrets would be legible in your face, and your impetuous zeal would frustrate all my hopes. Leave therefore to me the cares of love, and do you preserve its pleasures only. You surely have no reason to complain with this division: acquiesce, and be convinced that all you can possibly contribute to the advancement of our felicity, is, not to interrupt it.

But, alas! what avail my precautions now? Is it for me to be cautious how I step, who am already fallen headlong down the precipice, or to prevent the evils with which I am already oppressed? Ah wretched girl! is it for thee to talk of felicity? Was ever happiness compatible with shame and remorse? Cruel, cruel fate! neither to be able to bear nor to repent of my crime; to be beset by a thousand terrors, deluded by a thousand hopes, and not even to enjoy the horrible tranquility of despair. The question is not now of virtue and resolution, but of fortune and prudence. My present business is not to extinguish a flame which ought never to expire, but to render it innocent, or to die guilty. Consider my situation, my friend, and then see whether you dare depend upon my zeal.

Letter L. From Eloisa.

I refused to explain to you, before we parted yesterday, the cause of that uneasiness you remarked in me, because you were not in a condition to bear reproof. In spite, however, of my aversion to explanations, I think I ought to do it now, to acquit myself of the promise I then made you.

I know not whether you may remember your last night’s unaccountable discourse and strange behaviour; for my part, I shall remember them too long for your honour

or my repose; indeed they have hurt me too much to be easily forgotten. Similar expressions have sometimes reached my ears from the street; but I never thought they could come from the lips of any worthy man. Of this however I am certain, there are no such in the lover's dictionary, and nothing was farther from my thoughts than that they should ever pass between you and me. Good heaven! what kind of love must yours be, thus to season its delights! It is true, you were flushed with wine, and I perceive how much one must over-look in a country where such excess is permitted. It is for this reason I speak to you on the subject; for you may be assured that, had you treated me in the same manner when perfectly sober, it should have been the last opportunity you should ever have had.

But what alarms me most on your account is, that the conduct of men in liquor is often no other than the image of what passes in their hearts at other times. Shall I believe that, in a condition which disguises nothing, you discovered yourself to be what you really are? What will become of me if you think this morning as you did last night? Sooner than be liable to such insults, I had rather extinguish so gross a passion, and lose for ever a lover who, knowing so little how to respect his mistress, deserves so little of her esteem.

Is it possible that you who should delight in virtuous sentiments, should have fallen into that cruel error, and have adopted the notion, that a lover once made happy need no longer pay any regard to decorum, and that those have no title to respect whose cruelty is no longer to be feared. Alas, had you always thought thus, your power would have been less dreadful, and I should have been less unhappy. But mistake not, my friend; nothing is so pernicious to true lovers as the prejudices of the world; so many talk of love and so few know what it is, that most people mistake its pure and gentle laws for the vile maxims of an abject commerce, which, soon satiated, has recourse to the monsters of imagination, and, in order to support itself, sinks into depravity.

Possibly I may be mistaken; but it seems to me that true love is the chastest of all human connections; and that the sacred flame of love should purify our natural inclinations, by concentring them in one object. It is love that secures us from temptation, and makes the whole sex indifferent, except the beloved individual.

To a woman indifferent to love, every man is the same, and all are men; but to her whose heart is truly susceptible of that refined passion, there is no other man in the world but her lover. What do I say? Is a lover no more than a man? He is a being far superior! There exists not a man in the creation with her who truly loves: her lover is more, and all others are less; they live for each other, and are the only beings of their species. They have no desires; they love. The heart is not led by, but leads, the senses, and throws over their errors the veil of delight. There is nothing obscene but in lewdness and its gross language. Real love, always modest, seizes not impudently its favours, but steals them with timidity. Secrecy, silence, and a timorous bashfulness heighten and conceal its delicious transports; its flame purifies all its caresses, while decency and chastity attend even its most sensual pleasures. It is love alone that knows how to gratify the desires without trespassing on modesty. Tell me, you who once knew what true pleasures were, how can a cynic impudence be consistent with their enjoyment? Will it not deprive that enjoyment of all its sweetness? Will it not deface that image of perfection that represents the beloved object? Believe me, my friend, lewdness and love can never dwell together; they are incompatible. On the heart depends the true happiness of those who love; and where love is absent, nothing can supply its place.

But, supposing you were so unhappy as to be pleased with such immodest discourse, how could you prevail on yourself to make sure of it so indifferently, and address her who was so dear to you, in a manner in which a virtuous man certainly ought to be ignorant? Since when is it become delightful to afflict the object one loves? and how barbarous is that pleasure which delights in tormenting others? I have not forgotten that I have forfeited the right I had to be respected: but if I should ever

forget it, is it you that ought to remind of it? Does it belong to the author of my crime to aggravate my punishment? Ought he not rather to administer comfort? All the world may have reason to despise me, but you have none. It is to you I owe the mortifying situation to which I am reduced; and surely the tears I have shed for my weakness call upon you to alleviate my sorrow, I am neither nice nor prudish. Alas, I am but too far from it; I have not been even discreet. You know too well, ungrateful as you are, that my susceptible heart can refuse nothing to love. But, whatever I may yield to love, I will make no concessions to any thing else; and you have instructed me too well in its language to be able to substitute one so different in its room. No terms of abuse, not even blows could have insulted me more than such demonstrations of kindness. Either renounce Eloisa, or continue to merit her esteem. I have already told you I know no love without modesty; and, how much soever it may cost me to give up yours, it will cost me still more to keep it at so dear a price.

I have yet much to say on this subject; but I must here close my letter, and defer it to another opportunity. In the mean time, pray observe one effect of your mistaken maxims regarding the immoderate use of wine. I am very sensible your heart is not to blame; but you have deeply wounded mine; and, without knowing what you did, afflicted a mind too easily alarmed, and to which nothing is indifferent that comes from you.

Letter LI.

There is not a line in your letter that does not chill the blood in my veins; and I can hardly be persuaded, after twenty times reading, that it is addressed to me. Who I? Can I have offended Eloisa? Can I have profaned her beauties? Can the idol of my soul, to whom every moment of my life I offer up my adorations, can she have been the object of my insults? No, I would have pierced this heart a thousand times before it should have formed so barbarous a design. Alas! you know but little of this heart that flies to prostrate itself at your feet; a heart anxious to contrive for thee a new

species of homage, unknown to human beings. Ah! my Eloisa, you know that heart but little, if you accuse it of wanting towards you the ordinary respect which even a common lover entertains for his mistress. Is it possible I can have been impudent and brutal? I, who detest the language of immodesty, and never in my life entered into places where it is held! But that I should repeat such discourse to you; that I should aggravate your just indignation! Had I been the most abandoned of men, had I spent my youth in riot and debauchery, had even a taste for sensual and shameful pleasures found a place in the heart where you reside, tell me, Eloisa, my angel, tell me, how was it possible I could have betrayed before you that impudence, which no one can have but in the presence of those who are themselves abandoned enough to approve it. Ah, no! it is impossible. One look of yours had sealed my lips and corrected my heart. Love would have veiled my impetuous desires beneath the charms of your modesty; while in the sweet union of our souls their own delirium only would have led the senses astray. I appeal to your own testimony, if ever in the utmost extravagance of an unbounded passion, I ceased to revere its charming object. If I received the reward of my love, did I ever take an advantage of my happiness, to do violence to your bashfulness? If the trembling hand of an ardent but timid lover hath sometimes presumed too far, did he ever with brutal temerity profane your charms? If ever an indiscreet transport drew aside their veil, though but for a moment, was not that of modesty as soon substituted in its place? Unalterable as the chastity of your mind, the flame that glows in mine can never change. Is not the affecting and tender union of our souls sufficient to constitute our happiness? Does not in this alone consist all the happiness of our lives? Have we a wish to know, or taste of any other? And canst thou conceive that this enchantment can be broken? How was it possible for me to forget in a moment all regard to chastity, to our love, my honour, and that invincible reverence and respect which you must always inspire even in those by whom you are not adored? No; I cannot believe it. It was not I that offended you? I have not the least remembrance of it; and, were I but

one instant culpable, can it be that my remorse should ever leave me? No, Eloisa, some demon, envious of happiness, too great for a mortal, has taken upon him my form to destroy my felicity.

Nevertheless, I abjure, I detest a crime which I must have committed, since you are my accuser, but in which my will had no part. How do I begin to abhor that fatal intemperance, which once seemed to me favourable to the effusions of the heart, and which has so cruelly deceived mine! I have bound myself, therefore, by a solemn and irrevocable vow, to renounce wine from this day, as a mortal poison. Never shall that fatal liquor again touch my lips, bereave me of my senses, or involve me in guilt to which my heart is a stranger. If I ever break this solemn vow, may the powers of love inflict on me the punishment I deserve! May the image of Eloisa that instant forsake my heart, and abandon it for ever to indifference and despair!

But, think not I mean to expiate my crime by so slight a mortification. There is a precaution and not a punishment. It is from you I expect that which I deserve; nay, I beg it of you to console my affliction. Let offended love avenge itself and be appeased to punish without hating me, and I will suffer without murmuring. Be just and severe; it is necessary, and I must submit; but if you would not deprive me of life, you must not deprive me of your heart.

Letter LII. From Eloisa.

What! my friend renounce his bottle for his mistress! This is indeed a sacrifice! I defy any one to find me a man in the four cantons more deeply in love than your-self. Not but there may be found some young frenchified petit-maîtres among us that drink water through affectation; but you are the first Swiss that ever love made a water-drinker, and ought to stand as an example for ever in the lover’s chronicle of your country. I have even been informed of your abstinent behaviour, and have been much edified to hear that, being to sup last night with M. de Vueillerans, you saw six bottles go round after supper without touching a drop; and

that you spared your water as little as your companions did their wine. This state of self-denial and penitence, however, must have lasted already three days, and in three days you must have abstained from wine at least for six meals. Now to the abstinence for six meals, observed through fidelity, may be added six others, through fear, six through shame, six through habit, and six more through obstinacy. How many motives might be found to prolong this mortifying abstinence, of which love alone will have all the credit? But can love condescend to pride itself in merit, to which it hath no just pretensions?

This idle raillery may possibly be as disagreeable to you, as your stuff the other night was to me: it is time, therefore, to stop its career. You are naturally of a serious turn, and I have perceived ere now that a tedious scene of trifling hath heated you as much as a long walk usually does a fat man; but I take nearly the same vengeance of you as Henry the fourth took of the duke of Maine: your sovereign also will imitate the clemency of that best of kings. In like manner, I am afraid lest, by virtue of your contrition and excuses, you should in the end make a merit of a fault so fully repaired; I will therefore forget it immediately, lest by deferring my forgiveness too long it should become rather an act of ingratitude than generosity.

With regard to your resolution of renouncing your bottle for ever; it has not so much weight with me as perhaps you may imagine; strong passions think nothing of these trifling sacrifices, and love will not be satisfied with gallantry. There is besides more of address sometimes than resolution, in making for the present moment an advantage of an uncertain futurity, and in reaping before hand the credit of an eternal abstinence, which may be renounced at pleasure. But, my good friend, is the abuse of every thing that is agreeable to the senses inseparable from the enjoyment of it? Is drunkenness necessarily attached to the taste of wine? and is philosophy so cruel or so useless, as to offer no other expedient to prevent the immoderate use of agreeable things than that of giving them up entirely?

If you keep true to your engagement, you deprive yourself of an innocent pleasure, and endanger your health in changing your manner of living: on the other hand, if you break it, you commit a double offence against love; and even your honour will stand impeached. I will make use therefore on this occasion of my privilege; and do not only release you from the observance of a vow, which is null and void, as being made without my consent; but do absolutely forbid you to observe it beyond the term I am going to prescribe. On Tuesday next my Lord B—— is to give us a concert. At the collation I will send you a cup about half full of a pure and wholesome nectar; which it is my will and pleasure that you drink off in my presence, after having made, in a few drops, an expiatory libation to the graces. My penitent is permitted afterwards to return to the sober use of wine, tempered with the chrystal of the fountain; or as your honest Plutarch has it, moderating the ardors of Bacchus by a communication with the nymphs.

But to our concert on Tuesday; that blunderer Regianino has got it into his head that I am already able to sing an Italian air, and even a duo with him. He is desirous that I should try it with you; in order to shew his two scholars together; but there are certain tender passages in it dangerous to sing before a mother, when the heart is of the party: it would be better therefore to defer this trial of our skill to the first concert we have at our cousin’s. I attribute the facility with which I have acquired a taste for the Italian music to that which my brother gave me for their poetry; and for which I have been so well prepared by you, that I perceive easily the cadence of the verse: and, if may believe Regianino, have already a tolerable notion of the true accent. I now begin every lesson by reading some passages of Tasso, or some scene of Metastasio; after this, he makes me repeat and accompany the recitative, so that I seem to continue reading or speaking all the while; which I am pretty certain could never be the case in the French music. After this I practise, in regular time, the expression of true and equal tones; an exercise which the noise I had been accustomed to, rendered difficult enough. At length we pass on to the air, wherein

he demonstrates that the justness and flexibility of the voice, the pathetic expression, the force and beauty of every part, are naturally affected by the sweetness of the melody and precision of the measure; insomuch that what appeared at first the most difficult to learn need hardly be taught me. The nature of the music is so well adapted to the sound of the language, and of so refined a modulation, that one need only hear the bass and know how to speak, to decypher the melody. In the Italian music all the passions have distinct and strong expressions: directly contrary to the drawling, disagreeable tones of the French, it is always sweet and easy, while at the same time lively and affecting; its smallest efforts produce the greatest effects. In short, I find that this music elevates the soul without tearing the lungs, which is just the music I want. On Tuesday then, my dear friend, my preceptor, my penitent, my apostle, alas! what are you not to me? Ah! why should there be only one title wanting!

P. S. Do you know there is some talk of such another agreeable party on the water, as we made two years ago, in company with poor Chaillot? How modest was then my subtle preceptor! How he trembled when he handed me out of the boat? Ah! the hypocrite! He is greatly changed.

Letter LIII. From Eloisa.

Thus every thing conspires to disconcert our schemes, every thing disappoints our hopes, every thing betrays a passion which heaven ought to sanctify! And are we always to be the sport of fortune, the unhappy victims of delusive expectation? Shall we still pant in pursuit of pleasure without ever attaining it? Those nuptials, which we so impatiently expected, were first to have been celebrated at Clarens; but the bad weather opposed it, and the ceremony was performed in town: however we had still some hopes of a private interview; but we were so closely beset by officious importunity, that it was impossible for us both to escape at the same instant. At last a favourable opportunity offers, but we are again disappointed by the cruelest of

mothers, and that which ought to have been the moment of our felicity went near to have proved our destruction. Nevertheless, I am so far from being abashed by these numberless obstacles, that they serve but to inflame my resolution. I know not by what new powers I am animated, but I feel an intrepidity of soul to which I have been hitherto ignorant; and if you are inspired with the same spirit this evening, this very evening I will perform my promises, and discharge at once all the obligations of love.

Weigh this affair maturely, and consider well at what rate you estimate your life; for the expedient I am going to propose may probably lead us to the grave. If thou art afraid, read no farther; but if thy heart shrinks no more at the point of a sword than formerly at the precipice of Meillerie, mine shares the danger and hesitates no longer. Be attentive.

Bab, who generally lies in my chamber, has been ill there three days, and though I offered to attend her, she is removed in spite of me; but as she is now somewhat better, possibly to-morrow she may return. The stairs, which lead to my mother’s apartment and mine, are at some distance from the room where they sup, and, at that hour, the rest of the house, except the kitchen, is entirely uninhabited. The darkness of the night will then favour your progress through the streets without the least risk of being observed, and you are not unacquainted with the house.

I believe I have said enough to be understood. Come this afternoon to Fanny’s; I will there explain the rest, and give the necessary instructions: but if that should be impossible, you will find them in writing, in the old place, to which I consign this letter. The subject is too important to be trusted with any person living.

O! I see the violent palpitation of thy heart! How I feel thy transports! No, no, my charming friend, we will not quit this short existence without having, for a moment, tasted happiness. Yet remember that the fatal moment is environed with the horrors of death! That the way to bliss is extremely hazardous, its duration full of perils, and

your retreat beyond measure dangerous; that if we are discovered, we are inevitably lost, and that to prevent it fortune must be uncommonly indulgent. Let us not deceive ourselves: I know my father too well to doubt that he would not instantly pierce your heart, or that even I should not be the first victim to his revenge; for certainly he would shew me no mercy, nor indeed can you imagine that I would lead you into dangers to which I myself were not exposed.

Remember also that you are not to have the least dependence on your courage; it will not bear a thought: I even charge you very expressly, to come entirely unarmed; so that your intrepidity will avail you nothing. If we are surprized; I am resolved to throw myself into thy arms, to grasp thee to my heart, and thus to receive the mortal blow, that they may part us no more; so shall my exit be the happiest moment of my life.

Yet I hope a milder fate awaits us; it surely is our due, and fortune must at last grow weary of her injustice. Come then, soul of my heart, life of my life, come and be re-united to thyself. Come, under the auspices of love, and receive the reward of thy obedience and thy sacrifices. O come and confess, even in the bosom of pleasure, that from the union of hearts, proceed its greatest delights.

Letter LIV. To Eloisa.

Am I then arrived?——how my heart flutters, in entering this asylum of love! Yes, Eloisa, I am now in your closet: I am in the sanctuary of my soul’s adored. The torch of love lighted my steps, and I passed through the house unperceived——Delightful mansion! happy place! once the scene of tenderness and infant love suppressed! These conscious walls have seen my growing, my successful passion, and will now a second time behold it crowned with bliss: witness of my eternal constancy, be witness also of my happiness, and conceal for ever the transports of the most faithful and most fortunate of men.

How charming is this place of concealment! Every thing around me serves to

inflame the ardour of my passion. O Eloisa, this delightful spot is full of thee, and my desires are kindled by every footstep of thine. Every sense is at once intoxicated with imaginary bliss. An almost imperceptible sweetness, more exquisite than the scent of the rose, and more volatile than that of the Iris, exhales from every part. I fancy I hear the delightful sound of your voice. Every part of your scattered dress presents to my glowing imagination the charms it has concealed. That light head dress, which is adorned by those bright locks it affects to hide, that simple elegant dishabille, which displays so well the taste of the wearer; those pretty slippers that fit so easily on your little feet; these stays, which encircle and embrace your slender——Heavens, what a charming shape! how the top of the stomacher is waved in two gentle curves? luxurious sight! the whalebone has yielded to their impression——delicious impression! let me devour it with kisses! O Gods! how shall I be able to bear? Ah! methinks I feel already a tender heart beat softly under my happy hand; Eloisa, my charming Eloisa, I see, I feel thee at every pore. We now breathe the same air. How thy delay inflames and torments me! My impatience is insupportable. O, come, Eloisa, fly to my arms, or I am undone! How fortunate it was to find pen, ink and paper! By expressing what I feel, I moderate my extasy, and give a turn to my transports by attempting to describe them.

Ha! I hear a noise——Should it be her inhuman father? I do not think myself a coward——but death would terrify me just now. My despair would be equal to the ardour which consumes me. Grant me, good heaven! but one more hour to live, and I resign the remainder of my life to thy utmost rigour. What impatience! what fears! what cruel palpitation! Ah! the door opens! It is she, it is Eloisa! I see her enter the chamber and lock the door. My heart, my feeble heart, sinks under its agitation. Let me recover myself, and gather strength to support the bliss that overwhelms me!

Letter LV. To Eloisa.

O let us die, my sweet friend! let us die, thou best beloved of my heart! How shall

we hereafter support an insipid life, whose pleasures we have already exhausted? Tell me, if you can, what I experienced last night? give me an idea of a whole life spent in the same manner, or let me quit an existence which has nothing left that can equal the pleasures I have tasted.

I had tasted bliss, and formed a conception of happiness. But, alas! I had only dreamt of true pleasure, and conceived only the happiness of a child! My senses deceived my unrefined heart; I sought supreme delight in their gratification; and I find that the end of sensual pleasures is but the beginning of mine. O thou choice master piece of nature's works! divine Eloisa! to the ecstatic possession of whom all the transports of the most ardent passion hardly suffice! Yet it is not those transports I regret the most. Ah! no: deny me, if it must be so, those intoxicating favours, for the enjoyment of which I would nevertheless die a thousand deaths, but restore me all the bliss which does not depend on them, and it will abundantly exceed them. Restore me that intimate connection of souls, which you first taught me to know, and have so well instructed me to taste. Restore to me that delightful languor, accomplished by the mutual effusions of the heart. Restore to me that enchanting slumber that lulled me in your breast! Restore to me the yet more delicious moments when I awake, those interrupted sighs, those melting tears, those kisses slowly, sweetly impressed in voluptuous languishment; let me hear those soft, those tender complaints, amidst whose gentle murmurs you pressed so close those hearts which were made for each other.

Tell me, Eloisa, you, who ought from your own sensibility to judge so well of mine, do you think I ever tasted real love before? My feelings, are greatly changed, since yesterday; they seem to have taken a less impetuous turn; but more agreeable, more tender, and more delightful. Do you remember that whole hour we spent, in calmly talking over the circumstances of our love, and of the fearful consequences of what might happen hereafter, by which the present moment was made the more interesting? That short hour in which a slight apprehension of future sorrow

rendered our conversation the more affecting? I was tranquil, and yet was near my Eloisa. I adored her, but my desires were calm. I did not even think of any other felicity than to perceive your face close to mine, to feel your breath on my cheek, and your arm about my neck. What a pleasing tranquillity prevailed over all my senses! How refined, how lasting, how constant the delight! The mind possessed all the pleasure of enjoyment, not momentary, but durable. What a difference is there between the impetuous sallies of appetite, and a situation so calm and delightful! It is the first time I have experienced it in your presence; and judge of the extraordinary change it has effected. That hour I shall ever think the happiest of my life, as it is the only one which I could wish should have been prolonged to eternity. Tell me then, Eloisa, did I not love you before, or have I ceased to love you since?

If I cease to love you! What a doubt is that? Do I cease to exist or does my life not depend more on the heart of Eloisa than my own? I feel, I feel you are a thousand times more dear to me than ever; and I find myself enabled, from the slumber of my desires, to love you more tenderly than before. My sentiments, it is true, are less passionate, but they are more affectionate, and are of different kinds: without loosing any thing of their force, they are multiplied; the mildness of friendship moderates the extravagance of love; and I can hardly conceive any kind of attachment which does not unite me to you. O my charming mistress! my wife! my sister! my friend! By what name shall I express what I feel, after having exhausted all those which are dear to the heart of man?

Let me now confess a suspicion which, to my shame and mortification, I have entertained; it is that you are more capable of love than myself. Yes, my Eloisa, it is on you that my life, my being depends: I revere you with all the faculties of my soul; but yours contains more of love. I see, I feel, that love hath penetrated deeper into your heart than mine. It is that which animates your charms, which prevails in your discourse, which gives to your eyes that penetrating sweetness, to your voice such moving accents: it is that which your presence alone imperceptibly communicates to

the hearts of others, the tender emotions of your own. Alas! How far am I from such an independent state of love! I seek the enjoyment, and you the love, of the beloved object: I am transported, and you enamoured; not all my transports are equal to your languishing softness; and it is in such sensations as yours, only that supreme felicity consists. It is but since yesterday that I have known such refined pleasure. You have left me something of that inconceivable charm peculiar to yourself; and I am persuaded that your sweet breath hath inspired me with a new soul. Haste then, I conjure you, to compleat the work you have begun. Take from me all that remains of mine, and give me a soul entirely yours. No, angelic beauty, celestial mind, no sentiments but such as yours can do honour to your charms. You alone are worthy to inspire a perfect passion; you alone are capable of feeling it. Ah! give me your heart, my Eloisa, that I may love you as you deserve?

Letter LVI. From Clara to Eloisa.

I have a piece of information for my dear cousin, in which she will find herself a little interested. Last night there happened an affair between your friend and Lord B—— which may possibly become serious. Thus it was, as I had it from Mr. Orbe, who was present, and who gave me the following account this morning.

Having supped with his Lordship, and entertained themselves for a couple of hours with their music, they sat down to chat and drink punch. Your friend drank only one single glass mixt with water. The other two were not quite so sober; for though Mr. Orbe declares he was not touched, I intend to give him my opinion of that matter some other time. You naturally became the subject of their conversation; for you know this Englishman can talk of no body else. Your friend, who did not much relish his Lordship’s discourse, seemed so little obliged to him for his confidence, that at last, my Lord, slushed with liquor, and piqued at the coldness of his manner, dared to tell him, in complaining of your indifference, that it was not so general as might be imagined, and that those who were silent had less reason to complain. You

know your friend's impetuosity: he instantly took fire, repeated the words with great warmth and insult, which drew upon him the lie, and, they both flew to their swords. Lord B——, who was half seas over, in running gave his ancle a sudden twist which obliged him to stagger to a chair. His leg began immediately to swell, and this more effectually appeased their wrath than all Mr. Orbe's interposition. But as he continued attentive to what past, he observed your friend, in going out, approach his Lordship, and heard him whisper: As soon as you are able to walk, you will let me know it, or shall take care to inform myself——You need not give yourself that trouble, said the other with a contemptuous smile, you shall know it time enough——We shall see, returned your friend, and left the room. Mr. Orbe when he delivers this letter, will tell you more particularly. It is your prudence that must suggest the means of stifling this unlucky affair. In the mean time, the bearer waits your commands, and you may depend on his secrecy.

Pardon me, my dear, my friendship forces me to speak: I am terribly apprehensive on your account. Your attachment can never continue long concealed in this small town; it is indeed a miraculous piece of good fortune, considering it is now two years since it begun, that you are not already the public talk of the place. But it will very soon happen, if you are not extremely cautious. I am convinced your character would long since have suffered, if you had been less generally beloved; but the people are so universally prejudiced in your favour, that no one dares to speak ill of you for fear of being discredited and despised. Nevertheless every thing must have an end; and must I fear that your mystery draws near its period; I have great reason to apprehend that Lord B——'s suspicions proceed from some disagreeable tales he has heard. Let me intreat you to think seriously of this affair. The watch-man has been heard to say, that, some time ago, he saw your friend come out of your house at five o'clock in the morning. Fortunately he himself had early intelligence of this report and found means to silence the fellow; but what signifies such silence? It will serve only to confirm the reports that will be privately whispered to all the world.

Besides, your mother's suspicions are daily increasing. You remember her frequent hints. She has several times spoke to me in such bitter terms, that if she did not dread the violence of your father's temper, I am certain she would already have opened her mind to him; but she is conscious that the blame would fall chiefly on herself.

It is impossible I should repeat it too often; think of your safety before it be too late. Prevent those growing suspicions, which nothing but his absence can dispel: and indeed, to be sincere with you, under what pretext can he be supposed to continue here? Possibly in a few weeks more his removal may be to no purpose. If the least circumstance should reach your father's ear, you will have cause to tremble at the indignation of an old officer, so tenacious of the honour of his family, and at the petulance of a violent youth. But we must first endeavour to terminate the affair with Lord B——, for it were in vain to attempt to persuade your friend to decamp, till that is in some shape accomplished.

Letter LVII. From Eloisa.

I have been informed, my friend, of what has passed between you and my Lord B——; and from a perfect knowledge of the fact, I have a mind to discuss the affair, and give you my opinion of the conduct you ought to observe on this occasion, agreeable to the sentiments you profess, and of which I suppose you do not make only an idle parade.

I do not concern myself whether you are skilled in fencing, nor whether you think yourself capable of contending with a man who is famous all over Europe for his superior dexterity in that art, having fought five or six times in his life, and always killed, wounded, or disarmed his man. I know that in such a case as yours, people consult not their skill, but their courage; and that the fashionable method to be revenged of a man who has insulted you, is to let him run you through the body. But let us pace over this wise maxim; you will tell me that your honour and mine are

dearer to you than life. This, therefore, is the principle on which we must reason.

To begin with what immediately concerns yourself. Can you ever make it appear in what respect you were personally offended by a conversation that related solely to me? We shall see presently whether you ought on such an occasion to take my cause upon yourself: in the mean time, you cannot but allow that the quarrel was quite foreign to your own honour in particular, unless you are to take the suspicion of being beloved by me as an affront. I must own you have been insulted; but then it was after having begun the quarrel yourself by an atrocious affront; and, as I have had frequent opportunities, from the many military people in our family, of hearing these horrible questions debated, I am not to learn that one outrage committed in return to another does not annul the first, and that he who receives the first insult is the only person offended. It is the same in this case, as in a rencounter, where the aggressor is only in fault: he who wounds and kills another in his own defence, is not considered as being guilty of murder.

To come now to myself; we will agree that I was insulted by the conversation of my Lord B——, although he said no more of me than he might justify. Do you know what you are about in defending my cause with so much warmth and indiscretion? You aggravate his insults; you prove he was in the right; you sacrifice my honour to the false punctilios of yours, and defame your mistress to gain at most the reputation of a good swords-man. Pray tell me what affinity there is between your manner of justifying me and my real justification? Do you think that to engage in my behalf with so much heat is any great proof that there are no connections between us? And that it is sufficient to shew your courage to convince the world you are not my lover? Be assured, my Lord B——'s insinuations are less injurious to me than your conduct. It is you alone who take upon yourself, by this bustle to publish and confirm them. He may, perhaps, turn aside the point of your sword in conflict; but never will my reputation, nor perhaps my being, survive the mortal blow you meditate.

These reasons are too solid to admit of a reply; but I foresee you will oppose custom to reason; you will tell me there is a fatality in some things which hurries us away in spite of ourselves; that we can, in no case whatever, bear the lie; and that, when an affair is gone a certain length, it is impossible to avoid fighting or infamy. We will examine into the validity of this argument.

Do not you remember a distinction you once made, on an important occasion, between real and apparent honour? Under which of these classes shall we rank that in question? For my part, I cannot see that it will even admit of a doubt. What comparison is there between the glory of cutting another's throat, and the testimony of a good conscience? And of what importance is the idle opinion of the world, set in competition with true honour, whose foundation is rooted in the heart? Can we be deprived of virtues we really possess by false aspersions of calumny? Does the insult of a drunken man prove such insults deserved? Or does the honour of the virtuous and prudent lie at the mercy of the first brute he meets? Will you tell me that fighting a duel shews a man to have courage, and that this is sufficient to efface the dishonour, and prevent the reproach, due to all other vices? I would ask you, what kind of honour can dictate such a decision? Or what arguments justify it? On such principles a knave need only fight, to cease to be a knave; the assertions of a liar become true when they are maintained at the point of the sword; and, if you were even accused of killing a man, you have only to kill a second, to prove the accusation false. Thus virtue, vice, honour, infamy, truth, and falsehood, all derive their existence from the event of a duel: a gallery of small arms is the only court of justice; there is no other law than violence, no other argument than murder: all the reparation due to the insulted, is to kill them, and every offence is equally washed away by the blood of the offender or the offended. If wolves themselves could reason, would they entertain maxims more inhuman than these? Judge yourself, from the situation you are in, whether I exaggerate their absurdity? What is it you resent? That the lie has been given you on an occasion wherein you actually asserted

a falsehood. Do you think to destroy the truth, by killing him you would punish for having told it? Do you consider that, in risking the success of a duel, you call heaven to witness the truth of a lie, and impiously bid the supreme disposer of events to support the cause of injustice, and give the triumph to falsehood? Does not such absurdity shock you? Does not such impiety make you shudder? Good God! what a wretched sense of honour is that, which is less afraid of vice than reproach; and will not permit that another should give us the lie, which our own hearts had given us before?

Do you, who would have every one profit by their reading, make use of yours: see if you can find one instance of a challenge being given, when the world abounded with heroes? Did the most valiant men of antiquity ever think of revenging private injuries by personal combat? Did Caesar send a challenge to Cato, or Pompey to Caesar, for their many reciprocal affronts? Or was the greatest warrior of Greece disgraced, because he put up the threats of being cudgelled? Manners, I know, change with the times; but are they all equally commendable? Or is it unreasonable to enquire whether those of any times are agreeable to the dictates of true honour? This is not of a fickle or changeable nature: true honour does not depend on time, place or prejudice; it can neither be annihilated nor generated anew; but has its constant source in the heart of the virtuous man, and in the unalterable rules of his conduct. If the most enlightened, the most brave, the most virtuous people upon earth had no duels, I will venture to declare it not an institution of honour, but a horrid and savage custom worthy its barbarous origin. It remains for you to determine whether, when his own life or that of another is in question, a man of real honour is to be governed by the mode of the times, or if it be not a greater instance of his courage to despise than follow it. What do you think he would do in places where a contrary custom prevails? At Messina or Naples he would not challenge his man, but wait for him at the corner of a street, and stab him in the back. This is called bravery in those countries, where honour consists in killing your enemy, and

not in being killed by him yourself. Beware then of confounding the sacred name of honour with that barbarous prejudice, which subjects every virtue to the decision of the sword, and is only adapted to make men daring villains! Will it be said this custom may be made use of as a supplement to the rules of probity? Wherever probity prevails, is not such a supplement useless? And what shall be said to the man who exposes his life, in order to be exempted from being virtuous? Do you not see that the crimes, which shame and a sense of honour have not prevented, are screened and multiplied by a false shame and the fear of reproach? It is this fear which makes men hypocrites and liars: it is this which makes them embrue their hands in the blood of their friends, for an indiscreet word, which should have been forgotten, for a merited reproach too severe to be borne. It is this which transforms the abused and fearful maid into an infernal fury: It is this which arms the hand of the mother against the tender fruit of——I shudder at the horrible idea, and give thanks at least to that being who searcheth the heart, that he hath banished far from mine a sense of that horrid honour, which inspires nothing but wickedness, and makes humanity tremble.

Look into yourself, therefore, and consider whether it be permitted you to make a deliberate attempt on the life of a man, and expose yours to satisfy a barbarous and fatal notion, which has no foundation in reason or nature. Consider whether the sad reflection of the blood spilt on such occasions can cease to cry out for vengeance on him who has spilt it. Do you know any crime equal to wilful murder? If humanity also be the basis of every virtue, what must be thought of the man, whose blood-thirsty and depraved disposition prompts him to seek the life of his fellow-creature? Do you remember what you have yourself said to me, against entering into foreign service? Have you forgot that a good citizen owes his life to his country, and has not a right to dispose of it, without the permission of its laws, and much less in direct opposition to them? O my friend, if you have a sincere regard for virtue, learn to pursue it in its own way, and not in the ways of the world. I will own

some slight inconvenience may arise from it; but is the word virtue no more to you than an empty sound? and will you practise it only when it costs you no trouble? I will ask, however, in what will such inconvenience consist? In the whispers of a set of idle or wicked people, who seek only to amuse themselves with the misfortunes of others, and to have always some new tale to propagate. A pretty motive, truly, to engage men to cut each other's throats! If the philosopher and man of sense regulate their behaviour, on the most important occasions of life, by the idle talk of the multitude, to what purpose is all their parade of study, if they are at last no better than the vulgar? Dare you not sacrifice your resentment to duty, to esteem, to friendship, for fear it should be said you are afraid of death? Weigh well these circumstances, my good friend, and I am convinced you will find more cowardice in the fear of that reproach than in the fear of death. The braggard, the coward, would, at all hazards, pass for brave men.

Ma verace valor, ben che negletto, E' di se stesso a fe freggio assai chiaro.

He, who affects to meet death without fear, is a liar. All men fear to die; it is a law with all sensible Beings, without which every species of mortals would soon be destroyed. This fear is the simple emotion of nature, and that not in itself indifferent, but just and conformable to the order of things. All that renders it shameful, or blameable, is, that it may sometimes prevent us from well doing, and the proper discharge of our duty. If cowardice were to no obstacle to virtue, it would never be vicious. Whoever is more attached to life than his duty, I own, cannot be truly virtuous; but can you, who pique yourself on your judgment, explain to me what sort of merit there is in braving death in order to be guilty of a crime?

What though it be true, that a man is despised who refuses to fight; which contempt is most to be feared, that of others for doing well, or that of ourselves for having acted ill? Believe me, he, who has a proper esteem for himself, is little sensible to the unjust reproach cast on him by others, and is only afraid of deserving it. Probity

and virtue depend not on the opinion of the world, but on the nature of things; and though all mankind should approve of the action you are about, it would not be less shameful in itself. But it is a false notion, that to refrain from it, though a virtuous motive, would be bringing yourself into contempt. The virtuous man, whose whole life is irreproachable, and who never betrayed any marks of cowardice, will refuse to stain his hands with blood, and will be only the more respected for such refusal. Always ready to serve his country, to protect the weak, to discharge his duty on the most dangerous occasions, and to defend in every just and reasonable cause whatever is dear to him, at the hazard of his life, he displays throughout the whole of his conduct that unshaken fortitude, which is inseparable from true courage. Animated by the testimony of a good conscience, he appears undaunted; and neither flies from, nor seeks, his enemy. It is easily observed that he fears less to die than to act basely; that he dreads the crime, but not the danger. If at any time the mean prejudices of the world raise a clamour against him, the conduct of his whole life is his testimony, and every action is approved by a behaviour so uniformly irreproachable.

But do you know what makes this moderation so painful to the generality of men? It is the difficulty of supporting it with propriety. It is the necessity they lie under of never impeaching it by an unworthy action: for if the fear of doing ill does not restrain men in one case, why should it in another, where that restraint may be attributed to a more natural motive? Hence, it is plain, it does not proceed from virtue, but cowardice; and it is with justice that such scruples are laughed at, as appear only in cases of danger. Have you not observed that persons, captious and ready to affront others, are, for the most part, bad men, who, for fear of having the contempt in which they are universally held publicly exposed, endeavour to screen, by some honourable quarrels, the infamy of their lives? Is it for you to imitate such wretches as these? Let us set aside men of a military profession, who fell their blood for pay, and who, unwilling to be degraded from their rank, calculate from their

interest what they owe to their honour, and know to a shilling the value of their lives. Let us, my friend, leave these gentlemen to their fighting. Nothing is less honourable than that honour about which they make such a noise; and which is nothing more than an absurd custom, a false imitation of virtue, which prides itself in the greatest crimes. Your honour is not in the power of another: it depends on yourself, and not on the opinion of the world; its defence is neither in the sword nor the buckler, but in a life of integrity and virtue; a proof of greater courage than to brave death in a duel.——

On these principles you may reconcile the encomiums I have always bestowed on true valour, with the contempt I have as constantly expressed for the base pretenders to magnanimity. I admire men of spirit, and hate cowards; I would break with a pusillanimous lover, who should betray the want of a proper resolution in cases of danger, and think with all the rest of my sex, that the ardours of true courage heighten those of love. But, I would have such courage exerted only on lawful occasions, and not an idle parade made of it when it is unnecessary, as if there was some fear of not having it ready when it should be called for. There are cowards who will make one effort to exert their courage, that they may have a pretence to avoid danger the rest of their lives. True courage is more constant and less impetuous; it is always what it ought to be, and wants neither the spur nor the rein; the man of real magnanimity carries it always about him; in fighting he exerts it against his enemy; in company against back-biting and falsehood, and on a sick bed against the attacks of pain and the horrors of death. That fortitude of mind which inspires true courage is always exerted; it places virtue out of the reach of events, and does not consist in braving danger, but in not fearing it. Such, my friend, is the merit of that courage I have often commended, and which I would admire in you. All other pretences to bravery are wild, extravagant, and brutal; it is even cowardice to submit to them; and I despise as much the man who runs himself into needless danger, as him who turns his back on what he ought to encounter.

If I am not much mistaken, I have now made it clear, that, in this your quarrel with Lord B——, your own honour is not at all concerned; that you are going to compromise mine by drawing your sword to avenge it; that such conduct is neither just, reasonable, nor lawful; that it by no means agrees with the sentiments you profess, but belongs only to bad men, who make use of their courage as a supplement to virtues they do not possess, or to officers that fight not for honour but interest; that there is more true courage in despising than adopting it, that the inconveniences to which you expose yourself by rejecting it are inseparable from the practice of our duty, and are more apparent than real; in fine, that men who are the most ready to recur to the sword, are always those of the most suspicious characters. From all which I conclude, that you cannot either give or accept a challenge on this occasion, without giving up at once the cause of reason, virtue, honour, and Eloisa. Canvas my arguments as you please, heap sophism on sophism, as you will, it will be always found that a man of true courage is not a coward, and that a man of virtue cannot be without honour. And I think I have demonstrated as clearly that a man of true courage despises, and a man of virtue abhors, duelling.

I thought proper, my friend, in so serious and important an affair, to speak to you only in the plain language of reason, and to represent things simply as they are. If I would have described them as they appear to me, and engaged the passions and humanity in the cause, I should have addressed you in a different stile. You know that my father had the misfortune, in his youth, to kill his antagonist in a duel: that antagonist was his friend; they fought with regret, but were obliged to it by that absurd notion of a point of honour. That fatal blow which deprived the one of life, robbed the other of his piece of mind for ever. From that time has the most cruel remorse incessantly preyed on his heart; he is often heard to sigh and weep in private: his imagination still represents to him the fatal steel pushed by his cruel hand into the breast of the man he loved; his slumbers are disturbed by the appearances of his pale and bleeding friend: he looks with terror on the mortal

wound; he endeavours to stop the blood that flows from it; he is seized with horror, and cries out, will this corpse never cease pursuing me? It is five years since he lost the only support of his name, and hope of his family; since when, he has reproached himself with his death, as a just judgment from heaven, which avenged on him the loss of that unhappy father, whom he deprived of an only son.

I must confess that all this, added to my natural aversion to cruelty, fills me with such horror at duels, that I regard them as instances of the lowest degree of brutality into which mankind can possibly descend. I look upon those, who go chearfully to a duel, in no other light than as wild beasts going to tear each other to pieces; and, if there remains the least sentiment of humanity within them, I think the murdered less to be pitied than the murderer. Observe those men who are accustomed to this horrid practice; they only brave remorse by stifling the voice of nature; they grow by degrees cruel and insensible; they sport with the lives of others, and their punishment for having turned a deaf ear to humanity, is to lose at length every sense of it. How shocking must be such a situation? Is it possible you can desire to be like them? No, you were never made for such a state of detestable brutality: be careful of the first step that leads to it; your mind is yet undepraved and innocent: begin not to debase it, at the hazard of your life, by an attempt that has no virtue, a crime that has no temptation, and a point of honour founded only on absurdity.

I have said nothing to you of your Eloisa; she will be a gainer, no doubt, by leaving your heart to speak for her. One word, only one word, and I leave her to you. You have sometimes honoured me with the endearing name of wife; perhaps I ought at this time to bear that of mother. Will you leave me a widow before we are legally united?

P. S. I make use of an authority in this letter, which no prudent man ever resisted. If you refuse to submit to it, I have nothing farther to say to you: but think of it well before hand. Take a week’s time for reflection, and to meditate on this important

subject. It is not for any particular reason I demand this delay, but for my own pleasure. Remember, I make use only on this occasion of a right; which you yourself have given me over you, and which extends at least to what I now require.

Letter LVIII. From Eloisa to Lord B——.

I have no intention in writing to your Lordship, to accuse or complain of you; since you are pleased to affront me, I must certainly be the offender, though I may be ignorant of my offence. Would any gentleman seek to dishonour a reputable family without a cause? Surely no: therefore satisfy your revenge, if you believe it just. This letter will furnish you with an easy method of ruining an unhappy girl, who can never forgive herself for having offended you, and who commits to your discretion that honour which you intend to blast. Yes, my Lord, your imputations were just: I have a lover, whom I sincerely love; my heart, my person, are entirely his, and death only can dissolve our union. This lover is the very man whom you honour with your friendship, and he deserves it, because he loves you and is virtuous. Nevertheless, he must perish by your hand. Offended honour, I know, can be appeased only by a human sacrifice. I know that his own courage will prove his destruction. I am convinced, that in a combat in which you have so little to fear, his intrepid heart will impatiently rush upon the point of your sword. I have endeavoured to restrain his inconsiderate ardour, by the power of reason; but alas! even whilst I was writing, I was conscious of the inutility of my arguments: What opinion soever I may have of his virtue, I do not believe it so sublime as to detach him from a false point of honour. You may safely anticipate the pleasure you will have in piercing the heart of your friend: but be assured, barbarous man, that you shall never enjoy that of being witness to my tears and my despair. No, I swear by that sacred flame which fills my whole heart, that I will not survive, one single day, the man for whom alone I breathe! Yes, Sir, you will reap the glory of having, in one instant, sent to the grave two unhappy lovers, whose offence was not intentional, and by whom you were

honoured and esteemed.

I have heard, my Lord, that you have a great soul and a feeling heart: if these will allow you the peaceful enjoyment of your revenge, heaven grant, when I am no more, that they may inspire you with some compassion for my poor, disconsolate parents, whose grief for their only child will endure for ever.

Letter LIX. From Mr. Orbe to Eloisa.

I snatch the first moment, my dear cousin, in obedience to your commands, to render an account of my proceedings. I am this instant returned from my visit to Lord B—— who is not yet able to walk without a support. I gave him your letter, which he opened with impatience. He shewed some emotion whilst he was reading; he paused; read it a second time, and the agitation of his mind was then more apparent. When he had done, these were his words: You know, Sir, that affairs of honour have their fixt rules which cannot be dispensed with. You were a witness to what passed in this. It must be regularly determined. Chuse two of your friends, and give yourself the trouble to return with them hither to-morrow morning, and you shall then know my resolution. I urged the impropriety of making others acquainted with an affair which had happened among ourselves. To which he hastily replied: I know what ought to be done, and shall act properly. Bring your two friends, or I have nothing to say to you. I then took my leave and have ever since racked my brain ineffectually to penetrate into his design. Be it as it will, I shall see you this evening, and to-morrow shall act as you may advise. If you think it proper that I should wait on his lordship with my attendants, I will take care to chuse such as may be depended on, at all events.

Letter LX. To Eloisa.

Lay aside your fears, my gentle Eloisa; and from the following recital of what has happened, know and partake of the sentiments of your friend.

I was so full of indignation when I received your letter, that I could hardly read it with the attention it deserved. I should have made fine work in attempting to refuse it: I was then too rash and inconsiderate. You may be in the right, said I to myself, but I will never be persuaded to put up an affront injurious to my Eloisa.——Though I were to lose you, and even die in a wrong cause, I will never suffer any one to shew you less respect than is your due; but, whilst I have life, you shall be revered by all that approach you, even as my own heart reveres you. I did not hesitate, however, on the week's delay you required: the accident which had happened to Lord B——, and my vow of obedience concurred, in rendering it necessary. In the mean time, being resolved agreeable to your commands to employ that interval in meditating on the subject of your letter, I read it over again and again, and am reflecting on it continually; not with a view, however, to change my design, but to justify it.

I had it in my hand this morning, perusing again, with some uneasiness of mind, those too sensible and judicious arguments that made against me, when somebody knocked at the door of my chamber. It was opened, and immediately entered Lord B——, without his sword, leaning on his cane; he was followed by three gentlemen, one of whom I observed to be Mr. Orbe. Surprized at a visit so unexpected, I waited silently for the consequence; when my Lord requested of me a moment's audience and begged leave to say, and do, as he pleased without interruption. You must, says he, give me your express permission: the presence of these gentlemen, who are your friends, will excuse you from any supposed indiscretion. I promised without hesitation not to interrupt him; when, to my great astonishment, his Lordship immediately fell upon his knee. Surprized at seeing him in such an attitude, I would have raised him up; but, after putting me in mind of my promise, he proceeded in the following words. "I am come, Sir, to make an open retraction of the abuse, which, when in liquor, I uttered in your company. The injustice of such behaviour renders it more injurious to me than to you; and therefore I ought publicly to disavow it. I

submit to whatever punishment you please to inflict on me, and shall not think my honour re-established till my fault is repaired. Then, grant me the pardon I ask, on what conditions you think fit, and restore me your friendship." My Lord, returned I, I have the truest sense of your generosity and greatness of mind, and take a pleasure in distinguishing between the discourse which your heart dictates, and that which may escape you when you are not yourself: let that in question be for ever forgotten, I immediately raised him, and, falling into my arms, he cordially embraced me. Then, turning about to the company, "Gentlemen, said he, I thank you for your complaisance. Men of honour, like you, added he, with a bold air and resolute tone of voice, know that he who thus repairs the injury he has done, will not submit to an injury from any man. You may publish what you have seen." He then invited all of us to sup with him this evening, and the gentlemen left us. We were no sooner alone, than his lordship embraced me again, in a more tender and friendly manner; then, taking me by the hand, and seating himself down by me, happy man! said he, may you long enjoy the felicity you deserve! The heart of Eloisa is yours, may you be both.——What do you mean, my Lord? said I, interrupting him; have you lost your senses? No, returned he, smiling, but I was very near losing them, and it had perhaps been all over with me, if she who took them away, had not restored them. He then gave me a letter that I was surprized to see written by a hand, which never before wrote to any man but myself. What emotions did I feel in its perusal. I traced the passion of an incomparable woman who would make a sacrifice of herself to save her lover; and I discovered Eloisa. But when I came to the passage, wherein she protests she would never survive the most fortunate of men, how did I not shudder at the dangers I had escaped! I could not help complaining that I was loved too well, and my fears convinced me you are mortal. Ah! restore me that courage of which you have deprived me! I had enough to set death at defiance, when it threatened only myself, but I shrunk when my better half was in danger.

While I was indulging myself in these cruel reflections, I paid little attention to his

lordship's discourse; till I heard the name of Eloisa. His conversation gave me pleasure as it did not excite my jealousy. He seemed extremely to regret his having disturbed our mutual passion and your repose; he respects you indeed beyond any other woman in the world; and, being ashamed to excuse himself to you, begged me to receive his apology in your name, and to prevail on you to accept it. "I consider you, says he, as her representative, and cannot humble myself too much to one she loves; being incapable, without having compromised the affair, to address myself personally to her, or even mention her name to you." He frankly confessed to me he had entertained for you those sentiments, which every one must do who looks too intensely on Eloisa; but that his was rather a tender admiration than love; that he had formed neither hope nor pretension: but had given up all thoughts of either, on hearing of our connections; and that the injurious discourse which escaped him was the effect of liquor, and not of jealousy. He talked of love like a philosopher, who thinks his mind superior to the passions; but, for my part, I am mistaken if he has not already felt a passion, which will prevent any other from taking deep root in his breast. He mistakes a weakness of heart for the effect of reason; but I know that to love Eloisa, and be willing to renounce her, is not among the virtues of human nature.

He desired me to give him the history of our amour, and an account of the causes which prevented our happiness. I thought that, after the explicitness of your letter, a partial confidence might be dangerous and unreasonable. I made it therefore compleat, and he listened to me with an attention that convinced me of his sincerity. More than once I saw the tears come into his eyes, while his heart seemed most tenderly affected: above all, I observed the powerful impressions which the triumphs of virtue made on his mind; and I please myself in having raised up for Claud Anet a new protector, no less zealous than your father. When I had done, there are neither incidents nor adventures, said he, in what you have related; and yet the catastrophe of a Romance could not equally affect me; so well is a want of variety atoned for by

sentiments; and of striking actions supplied by instances of a virtuous behaviour. Yours are such extraordinary minds that they are not to be guided by common rules: your happiness is not to be attained in the same manner, nor is it of the same species with that of others. They seek power and pre-eminence; you require only tenderness and tranquillity. There is blended with your affections a virtuous emulation, that elevates both; and you would be less deserving of each other if you were not mutually in love. But love, he presumed to say, will one day lose its power (forgive him, Eloisa, that blasphemous expression, spoken in the ignorance of his heart) the power of love, said he, will one day be lost, while that of virtue will remain. Oh my Eloisa! may our virtues but subsist as long as our love! Heaven will require no more.

In fine, I found that the philosophical inflexibility of his nation had no influence over the natural humanity of this honest Englishman; but that his heart was really interested in our difficulties. If wealth and credit can be useful to us, I believe we have some reason to depend on his service. But alas! how shall credit or riches operate to make us happy?

This interview, in which we did not count the hours, lasted till dinner time; I ordered a pullet for dinner, after which we continued our discourse. Among other topics, we fell upon the step his lordship had taken, with regard to myself in the morning; on which I could not help expressing my surprize at a procedure so solemn and uncommon. But, repeating the reasons he had already given me, he added, that to give a partial satisfaction was unworthy a man of courage: that he ought to make a compleat one or none at all; lest he should only debase himself without making any reparation; and lest a concession made involuntarily, and with an ill grace, should be attributed to fear. Besides, continued he, my reputation is established; I can do you justice without incurring the suspicion of cowardice; but you, who are young and just beginning the world, ought to clear yourself so well of the first affair you are engaged in as to tempt no one to involve you in a second. The world is full of those artful cowards, who are upon the catch, as one may say, to taste their man; that is, to

find out some greater coward than themselves to shew their valour upon. I would save a man of honour, like you, the trouble of chastising such scoundrels; I had rather, if they want a lesson, that they should take it of me than you: for one quarrel, more or less, on the hands of a man, who has already had many, signifies nothing; whereas it is a kind of disgrace to have had but one, and the lover of Eloisa should be exempt from it.

This is, in abstract, my long conversation with Lord B——; of which I thought proper to give you an account, that you might prescribe the manner in which I ought to behave to him.

As you ought now to be composed, chase from your mind, I conjure you, those dreadful apprehensions which have found a place there for some days past. Think of the care you should take in the uncertainty of your present condition. O should you soon give me life in a third being! Should a charming pledge——Too flattering hope! Dost thou come again to deceive me? I wish! I fear! I am lost in perplexity! Oh! Thou dearest charmer of my heart, let us live but to love, and let heaven dispose of us, as it may?

P. S. I forgot to tell you that my Lord offered me your letter, and that I made no difficulty of taking it; thinking it improper that it should remain in the hands of a third person. I will return it you the first time I see you: for, as to myself, I have no occasion for it; it is deeply engraven in my heart.

Letter LXI. From Eloisa.

Bring my Lord B—— hither to-morrow, that I may throw myself at his feet, as he has done at yours. What greatness of mind! What generosity! Oh how little, do we seem, compared to him! Preserve so inestimable a friend as you would the apple of your eye. Perhaps he would be less valuable, were he of a more even temper; was there ever a man without some vices who had great virtues?

A thousand distresses of various kinds had sunk my spirits to the lowest ebb; but your letter has rekindled my extinguished hopes. In dissipating my fears, it has rendered my anxiety the more supportable. I feel now I have strength enough to bear up under it. You live, you love me; neither your own nor the blood of your friend has been spilt, and your honour is secured; I am not then compleatly miserable.

Fail not to meet me to-morrow. I never had so much reason for seeing you, nor so little hope of having that pleasure long. Farewell, my dear friend, instead of saying let us live but to love, you should have said alas! let us love that we may live.

Letter LXII. From Clara.

Must I be always, my dear cousin, under the necessity of performing the most disagreeable offices of friendship? Must I always, in the bitterness of my own heart, be giving affliction to yours, by cruel intelligence? Our sentiments, alas! are the same, and you are sensible I can give no new uneasiness to you which I have not first experienced myself. O that I could but conceal your misfortune without increasing it! or that a friendship like ours were not as binding as love! How readily might I throw off that chagrin I am now obliged to communicate. Last night, when the concert was over, and your mother and you were gone home, in company with your friend and Mr. Orbe, our two fathers and my Lord B—— were left to talk politics together; the disagreeableness of the subject, of which indeed I am quite surfeited, soon made me retire to my own chamber. In about half an hour, I heard the name of your friend repeated with some vehemence; on which I found the conversation had changed its subject, and therefore listened to it with some attention; when I gathered, by what followed, that his lordship had ventured to propose a match between you and your friend, whom he frankly called his, and on whom, as such, he offered to make a suitable settlement. Your father rejected the proposal with disdain, and upon that the conversation began to grow warm. “I must tell you sir, said my lord, that, notwithstanding your prejudices, he is of all men the

most worthy of her, and perhaps the most likely to make her happy. He has received from nature every gift that is independent of the world; and has embellished them by all those talents, which depended on himself. He is young, tall, well-made, and ingenious: he has the advantages of education, sense, manners, and courage; he has a fine genius and a sound mind; what then does he require to make him worthy of your daughter? Is it a fortune? He shall have one. A third part of my own will make him the richest man of this country; nay, I will give him, if it be necessary, the half. Does he want a title? Ridiculous prerogative, in a country where nobility is more troublesome than useful! But, doubt it not, he is noble: not that his nobility is made out in writing upon an old parchment, but it is engraven in indelible characters on his heart. In a word if you prefer the dictates of reason and sense to groundless prejudices, and if you love your daughter better than empty titles, you will give her to him."

On this your father expressed himself in a violent passion: he treated the proposal as absurd and ridiculous. How! my lord! said he, is it possible a man of honour, as you are, can entertain such a thought, that the last surviving branch of an illustrious family should go to lose and degrade its name, in that of nobody knows who; a fellow without home, and reduced to subsist upon charity. Hold, sir, interrupted my lord, you are speaking of my friend; consider that I must take upon myself every injury done him in my company, and that such language as is injurious to a man of honour, is more so to him who makes use of it. Such fellows are more respectable than all the country squires in Europe; and I defy you to point out a more honourable way to fortune, than by excepting the debts of esteem, and the gifts of friendship. If my friend does not trace his descent, as you do, from a long and doubtful succession of ancestors, he will lay the foundation, and be the honour of his own house, as the first of your ancestors did that of yours. Can you think yourself dishonoured by your alliance to the head of your family, without falling under the contempt you have for him? How many great families would sink again into oblivion, if we respected only

those which descended from truly respectable originals? Judge of the past by the present; for two or three honest citizens ennobled by virtuous means, a thousand knaves find every day the way to aggrandize themselves and families. But to what end serves that nobility, of which their descendants are so proud, unless it be to prove the injustice and infamy of their ancestors? [12] There are, I must confess, a great number of bad men among the common people; but the odds are always twenty to one against a gentleman, that he is descended from a rascal. Let us, if you will, set aside descent, and compare only merit and utility. You have borne arms in the service and pay of a foreign prince; his father fought without pay in the service of his country. If you have well served, you have been well paid; and, whatever honour you may have acquired by arms, a hundred Plebeians may have acquired still more.

In what consists the honour then, continued my lord, of that nobility of which you are so tenacious? How does it affect the glory of one's country or the good of mankind? A mortal enemy to liberty and the laws, what did it ever produce in most of those countries where it has flourished, but the rod of tyranny and the oppression of the people? Will you presume to boast, in a republic, of a rank that is destructive to virtue and humanity? Of a rank that makes its boast of slavery, and wherein men blush to be men? Read the annals of your own country; what have any of the nobility merited of her? Were any of her deliverers nobles? The Fursts, the Tills, the Stauffachers, were they gentlemen? What then is that absurd honour, about which you make so much noise?

Think, my dear, what I suffered to hear this respectable man thus injure, by an ill-concerted application, the cause of that friend whom he endeavoured to serve. Your father, being irritated by so many galling, though general invectives, strove to retort them by personal ones. He told his lordship plainly, that never any man of his condition talked in the manner he had done. Trouble not yourself to plead another's cause, added he roughly, honourable as you are, I doubt much if you could make

your own good, on the subject in question. You demand my daughter for your pretended friend, without knowing whether you are yourself an equal match for her; and I know enough of the English nobility to entertain, from your discourse, a very indifferent opinion of yours.

To this his lordship answered; whatever you may think of me, sir, I should be very sorry to be able to give no other proof of my merit than the name of a man who died five hundred years ago. If you know the nobility of England, you know that it is the least prejudiced, best informed, most sensible, and bravest of all Europe; after which it is needless to ask whether it be the most ancient; for, when we talk of what is, we never mind what was. We are not, it is true, the slaves, but the friends of a prince; not the oppressors of a people, but their leaders. The guardians of liberty, the pillars of our country, and the support of the throne, we maintain an equilibrium between the people and the king. Our first regards are due to the nation, our second to him that governs: we consult not his will, but his just prerogative. Supreme judges in the house of peers, and sometimes legislators, we render equal justice to the king and people, and suffer no one to say God and my sword, but only God and my right.

Such, sir, continued he, is that respectable nobility with which you are unacquainted; as ancient as any other, but more proud of its merit than of its ancestors. I am one, not the lowest in rank of that illustrious order, and believe, whatever be your pretensions, that I am your equal in every respect. I have a sister unmarried; she is young, amiable, rich and in no wise inferior to Eloisa, except in those qualities which with you pass for nothing. Now, sir, if after being enamoured with your daughter, it were possible for any one to change the object of his affections and admire another, I should think it an honour to accept the man for my brother, though he had nothing, whom I propose to you for a son with half my estate.

I knew matters would be only aggravated by your father’s reply; and, though I was struck with admiration at my Lord B——’s generosity, I saw plainly that he would

totally ruin the negotiation he had undertaken. I went in, therefore, to prevent things from going farther. My entrance broke up the conversation, and immediately after they coldly took leave of each other, and parted. As to my father, he behaved very well in the dispute. At first he seconded the proposal; but, finding that yours would hear nothing of it, he took the side of his brother-in-law, and, by taking proper opportunities to moderate the contest, prevented them from going beyond those bounds they would certainly have trespassed, had they been alone. After their departure, he related to me what had happened; and, as I foresaw where his discourse would end, I readily told him, that things being in such a situation, it would be improper the person in question should see you so often here; and that it would be better for him not to come hither at all, if such an intimation would not be putting a kind of affront on Mr. Orbe, his friend; but that I should desire him to bring Lord B—— less frequently for the future. This, my dear, was the best I could do to prevent our door being entirely shut against him.

But this is not all. The crisis in which you stand at present obliges me to return to my former advice. The affair between my Lord B—— and your friend has made all the noise in town, which was natural to expect. For, though Mr. Orbe has kept the original cause of their quarrel a secret, the circumstances are too public, to suffer it to lie concealed. Every one has suspicions, makes conjectures, and some go so far as to name Eloisa. The report of the watch was not so totally suppressed but it is remembered; and you are not ignorant that, in the eye of the world, a bare suspicion of the truth is looked upon as evidence. All that I can say for your consolation is, that in general your choice is approved, and every body thinks with pleasure on the union of so charming a couple. This confirms me in the opinion that your friend has behaved himself well in this country, and is not less beloved than yourself. But what is the public voice to your inflexible father? All this talk has already reached, or will come to his ear; and I tremble to think of the effect it may produce, if you do not speedily take some measures to prevent his anger. You must expect from him an

explanation terrible to yourself, and perhaps still worse for your friend. Not that I think, at his age, he will condescend to challenge a young man he thinks unworthy his sword: but the influence he has in the town will furnish him, if he has a mind to it, with a thousand means to stir up a party against him; and it is to be feared that his passion will be too ready to excite him to do it.

On my knees, therefore, I conjure you, my dear friend, to think on the dangers that surround you, and the terrible risk you run; which increases every moment. You have been extremely fortunate to escape hitherto, in the midst of such hazards; but, while it is yet time, I beg of you to let the veil of prudence be thrown over the secret of your amours; and not to push your fortune farther; lest it should involve in your misfortunes the man who has been the cause of them. Believe me, my dear, the future is uncertain, a thousand accidents may happen unexpectedly, in your favour; but, for the present, I have said and repeat it more earnestly, send away your friend, or you are undone.

Letter LXIII. From Eloisa to Clara.

All that you foresaw, my dear, is come to pass. Last night, about an hour after we got home, my father entered my mother’s apartment, his eyes sparkling and his countenance inflamed with anger; in a word, so irritated as I never saw him before. I found immediately that he had either just left a quarrel, or was seeking occasion to begin one; and my guilty conscience made me tremble for the consequence.

He began by exclaiming violently, but in general terms, against such mothers as indiscreetly invite to their houses young fellows without family or fortune, whose acquaintance only brings shame and scandal on those who cultivate it. Finding this not sufficient to draw an answer from an intimidated woman, he brought up particularly, as an example, what had passed in our own house, since she had introduced a pretended wit, an empty chatterer, more fit to debauch the mind of a modest young woman than to instruct her in any thing that is good.

My mother, who now saw she should get little by holding her tongue, took him up at the word debauch, and asked what he had ever seen in the conduct, or knew of the character of the person he spoke of, to authorize such base suspicions. I did not conceive, she added, that genius and merit were to be excluded from society. To whom, pray, would you have your house open, if fine talents and good behaviour have no pretensions to admittance? To our equals, Madam, he replied in a fury; to such as might repair the honour of a daughter if they should injure it. No, sir, said she, but rather to people of virtue who cannot injure it. Know, Madam, that the presumption of soliciting an alliance with my family, without a title to that honour, is highly injurious. So far from thinking it injurious, returned my mother, I think it, on the contrary, the highest mark of esteem: but, I know not that the person you exclaim against has made any such pretensions. He has done it, Madam, and will do worse, if I do not take proper care to prevent him; but, for the future, I shall take upon myself the charge you have executed so ill.

On this began a dangerous altercation between them; by which I found they were both ignorant of those reports, which you say have been spread about the town. During this time your unworthy cousin could, nevertheless, have wished herself buried a hundred feet in the earth. Think of the best and most abused of mothers lavishing encomiums on her guilty daughter, and praising her for all those virtues she has lost, in the most respectful, or rather to me the most mortifying terms. Think of an angry father, profuse of injurious expressions; and yet in the height of his indignation, not letting one escape him in the least reflecting on the prudence of her, who, torn by remorse and humbled with shame, could hardly support his presence.

O the inconceivable torture of a bleeding heart, reproaching itself with unsuspected crimes! How depressing and insupportable is the burthen of unmerited praise, and of an esteem of which the heart is conscious it is unworthy! I was indeed so terribly oppressed, that, in order to free myself from so cruel a situation, I was just going, if the impetuosity of his temper would have given me time, to confess all. But he was

so enraged as to repeat over and over a hundred times the same things, and to change the subject every moment. He took notice of my looks, cast down, and affrighted, in consequence of my remorse; and if he did not construe them into those of my guilt he did into looks of my love; but, to shame me the more, he abused the object of it in terms so odious and contemptible that, in spite of all my endeavours, I could not let him proceed without interruption. I know not whence my dear, I had so much courage, or how I came so far to trespass the bounds of modesty and duty: but, if I ventured to break for a moment that respectful silence they dictate, I suffered for it, as you will see, very severely. For Heaven's sake, my dear father, said I, be pacified: never could your daughter be in danger from a man deserving such abuse. I had scarce spoken, when, as if he had felt himself reproved by what I said, or that his passion wanted only a pretext for extremities, he flew upon your poor friend, and for the first time in my life I received from him a box on the ear: nor was this all but, giving himself up entirely to his passion, he proceeded to beat me without mercy, notwithstanding my mother threw herself in between us, to screen me from his blows, and, received many of those which were intended for me. At length, in running back to avoid them, my foot slipt, and I fell down with my face against the foot of a table.

Here ended the triumph of passion, and begun that of nature. My fall, the sight of my blood, my tears, and those of my mother greatly affected him. He raised me up with an air of affliction and solicitude; and, having placed me in a chair, they both eagerly enquired where I was hurt. I had received only a slight bruise on my forehead, and bled only at the nose. I saw nevertheless, by the alteration in the air and voice of my father, that he was displeased at what he had done. He was not, however, immediately reconciled to me; paternal authority did not permit so abrupt a change; but he apologized with many tender excuses to my mother; and I saw plainly, by the looks he cast on me, to whom half of his apologies were indirectly addressed. Surely, my dear, these is no confusion so affecting as that of a tender

father, who thinks himself to blame in his treatment of a child.

Supper being ready, it was ordered to be put back that I might have time to compose myself; and my father, unwilling the servants should see any thing of my disorder, went himself for a glass of water; while my mother was bathing the contusion on my forehead. Ah, my dear how I pitied her! already in a very ill and languishing state of health, how gladly would she have been excused from being witness to such a scene! How little less did she stand in need of assistance than I!

At supper my father did not speak to me, but I could see his silence was the effect of shame, and not of disdain: he pretended to find every thing extremely good, in order to bid my mother help me to it; and, what touched me the most sensibly was, that he took all occasions to call me his daughter, and not Eloisa, as is customary with him.

After supper the evening was so cold that my mother ordered a fire in her chamber; she placing herself on one fire and my father on the other. I went to take a chair, to sit down in the middle; when, laying hold of my gown and drawing me gently to him, he placed me on his knee, without speaking a word. This was done so immediately, and by a sort of involuntarily impulse, that he seemed to be almost sorry for it a moment afterwards. But I was on his knee, and he could not well push me from him again, and, what added to his apparent condescension, he was obliged to support me with his arms in that attitude. All this passion in a kind of reluctant silence; but I perceived him, every now and then, ready to give me an involuntary embrace, which however he resisted, at the same time endeavouring to stifle a sigh, which came from the bottom of his heart. A certain false shame prevented his paternal arms from clasping me with that tenderness he too, plainly felt; a certain gravity, he was ashamed to depart from, a confusion he durst not overcome, occasioned between a father and his daughter the same charming embarrassment, as love and modesty cause between lovers; in the mean while a most affectionate mother, transported with pleasure, secretly enjoyed the delightful sight. I saw, I felt

it all, and could no longer support a scene of such melting tenderness. I pretended to slip down; and, to save myself, threw my arm round my father's neck, laying my face close to his venerable cheek, which I pressed with repeated kisses and bathed with my tears. At the same time, by those which flowed plentifully from his eyes, I could perceive him greatly relieved; while my mother, embraced us both and partook of our transports. How sweet; how peaceful is innocence! which alone was wanting to make this the most delightful moment of my life.

This morning, lassitude and the pain I felt from my fall having kept me in bed later than usual, my father came into my chamber before I was up; when, asking kindly after my health, he sat down by the side of my bed; and, taking one of my hands into his, he condescended so far as to kiss it several times, calling me at the same time his dear daughter, and expressing his sorrow for his resentment. I told him I should think myself but too happy to suffer as much every day to have the pleasure he then gave me in return; and that the severest treatment I could receive from him would be fully recompensed, by the smallest instance of his kindness.

Then putting on a more serious air, he resumed the subject of yesterday, and signified his pleasure in civil but positive terms. You know, says he, the husband I designed for you: I intimated to you my intentions concerning him on my arrival, and shall never change them, on that head. As to the man whom Lord B—— spoke of, though I shall not dispute the merit every body allows him, I know not whether he has of himself conceived the ridiculous hopes of being allied to me, or if it has been instilled into him by others; but, be assured, that, had I even no other person in view, and he was in possession of all the guineas in England, I would never accept him for my son-in-law. I forbid you, therefore, either to see or speak to him as long as you live, and that as well for the sake of his honour as your own. I never indeed felt any great regard for him: but I now mortally hate him for the outrages he has been the occasion of my committing, and shall never forgive him the violence I have been guilty of.

Having said this, he rose and left me, without waiting for my answer, and with the same air of severity, which he had just reproached himself for assuming before. Ah, my dear cousin, what an infernal monster is prejudice, that depraves the best hearts, and puts the voice of nature every moment to silence!

Thus ended the explanation you predicted, and of which I could not comprehend the reason till your letter informed me. I cannot well tell what revolution it has occasioned in my mind; but I find myself ever since greatly altered. I seem to look back with more regret to that happy time, when I lived content and tranquil with my family friends around me; and that the sense of my error increases with that of the blessings of which it has deprived me. Tell me, my severe monitor, tell me if you dare be so cruel, are the joyful hours of love all gone and fled? And will they never more return? Do you perceive, alas, how gloomy and horrible is that sad apprehension? And yet my father's commands are positive; the danger of my lover is certain. Think, my dear Clara, on the result of such opposite emotions, destroying the effects of each other in my heart. A kind of stupidity has taken possession of me, which makes me almost insensible, and leaves me neither the use of my passions nor my reason. The present moment, you tell me, is critical; I know, I feel it is: and yet I was never more incapable to conduct myself than now. I have sat down more than twenty times to write to my lover: but I am ready to sink at every line. I have no resource, my dear friend, but in you. Let me prevail on you then to think, to speak, to act, for me. I put myself into your hands: whatever step you think proper to take, I hereby confirm before hand every thing you do; I commit to your friendship that sad authority over a lover which I have bought so dear. Divide me for ever from myself. Kill me, if I must die; but do not force me to plunge the dagger in my own breast. O my good angel! my protectress! what an employment do I engage you in! Can you have the courage to go through it? Can you find means to soften its severity? It is not my heart alone you will rend to pieces. You know, Clara, yes, you know, how sincerely I am beloved; that I have not even the consolation of being the most to be

pitied. Let my heart, I beseech you, speak from your lips, and let yours sympathize with the tender compassion of love. Comfort the poor unfortunate youth, tell him, ah, tell him, again and again——do you not think so, my dear friend? Do you not think that, in spite of prepossessions and prejudice, in spite of all obstacles and crosses, Heaven has made us for each other? Yes, tell him so, I am sure of it, we are destined to be happy. It is impossible for me to lose sight of that prospect: it is impossible for me to give up that delightful hope. Tell him, therefore, not to be too much afflicted; not to give way to despair. You need not trouble yourself to exact a promise of eternal love and fidelity; and still less to make him a needless promise of mine. Is not the assurance of both firmly rooted in our hearts? Do we not feel that we are indivisible, and that we have but one mind between us? Tell him only to hope, and that though fortune persecutes us, he may place his confidence in love; which I am certain, my cousin, will in some way or other compensate for the evils it makes us suffer; as I am that, however heaven may dispose of us, we shall not live long from each other.

P.S. After I had written the above, I went into my mother's apartment, but found myself so ill that I was obliged to return, and lie down on the bed. I even perceived——alas, I am afraid——indeed, my dear, I am afraid, the fall I had last night will be of a much worse consequence than I imagined. If so, all is over with me; all my hopes are vanished at once.

Letter LXIV. Clara to Mr. Orbe.

My father has this morning related to me the conversation he had yesterday with you. I perceive with pleasure that your expectations of what you are pleased to call your happiness, are not without foundation: you know I hope that it will prove mine too. Esteem and friendship are already in your possession, and all of that more tender sentiment of which my heart is capable is also yours. Yet be not deceived: as woman, I am a kind of monster; by whatsoever strange whim of nature it happens I

know not, but this I know, that my friendship is more powerful than my love. When I tell you that my Eloisa is dearer to me than yourself, you only laugh at, me; and yet nothing can be more certain. Eloisa is so sensible of this, that she is more jealous for you than you are for yourself, and whilst you are contented, she is upbraiding me, that I do not love you sufficiently. I am even so strongly interested in every thing which concerns her, that her lover and you hold nearly the same place in my heart, though in a different manner. What I feel for him is friendship only; but it is violent: for you, I think, I perceive something of a certain passion called love; but then it is tranquil. Now, though this might appear sufficiently equivocal to disturb the repose of a jealous mind, I do not believe it will cause much uneasiness in you.

How far, alas, are those two poor souls from that tranquillity which we dare presume to enjoy! and how ill does this contentment become us, whilst our friends are in despair! It is decreed, they must part, and perhaps this may be the very instant of their eternal separation. Who knows but their mutual dejection, with which we reproached them at the concert, might be a foreboding that it was the last time they would ever meet? To this hour your friend is ignorant of his destiny. In the security of his heart he still enjoys the felicity of which he is already deprived. In the very instant of despair he tastes, in idea, the shadow of happiness, and like one who is on the brink of sudden death, the poor wretch dreams of existence unapprehensive of his fate. O heavens! it is from me he is to receive the sad sentence. O friendship divine! the idol of my soul! arm me, I beseech thee, with thy sacred cruelty. Inspire me with barbarous resolution, and enable me to perform this sad duty with becoming magnanimity!

I depend on your assistance, and I should expect it even if you loved me less; for I know your tender heart: it will have no need of the zeal of love when humanity pleads. You will engage our friend to come to me to-morrow morning; but be sure not to mention a syllable of the affair. To day I must not be interrupted. I shall pass the afternoon with Eloisa. Endeavour to find Lord B——, and bring him with you

about eight o'clock this evening, that we may come to some determination concerning the departure of this unhappy man, and endeavour to prevent his despair.

I have great confidence in his resolution added to our precautions, and I have still greater dependence on his passion for Eloisa: her will, the danger of her life and honour, are motives which he cannot resist. Be it as it will, you may be assured that I shall not dream of marriage till Eloisa has recovered her peace of mind. I will not stain the matrimonial knot with the tears of my friend, so that if you really love me, your interest will second your generosity, and it becomes your own affair rather than that of another.

Letter LXV. Clara to Eloisa.

All is over; and in spite of her indiscretion my Eloisa is in safety. Her secrets are buried in silence. She is still loved and cherished in the midst of her friends and relations, possessing every one's esteem, and a reputation without blemish. Consider, my friend, and tremble for the dangers which, through motives of love or shame, through fear of doing too little or too much, you have run. Learn hence, too fond or too fearful girl, never more to attempt to reconcile sentiments so incompatible; and thank heaven that, through a happiness peculiar to yourself, you have escaped the evils that threatened you.

I would spare your sorrowing heart the particulars of your lover's cruel and necessary departure. But you desired to know them; I promised you should, and will keep my word with that sincerity which ever subsisted between us. Read on then, my dear and unhappy friend; read on, but exert your courage and maintain your resolution.

The plan I had concerted, and of which I advised you yesterday, was punctually followed in every particular. On my return home, I found here Mr. Orbe and my Lord B——; with whom I immediately begun, by declaring to the latter how much we were both affected by his heroic generosity. I then gave them urgent reasons for

the immediate departure of your friend, and told them the difficulties I foresaw in bringing it about. His Lordship was perfectly sensible that it was necessary, and expressed much sorrow for the effects of his imprudent zeal. They both agreed it was proper to hasten the separation determined, and to lay hold of the first moment of consent, to prevent any new irresolution: and to snatch him from the danger of delay. I would have engaged Mr. Orbe to make the necessary preparations, unknown to your friend; but his Lordship, regarding this affair as his own, insisted on taking charge of it. He accordingly promised me that his chaise would be ready at eleven o'clock this morning, adding that he would carry him off under some other pretext, and accompany him as far as it might be necessary; opening the matter to him at leisure. This expedient however did not appear to me sufficiently open and sincere, nor would I consent to expose him, at a distance, to the first effects of a despair, which might more easily escape the eyes of Lord B—— than mine. For the same reason I did not close with his Lordship's proposal of speaking himself to him, and prevailing on him to depart. I foresaw, that negotiation would be a delicate affair, and I was unwilling to trust any body with it but myself; knowing much better how to manage his sensibility, and also that there is always a harshness in the arguments of the men which a woman best knows how to soften. I conceived nevertheless that my Lord might be of use in preparing the way for an eclairissement; being sensible of the effects which the discourse of a man of sense might have over a virtuous mind; and what force the persuasions of a friend might give to the arguments of the philosopher.

I engaged Lord B——, therefore, to pass the evening with him, and, without saying any thing directly of his situation, to endeavour to dispose his mind insensibly to a stoical resolution. You, my Lord, who are so well acquainted with Epictetus, says I, have now an opportunity of making some real use of him. Distinguish carefully between real and apparent good, between that which depends on ourselves and what is dependent on others. Demonstrate to him that, whatever threatens us from

without, the cause of evil is within us; and that the wise man, being always on his guard, has his happiness ever in his own power. I understood by his Lordship's answer that this stroke of irony, which could not offend him, served to excite his zeal, and that he counted much on sending his friend the next day well prepared. This indeed was the most I expected; for in reality, I place no great dependence, any more than yourself, on all that verbose philosophy. And yet I am persuaded a virtuous man must always feel some kind of shame, in changing at night the opinions he embraced in the morning, and in denying in his heart the next day what his reason dictated for truth the preceding night.

Mr. Orbe was desirous of being of their party, and passing the evening with them; but to this I objected; as his presence might only disturb or lay a restraint on the conversation. The interest I have in him, does not prevent me from seeing he is not a match for the other two. The masculine turn of thinking in men of strong minds gives a peculiar idiom to their discourse, and makes them converse in a language to which Mr. Orbe is a stranger. In taking leave of them, I bethought me of the effects of his Lordship's drinking punch; and, fearing he might when in liquor anticipate my design, I laughingly hinted as much to him: to which he answered, I might be assured he would indulge himself in such habits only when it could be of no ill effect; but that he was no slave to custom; that the interview intended concerned Eloisa's honour, the fortune and perhaps the life of a man, and that man his friend. I shall drink my punch, continued he, as usual, lest it should give our conversation an air of reserve and preparation; but that punch shall be mere lemonade; and, as he drinks none, he will not perceive it. Don't you think it, my dear, a great mortification to have contracted habits that make such precautions as these necessary?

I passed the night in great agitation of mind, not altogether on your account. The innocent pleasures of our early youth, the agreeableness of our long intimacy, and the closer connections that have subsisted between us for a year past, on account of

the difficulty he met with in seeing you; all this filled me with the most disagreeable apprehensions of your separation. I perceived I was going to lose, with the half of you, a part of my own existence. Awake and restless I lay counting the clock, and when the morning dawned, I shuddered to think it was the dawn of that day which might fix the destiny of my friend. I spent the early part of the morning in meditating on my intended discourse, and in reflecting on the impressions it might make. At length the hour drew nigh, and my expected visitor entered. He appeared much troubled, and hastily asked me after you; for he had heard, the day after your severe treatment from your father, that you was ill, which was yesterday confirmed by my Lord B——, and that you had kept your bed ever since. To avoid entering into particulars on this subject, I told him I had left you better last night, and that he would know more by the return of Hans whom I had sent to you. My precaution was to no purpose, he went on asking me a hundred questions, to which, as they only tended to lead me from my purpose, I made short answers, and took upon me to interrogate him in my turn.

I begun by endeavouring to found his disposition of mind, and found him grave, methodical, and reasonable. Thank heaven, said I to myself, my philosopher is well prepared. Nothing remained therefore but to put him to the trial. It is an usual custom to open bad news by degrees; but the knowledge I had of the furious imagination of your friend, which at half a word's speaking carries him often into the most passionate extremes, determined me to take a contrary method; as I thought it better to overwhelm him at once, and administer comfort to him afterwards, than needlessly to multiply his griefs and give him a thousand pains instead of one. Assuming, therefore, a more serious tone, and looking at him very attentively; have you ever experienced, my friend, said I, what the fortitude of a great mind is capable of? Do you think it possible for a man to renounce the object he truly loves? I had scarce spoke before he started up like a madman; and, clasping his hands together, struck them against his forehead, crying out, I understand you, Eloisa is dead! my

Eloisa is dead! repeated he in a tone of despair and horror that made me tremble. I see through your vain circumspection, your useless cautions, that only render my tortures more lingering and cruel. Frightened as I was by so sudden a transport, I soon entered into the cause; the news he had heard of your illness, the lecture which Lord B—— had read him, our appointed meeting this morning, my evading his questions and those I put to him, were all so many collateral circumstances combining to give him a false alarm. I saw plainly also what use I might have made of his mistake, by leaving him in it a few minutes, but I could not be cruel enough to do it. The thoughts of the death of the person one loves is so shocking, that any other whatever is comparatively agreeable; I hastened accordingly to make the advantage of it. Perhaps, said I, you will never see her again, yet she is alive and still loves you. If Eloisa were dead, what could Clara have to say? Be thankful to heaven that, unfortunate as you are, you do not feel all those evils which might have overwhelmed you. He was so surprized, so struck, so bewildered that, having made him sit down, again, I had leisure to acquaint him with what it was necessary for him to know. At the same time I represented the generous behaviour of Lord B—— in the most amiable light, in order to divert his grief by exciting, in his honest mind, the gentler emotions of gratitude. You see, continued I, the present state of affairs. Eloisa is on the brink of destruction, just ready to see herself exposed to public disgrace, by the resentment of her family, by the violence of an enraged father, and by her own despair. The danger increases every moment, and, whether in her own or in the hand of a father, the poignard is every instant of her life within an inch of her heart. There remains but one way to prevent these misfortunes, and that depends entirely on you. The fate of Eloisa is in your hands. See if you have the fortitude to save her from ruin, by leaving her, since she is no longer permitted to see you, or whether you had rather stay to be the author and witness of her dishonour? After having done every thing for you, she puts your heart to the trial to see what you can do for her. It is astonishing that she bears up under her distresses. You are anxious

for her life; know then that her life, her honour, her all depends on you.

He heard me without interruption; and no sooner perfectly comprehended me, than that wild gesture, that furious look, that frightful air, which he had put on just before, immediately disappeared. A gloomy veil of sorrow and consternation spread itself over his features, while his mournful eyes and bewildered countenance betrayed the sadness of his heart. In this situation he could hardly open his lips to make me an answer. Must I then go? said he in a peculiar tone; it is well, I will go. Have I not lived long enough? No, returned I, not so, you should still live for her who loves you. Have you forgot that her life is dependant on yours? Why then should our lives be separated? cried he; there was a time. It is not yet too late.——

I affected not to understand the last words, and was endeavouring to comfort him with some hopes, which I could see his heart rejected, when Hans returned with the good news of your health. In the joy he felt at this, he cried out, My Eloisa lives,——let her live, and if possible be happy. I will never disturb her repose, I will only bid her adieu——and, if it must be so, will leave her for ever.

You surely know, said I, that you are not permitted to see her. You have already bidden farewell, and are parted. Consider, therefore, you will be more at ease when you are at a greater distance, and will have at least the consolation to think you have secured, by your departure, the peace and reputation of her you love. Fly then this hour, this moment; nor let so great a sacrifice be made too slow. Haste, lest even your delay should cause the ruin of her to whose security you have devoted yourself. What! said he in a kind of fury, shall I depart without seeing her? Not see her again! We will both perish if it must be so. I know she will not think much to die with me. But I will see her, whatever may be the consequence; I will lay both my heart and life at her feet before I am thus torn from myself.——It was not difficult for me to shew the absurdity and cruelty of such a project. But the exclamation of, Shall I see her no more! repeated in the most doleful accents, seemed to demand of me some

consolation. Why, said I to him, do you make your misfortunes worse than they really are? Why do you give up hopes which Eloisa herself entertains? Can you believe she would think of thus parting with you, if she conceived you were not to meet again? No, my friend, you ought to know the heart of Eloisa better. You ought to know how much she prefers her love to her life. I fear, alas! too much I fear (this I confess I have added) she will soon prefer it to every thing. Believe me, Eloisa lives in hopes, since she consents to live: believe me the cautions which her prudence dictates, regard yourself more than you are aware of; and that she is more careful of herself on your account than her own. I then took out your last letter; and, shewing him what were the hopes of a fond deluded girl, animated his, by the gentle warmth of her tender expressions. These few lines seemed to distil a salutary balsam into his envenomed heart. His looks softened, the tears rose into his eyes, and I had the satisfaction of seeing a sorrowful tenderness succeed by degrees to his former despair; but your last words, so moving, so heart-felt, we shall not live long asunder, made him burst into a flood of tears. No, Eloisa, my dear Eloisa! said he, raising his voice and kissing the letter, no, we shall not live long asunder. Heaven will either join our hands in this world, or unite our hearts in those eternal mansions where there is no more separation. He was now in the temper of mind, I wished to have him; his former, sullen sorrow gave me much uneasiness. I should not have permitted him to depart in that disposition; but, as soon as I saw him weep and heard your endearing name come from his lips with so much tenderness, I was no longer in apprehensions for his life; for nothing is less tender than despair. The soft emotions of his heart now dictated an objection which I did not foresee. He spoke to me of the condition in which you lately suspected yourself to be; protesting he would rather die a thousand deaths than abandon you to those perils that threatened you. I took care to say nothing about the accident of your fall; telling him only that your expectations had been disappointed, and that there were no hopes of that kind. To which he answered with a deep sigh, there will remain then no living monument of

my happiness; it is gone, and——Here his heart seemed too full for expression.

After this, it remained only for me to execute the latter part of your commission; and for which I did not think, after the intimacy in which you lived, that any preparation or apology was necessary. I mildly reproached him, therefore, for the little care he had taken of his affairs; telling him that you feared it would be long before he would be more careful, and that in the mean time you commanded him to take care of himself for your sake, and to that end to accept of that small present which I had to make him from you. He seemed neither offended at the offer, nor to make a merit of the acceptance; telling me only that you well knew nothing could come from you that he should not receive with transport; but that your precaution was superfluous: a little house, which he had sold at Grandson, the remains of his small patrimony, having furnished him with more money than he ever had at any one time in his life. Besides, added he, I possess some talents from which I can always draw a subsistence. I shall be happy to find, in the exercise of them, some diversion from my misfortunes; and, since I have seen the use to which Eloisa puts her superfluities, I regard it as a treasure sacred to the widow and the orphan, whom humanity will never permit me to neglect. I reminded him of his former journey to the Valois, your letter, and the preciseness of your orders. The same reasons, said I, now subsist——The same! interrupted he, in an angry tone. The penalty of my refusal then, was never to see her more; if she will permit me now to stay, I will use it on those conditions. If I obey, why does she punish me? If I do not, what can she do worse than banish me?——The same reasons! repeated he, with some impatience. Our union then was just commenced; it is now at an end; and I part from her perhaps for ever; there is no longer any connection between us, we are going to be torn asunder. He pronounced these last words with such an oppression of heart that I trembled with the apprehensions of his relapsing into that disposition of mind, out of which I had taken so much pains to extricate him. I affected therefore an air of gaiety, and told him with a smile, that he was a child, and that I would be his tutor,

as he stood greatly in need of one. I will take charge of this, said I; and, that we may dispose of it properly in the business we shall engage in together, I insist upon knowing particularly the state of your affairs. I endeavoured thus to direct his melancholy ideas by that of a familiar correspondence to be kept up in his absence; and he, whose simplicity only sought to lay hold of every twig, as one may say, that grew near to you, came easily into my design. We accordingly settled the address of our letters; and, as the talking about these regulations was agreeable to him, I prolonged our discourse on this subject till Mr. Orbe arrived; who, on his entrance, made a signal to me that every thing was ready. Your friend, who easily understood what was meant, then desired leave to write to you; but I would not permit him. I saw that an excess of tenderness might overcome him, and that after he had got half way through his letter, we might find it impossible to prevail on him to depart. Delays, said I, are dangerous; make haste to go; and, when you are arrived at the end of your first stage, you may write more at your ease. In saying this, I made a sign to Mr. Orbe, advanced towards him with a heavy heart, and took leave. How he left me I know not, my tears preventing my sight; my head began also to turn round, and it was high time my part was ended.

A moment afterwards, however, I heard them go hastily down stairs; on which I went to the stair-head to look after them. There I saw your friend, in all his extravagance, throw himself on his knees, in the middle of the stairs, and kiss the steps; while Mr. Orbe had much to do to raise him from the cold stones, which he pressed with his lips, and to which he clung with his hands, sighing most bitterly. For my part, I retired, that I might not expose myself to the servants.

Soon after Mr. Orbe returned, and, with tears in his eyes, told me it was all over, and that they were set out. It seems the chaise was ready at his door, where Lord B—— was waiting for our friend, whom when his Lordship saw he ran to meet him, and with the most cordial expressions of friendship, placed him in the chaise, which drove off with them, like lightning.

Letter LXVI. To Eloisa.

How often have I taken up, and flung down, my pen! I hesitate in the first period; I know not how, I know not where, to begin. And yet it is to Eloisa I would write. To what a situation am I reduced? That time is, alas! no more, when a thousand pleasing ideas crowded on my mind, and flowed inexhaustibly from my pen. Those delightful moments of mutual confidence, and sweet effusion of souls, are gone and fled. We live no longer for each other. We are no more the same persons, and I no longer know to whom I am writing. Will you deign to receive, to read, my letters? Will you think them sufficiently cautious and reserved? Shall I preserve the stile of our former intimacy? May I venture to speak of a passion extinguished or despised? and am I not to make as defiant approaches to Eloisa, as on the first day I presumed to write? Good heavens! how different are the tedious hours of my present wretchedness from those happy, those delightful days I have passed! I but begin to exist, and am sunk into nothing. The hopes of life that warmed my heart are fled, and the gloomy prospect of death is all before me. Three revolving years have circumscribed the happiness of my days. Would to God I had ended them, ere I had known the misery of thus surviving myself! Oh that I had obeyed the foreboding dictates of my heart, when once those rapid moments of delight were passed, and life presented nothing to my view for which I could wish to live! Better, doubtless, had it been that I had breathed no longer, or that those three years of life and love I enjoyed could be extracted from the number of my days. Happier is it never to taste of felicity than to have it snatched from our enjoyment. Had I been exempted from that fatal interval of happiness; had I escaped the first enchanting look, that animated me to a new life, I might still have preserved my reason, have still been fit to discharge the common offices of life, and have displayed perhaps some virtues in the duration of an insipid existence. One moment of delusion hath changed the scene. I have ventured to contemplate with rapture an object I should not have dared to look on. This presumption has produced its necessary effect, and led me

insensibly to ruin; I am become a frantic, delirious wretch, a servile dispirited being, that drags along his chain in ignominy and despair.

How idle are the dreams of a distracted mind! How flattering, how deceitful the wishes of the wandering heart, that disclaims them as soon as suggested! To what end do we seek, against real evils, imaginary remedies, that are no sooner thought of than rejected? Who, that hath seen and felt the power of love, can think it possible there should be a happiness which I would purchase at the price of the supreme felicity of my first transports. No, it is impossible——Let heaven deny me all other blessings; let me be wretched, but I will indulge myself in the remembrance of pleasures past. Better is it to enjoy the recollection of my past happiness, though imbittered with present sorrow, than to be for ever happy without Eloisa. Come then, dear image of my love, thou idol of my soul! come, and take possession of a heart that beats only for thee; live in exile, alleviate my sorrows, rekindle my extinguished hopes, and prevent me from falling into despair. This unfortunate breast shall ever be thy inviolable sanctuary, whence neither the powers of heaven nor earth shall ever expel thee. If I am lost to happiness, I am not to love, which renders me worthy of it; a love irresistible as the charms that gave it birth. Raised on the immoveable foundations of merit and virtue, it can never cease to exist in a mind that is immortal: it needs no future hope for its support, the remembrance of what is past will sustain it for ever.

But how is it with my Eloisa? With her, who was once so sensible of love? Can that sacred flame be extinguished in her pure and susceptible breast? Can she have lost her taste for those celestial raptures, which she alone could feel or inspire?——She drives me from her presence without pity, banishes me with shame, gives me up to despair, and sees not, through the error which misleads her, that, in making me miserable, she robs herself of happiness. Believe me, my Eloisa, you will in vain seek another heart akin to yours. A thousand will doubtless adore you, but mine only is capable of returning your love.

Tell me, tell me, sincerely, thou deceived or deceiving girl! What is become of those projects we formed together in secret? Where are fled those vain hopes, with which you so often flattered my credulous simplicity? What say you now to that sacred union my heart panted after, the secret cause of so many ardent sighs, and with which your lips and your pen have so often indulged my hopes? I presumed alas! on your promises, to aspire to the sacred name of husband, and thought myself already the most fortunate of men. Say, cruel Eloisa, did you not flatter me thus only to render my disappointment the more mortifying, my affliction the more severe? Have I incurred this misfortune by my own crimes? Have I been wanting in obedience, in tractability, in discretion? Have you ever seen me so weak and absurd in my desires, as to deserve to be thus rejected? or have I ever preferred their gratification to your absolute commands? I have done, I have studied, every thing to please you, and yet you renounce me. You undertook to make me happy, and you make me miserable. Ungrateful woman! account with me for the trust I deposited in your hands; account with me for my heart, after having reduced it by a supreme felicity that raised me to an equality with angels. I envied not their lot; I was the happiest of beings; though now alas! I am the most miserable! A single moment has deprived me of every thing, and I am fallen instantaneously from the pinnacle of happiness to the lowest gulph of misery. I touch even yet the felicity that escapes me. I have still hold of, it, and lose it for ever——Ah, could I but believe!——if the remains of false hope did not flatter——Why, why, ye rocks of Meillerie, whose precipices my wandering eye so often measured, why did you not assist my despair! I had then less regretted life, ere enjoyment had taught me its value.

Letter LXVII. Lord B—— to Mrs. Orbe.

Being arrived at Besançon, I take the first opportunity to write you the particulars of our journey; which, if not passed very agreeably, has at least been attended with no ill accident. Your friend is as well in health as can be expected for a man so sick at

heart. He even endeavours to affect outwardly a kind of tranquillity, to which his heart is a stranger; and, being ashamed of his weakness, lays himself under a good deal of restraint before me. This only served, however, to betray the secret agitations of his mind; and though I seemed to be deceived by his behaviour, it was only to leave him to his own thoughts, with the view of opposing one part of his faculties to repress the effects of the other.

He was much dejected during the first day's journey, which I made a short one, as I saw the expedition of our travelling increased his uneasiness. A profound silence was observed on both sides; on my part, the rather, as I am sensible that ill-timed condolence only imbitters violent affliction. Coldness and indifference easily find words, but silent sorrow is in those cases the language of true friendship. I began yesterday to perceive the first sparks of the fury which naturally succeeded. At dinner time we had been scarce a quarter of an hour out of the chaise, before he turned to me, with an air of impatience, and asked me with an ill-natured smile, why we rested a moment so near Eloisa? In the evening he affected to be very talkative, but without saying a word of her, asking the same questions over and over again. He wanted one moment to know if we had reached the French territories, and the next if we should soon arrive at Vevey. The first thing he did at every stage was to sit down to write a letter, which he rumpled up, or tore to pieces, the moment afterwards. I picked up two or three of these blotted fragments, by which you may judge of the situation of his mind. I believe, however, he has by this time written a compleat letter.——The extravagance which these first symptoms of passion threaten is easily foreseen; but I cannot pretend to guess what will be its effect, or how long may be its continuance; these depend on a combination of circumstances, as the character of the man, the degree and nature of his passion, and of a thousand things which no human sagacity can determine. For my part, I can answer for the transports of his rage, but not for the sullenness of his despair; for, do as we will, every man has always his life in his own power. I flatter myself, however, that he will pay a due

regard to his life and my assiduities; though I depend less on the effects of my zeal, which nevertheless shall be exerted to the utmost, than on the nature of his passion, and the character of his mistress. The mind cannot long employ itself in contemplating a beloved object, without contracting a disposition similar to what it admires. The extreme sweetness of Eloisa's temper must therefore have softened the harshness of that passion it inspired; and I doubt not but love, in a man of such lively passions, is always more alive and violent than it would be in others. I have some dependence also upon his heart: it was formed to struggle, and to conquer. A love like his is not so much a weakness, as strength badly exerted. A violent and unhappy passion may smother for a time, perhaps for ever, some of his faculties; but it is itself a proof of their excellence, and of the use that may be made of them to cultivate his understanding. The sublimest wisdom is attained by the same vigour of mind which gives rise to the violent passions; and philosophy must be attained by as fervent a zeal as that which we feel for a mistress.

Be assured, lovely Clara, I interest myself no less than you in the fate of this unfortunate couple; not out of a sentiment of compassion, which might perhaps be only a weakness, but out of a due regard to justice and the fitness of things, which require that every one should be disposed of in a manner the most advantageous to himself and to society. Their amiable minds were doubtless formed by the hands of nature for each other. In a peaceful and happy union, at liberty to exert their talents and display their virtues, they might have enlightened the world with the splendor of their examples. Why should an absurd prejudice then cross the eternal directions of nature, and subvert the harmony of thinking Beings? Why should the vanity of a cruel father thus hide their light under a bushel, and wound those tender and benevolent hearts which were formed to sooth the pangs of others? Are not the ties of marriage the most free, as well as the most sacred of all engagements? Yes, every law to lay a constraint on them is unjust. Every father, who presumes to form, or break them, is a tyrant. This chaste and holy tie of nature is neither subjected to

sovereign power nor paternal authority but to the authority only of that common parent who hath the power over our hearts, and, by commanding their union, can at the same time make them love each other.

To what end are natural conveniences sacrificed to those of opinion? A disagreement in rank and fortune loses itself in marriage, nor doth any equality therein tend to make the marriage state happy; but a disagreement in person and disposition ever remains, and is that which makes it necessarily miserable. [13] A child, that has no rule of conduct but her fond passion, will frequently make a bad choice; but the father, who has no other rule for his than the opinion of the world, will make a worse. A daughter may want knowledge and experience to form a proper judgment of the discretion and conduct of men; a good father ought doubtless in that care to advise her. He has a right, it is even his duty, to say “My child, this is a man of probity, or that man is a knave, this is a man of sense, or that is a fool.” Thus far ought the father to judge, the rest belongs of right to the daughter. The tyrants, who exclaim that such maxims tend to disturb the good order of society, are those who, themselves, disturb it most.

Let men rank according to their merit; and let those hearts be united that are objects of each other’s choice. This is what the good order of society requires; those who would confine it to birth or riches are the real disturbers of that order; and ought to be rendered odious to the public, or punished, as enemies to society.

Justice requires that such abuses should be redressed: it is the duty of every man to set himself in opposition to violence, and to strengthen the bonds of society. You may be assured therefore, that, if it be possible for me to effect the union of these two lovers, in spite of an obstinate father, I shall put in execution the intention of heaven, without troubling myself about the approbation of men.

You, amiable Madam, are happy in having a father, who doth not presume to judge better than yourself of the means of your own happiness. It is not, however, from his

greater sagacity, perhaps, nor from his superior tenderness, that he leaves you thus mistress of your own choice: but what signifies the cause if the effect be the same? Or whether, in the liberty he allows you his indolence supplies the place of his reason? Far from abusing that liberty, the choice you have made, at twenty years of age, must meet with the approbation of the most discreet parent. Your heart, taken up by a friendship without example, had little room for love. You have yet substituted in its place every thing that can supply the want of passion; and, though less a lover than a friend, if you should not happen to prove the fondest wife, you will be certainly the most virtuous; that union, which prudence dictated, will increase with age and end but with life. The impulse of the heart is more blind, but it is more irresistible; and the way to ruin is to lay one's self under the cruel necessity of opposing it. Happy are those whom love unites as prudence dictates, who have no obstacles to surmount, nor difficulties to encounter! Such would be our friends, were it not for the unreasonable prejudice of an obstinate father. And such, notwithstanding, may they be yet, if one of them be well advised. By yours and Eloisa's example, we may be equally convinced that it belongs only to the parties themselves to judge how far they will be reciprocally agreeable. If love be not predominant, prudence only directs the choice, as in your case; if passion prevail, nature has already determined it, as in Eloisa's. So sacred also is the law of nature, that no human being is permitted to transgress it, or can transgress it with impunity; nor can any consideration of rank or fortune abrogate it, without involving mankind in guilt and misfortune.

Though the winter be pretty far advanced and I am obliged to go to Rome, I shall not leave our friend till I have brought him to such a consistency of temper that I may safely trust him with himself. I shall be tender of him, as well on his own account, as because you have entrusted him to my care. If I cannot make him happy, I will endeavour at least to make him prudent; and to prevail on him to bear the evils of humanity like a man. I purpose to spend a fortnight with him here; in which time I

hope to hear from you and Eloisa; and that you will both assist me in binding up the wounds of a broken heart, as yet unaffected by the voice of reason, unless it speak in the language of the passions.

Inclosed is a letter for your friend. I beg you will not trust it to a messenger, but give it her with your own hands.

Fragments, Annexed to the Preceding Letter.

Why was I not permitted to see you before my departure? You were afraid our parting would be fatal! Tender Eloisa! Be comforted——I am well——I am at ease——I live——I think of you——I think of the time when I was dear to you——My heart is a little oppressed——The chaise has made me giddy——My spirits are quite sunk——I cannot write much to-day; tomorrow, perhaps, I shall be able to——or I shall have no more occasion——

Whither do these horses hurry me so fast? Where is this man, who calls himself my friend, going to carry me? Is it from Eloisa? Is it by her order that I am dispatched so precipitately away? Mistaken Eloisa!——How rapidly does the chaise move! Whence come I? Where am I going? Why all this expedition? Are ye afraid, ye persecutors, that I should not fly fast enough to ruin? O friendship! O love! is this your contrivance? Are these your favours?——

Have you consulted your heart in driving me from you so suddenly? Are you capable, tell me Eloisa, are you capable of renouncing me for ever? No, that tender heart still loves me, I know it does——In spite of fortune, in spite of itself, it will love me for ever.——I see it, you have permitted yourself to be persuaded[14]——What lasting repentance are you preparing for yourself!——Alas! it will be too late——how! forget me! I did not know your heart!——Oh consider yourself, consider me, consider——hear me: it is yet time enough——'twas cruel to banish me: I fly from you swifter than the wind.——Say but the word, but one word, and I return quicker than lightening. Say but one word,

and we will be united for ever. We ought to be——We will be——Alas! I complain to the winds——I am going again——I am going to live and die far from Eloisa——Live I did I say? It is impossible.——

Letter LXVIII. Lord B—— to Eloisa.

Your cousin will give you information concerning your friend. I imagine, also, he has written to you himself, by the post. First satisfy your impatience on that head, that you may afterwards peruse this letter with composure; for, I give you previous notice, the subject of it demands your attention. I know mankind; I have lived a long time in a few years, and have acquired experience at my own cost; the progress of the passions having been my road to philosophy. But of all the extraordinary things that have come within the compass of my observation, I never saw any thing equal to you and your lover. It is not that either the one or the other has any peculiar characteristic, whereby you might at first be known and distinguished, and through the want of which yours might well enough be mistaken, by a superficial observer, for minds of a common and ordinary cast. You are eminently distinguished, however, by this very difficulty of distinguishing you, and in that the features of a common model, some one of which is wanting in every individual, are all equally perfect in you. Thus every printed copy that comes from the press has its peculiar defects, which distinguish it from the rest of its kind; and if there should happen to come one quite perfect, however beautiful it might appear at first sight, it must be accurately examined to know its perfection. The first time I saw your lover, I was struck as with something new; my good opinion of him increasing daily in proportion as I found cause. With regard to yourself, it was quite otherwise; and the sentiments you inspired were such as I mistook for those of love. The impression you made on me, however, did not arise so much from a difference of sex, as from a characteristical perfection of which the heart cannot be insensible, though love were out of the question. I can see what you would be, though without your friend; but I

cannot pretend to say what he would prove without you. Many men may resemble him, but there is but one Eloisa in the world. After doing you an injury, which I shall never forgive myself, your letter soon convinced me of the nature of my sentiments concerning you. I found I was not jealous, and consequently not in love. I saw that you were too amiable for me; that you deserved the first fruits of the heart, and that mine was unworthy of you.

From that moment, I took an interest in your mutual happiness, which will never abate; and, imagining it in my power to remove every obstacle to your bliss, I made an indiscreet application to your father; the bad success of which is one motive to animate my zeal in your favour. Indulge me so far as to hear me, and perhaps I may yet repair the mischief I have occasioned. Examine your heart, Eloisa, and see if it be possible for you to extinguish the flame with which it burns. There was a time, perhaps, when you could have stopt its progress; but, if Eloisa fell from a state of innocence, how will she resist after her fall? How will she be able to withstand the power of love triumphing over her weakness, and armed with the dangerous weapons of her past pleasures. Let not your heart impose on itself; but renounce the fallacious presumption that seduces you: you are undone, if you are still to combat with love: you will be debased and vanquished, while a sense of your debasement will by degrees stifle all your virtues. Love has insinuated itself too far into your mind, for you ever to drive it thence. It has eaten its way, has penetrated into its inmost recesses, like a corrosive menstruum, whose impressions you will never be able to efface, without destroying at the same time all that virtuous sensibility you received from the hands of nature: root out love from your mind, and you will have nothing left in it truly estimable. Incapable of changing the condition of your heart, what then remains for you to do? Nothing sure but to render your union legitimate. To this end, I will propose to you the only method that now offers. Make use of it, while it is yet time, and add to innocence and virtue, the exercise of that good sense with which heaven has endowed you.

I have a pretty considerable estate in Yorkshire, which has been long in our family, and was the seat of my ancestors. The mansion-house is old, but in good condition and convenient; the country about is solitary, but pleasant, and variegated. The river Ouse, which runs through the park, presents at once a charming prospect to the view, and affords a commodious transport for all kinds of necessaries. The income of the estate is sufficient for the reputable maintenance of the master, and might be doubled in its value, if under his immediate inspection. Hateful prepossession and blind prejudices harbour not in that delightful country; the peaceful inhabitant of which preserves the ancient manners, whose simplicity presents to you a picture of the Valois, such as it is described by the affecting touches of your lover's pen. This estate, Eloisa, is yours, if you will deign to accept it, and reside there with your friend. There may you see accomplished all those tender wishes with which he concludes the letter I have just hinted at.

Come, amiable and faithful pair! The choicest pattern of true lovers! come, and take possession of a spot, destined for the asylum of love and innocence. Come, and, in the face of God and man, confirm the gentle ties by which you are united. Come, and let your example do honour to a country where your virtues will be revered, and where the people, bred up in innocence and simplicity, will be proud to imitate them. May you enjoy in that peaceful retirement, and with the same sentiments that united you, the happiness of souls truly refined! May your chaste embraces be crowned with offspring resembling yourselves! may you see your days lengthened to an honourable old age, and peacefully end them in the arms of your children and may our posterity, in relating the story of your union, affectingly repeat, Here was the asylum of innocence, this was the refuge of the two lovers.

Your destiny, Eloisa, is in your own power. Weigh maturely the proposal I make to you, and examine only the main point; for, as to the rest, I shall take upon myself to settle every thing with your friend, and make firm and irrevocable the engagement into which I am willing to enter. I shall take charge also for the security of your

departure, and the care of your person, till your arrival. There you may be immediately married without difficulty: for with us a girl that is marriageable has no need of any one's consent to dispose of herself as she pleases. Our laws contradict not those of nature; and although there sometimes result from their agreement some slight inconveniencies, they are nothing compared to those it prevents. I have left at Vevey my Valet-de-chambre, a man of probity and courage, as well as discreet, and of approved fidelity. You may easily concert matters with him, either by word of mouth, or by letter, with the assistance of Regianino, without the latter's knowing any thing of the affair. When every thing is ready, we will set out to meet you, and you shall not quit your father's house but under the conduct and protection of your husband.

I now leave you to think of my proposal: but give me leave to say again, beware of the consequences of prejudice, and those false scruples, which too often, under the pretext of honour, conduct us to vice. I foresee what will happen to you if you reject my offers. The tyranny of an obstinate father will plunge you into an abyss, you will not be aware of till after your fall. Your gentleness of disposition degenerates sometimes into timidity: you will fall a sacrifice to the chimerical distinction of rank; [15] you will be forced into an engagement which your heart will abhor. The world may approve your conduct, but your heart will daily give the lie to public opinion; you will be honoured and yet contemptible in your own opinion. How much better is it to pass your life in obscurity and virtue?

P. S. Being in doubt concerning your resolution, I write to you, unknown to your friend; lest a refusal on your part should ruin at once the expectations I have formed of the good effects my care and advice may have upon his mind.

Letter LXIX. Eloisa to Clara.

Oh, my dear! in what trouble did you leave me last night! and what a night did I pass in reflecting on the contents of that fatal letter! No, never did so powerful a

temptation assail my heart; never did I experience the like agitation of mind; nor was ever more at a loss to compose it. Hitherto reason has darted some ray of light to direct my steps; on every embarrassing occasion I have been able to discern the most virtuous part, and immediately to embrace it. But now, debased and overcome, my resolution does nothing but fluctuate between contending passions: my weak heart has now no other choice than its foibles; and so deplorable is my blindness that, if I even chose for the best, my choice is not directed by virtue, and therefore I feel no less remorse than if I had done ill. You know who my father designs for my husband: you know, also, to whom the indissoluble bond of love has united me: would I be virtuous, filial obedience and plighted vows impose on me contradictory obligations. Shall I follow the inclinations of my heart?——Shall I pay a greater regard to a lover than to a parent? In listening to the voice of either love or nature, I cannot avoid driving the one or the other to despair. In sacrificing myself to my duty, I must either way be guilty of a crime, and which ever party I take, I must die criminal, and unhappy.

Ah, my dear friend! you, who have been my constant and only resource, who have saved me so often from death and despair, O, think of my present horrible state of mind; for never were your kind offices of consolation more necessary. You know I have listened to your advice, that I have followed your counsel: you have seen how far, at the expense of my happiness, I have paid a deference to the voice of friendship. Take pity on me, then, in the trouble you have brought upon me. As you have begun, continue to assist me; sustain my drooping spirits, and think for her who can no longer think for herself, but through you. You can read this heart that loves you, you know it better than I; learn then my difficulties, and chuse in my stead, since I have no longer the power to will, nor the reason to chuse for myself.

Read over the letter of that generous Englishman; read it, my dear, again, and again. Are you not affected by the charming picture he has drawn of that happiness which love, peace, and virtue have yet in store for your friend? How ravishing that union of

souls! What inexpressible delight it affords, even in the midst of remorse. Heavens! how would my heart rejoice in conjugal felicity? And is innocence and happiness yet in my power? May I hope to expire with love and joy, in the embraces of a beloved husband amidst the dear pledges of his tenderness! Shall I hesitate then a moment, and not fly to repair my faults in the arms of him who seduced me to commit them? Why do I delay to become a virtuous and chaste mother of an endearing family?——Oh that my parents could but see me thus raised out of my degeneracy! That they might but see how well I would acquit myself, in my turn, of those sacred duties they have discharged towards me!——And yours! ungrateful, unnatural daughter, (might they not say) who shall discharge yours to them, when you are so ready to forget them? Is it, by plunging a dagger into the heart of your own mother, that you prepare to become a mother yourself? Can she, who dishonours her own family, teach her children to respect theirs? Go, unworthy object of the blind fondness of your doting parents! Abandon them to their grief for having ever given you birth; load their old age with infamy, and bring their grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.——Go, and enjoy, if thou canst, a happiness purchased at such a price.

Good God! what horrors surround me! shall I fly by stealth from my native country, dishonour my family, abandon at once father, mother, friends, relations, and even you, my dear Clara; you my gentle friend, so well beloved of my heart; you, who from our earliest infancy have hardly ever been absent from me a day; shall I leave you, lose you, never see you more?——Ah! no. May never——How wretched, how cruelly afflicted is your unhappy friend! She sees before her variety of evils; and nothing remains to yield her consolation. But my mind wanders——so many conflicts surpass my strength and perplex my reason: I lose at once my fortitude and understanding. I have no hope but in you alone. Advise me; chuse for me; or leave me to perish in perplexity and despair.

Letter LXX. Answer to the Preceding.

There is too just cause, my dear Eloisa, for your perplexity: I foresaw, but could not prevent it: I feel, but cannot remove it: nay, what is still worse in your unhappy situation, there is no one that can extricate you but yourself. Were prudence only required, friendship might possibly relieve your agitated mind; were it only necessary to chuse the good from the evil, mistaken passion might be over-ruled by disinterested advice. But in your case, whatever side you take, nature both authorizes and condemns you; reason, at the same time, commends and blames you; duty is silent or contradicts itself; the consequences are equally to be dreaded on one part or the other: in the mean while you can neither safely chuse nor remain undetermined; you have only evils to take your choice of, and your heart is the only proper judge which of them it can best support. I own, the importance of the deliberation frightens, and extremely afflicts me. Whatever destiny you prefer, it will be still unworthy of you; and, as I can neither point out your duty, nor conduct you in the road to happiness, I have not the courage to decide for you. This is the first refusal you ever met with from your friend; and I feel, by the pain it costs me, that it will be the last: but I should betray your confidence should I take upon me to direct you in an affair, about which prudence itself is silent; and in which your best and only guide is your own inclination.

Blame me not wrongfully, Eloisa, nor condemn me too soon. I know there are friends so circumspect that, not to expose themselves to consequences, they refuse to give their advice on difficult occasions, and by that reserve increase but the danger of those they should serve. Think me not one of those; you will see presently if this heart, sincerely yours, is capable of such timid precautions: permit me therefore, instead of advising you in your affairs, to mention a little of my own.

Have you never observed, my dear, how much every one who knows you is attached to your person?——That a father or mother should be fond of an only daughter, is

not at all surprizing; that an amorous youth should be inflamed by a lovely object is also as little extraordinary; but that, at an age of sedateness and maturity, a man of so cold a disposition as Mr. Wolmar should be so taken with you at first sight; that a whole family should be unanimous to idolize you; that you should be as much the darling of a man so little affectionate as my father, and perhaps more so than any of his own children; that friends, acquaintance, domestics, neighbours, that the inhabitants of a whole town, should unanimously join in admiring and respecting you; this, my dear, is a concurrence of circumstances more extraordinary; and which could not have happened, did you not possess something peculiarly engaging. Do you know, Eloisa, what this something is? It is neither your beauty, your wit, your affability, nor any thing that is understood by the talent of pleasing: but it is that tenderness of heart, that sweetness of disposition, that has no equal; it is the talent of loving others, my dear, that makes you so universally beloved. Every other charm may be withstood, but benevolence is irresistible; and there is no method so sure to obtain the love of others as that of having an affection for them. There are a thousand women more beautiful; many are as agreeable; but you alone possess, with all that is agreeable, that seducing charm, which not only pleases, but affects, and ravishes every heart. It is easily perceived that yours requests only to be accepted, and the delightful sympathy it pants after flies to reward it in turn.

You see, for instance, with surprize, the incredible affection Lord B—— has for your friend; you see his zeal for your happiness; you receive with admiration his generous offers; you attribute them to his virtue only. My dear cousin, you are mistaken. God forbid I should extenuate his Lordship’s beneficence, or undervalue his greatness of soul. But, believe me, his zeal, disinterested as it is, would be less fervent if under the same circumstances he had to do with different people. It is the irresistible ascendant you and your friend have over him that, without his perceiving it, determines his resolution, and makes him do that out of affection, which he imagines proceeds only from motives of generosity. This is what always will be

effected by minds of a certain temper. They transform, in a manner, every other into their own likeness; having a sphere of activity wherein nothing can resist their power. It is impossible to know without imitating them, while from their own sublime elevation they attract all that are about them. It is for this reason, my dear, that neither you nor your friend will perhaps ever know mankind; for you will rather see them such as you model them, than such as they are in themselves. You will lead the way for all those among whom you live; others will either imitate or leave you; and perhaps you will meet with nothing in the world similar to what you have hitherto seen.

Let us come now to myself; to me whom the tie of consanguinity, a similarity of age, and, above all, a perfect conformity of taste, and humour, with a very opposite temperament, have united to you from your infancy.

Congiunti eran gl' alberghi, Ma più congiunti i cori: Conforme era l' etate, Ma l' pensier più conforme.

What think you has been the effect of that captivating influence, which is felt by every one that approaches you, on her who has been intimate with you from her childhood? Can you think there subsists between us, but an ordinary connection? Do not my eyes communicate their sparkling joy in meeting yours? Do you not perceive in my heart the pleasure of partaking your pains, and lamenting with you? Can I forget that, in the first transports of a growing passion, my friendship was never disagreeable; and that the complaints of your lover could never prevail on you to send me from you, or prevent me from being a witness to your weakness? This, my Eloisa, was a critical juncture. I am sensible how great a sacrifice you made to modesty, in making me acquainted with an error I happily escaped. Never should I have been your confident had I been but half your friend: no, our souls felt themselves too intimately united for any thing ever to part them.

What is it that makes the friendships of women, I mean of those who are capable of

love, so lukewarm and short lived? It is the interests of love; it is the empire of beauty; it is the jealousy of conquest. Now, if anything of that kind could have divided us, we should have been already divided. But, were my heart less insensible to love, were I even ignorant that your affections are so deeply rooted as to end but with life; your lover is my friend, my brother; whoever knew the ties of a sincere friendship broken by those of love? As for Mr. Orbe, he may be long enough proud of your good opinion, before it will give me the least uneasiness; nor have I any stronger inclination to keep him by violence, than you have to take him from me. Would to heaven I could cure you of your passion at the expense of his! Though I keep him with pleasure, I should with greater pleasure resign him.

With regard to my person, I may make what pretensions I please to beauty; you will not set yourself in competition with me; for I am sure it will never enter into your head to desire to know which of us is the handsomest. I must confess, I have not been altogether so indifferent on this head; but know how to give place to your superiority, without the least mortification. Methinks I am rather proud than jealous of it; for as the charms of your features are such as would not become mine, I think myself handsome in your beauty, amiable in your graces, and adorned with your talents; thus I pride myself in your perfections, and admire myself the most in you. I shall never chuse, however, to give pain on my own account being sufficiently handsome in myself, for any use I have for beauty. Any thing more is needless; and it requires not much humility to yield the superiority to you.

You are doubtless impatient to know, to what purpose is all this preamble. It is to this. I cannot give you the advice you request, I have given you my reasons for it, but, notwithstanding this, the choice you shall make for yourself will at the same time be that of your friend; for, whatever be your fortune, I am resolved to accompany you and partake of it. If you go, I follow you. If you say, so do I. I have formed a determined and unalterable resolution. It is my duty, nor shall any thing prevent me. My fatal indulgence to your passion has been your ruin: your destiny

ought therefore to be mine; and, as we have been inseparable from our cradles, we ought to be so to the grave.——I foresee you will think this an absurd project; it is, however, at bottom, a more discreet one, perhaps, than you may imagine: I have not the same motives for doubt and irresolution as you have. In the first place, as to my family; if I leave an easy father, I leave an indifferent one, who permits his children to do just as they please, more through neglect than indulgence: for you know he interests himself much more in the affairs of Europe than in his own, and that his daughter is much less the object of his concern than the Pragmatic Sanction. I am besides not like you, an only child, and shall be hardly missed from among those that remain.

It is true, I leave a treaty of marriage just on the point of being brought to a conclusion. Manco-male, my dear, it is the affair of Mr. Orbe, if he loves me, to console himself for the disappointment. For my part, although I esteem his character, I am not without affection for his person, and regret in his loss a very honest man, he is nothing to me in comparison to Eloisa. Tell me, is the soul of any sex? I really cannot perceive in mine. I may have my fancies, but very little of love. A husband might be useful to me; but he would never be any thing to me but a husband; and that a girl who is not ugly, may find every where. But take care, my dear cousin, although I do not hesitate, I do not say that you ought not; nor would I insinuate that you should resolve to do what I am resolved to imitate. There is a wide difference between you and me; and your duty is much severer than mine. You know that an unparalleled affection for you possesses my heart, and almost stifles every other sentiment. From my infancy I have been attached to you by an habitual and irresistible impulse; so that I perfectly love no one else; and if I have some few ties of nature and gratitude to break through, I shall be encouraged to do it by your example. I shall say to myself, I have but imitated Eloisa, and shall think myself justified.

Billet. Eloisa to Clara.

I understand you, my dear Clara, and thank you. For once, at least, I will do my duty; and shall not be totally unworthy of your friendship.

Letter LXXI. Eloisa to Lord B——.

Your lordship's last letter has affected me in the highest degree with admiration and gratitude; nor will my friend, who is honoured with your protection, be less so, when he knows the obligations you would have conferred on us. The unhappy, alas! only know the value of benevolent minds. We had before but too many reasons to acknowledge that of yours, whose heroic virtue will never be forgotten, tho' after this it cannot again surprize us.

How fortunate should I think myself to live under the auspices of so generous a friend, and to reap from your benevolence that happiness which fortune has denied me. But I see, my Lord, I see, with despair, your good designs will be frustrated; my cruel destiny will counteract your friendship; and the delightful prospect of the blessings you offer to my acceptance, serves only to render their loss more sensible. You offer a secure and agreeable retreat to two persecuted lovers; you would render their passion legitimate, their union sacred; and I know that, under your protection, I could easily elude the pursuits of my irritated relations. This would compleat our love, but would it insure our felicity? Ah! no: if you would have Eloisa contented and happy, give her an asylum yet more secure, an asylum from shame and repentance. You anticipate our wants; and by an unparalleled generosity, deprive yourself of your own fortune to bestow it on us. More wealthy, more honoured by your benevolence than my own patrimony, I may recover every thing I have lost, and you will condescend to supply the place of a father. Ah, my Lord, shall I be worthy of another father when I abandon him whom nature gave me?

This is the source of the reproaches my wounded conscience makes me, and of those secret pangs that rend my heart.

I do not inquire whether I have a right to dispose of myself contrary to the will of those who gave me birth; but whether I can do it without involving them in a mortal affliction; whether I can abandon them without bringing them to despair; whether alas! I have a right to take away their life who gave me mine? How long has the virtuous mind taken upon itself thus to balance the rights of consanguinity and laws of nature? Since when has the feeling heart presumed thus nicely to distinguish the bounds of filial gratitude? Is it not a crime to proceed in questioning our duty to its very utmost limits? Will any one so scrupulously enquire into its extent, unless they are tempted to go beyond it? Shall I cruelly abandon those by whom I live and breathe, those who so tenderly preserve the life and being they gave me; those who have no hope, no pleasure, but in me? A father near sixty years of age! A mother weak and languishing? I their only child! Shall I leave them without help in the solitude and troubles of old age; at a time when I should exercise towards them that tender solicitude they have lavished on me? Shall I involve their latter days in shame and sorrow? Will not my troubled conscience incessantly upbraid me, and represent my despairing parents breathing out their last in curses on the ungrateful daughter that forsook and dishonoured them? No, my Lord, virtue, whose paths I have forsaken, may in turn abandon me, and no longer actuate my heart, but this horrible idea will supply its dictates; will follow, will torment me, every hour of my life, and make me miserable, in the midst of happiness. In a word, if I am doomed to be unhappy the rest of my days, I will run the risque of every other remorse; but this is too horrible for me to support. I confess, I cannot invalidate your arguments. I have but too great an inclination to think them just: but my Lord, you are unmarried, don’t you think a man ought to be a father himself to advise the children of others? As to me, I am determined what to do: my parents will make me unhappy, I know they will: but it will be less hard for me to support my own misery than the thought of having been the cause of theirs; for which reason I will never forsake my father’s house. Be gone then, ye sweet and flattering illusions! Ideas of so desirable a

felicity! Go, vanish like a dream; for such I will ever think ye. And you, too generous friend, lay aside your agreeable designs, and let their remembrance only remain in the bottom of a heart, too grateful ever to forget them. If our misfortunes, however, are not too great to discourage your noble mind; if your generosity is not totally exhausted, there is yet a way to exercise it with reputation, and he whom you honour under the name of friend may under your care be deserving of it. Judge not of him by the situation in which you now see him; his extravagance is not the effect of pusillanimity, but of an ambitious and susceptible disposition, making head against adversity. There is often more insensibility than fortitude in apparent moderation: common men know nothing of violent sorrow, nor do great passions ever break out in weak minds. He possesses all that energy of sentiment which is the characteristic of a noble soul; and which is alas! the cause of my present despair. Your Lordship may indeed believe me, had he been only a common person, Eloisa, had not been undone.

No, my Lord, that secret prepossession in his favour, which was followed by your manifest esteem, did not deceive you. He is worthy of all you did for him before you were acquainted with his merit; and you will do more for him, if possible, as you know him better. Yes, be your Lordship his comforter, his patron, his friend, his father; it is both for your own sake and his I conjure you to this; he will justify your confidence, he will honour your benefactions, he will practise your precepts, he will imitate your virtues, and will learn your wisdom. Ah! my Lord! if he should become, in your hands, what he is capable of being, you will have reason to be proud of your charge.——

Letter LXXII. From Eloisa.

And do you too, my dear friend! my only hope! do you come to wound afresh my heart, oppressed already with a load of sorrow! I was prepared to bear the shocks of adversity; long has my foreboding heart announced their coming; and I should have

supported them with patience: but you, for whom I suffer! insupportable! I am struck with horror to see my sorrows aggravated by one who ought to alleviate them. What tender consolations did not I promise myself to receive from you? But all are vanished with your fortitude! How often have I not flattered myself that your magnanimity would strengthen my weakness; that your deserts would efface my error; and your elevated virtues raise up my debased mind! How many times have I not dried up my tears, saying to myself, I suffer for him, it is true, but he is worthy; I am culpable, but he is virtuous; I have a thousand troubles, but his constancy supports me; in his love I find a recompense for all my cares. Vain imagination! on the first trial thou hast deceived me! Where is now that sublime passion which could elevate your sentiments, and display your virtues? What is become of these high-boasted maxims? Your imitation of great examples? Where is that philosopher whom adversity could not shake, yet falls before the first accident that parts him from his mistress? How shall I hereafter excuse my ill conduct to myself, when in him that reduced me, I see a man without courage, effeminate, one whose weak mind sinks under the first reverse of fortune, and absurdly renounces his reason the moment he has occasion to make use of it? Good God! that in my present state of humiliation I should be reduced to blush for my choice, as much as for my weakness.

Reflect a little——think how far you forget yourself; can your wandering and impatient mind stoop so low as to be guilty of cruelty? Do you presume to reproach me? Do you complain of me?——complain of Eloisa? Barbarous man!——How comes it that remorse did not hold your hand? Why did not the most endearing proofs of the tenderest passion that ever existed, deprive you of the power to insult me? How despicable must be your heart, if it can doubt of the fidelity of mine!——But no, you do not, you cannot doubt it, I defy your utmost impatience to do this; nay even at this instant, while I express my abhorrence of your injustice, you must see, too plainly, the cause of the first emotion of anger I ever felt in my life.

Was it you that asked me whether I had not ruined myself by my inconsiderate confidence, and if my designs had not succeeded? How would you not blush for such cruel insinuations, if you knew the fond hopes that reduced me, if you knew the projects I had formed for our mutual happiness, and how they are now vanished with all my comforts. I dare flatter myself still, you will one day know better, and your remorse amply revenge your reproaches. You know my father's prohibition; you are not ignorant of the public talk; I foresaw the consequences, I had them represented to you by my cousin: you were as sensible of them as we, and for our mutual preservation it was necessary to submit to a separation.

I therefore drove you away, as you injuriously term it. But for whose sake was I induced to this? Have you no delicacy? Ungrateful man! It was for the sake of an heart insensible of its own worth, and that would rather die a thousand deaths than see me rendered infamous. Tell me, what would become of you if I were given up to shame? Do you think you could support my dishonour? Come, cruel as you are, if you think so; come, and receive the sacrifice of my reputation with the same fortitude as I will offer it up. Come back, nor fear to be disclaimed by her to whom you were always dear. I am ready to declare, in the face of heaven and earth, the engagements of our mutual passion; I am ready boldly to declare you my lover, and to expire in your arms with affection and shame. I had rather the whole world should know my tenderness than that you should one moment doubt it: the shafts of ignominy wound not so deep as your reproaches.

I conjure you, let us for ever put an end to these reciprocal complaints; they are to me intolerable. Good heavens! how can those who love each other, delight in quarreling; and lose, in tormenting each other, those moments in which they stand in need of mutual consolation? No, my friend, what end does it serve to effect a disagreement, which does not subsist? Let us complain of fortune, but not of love. Never did it form a more perfect, a more lasting, union; our souls are too intimately blended ever to be separated; nor can we live a-part from each other, but as two

parts of one being. How is it then, that you only feel your own griefs? Why do you not sympathize with those of your friend? Why do you not perceive in your breast the heart-felt sighs of hers? Alas! they are more affecting than your impassioned ravings! If you partook of my sufferings, you would even more severely feel them than your own.

You say your situation is deplorable! Think of Eloisa's, and lament only for her. Consider, in our common misfortune, the different state of your sex and mine, and judge which is most deplorable. Affected by violent passions, to pretend to be insensible; a prey to a thousand griefs, to be obliged to appear chearful and content; to have a serene countenance with an agitated mind; to speak always contrary to one's thoughts; to disguise all we feel; to be deceitful through obligation, and to speak untruth through modesty; such is the habitual situation of every young woman of my age. Thus we pass the prime of our youth under the tyranny of decorum, which is at length aggravated by that of our parents, in forcing us into an unsuitable marriage. In vain, however, would men lay a restraint on the inclinations; the heart gives law to itself; it eludes the shackles of slavery, and bestows itself at its own pleasure.

Clogged with a yoke of iron, which heaven does not impose on us, they unite the body without the soul; the person and the inclinations are separately engaged, and an unhappy victim is forced into guilt, by obliging her to enter into a sacred engagement, which she wants, in one respect or other, an essential power to fulfill. Are there not some young women more discreet? Alas! I know there are. There are those that have never loved? Peace be with them! They have withstood that fatal passion! I would also have resisted it. They are more virtuous! Do they love virtue better than I? Had it not been for you, for you alone, I had ever loved it. Is it then true that I love virtue no longer?——Is it you that have ruined me, and is it I who must console you? But what will become of me? The consolation of friendship is weak where that of love is wanting! Who then can give me comfort in my affliction?

With what a dreadful situation am I threatened? I who, for having committed a crime, see myself ready to be plunged into a new scene of guilt, by entering into an abhorred, and perhaps inevitable, marriage! Where shall I find tears sufficient to mourn my guilt and lament my lover, if I yield? On the other hand, how shall I find resolution, in my present depression of mind, to resist? Methinks, I see already the fury of an incensed father! I feel myself already moved by the cries of nature, I feel my heart-strings torn by the pangs of love. Deprived of thee, I am without resource, without support, without hope; the past is disgraceful, the present afflicting, and the future terrible. I thought I had done every thing for our happiness, but we are only made more miserable, by preparing the way for a more cruel separation. Our fleeting pleasure is past, while the remorse it occasioned remains, and the shame which overwhelms me is without alleviation.

It belongs to me, to me alone, to be weak and miserable. Let me then weep and suffer; my tears are as inexhaustible as my fault is irreparable, while time, that sovereign cure for almost every thing, brings to me only new motives for tears: but you, who have no violence to fear, who are unmortified by shame, whom nothing constrains to disguise your sentiments; you, who have only just tasted misfortune and possess at least your former virtues unblemished; how dare you demean yourself so far as to sigh and sob like a woman, or betray your impatience like a madman? Have not I merited contempt enough on your account, without your increasing it, by making yourself contemptible; without overwhelming me at once with my own infamy and yours? Recall then your resolution; learn to bear your misfortunes, and be like a man: be yet, if I dare to say so, the lover of Eloisa. If I am no longer worthy to animate your courage, remember at least, what I once was. Deserve then, what for your sake, I have ceased to be; and though you have dishonoured me once, do not dishonour me again. No, my best friend, it is not you that I discover in that effeminate letter, which I would forget for ever, and which I look upon already as disowned by you. I hope, debased and confused as I am, I dare hope, the

remembrance of me does not inspire sentiments so base; but that I am more respected by a heart it was in my power to inflame, and that I shall not have additional cause to reproach myself in your weakness.

Happy in your misfortune, you have met with the most valuable recompense that was ever known to a susceptible mind. Heaven, in your adversity, has given you a friend; and has made it doubtful whether what it has bestowed is not a greater blessing than that which it has deprived you of. Love and respect that too generous man; who, at the expense of his own ease, condescends to interest himself in your peace and preservation. How would you be affected, if you knew every thing he would have done for you! But what signifies exciting your gratitude to aggravate your affliction? You have no need to be informed how much he loves you, to know his worth; and you cannot respect him as he deserves without loving him as you ought.

Letter LXXIII. From Clara.

Your passion prevails over your delicacy, and you know better how to suffer than to make a merit of your sufferings. You would otherwise never have written in a strain of reproach to Eloisa, in her present situation. Because you are uneasy, truly, you must aggravate her uneasiness, which is greater than yours. I have told you a thousand times that I never saw so grumbling a lover as you; always ready to dispute about nothing; love is to you a state of warfare: or, if sometimes you are a little tractable, it is only that you may have an opportunity to complain of having been so. How disagreeable must be such lovers, and how happy do I think myself in never having had any but such as I could dismiss when I pleased, without a tear being shed on either side!

You must change your tone, believe me, if you would have Eloisa survive her present distress: it is too much for her to support her own grief and your displeasure. Learn for once to sooth her too susceptible heart: you owe her the most tender

consolation; and ought to be afraid lest you should aggravate your misfortune, by lamenting it. At least, if you must complain, vent your complaints against me; who am the only cause of your separation. Yes, my friend, you guessed right: I suggested to her the part her honour and security required her to take; or rather I obliged her to take it, by exaggerating her danger: I prevailed also on you to depart, and we all have but done our duty. I did more, however, than this. I prevented her from accepting the offers of Lord B——; I have prevented your being happy; but the happiness of Eloisa is dearer to me than yours; I knew she could not be happy after leaving her parents to shame and despair; and I can hardly comprehend, with regard to yourself, what kind of happiness you can taste at the expense of hers. Be that what it will, such has been my conduct and offence; and since you delight in quarrelling with those you love, you see the occasion you have to begin with me alone: if in this you do not cease to be ungrateful, you will at least cease to be unjust. For my part, in whatever manner you behave to me, I shall always behave the same towards you: so long as Eloisa loves you, you will be dear to me, and more I cannot say. I am not sorry that I never opposed or favoured your passion. The disinterested friendship which always actuated me in that affair, justifies me equally in what I have done for and against you; and if at any time I interested myself in your passion, more perhaps than became me, my heart sufficiently excused me. I shall never blush for the services I was able to do my friend, nor shall reproach myself because they were useless. I have not forgot what you formerly taught me, of the fortitude of the wise man under misfortunes; and fancy I could remind you of several maxims to that purpose: but I have learned, by the example of Eloisa, that a girl of my age is, to a philosopher, a bad preceptor, and a dangerous pupil.

Volume II

Letter LXXIV. From Lord B—— To Eloisa.

Now, charming Eloisa, we gain our point: a lucky mistake of our friend hath brought him to reason. The shame of finding himself a moment in the wrong has dissipated his phrenzy, and rendered him so tractable that we may manage him for the future as we please. It is with pleasure I see the fault with which he reproaches himself, attended rather with contrition than anger; and I know how highly he esteems me, from that humility and confusion he seems to feel when I am present; but without affection or constraint. His sensibility of the injury he has done me disarms my resentment. When the offender thus acknowledges his crime, he reaps more honour by such a reparation of his fault, than the offended in bestowing him a pardon. I have taken the advantage of this change, and the effect it has produced, to enter into some necessary measures with him before my departure, which I now cannot defer much longer. As I purpose to return the approaching summer, we have agreed that he shall go to wait for me at Paris, from whence we shall proceed together to England.

London is the most extensive theatre in the world for the display of great talents. [16] Those of our friend are in many respects of the first rank; and I despair not of seeing him, with some little assistance, soon strike out something in his way to fortune, worthy of his merit. I will be more explicit as to my intentions when I see you; in the mean time, you will readily conceive the importance of his success may encourage him to surmount many difficulties, and that there are various modes of distinction which may compensate for inferiority of birth, even in the opinion of your father. This appears to me the only expedient that remains to be tried, in order to effect your mutual happiness, since prejudice and fortune have deprived you of all others.

I have written for Regianino to come post hither, and to remain with me during the eight or ten days I shall yet stay with our friend. He is too deeply afflicted to admit of much conversation: music will serve to fill up the vacant hours of silence, indulge his reveries, and sooth his grief by degrees into a peaceful melancholy. I wait only to

see him in such a temper of mind to leave him to himself; and before that, I dare not trust him. As for Regianino, I will leave him with you as I pass by, and shall not take him from you again till I return from Italy; by which time, I imagine, from the progress you have both already made, his assistance will be unnecessary. Just at present he is certainly useless to Eloisa, and I deprive her of nothing by detaining him here for a few days.

Letter LXXV. To Clara.

Ah, why do I live to open my eyes on my own unworthiness! O that I had for ever closed them, rather than thus to look on the disgrace into which I am fallen; rather than to find myself the most abject, after having been the most fortunate of men! generous and amiable friend, to whose care I have been so often obliged, still let me pour my complaints into your compassionate heart; still let me implore your assistance, sensible and ashamed as I am of my own demerits: abandoned by myself, it is to you I fly for consolation. Heavens! how can it be that a man so contemptible should ever be beloved by her; or that a passion for so divine an object should not have refined my soul: let her now blush at her choice, she whose name I am no longer worthy to repeat. Let her sigh to see her image profan’d by dwelling in a heart so abject and mean. What hatred and disdain doth she not owe a wretch, that, inspired by love, could be yet servile and base! you shall know, my charming [17] cousin, the cause of my disgrace: you shall know my crime and penitence. Be you my judge, and let me perish by your sentence; or be my advocate, and let the adorable object on whom depended the past, conduct my future fortune.

I will say nothing of the effect which so unexpected a separation had on me: I will say nothing of the excess of my grief, or the extravagance of my despair; you will judge of them too well from the unaccountable behaviour into which they betrayed me. The more sensible I grew of the misery of my situation, the less I conceived it possible for me voluntarily to give up Eloisa; and the bitterness of this reflection,

joined to the amazing generosity of Lord B——, awaked suspicions, on which I shall never reflect without horror, and which I can never forget without ingratitude to the friend whose generosity could forgive them.

Revolving in my phrenzy the several circumstances attending my departure, I imagined I discovered it to be a premeditated scheme, which I rashly attributed to the most virtuous of mortals. That dreadful suspicion no sooner suggested itself than every circumstance appeared to confirm it. My lord's conversation with the Baron D'Etange, and his peremptory manner, which I took to be affected, the quarrel which ensued. Eloisa's being forbid to see me, and their resolution to send me away, the diligence and secrecy of the preparations made for my departure, his lordship's discourse with me the preceding evening; in short, the rapidity with which I was rather forced than conducted hither: all these circumstances seemed to prove that my lord had formed a scheme to separate me from Eloisa; and lastly, his intended return assured me that I had discovered his designs. I resolved, however, to get more particular information before I broke with him; and with this design set myself to examine the matter with attention. But every thing conspired to increase my ridiculous suspicions; all his generous and humane actions in my favour, were converted by my jealousy into so many instances of his perfidy. I knew that he wrote to Eloisa from Besançon, without communicating to me the contents of his letter, or giving me the least hint. I thought myself therefore sufficiently assured of the truth of what I suspected, and waited only for his receiving answer to his letter, which, I hoped, might be disagreeable, to come to the explanation I meditated.

Last night we returned home pretty late, and I knew he had received a packet from Switzerland, of which however he took no notice when we retired. I let him have time to open it, and heard him from my apartment reading in a low voice; I listened attentively and overheard him thus exclaim to himself, in broken sentences, Alas, Eloisa! I strove to render you happy——honoured your virtues,——but I grieve at your delusion.——At these and other similar exclamations, which I distinctly heard,

I was no longer master of myself; I snatched up my sword, and taking it under my arm, forced open the door, and rushed like a madman into his chamber; but I will not soil my paper, nor offend your delicacy with the injurious expressions my rage dictated, to urge him to fight me on the spot.

Here, my dear cousin, I must confess to have seen the most extraordinary instance of the influence of true wisdom, even over the most susceptible mind, when we listen to her dictates. At first he could not comprehend whence arose my disorder, and took it for a real delirium. But the perfidy of which I accused him, the secret designs with which I reproached him, Eloisa's letter which he held in his hand, and which I incessantly mentioned, at length discovered the cause of my anger. He smiled, and said to me coldly, you are certainly out of your senses; do you think me so void of discretion as to fight with a madman? open your eyes, inconsiderate man, he said, with a milder tone, is it me that you accuse of betraying you? Something, I know not what, in his voice and manner of speaking, struck me immediately with a sense of his innocence and my own folly. His reproof sunk into my heart, and I had no sooner met his looks than my suspicions vanished, and I began to think with horror on the extravagance I had committed. He perceived immediately this change of sentiment, and taking me by the hand, 'tis well, says he, but if you had not recollected yourself before my justification, I would never have seen you more. As it is, and you have recovered your reason, read that letter, and know for once your friends. I would now have been excused from reading it, but the ascendant, which so many advantages had given him over me, made him insist on it with an air of authority; and, though my suspicions were vanished, I secretly wished to see it.

Think what a situation I was in, on reading a letter that informed me of the unparalleled obligations I was under, to a man I had so unworthily treated. I threw myself immediately at his feet, struck with admiration, affliction and shame: I embraced his knees with the utmost humiliation and concern, but could not utter a word. He received my penitence in the same manner as he did the outrage I had

committed; and exacted no other recompense for the pardon he granted, than my promise that I would never more oppose his designs to serve me. Yes, he shall act for the future as he pleases: his sublime generosity is more than human, and it is as impossible to refuse his favours as it is to withstand the benevolence of the deity.

He gave afterwards two letters out of the packet, addressed to me, and which he would not deliver before he had read his own, that he might be made acquainted with the resolution of your cousin. In perusing them I found what a mistress and friend heaven had bestowed on me: I saw how it had connected me with the most perfect patterns of generosity and virtue, to render my remorse the more keen, and meanness contemptible. Say, who is that matchless fair, whose beauty is her least perfection; who, like the divinity, makes herself equally adored for the dispensation of good and evil. It is Eloisa; she has undone me; yet cruel as she is, I love and admire her but the more. The more unhappy she makes me, the more perfect she appears; and every pain she gives, is a new instance of her perfection. The sacrifice she has made to nature both afflicts and charms me; it enhances even the value of that which she made to love. No, my Eloisa can make no refusal that is not of equal value to what she bestows. And you, my charming, my truly deserving cousin, the only perfect model of friendship your sex can boast, an instance which minds, not formed like yours, will never believe real: tell not me of philosophy, I despise its vain parade of idle terms; I despise that phantom of wisdom which teaches us to brave the passions at a distance, but flies, and leaves us a prey to them the moment they approach. Abandon me not, Clara, to a distracted mind; withdraw not your wonted kindness from a wretch, who, though he deserves it no longer, desires it more ardently, and stands more in need of it, than ever. Assist me to recover my former self, and let your gentle counsel supply the dictates of reason to my afflicted heart.

I will yet hope I am not fallen into irretrievable disgrace. I feel that pure and sacred flame I once cherished, rekindle within me. The sublime examples before me shall

not be given in vain. The virtues which I love and admire I will imitate. Yes, divine Eloisa! I will yet do honour to thy choice; and, you, my friends, whose esteem I am determined to regain, my awakened soul shall gather new strength and life from yours. Chaste love and sacred friendship shall restore that constancy of mind, of which a cowardly despair had deprived me; the pure sensations of my heart shall supply the place of wisdom: you shall make me every thing I ought to be, and I will compel you to forget my fall, in consideration of my endeavours to rise. I know not, neither do I desire to know, the future lot which providence assigns me; be it what it will, I will render myself worthy of that which I have already enjoyed. The image of Eloisa, never to be erazed from my mind, shall be my shield, and render my soul invulnerable. I have lived long enough for my own happiness, I will now live to her honour. Oh, that I could but live so supremely virtuous, that the admiring world should say, how could he do less who was loved by Eloisa?

P. S. From ties abhorred and perhaps inevitable! what is the meaning of those words? they are in Eloisa's letter. Clara, I am attentive to every, the minutest circumstance; I am resigned to fortune: but those words,——whatever may happen, I will never leave this place till I have an explanation of those words.

Letter LXXVI. From Eloisa.

Can it be that my soul has not excluded all delight, and that a sense of joy yet penetrates my heart? alas! I conceived it insensible to any thing but sorrow: I thought I should do nothing but suffer, when you left me, and that absence had no consolations; your letter to my cousin has undeceived me; I have read and bath'd it with tears of compassion. It has shed a sweet refreshing dew o'er a drooping heart, dried up with vexation and sorrow. The peaceful serenity it has caused in my soul convinces me of the ascendant you hold, whether present or absent, over the affections of Eloisa. Oh! my friend, how much it delights me to see you recover that strength of mind which becomes the resolution of a man. I esteem you for it the

more, and despise myself the less, in that the dignity of a chaste affection is not totally debased between us, and that our hearts are not both at once corrupted. I will say more, as we can at present speak freely of our affairs. That which most aggravated my despair, was to see that yours deprived us of the only resource which was left us, the exertion of your abilities, to improve them. You now know the worth of the friendship with which heaven has blessed you, in that of my Lord B——, whose generosity merits the services of your whole life, nor can you ever sufficiently atone for the offence you have committed. I hope you will need no other warning to make you guard for the future against your impetuous passions. It is under the protection of this honourable friend that you are going to enter on the stage of the world; it is under the sanction of his credit, under the guidance of his experience, that you go to revenge the cause of injured merit, on the cruelty of fortune.

Do that for his sake which you did not for your own. Endeavour at least to respect his goodness, by not rendering it useless to yourself. Behold a pleasing prospect still before you: contemplate the success you have reason to hope for in entering the lists where every thing conspires to ensure the victory. Heaven has been lavish to you of its bounties; your natural genius, cultivated by taste, has endowed you with every necessary and agreeable qualification; at least, at four-and-twenty you possess all the charms of youth, matured by the reflections of age.

Frutto simile in su’l gioveriel fiore.

Study has not impaired your vivacity, nor injured your person; insipid gallantry has not contracted your genius, nor formality your understanding: but love inspiring those sublime sentiments which are its genuine offspring, has given you that elevation of mind and justness of conception from which it is inseparable. [18] I have seen thy mind expanded by its gentle warmth, display its brilliant faculties, as a flower that unfolds itself to the rays of the sun; you possess at once every talent that

leads to fortune, and should set you above it: you need only aspire to be considerable, to become so; and I hope that object for whose take you should covet distinction, will excite in you a greater zeal for those marks of the world's esteem, than of themselves they may deserve.

You are going, my friend, far from me——my best beloved is going to fly from his Eloisa.——It must be so,——it is necessary that we should part at present, if we ever mean to be happy; on the success of your undertakings also depends our last hope of such an event——Oh, may the anticipation of it animate and comfort you throughout our cruel, perhaps long separation! may it inspire you with that zeal, which surmounts every obstacle. The world and its affairs will indeed continually engage your attention, and relieve you from the pangs of absence. But I, alas! remain alone, abandoned to my own thoughts, or subject to the persecution of others, that will oblige me incessantly to lament thy absence. Happy, however, shall I be, in some measure, if groundless alarms do not aggravate my real afflictions, and if the evils I actually suffer be not augmented by those to which you may be exposed——I shudder at the thoughts of the various dangers to which your life and your innocence will be liable. I place in you all the confidence a man can expect; but, since it is our lot to live asunder, O, my friend, I could wish you were something more than man. Will you not stand in need of frequent advice to regulate your conduct in a world, to which you are so much a stranger? It does not belong to me, young and unexperienced, and even less qualified by reflection and study than yourself, to advise you here. That difficult task I leave to Lord B——. I will content myself to recommend to you two things, as these depend more on sentiment than experience; and, tho' I know but little of the world, I flatter myself I am not to be instructed in the knowledge of your heart: Be virtuous, and remember Eloisa.

I will not make use of any of those subtle arguments you have taught me to despise; and which, though they fill so many volumes, never yet made one man virtuous. Peace to those gloomy reasoners! to what ravishing delights their hearts are

strangers! leave, my friend, those idle moralists, and consult your own breast. It is there you will always find a spark of that sacred fire, which hath so often inflamed us with love for the sublimest virtue. It is there you will trace the lasting image of true beauty, the contemplation of which inspires us with a sacred enthusiasm; an image which the passions may continually defile, but never can efface. [19] Remember those tears of pleasure, those palpitations of heart, those transports which raised us above ourselves at the recital of heroic examples, which have done honour to human nature. Would you know which is most truly desirable, riches or virtue? reflect on that which the heart prefers in its unprejudiced moments: think on that which interests us most in the perusal of history. Did you never covet the riches of Croesus, the honours of Caesar, nor the pleasures of Heliogabalus? If they were happy, why did you not wish to be placed in the same situation? But they were not, you were sensible they were not, happy; you were sensible they were vile and contemptible; and that bad men, however fortunate, are not objects of envy.

What characters did you then contemplate with the greatest pleasure? what examples did you most admire? which did you desire most to imitate? inexpressible are the charms of ever-blooming virtue: it was the condemn’d Athenian, drinking hemlock; it was Brutus, dying for his country: it was Regulus, in the midst of tortures: it was Cato, plunging his dagger in his breast. These were the unfortunate heroes, whose virtues excited your envy, while your own sensations bore witness of that real felicity they enjoyed, under their apparent misfortunes. Think not this sentiment peculiar to yourself; it is the sentiment of all mankind, and that frequently in spite of themselves. That divine image of virtue, imprinted universally on the mind, displays irresistible charms even to the least virtuous. No sooner doth passion permit us to contemplate its beauty, but we wish to resemble it; and, if the most wicked of mankind could but change his being, he would chuse to be virtuous.

Excuse this rhapsody, my dear friend, you know it is originally derived from you, and it is due to the passion that inspired it. I do not take upon me to instruct you, by

repeating your own maxims, but endeavour to enforce their application to yourself. Now is the time to put in practice your own precepts, and to shew how well you can act what you so well know to teach. Though it is not expected you should be put to the trials of a Cato, or a Regulus, yet every man ought to cherish a love for his country, resolution and integrity, and to keep his promise inviolable, even at the expense of his life. Private virtues are often the more sublime as they less aspire to public approbation, but have their end in the testimony of a good conscience, which gives the virtuous a more solid satisfaction, than the loudest applauses of the multitude. Hence you may see true greatness is confirmed to no one station of life, and that no man can be happy who is not the object of his own esteem; for, if the height of self-enjoyment consists in the contemplation of the truly beautiful, how can the vicious man admire the beauty of virtue in others, and not be forced to despise himself. I am not apprehensive of your being corrupted by sensual pleasures; a heart so refined as yours will be in little danger from the gross seductions of appetite. But there are others more dangerous and sentimental. I dread the effects of the maxims and lessons of the world; I dread the force of vicious examples, so constantly present, and so generally extensive: I dread those subtle sophisms by which vice is excused and defended: I dread, in short, lest your heart should impose upon itself, and render you less difficult about the means of acquiring importance than you would be, if our union were not to be the consequence. I only caution you, my friend, against the danger; your own discretion must do the rest: a foresight of accidental evils, however, is no small step towards their prevention. I will add but one reflection more, which, in my opinion, disproves the false arguments of vice, exposes the mistaken conceits of folly, and ought alone to direct a wise man to pursue his sovereign good. This is, that the source of true happiness is not confined to the desired object, nor to the heart which possesses it, but consists in a certain relation between the one and the other: that every object of our desires will not produce the happiness sought in its possession, nor is the heart at all times in a

disposition to receive it. If the utmost refinement of intellectual pleasure is not sufficient alone to constitute our felicity, surely all the voluptuous pleasures on earth cannot make the depraved man happy. There is on both sides a necessary preparative, a certain combination of causes, from which results that delightful sensation so earnestly sought after by every sensible being, and for ever unexperienced by the pretended philosopher, who coldly nips his pleasures in the bud, for want of knowing how to conduct them to lasting felicity. What helps it, then, to obtain one advantage at the expense of another? to gain without what we lose from within; to procure the means of happiness, and lose the art of employing them. Is it not better also, if we can but enjoy one of these advantages, to sacrifice what the power of fortune may restore, to that which once lost can never be recovered? none should know better than I, who have imbittered all the sweets of my life, by thinking to increase them. Let the vicious and profligate then, who display their good fortune but keep their hearts a secret, let them advance what they will; be assured that if there be one instance of happiness upon earth it must be found in the breast of the virtuous. Heaven hath bestowed on you an happy inclination for what is virtuous and good: listen then only to your own desires, follow only your own inclinations, and think above all on the growth of our infant affections. So long as the remembrance of those delightful moments of innocence shall remain, it will be impossible that you should cease to love that which rendered them so endearing; it will be impossible the charms of moral excellence should ever be effaced from your mind, or that you should wish to obtain Eloisa by means unworthy of yourself. Can anyone enjoy a pleasure for which he has lost the taste? no, to be able to possess that which one loves, it is necessary the heart that loved it should be still the same.

I come now to my second point: you see I have not forgot my logic; it is possible, my friend, without love to have the sublime sentiments of a great mind; but a love like ours supplies its flame, which being once extinguished, the soul becomes

languid; and a heart once exhausted is good for nothing. Tell me, what should we be if we ceased to love? is it not better to lose our existence than our sensibility? or could you resolve to endure the life of an ordinary being, after having tasted every delight that can ravish the heart of man? you are going to visit populous cities, where your age and figure, rather than your merit, will lay a thousand snares for your fidelity. Insinuating coquetry will affect the language of tenderness, and please without deceiving you. You will not seek love, but enjoyment; you will taste it without love, and not know it for the same pleasure. I know not whether you will find in another the heart of Eloisa; but of this I am certain, you will never experience with another those ecstasies you have tasted with her. The vacancy of your exhausted mind will forebode the destiny I predict. Sadness and care will overwhelm you in the midst of frivolous amusements. The remembrance of our first transports will pursue you in spite of yourself; my image, an hundred times more beautiful than I ever was, will overtake you. In a moment the veil of disgust will be thrown over all your delights, and a thousand bitter reflections rush into your mind. My best beloved, my amiable friend, Oh, should you ever forget me——Alas! I can but die; but you, you, shall live base and unhappy, and my death will be but too severely revenged.

Forget not then that Eloisa, who lived for you, and whose heart can never be another’s. I can say nothing more regarding that dependence in which Providence hath placed me: but, after having recommended fidelity to you, it is but just to give you the only pledge of mine that is in my power. I have consulted, not my duty, my distracted mind knows that no longer, but I have examined my heart, the last guide of those who can follow no other; and behold the result of its examination: I am determined never to be your wife without the consent of my father, but I will never marry another without your consent; of this I give you my word, which, whatever happens, I will keep sacred, nor is there a power on earth can make me break my promise. Be not, therefore, disquieted at what may befall me in your absence. Go,

my dear friend, pursue, under the auspices of the most tender love, a destiny worthy to crown your merit: mine is in your hands, as much as it is in my power to commit it, and never shall it be altered but with your consent.

Letter LXXVII. To Eloisa.

O qual fiamma di gloria d'onore, Scorrer sento per tutte le sene, Alma grande parlando conto!

O Eloisa, let me breathe a moment,——you make me shudder, my blood boils, my heart pants; your letter glows with that sacred love of virtue that fires your breast, and communicates its celestial flame to the inmost recesses of mine. But why so many exhortations, where you should have laid on me your commands? do you think I can so far forget myself as to want arguments to excite me to act justly? at least, can I want to have them urged by you, whose injunctions alone I should fly to obey. Can you be ignorant that I ever will be what you please to have me? and that I could even act unjustly before I could disobey you? yes, I could set another capitol in flames if you enjoined me, for nothing can be so dear to me as you are. But, do you know, my incomparable Eloisa, why you are thus dear? it is because you can desire nothing but what is virtuous, and that my admiration of your virtues exceeds even the love inspired by your charms. I go, encouraged by the engagement into which you have entered, the latter part of which, however, you might have omitted; for to promise not to be another's without my consent, is it not to promise to be none but mine? for my own part, I speak more freely, and pledge with you the faith of a man of honour, ever to remain sacred and inviolable: I am ignorant to what destiny fortune will lead me in the career I am going, for your satisfaction, to enter upon; but never shall the ties of love or marriage unite me to any other than Eloisa D'Etange. I live, I exist, but for her, and shall either die married to her, or not married at all. Adieu! I am pressed for time, and am going to depart this instant.

Letter LXXVIII. To Eloisa.

I arrived last night at Paris, and he, who once could not live two streets length removed from you, is now at the distance of more than an hundred leagues. Pity, Eloisa, pity your unhappy friend: had the blood gushing from my veins, dy'd with its streams, my long, long route, my spirits could not have failed me more; I could not have found myself more languid than at present. O that I knew as well when we shall meet again, as I know the distance that divides us! the progress of time should then compensate for the length of space. I would count every day, every hour of my life, my steps, towards Eloisa. But that dismal career is hid in the gloom of futurity; its bounds are concealed from my feeble sight. How painful, how terrible is suspense! my restless heart is ever seeking, but finds you not. The sun rises, but gives me no hopes of seeing you; it sets without granting me that blessing. My days are void of pleasure, and pass away as one long continued night. In vain I endeavour to rekindle my extinguished hopes, they offer me nothing but uncertainty and groundless consolations. Alas, my gentle friend! what evils have I not to expect if they are to be a counterpoise to my past happiness!

But, I conjure you, let not my complaints alarm you; they are only the cursory effects of solitude, and the disagreeable reflections of my journey. Fear not the return of my former weakness; my heart is in your hands, Eloisa, and while you are its support it cannot debase itself. One of the comfortable fruits of your last letter is, that since I find myself sustained by a double share of spirits; and though love should annihilate what is properly mine, I should still be a gainer; the resolution with which you have inspired me being able to support me better than I could otherwise have supported myself. I am convinced it is not good for man to be alone. Human minds must be united to exert their greatest strength, and the united force of friendly souls, like that of the collateral bars of an artificial magnet, is incomparably greater than the sum of their separate forces. This is thy triumph, celestial friendship! but what is even friendship itself, compared to that perfect union of

souls, which connects the most perfect, the most harmonious amity, with ties an hundred times more sacred? where are the men whose ideas, gross as their appetites, represent the passion of love only as a fever in the blood, the effect of brutal instinct? let them come to me, let them observe, let them feel, what passes in my breast; let them view an unhappy lover separated from his beloved object, doubtful whether ever he shall see her more, and hopeless of retrieving his lost happiness; animated, however, by the never dying flame, which, kindled by your beauties, has been nourished by your mental charms, they will see him ready to brave the rigours of adversity; to be deprived even of your lovely self, and to cherish all those virtues that you have inspired, and which embellish that adorable image that shall never be erazed from my soul. O, my Eloisa, what should I be without you? informed indeed by dispassionate reason, a cold admirer of virtue, I might have respected it in any one. I shall now do more, I shall now be enabled to put it zealously in practice, and, penetrated by your example, shall excite those who have known us to exclaim:——"what happy creatures should we be, if all the women in the world were Eloisa's, and all the men had hearts susceptible of their charms!"

As I was meditating during my journey, on your last letter, I formed a resolution of collecting together all those you have written to me; as I no longer can attend to your delightful counsel from your own mouth. For, though there is not one which I have not learnt by heart, I love to read them continually, and to contemplate the characters of that lovely hand, which alone can make me happy: but the paper wears out by degrees, and therefore, before they fall quite in pieces, I design to copy each letter in a book, which I have already prepared for that purpose. It is pretty large, but I provide for the time to come, and even hope to live long enough to fill more than one volume. I set apart my evenings for the delightful employment, and proceed but slowly, in order to prolong so agreeable a task. This inestimable volume I will never part with; it shall be the manual of my devotions, my companion through the world which I am going to enter; it shall be my antidote against the pernicious maxims of

society; it shall comfort me under my afflictions; it shall prevent or amend my errors; it shall afford me instruction in my youth, and yield me edification in age: the first love-letters, Eloisa, that perhaps ever were put to such an use! With respect to your last epistle, which I have before me, excellent as it appears to me, I find however one thing you should have omitted. You may think it strange; but it is much more so, that this very article should particularly regard yourself, and that I blame you even for writing it at all. Why do you talk to me of fidelity and constancy? you once were better acquainted both with my passion and your own power. Ah, Eloisa, do you entertain such changeable sentiments? what, though I had promised you nothing, should I the sooner cease to be yours? Oh, no, it was at the first glance you directed to me, at the first word you spoke, at the first motion of my heart, that a flame was kindled in my soul which can never be extinguished. Had I never seen you since that first moment, it had been enough, it had been afterwards too late to have ever forgotten you. And is it possible for me to forget you now? now, that, intoxicated with my past felicity, the very remembrance of it makes me still happy? now, that the soul, which once animated me, is fled, and I live only by that which Eloisa hath inspired? now, that I despise myself for expressing so coldly what I so sensibly feel? should all the beauties in the universe display their charms to seduce me, is there one amongst them could eclipse thine? let them all combine to captivate my heart; let them pierce, let them wound it, let them break to pieces, this faithful mirror of my Eloisa, her unsullied image will not cease to be reflected from its smallest fragments, for nothing is able to drive it thence. No, not omnipotence itself can go thus far; it may annihilate my soul, but it cannot leave its existence and make it cease to love Eloisa.

Lord B—— has undertaken to give you an account of my affairs, and what he has projected in my favour: but I am afraid he will not strictly fulfil his promise with respect to his present plan. For you are to know that he has abused the right his beneficence has given him over me, in extending it beyond the bounds of generosity.

The pension he has settled on me, and which he has made independent, has put me in a condition to make an appearance here much above my rank, and perhaps even that which I shall have occasion to make in London. While I am here, as I have nothing to do, I live just as I please, and shall have no temptation to throw away the savings of my income in idle expenses. You, Eloisa, have taught me that our principal, at least our most pressing wants, are those of a benevolent mind; and, as long as one individual is deprived of the necessaries of life, what virtuous man will riot in its superfluities?

Letter LXXIX. To Eloisa. [20]

I enter with a secret horror on this vast desert, the world; whose confused prospect appears to me only as a frightful scene of solitude and silence. In vain my soul endeavours to shake off the universal restraint it lies under. It was the saying of a celebrated ancient, that he was never less alone than when he was by himself: for my part, I am never alone but when I mix with the crowd, and am neither with you nor with any body else. My heart would speak, but it feels there is none to hear: it is ready to answer, but no one speaks any thing that regards it. I understand not the language of the country, and no body here understands mine. Yet I own that I am greatly caressed, and that all the obliging offices of friendship and civility are readily offered to me: this is the very thing of which I complain. The officious zeal of thousands is ever on the wing to oblige me, but I know not how to entertain immediately a friendship for men I have never seen before. The honest feelings of humanity, the plain and affecting openness of a frank heart, are expressed in a different manner from those false appearances of politeness, and that external flattery, which the customs of the world require. I am not a little afraid that he, who treats me at first sight, as if I was a friend of twenty years standing, if at the end of twenty years I should want his assistance, will treat me as a stranger; and, when I see men, lost in dissipation, pretend to take so tender a part in the concerns of every one,

I readily presume they are interested for no body but themselves.

There is, however, some truth in all this profession: the French are naturally good-natured, open, hospitable, and generous. But they have a thousand modes of expression, which are not to be too strictly understood. A thousand apparent offers of kindness which they make only to be refused; they are no more than the snares of politeness laid for rustic simplicity. I never before heard such profusion of promises: you may depend on my serving you, command my credit, my purse, my house, my equipage.——But, if all this were sincere, and literally taken, there would not be a people upon earth less attached to property. The community of possessions would be in a manner already established; the rich always making offers, and the poor accepting them, both would naturally soon come upon a level, and not the citizens of Sparta itself could ever have been more upon an equality than would be the people of Paris. On the contrary, there is not a place, perhaps, in the world, where the fortunes of men are so unequal, where are displayed at once the most sumptuous opulence and the most deplorable poverty. This is surely sufficient to prove the insignificance of that apparent commiseration, which every one here affects to have for the wants and sufferings of others, and that tenderness of heart, which in a moment contracts eternal friendship.

But if, instead of attending to professions so justly to be suspected, and assurances so liable to deceive, I desire information, and would see knowledge; here is its most agreeable source. One is immediately charmed with the good sense which is to be met with in company of the French, not only among the learned, but with men of all ranks, and even among the women: the turn of conversation is always easy and natural, it is neither dull nor frivolous, but learned without pedantry, gay without noise, polite without affectation, gallant without being fulsome, and jocose without immodesty. Their discourse is neither made up of dissertations nor epigrams; they reason without argumentation, and are witty without punning: they artfully unite reason and vivacity, maxims and rhapsodies; and mix the most pointed satire and

refined flattery with strictness of morals. They talk about every thing, because every one has something to say; they examine nothing to the bottom, for fear of being tedious, but propose matters in a cursory manner, and treat them with rapidity: every one gives his opinion, and supports it in few words; no one attacks with virulence that of another, nor obstinately defends his own; they discuss the point only for the sake of improvement, and stop before it comes to a dispute: every one improves, every one amuses himself, and they part all satisfied with each other; even the philosopher himself carrying away something worthy his private meditation.

But, after all, what kind of knowledge do you think is to be gained from such agreeable conversation? to form a just judgment of life and manners; to make a right use of society; to know, at least, the people with whom we converse; there is nothing, Eloisa, of all this: all they teach is to plead artfully the cause of falsehood, to confound, by their philosophy, all the principles of virtue; to throw a false colour, by the help of sophistry, on the passions and prejudices of mankind; and to give a certain turn to error, agreeable to the fashionable mode of thinking. It is not necessary to know the characters of men, but their interests, to guess their sentiments on any occasion. When a man talks on any subject, he rather expresses the opinions of his garb or his fraternity, than his own, and will charge them as often as he changes his situation and circumstances.

Dress him up, for instance, by turns, in the robe of a judge, a peer, and a divine, and you shall hear him successively stand up, with the same zeal, for the rights of the people, the despotism of the prince, and the authority of the inquisition. There is one kind of reason for the lawyer, another for the officer of the revenue, and a third for the soldier. Each of them can demonstrate the other two to be knaves; a conclusion not very difficult to be drawn by all three. [21] Thus men do not speak their own sentiments but those they would instill into others, and the zeal which they affect is only the mask of interest. You may imagine, however, that such persons as are unconnected and independent, have at least a personal character and an opinion of

their own. Not at all: they are only different machines, which never think for themselves, but are set a going by springs.

You need only inform yourself of their company, their clubs, their friends, the women they visit, the authors they are acquainted with; and you may immediately tell what will be their opinion of the next book that is published, the next play that is acted, the works of this or that writer they know nothing of, or this or that system of which they have not one idea. As ordinary clocks, also, are wound up to go but four and twenty hours, so are these people under the necessity of going every evening into company, to know what they are to think the next day.

Hence it is, that there is but a small number of both sexes, who think for all the rest, and for whom all the rest talk and act. As every one considers his own particular interest, and none of them that of the public, and as the interests of individuals are always opposed, there is amongst them a perpetual clashing of parties and cabals, a continual ebb and flow of prepossessions and contrary opinions; amidst which the most violent tempers, agitated only by the rest, seldom understand a word of the matter in dispute. Every club has its rules, its opinions, its principles, which are no where else admitted. An honest man at one house is a knave at the next door. The good, the bad, the beautiful, the ugly, truth, and even virtue itself, have all only a limited and local existence. Whoever chuses a general acquaintance, therefore, and goes into different societies, should be more pliable than Alcibiades; he should change his principles with his company, new-model his sentiments in a manner at every step, and lay down his maxims by the rod. He ought at every visit to leave his conscience, if he has one, at the door, and take up with that belonging to the house as a new servant, on his entrance, puts on its livery, which he leaves behind him when turned out, and if he chuses it, again takes up his own, which serves him till he gets a new suit with a new place. But what is still more extraordinary, is, that every one here is perpetually contradicting himself, without being concerned at all about it. They have one set of principles for conversation, and another for their actions; nor is

any body scandalized at their inconsistency, it being generally agreed they should be very different. It is not required of an author, particularly of a moral writer, that he should maintain in conversation what he advances in his works; nor that he should put in practice what he inculcates. His writings, conversation, and conduct, are three things essentially different, which he is not at all obliged to reconcile to each other. In a word, every thing is absurd, and yet nothing offends, because absurdity is the fashion. Nay, there is attached to this incongruity of principles and manners, a fashionable air of which they are proud, and which is frequently affected. In fact, although every one zealously preaches up the maxims of his profession, he piques himself on the carriage and manners of another. The attorney, for instance, assumes the martial air of a soldier, and a petty clerk of the customs, the supercilious deportment of a lord; the bishop affects the gallantry of a fine gentleman; the courtier the precision of a philosopher; and the statesman the repartee and raillery of a wit. Even the plain mechanic, who knows not how to put on the airs of any other profession, dresses himself up in a suit of black on Sundays, in order to pass for a practitioner in the law. The military gentlemen alone, despising every other profession, preserve, without affectation, the manners of their own, which, to say the truth, are insufferable. Not that M. de Muralt was in the wrong, when he gave the preference to the conversation of a soldier; but, what might be true in his time, is no longer so now. The progress of literature has since improved conversation in general; and, as the gentlemen of the army despised such improvement in theirs, that which used to be the best, is at length become the worst. [22]

Hence it is, that the persons we talk to are not those with whom we converse; their sentiments do not come from the heart; their knowledge is not the acquisition of their own genius; their conversation does not discover their thoughts; and one perceives nothing of them but their figure. Thus, a man in company here, is nearly in the same situation as if he were spectator of a moving picture, where he himself is the only figure capable of self-motion.

Such are the notions I have formed of great societies, by that which I have seen at Paris. They may, nevertheless, be rather adapted to my own particular situation than to the true state of things; and will doubtless improve as I become more acquainted with the manners of the world. Besides this, I have hitherto kept no other company than that into which I have been introduced by the friends of Lord B——, and am sensible it is necessary to descend to persons of different ranks, to know the peculiar manners of a country; those of the opulent being almost every where the same. I shall endeavour to inform myself better hereafter; in the mean time, I leave you to judge whether I had not sufficient reason to call this crowded scene a desert, and to be terrified by a solitude, where I find only an empty appearance of sentiments and of sincerity, that falsifies itself in the instant of expression; and where I perceive only the mere apparitions of men, phantoms that strike the eye for a moment, but are insensible to the touch? Hitherto I have seen a great number of masks; when shall I behold the faces of mankind?

Letter LXXX. From Eloisa.

Yes, my friend, we shall continue to be united, notwithstanding our separation; we shall be happy in spite of fortune. It is the union of minds which constitutes their true felicity; the mutual attraction of hearts does not follow the ratio of their distance, and ours would be in contact, were they distant as the poles asunder. I am sensible with you that true lovers have a thousand expedients to sooth the pains of absence, and to fly to each other’s arms in a moment. Hence have they more frequent interviews even in absence, than when they see each other every day; for, no sooner is either alone, than they are both together. If you, my friend, can taste that pleasure every evening, I feast on it a hundred times a day. I am more alone, and am surrounded by objects I cannot look on without calling you to mind, without finding you ever near me.

Qui canto dolcemente e qui s’assise Qiu si revolve, e qui ritenne il passo Qui co

’begli occhi me trafise il core Qui disse una parola, e qui sorrise.

But is it so with you? can you thus alleviate the pains of absence? can you experience the sweets of a peaceful and tender passion, that speaks to the heart without inflaming the senses? Are your griefs at present more prudent than were formerly your desires? the violence of your first letter still makes me tremble. I dread those deceitful transports, by so much the more dangerous as the imagination which excites them, is the less subject to controul; and, I fear, lest even your excess of love should prove injurious to the object of it. Alas! you know not, your sensations are too indelicate to perceive how offensive to love is an irrational homage. You do not consider that your life is mine, nor that self-preservation leads us frequently to destruction. Sensual man! will you never learn to love? call to mind those peaceful, those tender sensations you once felt, and so affectingly described. If such be the highest pleasures which even happy lovers can taste, they are the only ones wherein those who pine in absence are permitted to indulge themselves; and those who once have felt them, though but for a moment, should never regret the loss of any other. I remember the reflections we made in reading your Plutarch, on the sensuality and depravity of taste, which debase our nature. Were such wretched pleasures attended only with the circumstance of their not being mutual, it were enough, we said, to render them insipid and contemptible. Let us apply the same conclusion to the sallies of an extravagant imagination, to which it is no less applicable. What can the wretch enjoy whose pleasures are confined to himself alone? his pleasures are lifeless, but thine, O love! are animated and generous delights. It is the union of souls: we receive more pleasure from that which we excite, than from our own enjoyment.

But, pray, tell me, my friend, in what language, or rather, in what jargon, is the description you give me in your last letter? did you not make use of it as an occasional display of your wit? if you intend to repeat it in your letters to me, it will be necessary to send me a dictionary. What is it you mean by the opinions of a garb?

by a conscience that is to be put off and on, like a livery? by laying down maxims by the rod? how would you have a poor, simple Swiss comprehend those sublime tropes and figures? have you not already borrowed some of the tinsel understanding of the people you describe? take care, my good friend, how you proceed. Do you not think the metaphors of the chevalier Marini, which you have so often laughed at, bear some resemblance to your own? if a garment may be said to think, in a letter, why not that fire may sweat in a sonnet? [23]

To observe in the space of three weeks all the different company that is kept in a great city; to pass judgment on their conversation; to distinguish precisely the false from the true, the real from the affected; the difference between their thoughts and words: this is the very thing for which the French are frequently censured by people of other countries; but this nation especially deserves to be studied more at leisure. I as little approve also of persons speaking ill of a country where they reside and are well received: they had better, in my judgment, submit to be deceived by appearances, than to moralize at the expense of their hosts. In short, I always suspect the candour of those observers, who set up for wits. I am always apprehensive lest they should insensibly sacrifice the real state of things to the arts of description, and affect a brilliancy of stile at the expense of truth.

You know, my friend, the saying of Muralt, that wit is the epidemical madness of the French: I am mistaken if I do not discover some marks of your being yourself infected with this phrenzy. There is this difference, however, that while it is agreeable enough in the French, the Swiss are of all people in the world those it becomes the least. There is something very quaint and far-fetched in many passages of your letter. I do not speak of the lively turn or animated expressions, which are dictated by any peculiar strength of sentiments, but of that affected prettiness of stile, which being unnatural in itself, can be natural to no people whatever, but betrays the absurd pretensions of the person who uses it. Pretensions, with those we love, good God! ought not all our pretensions to be confined to the object beloved?

It may be permitted to enliven an indifferent conversation with such rhetorical flourishes, and they may pass off as fine strokes of wit; but this is not the language adapted to the intercourse of lovers; the florid jargon of gallantry comes less from the heart than the most rude and simple of all dialects. I appeal to yourself: did wit ever find an opportunity to intrude into our private parties? if those fond, those endearing conversations had a charm to dispel and keep wit at a distance, how ill-suited are its embellishments to the letters of absence, always clouded in some measure with sorrow; and in which the heart expresses itself with peculiar tenderness? but, though every passion truly great should be serious, excess of joy sooner calling forth our tears than our smiles, I would not have love be always sad; its chearfulness should, nevertheless, be simple and unaffected, without art, without embellishment, and undissembled as the passion itself. In a word, I would have love appear in its native graces, and not in the false ornaments of wit.

My constant companion, in whose apartment I write this letter, pretends, that in the beginning of it I had just that pleasantry of disposition which love inspires; but I know not what is become of it. In proportion as I proceed, a languor invades my heart, and hardly leaves me spirits to write the reproaches she would have me make you. For you are to know the above hypercriticisms are rather hers than my own. It was she that dictated in particular the first article, laughing like an idiot, and insisting on my not altering a single syllable. She says, it is to teach you to respect Marini, whom she patronizes and you have the presumption to ridicule.

But can you guess the cause of our good humour? it is her approaching marriage. The contract was signed last night, and the day is fixed for Monday sevennight. If ever love was a chearful passion, it is surely so with her: surely no girl was ever so droll upon the like occasion.

The good Mr. Orbe, whose head is also a little turned, was highly delighted with the comical manner in which he was received. Less difficult to be pleased than you

were, he takes great pleasure in adding to the pleasantry of courtship, and looks upon the art of diverting his mistress as a master-piece in making love. For her part, we may talk to her as we please of decorum, tell her as much as we will of the grave and serious turn she ought to assume on the point of matrimony, and of doing honour to the virgin state she is going to quit; she laughs at all we can say, as ridiculous grimace, and tells Mr. Orbe to his face, that on the wedding day she shall be in the best humour in the world; and that one cannot go too chearfully to be married. But the little dissembler does not tell all; I surprized her this morning wiping her eyes, which were red with crying, and I would lay a wager, the tears of the night equal the smiles of the day. She is going to bind herself in new chains, that will relax the gentle ties of friendship: she is entering on a manner of life very different to that which she most affected. Hitherto always pleased and tranquil, she is going to run those hazards which are inseparable from the best marriage; and, whatever face she may assume, I see that, as a clear and smooth water begins to be troubled at the approach of a storm, so her chaste and timid heart feels an alarm at her approaching change of condition.

May they be happy, my dear friend! they love, and will be united in marriage: they will reap the transports of mutual enjoyment without obstacles, without fear, without remorse! Adieu, my heart is full——I can write no more.

P.S. We have seen Lord B——, but he was in such haste to proceed on his journey, that he staid with us but a moment. Impressed with a due sense of the obligations we owe him, I would have made him my acknowledgments and yours; but, I know not how, I was ashamed. It is surely a kind of insult offered to his unparallel’d generosity to thank such a man for any thing!

Letter LXXXI. To Eloisa.

What children does the impetuosity of our passions make of us! how readily does an extravagant affection nourish itself on chimeras; and how easily are our too violent

desires prevented by the most frivolous objects! I received your letter with as much rapture as your presence could have inspir'd: in the excess of my transport, a piece of folded paper supplying in my mind the place of Eloisa. One of the greatest evils of absence, and the only one which reason cannot alleviate, is the inquietude we are under concerning the actual state of the person we love. Her health, her life, her repose, her affections, nothing escapes the apprehensions of him who has every thing to lose. Nor are we more certain of the present condition than of the future; and every possible accident is realiz'd in the mind of the timid lover. I breathe, and am alive again. You are in health, and still love me; or rather ten days ago you loved me, and was well; but who can assure me it is so at this instant? How cruel! how tormenting is absence! how fatally capricious is that situation in which we can enjoy only the past moment and the present not yet arrived.

Had you said nothing about your constant companion, I should have detected her little malice in the censures passed on my observations, and her old grudge in the apology for Marini; but, if it be permitted me in turn to apologize for myself, I will not make her wait for a reply.

In the first place then, my dear cousin, for it is to her I should address my answer, as to the stile of my remarks, I have adopted that of the subject: I endeavoured to give you at once both an idea and an example of the mode of conversation in fashion; and thus, following an ancient precept, I wrote to you in the same manner they talk in some companies to each other. Besides, it is not the use of rhetorical figures, but the choice of them, which I blame in Marini. If a man has the least warmth of imagination, he must necessarily use metaphors and figurative expressions to make himself understood. Even your own letters are full of them, without your knowing it; and I will maintain it, that none but a geometrician or a blockhead can talk without metaphor. In effect, the same sentiment may admit of an hundred different degrees of energy; and how are we to determine the precise degree in which to enforce it, but by the turn of expression? I must confess I could not help smiling myself at the

absurdity of some phrases I used. I thank you for the trouble you took to pick them out. But, let them stand where they are, you will find them clear and peculiarly emphatical. Let us suppose that your two sprightly sparkling eyes, whose language is now expressive, were separated one from the other, and from the set of features to which they give such lustre; what think you, cousin, they would say, even with all their vivacity and fire? Believe me, they would lose all power of expression; they would be mute even to Mr. Orbe.

Is not the first thing that presents itself to observation in a strange country, the general cast and turn of conversation? And is not this the first observation I have made in Paris? I have written to you only what is said, and not what is done in this city. If I remarked a contrast between the discourse, the sentiments, and the actions of the people, it is because the contrast is too striking to escape the most superficial observer. When I see the same persons change their maxims according to the company they frequent, Molinists in one and Jansenists in another, court sycophants with the minister, and factious grumblers with an anticourtier: when I see a man in lace and embroidery rail at luxury, an officer of the revenue against imposts, or a prelate against gluttony; when I hear a court-lady talk of modesty, a noble lord of honesty, an author of candour, or an abbé of religion, and see nobody surprized at these absurdities, is it not natural enough to conclude that people here are as little anxious to hear truth as to speak it? And that, so far from endeavouring to persuade others into their own opinion, they care not whether they are believed or not?

But, let this suffice, in the way of pleasantry, for an answer to our cousin. I will lay aside an affectation to which we are all three strangers, and I hope you will find in me for the future as little of the satirist as the wit. And now, Eloisa, let me reply to you; for I am at no loss to distinguish between critical raillery and serious reproaches.

I cannot conceive how both you and your cousin could so egregiously mistake the

object of my description. It was not the French in particular, on whom I intended to animadvert. For, if the characters of nations can be determined only by their difference, how can I, who have as yet no acquaintance with any other, pretend to draw the character of this? I should not besides have been so indiscreet as to fix on the metropolis for the place of observation. I am not ignorant that capital cities differ less from each other, than the national characters of the people, which are there in a great measure lost and confounded, as well from the influence of courts, all which bear a great resemblance to each other, as from the common consequence of living in a close and numerous society; which is also every where nearly the same, and prevails over the original and peculiar character of the country.

Were I to study the national characteristics of a people, I would repair to some of the more distant provinces, where the inhabitants still pursue their natural inclinations. I would proceed slowly and carefully through several of those provinces, and those at greatest distance from each other: from the difference I might observe between them, I would then trace the peculiar genius of each province; from what was theirs in common and not customary to other countries, I would trace the genius of the nation in general; and what appeared common to all nations, I should regard as characteristics of mankind in general. But I have neither formed so extensive a project; nor, if I had, am I possessed of the necessary experience to put it in execution. My design is to improve myself in the knowledge of mankind universally, and my method is to consider man in his several relations. I have hitherto been acquainted only with small societies scattered up and down, in a manner alone, and without connections. At present I am in the midst of others, which are surrounded by multitudes on the same spot, from which I shall begin to judge of the genuine effects of society; for, if men are constantly made better by their association, the more numerous and closely connected they are, still better they ought to be; and their manners should be more simple and less corrupted at Paris than in the Valais; but if experience prove the contrary, we must draw the opposite

conclusion.

This method, I confess may in time lead to the knowledge of the national characters of people; but by a route so tedious and indirect, that I may perhaps never be qualified to determine that of any one nation upon earth. I must begin to make my observations on the first country in which I reside, proceeding in the others I pass through to mark the difference between them and the first: comparing France to every other, as we describe an olive-tree by a willow, or a palm-tree by a fir, and must defer the forming my judgment of the first people observed, till I have finished my observations on all the rest.

Please to distinguish then, my charming monitor, between philosophical observation and national satire. It is not the Parisians that I study, but the inhabitants of a great city; and I know not whether the remarks I have made be not as applicable to those of Rome and London, as of Paris. Moral principles do not depend on the customs of a people; so in spite of their reigning prejudices I can perceive what is wrong in itself but I know not whether I can justly attribute it to the Frenchman, or the man; whether it be the effect of habit, or of nature. Vice is in every place offensive to an impartial eye, and it is no more blameable to reprove it in whatever country it is found, than to correct the failings of humanity, because we live among men. Am not I at present an inhabitant of Paris? perhaps, I may have already unconsciously contributed my share, to the disorders I have remarked: perhaps too long a stay may corrupt even my inclinations, and at the end of a year I may be no more than a Parisian myself; if, in order to be deserving of Eloisa, I do not cherish the spirit of liberty and the manners of a free citizen. Let me proceed therefore, without restraint, in describing objects I should blush to resemble, and in animating my zeal for virtue by displaying the disgustful pictures of falsehood and vice.

Were my employment and fortune in my own power, I might without doubt make choice of other subjects for my letters. You were not displeased with those I wrote

you from Meillerie, and the Valais: but, my dear friend, it is necessary for me, in order to support the noise and hurry of the world, in which I am obliged to live, to console myself in writing to you; and the thoughts of drawing up my narratives for your perusal, should excite me to look out for proper subjects. Discouragement would otherwise overtake me at every step, and I must entirely relinquish my observations on mankind, if you refuse to hear me. Consider that, to live in a manner so little conformable to my taste, I make an effort not unworthy of its cause: and to enable you to judge of what I must undergo to obtain you, permit me to speak sometimes of the maxims I am forced to learn, and the obstacles I am obliged to encounter.

In spite of my slow pace, and unavoidable avocations, my collection was finish'd when your letter happily arrived to prolong my task of copying: but, I admire, in seeing it so short, how you contrive to say so much in so few words. I will maintain it, there can be no reading so delightful as that of your letters, even to those to whom you are a stranger, if their hearts do but sympathise with ours. But how can you be a stranger to any one who reads your letters? is it possible that a manner so engaging, that sentiments so tender, can belong to any other than Eloisa? your enchanting looks accompany every sentence; your charming voice pronounces every word. It is impossible for any other to love, to think, to speak, to act, to write like Eloisa. Be not surprized then if your letters, which so strikingly convey your form and feature, should sometimes have the same effect as your presence on a lover, who so devoutly idolizes your person. I lose my senses in their perusal; my head grows giddy, a devouring flame consumes me; my blood boils, and I become frantic with passion. I fancy I see, I feel, I press you to my heart, adorable object! bewitching beauty! source of rapture and delight! image of those angelic forms, which are the fabled companions of the bless'd! come to my arms——she is here——I clasp her in my embrace——ah! no, she is vanish'd; and I grasp but a shadow.——Indeed, my dear friend, you are too charming; you have been too indulgent to the weakness of a

heart, that can never forget your charms, nor your tenderness. Your beauty even triumphs in its absence, it pursues me wherever I go, it makes me dread to be alone, and it is my greatest misery that I dare not give myself to the contemplation of so ravishing an object.

Our friends then, I find, will be united in spite of all obstacles; or rather they are so while I am now writing. Amiable and deserving pair! may heaven bestow on them all the blessings their prudent and peaceful affections, innocence of manners, and goodness of heart, deserve! may it bless them with that happiness it is so sparing of to those who were formed by nature to taste its delights! happy indeed will they be, if heaven should grant to them what it has taken from us! and yet, Eloisa, we may draw some consolation even from our misfortunes. Do you not perceive that our severest troubles are not without their peculiar satisfactions; and that altho' our friends may taste pleasures of which we are deprived, we enjoy others of which they are ignorant? yes, my gentle friend, in spite of absence, losses, fears; in spite even of despair itself, the powerful exertion of two hearts, longing for each other, is always attended with a secret pleasure unknown to those at ease. This is one of the miracles of love, that teacheth us how to extract pleasure from pain; and would make us look upon a state of indifference as the greatest of all misfortunes. Tho' we lament our own situation, then, let us not envy that of others. On the whole, perhaps, there is none preferable to our own: as the deity derives his happiness from himself, the hearts that glow with a celestial passion, find in themselves the source of refined enjoyment, independent of fortune.

Letter LXXXII. To Eloisa.

At length, Eloisa, behold me swim with the stream. My collection being finish'd, I begin to frequent the public diversions, and to sup in company; I spend the whole day abroad, and am attentive to every striking object: but, perceiving nothing that resembles you, I recollect myself in the midst of noise and confusion, and converse

in secret with my love. It is not however, that this busy and tumultuous life has not in it something agreeable, or that such a vast variety of objects do not present a considerable fund of gratification to the curiosity of a stranger: but, to taste the entertainment they afford, the heart should be vacant, and the understanding idle. Both love and reason seem to unite in raising my disgust against such amusement. Every thing here being confined to appearances, which are every instant changing, I have neither the time to be moved with, nor to examine, any thing.

Hence I begin to see the difficulties of studying the world, and I know not what situation is most likely to make me a proficient in this science. The speculatist lives at too great a distance, and the man of business too near the object, to view it critically: the one sees too much to be able to reflect on any part, and the other too little to judge of the whole piece. Every object that strikes the philosopher he examines apart, and not being able to discern its connections and relations with others, that lie beyond the field of his observation, he never sees them placed in their proper point of view, and knows neither their real causes nor effects. The man of business sees all, and has leisure to think on nothing. The instability of objects permits him barely to perceive their existence, and not to examine their qualities: they pass in succession before him with such rapidity, that they efface the impression of each other, and load his memory only with a chaos of confused ideas. It is also as impossible to make observations, and meditate on them alternately: as the scene requires a constant and unremitted attention, which reflection would interrupt. A man who should divide his time by intervals between solitude and society, always perplexed in retirement and to seek in the world, would be able to do nothing in either. There is but one way: and that is to divide the whole period of life into two parts; applying the one to observation, and the other to reflection. But this is next to impossible; for reason is not a piece of furniture that can be thrown aside, and put to use again at pleasure: the man who should live ten years without reflection, will never again be capable of reflection as long as he lives.

I find it is a folly to think to study mankind in the quality of a simple spectator. He, who pretends only to make observations, will be able to observe nothing: for, being useless to the men of business, and troublesome to those of pleasure, he will find no where admittance. We can have the opportunity of seeing others act, in proportion only as we act with them; in the school of the world, as well as in that of love, we must begin by praising whatever we desire to learn.

What method then can I take? I that am a stranger, and can follow no employment in this country, and whom the difference of religion alone excludes from aspiring to office? I am reduced to be humble, in order to instruct myself; and, as I can never be useful, must endeavour to make myself agreeable. To this end, I aim as much as possible to be polite without flattery, complaisant without meanness, and to put so good a face on what is tolerable in society that I may be admitted into it, without being under the necessity of adopting its vices. Every man that would see the world, and has nothing to do in it, ought at least to adopt its manners to a certain degree. For what pretension can he have to be admitted into the society of people to whom he can be of no service, and to whom he has not the address to make himself agreeable? But, if he has found out this art, it is all that is required of him, particularly if he be a stranger. Such a one has no occasion to take part in their cabals, their intrigues, or their quarrels: if he behaves obligingly to every one; if he neither excludes, nor prefers women of a certain character; if he keeps the secrets of the company into which he is admitted; if he turns not into ridicule at one house, what he sees in another; if he avoids making confidents; entering into broils; and, in particular, if he maintains a certain personal dignity; he may see the world, without molestation, preserve the purity of his manners, his probity, and even his frankness itself, if it arises from a spirit of liberty, and not from that of party. This is what I have endeavoured to do, agreeable to the advice of some people of sense, whom I have chosen for my advisers, among the acquaintance Lord B——'s interest has procured me. In consequence of this, I begin now to be admitted into companies,

less numerous and more select. Hitherto I have been chiefly invited to regular dinners, where the only woman at table is the mistress of the family; where open house is kept for all the idle people about Paris, with whom they have the slightest acquaintance; and where every one pays for his dinner in wit, or flattery, as he can best afford: the conversation being in general noisy and confused, and very much resembling that of a public ordinary.

I am at present initiated into the more secret mysteries of visiting: being intreated to private suppers, where the door is shut against all strolling and chance guests, and every one is upon an agreeable footing, if not with each other, at least with the provider of the entertainment. Here it is that the women are less reserved, and their real characters more easily discovered. The conversation is in these parties carried on with more decorum, and is more refined and satirical: instead of talking of the public news, plays, promotions, births, deaths, and marriages, which were the topics of the morning, they here take a review of the several anecdotes of Paris, divulge the secret articles of the scandalous chronicle, turn the good and bad alike into ridicule, and, in artfully describing the characters of others, undesignedly display their own. It is in these companies that the little circumspection which remains has invented a peculiar kind of language, under which they affect to render their satire more obscure, while it only makes it more severe. It is here, in a word, that they carefully sharpen the poignard, under pretence of making it less hurtful; but, in fact, only to make it wound the deeper. To judge, however, of this conversation according to our notions of things, we should be in the wrong to call it satirical; for it consists more of raillery than censure, and turns less upon the vicious than the ridiculous. Satire in general is not common in large cities, where that which is downright wicked is too simple to be worth talking about. What can they condemn where virtue is in no esteem? and what should they revile where nothing is held to be villainous? At Paris, more particularly, where every thing is seen in an agreeable light, the representation of things that ought to raise our indignation is well received, if it be

but wrapt up in a song or an epigram. The fine ladies of this country do not like to be displeased; and are therefore displeased at nothing: they love to laugh, but woe be to him who happens to be the butt of their ridicule; the fears this caustic leaves are never to be effaced; they not only defame good manners and virtue, but exaggerate even vice itself. We now return to our company.

What strikes me most in these select meetings, is to see that half a dozen people, expressly chosen to entertain one another agreeably, and between whom there generally subsist very intimate connections, cannot converse an hour together without introducing the affairs of half the people in Paris; just as if their hearts had nothing to say to each other, or that there was no person in company of merit enough to engage their attention. You know, Eloisa, how far otherwise it was with us, when we supped together at your cousin's, or your own apartment; how we could find means, in spite of constraint and secrecy, to turn the discourse on subjects that related to ourselves; how at every moving reflection, at every subtle allusion, a look more swift than lightening, a sigh rather imagined than perceived, conveyed the pleasing sensation from one heart to the other.

If the discourse here turn by accident on any of the company, it is commonly carried on in a jargon known only to the persons concerned, and which one had need of a vocabulary to understand. Thus by talking as it were in cypher, they are enabled to banter each other with insipid raillery, in which the greatest blockhead does not always shine the least. In the mean time, perhaps, a third part of the company, incapable of taking the jest, are either reduced to a disagreeable silence, or to laugh at what they do not understand. Of this kind, Eloisa, is all the tenderness and affection I have observed in the intimacies of this country: those of a more private nature, with only a second person, I have not, nor ever shall have experienced.

In the midst of all this, however, if a man of any weight and consequence should enter on a grave discourse, or begin to discuss a serious question, a general attention

would be immediately fixed on this new object: men and women, old and young, every one would be ready to enter into its examination; and it is astonishing how much good sense and precision would, as it were, through emulation, sally out of their extravagant heads. [24] A point of morality could not be better determined in a society of philosophers, than in that of a fine lady at Paris: their conclusions would even be less precise and severe: for the philosopher, who thinks himself obliged to act as he speaks, will be less rigid in his principles; but, where morality is nothing more than a topic of discourse, the severity of it is of no consequence: and no one is displeased at an opportunity of checking philosophical pride, by placing virtue out of its reach.

Besides this, influenced by a knowledge of the world and of their own hearts, all agree in thinking human nature as depraved as possible: hence their philosophy is always of the gloomy cast; they are ever indulging their own vanity by depreciating the virtues of humanity; always accounting for good actions from vicious motives, and attributing to mankind in general the depravity of their own minds.

And yet, notwithstanding their adopting this abject doctrine, one of the favourite topics of these societies is sentiment; a word by which we are not to understand the sensation of a heart susceptible of love or friendship: this would be thought vulgar and disgusting. No, sentiment consists in great and general maxims, heightened by the most sublime subtilties of metaphysics. I can safely say that in my life, I have never heard so much talk of sentiment, nor ever comprehended so little what was meant by it; so inconceivable are these French refinements! our simple hearts, Eloisa, never were governed by any of these fine maxims; and I am afraid it is with sentiment in the polite world, as it is with Homer among the pedants, who discover in him a thousand imaginary beauties, for want of taste to point out his real ones. So much sentiment is here laid out in wit, and evaporated in conversation, that none is left to influence their actions. Happily politeness supplies its place, and people act from custom nearly as they would from sensibility: at least so long as it costs them

only a few compliments, and such trifling restraints, as they willingly lay themselves under in order to be respected; but, if any considerable sacrifice of their ease or interest is required, adieu to sentiment: politeness does not proceed so far; so far as it goes, however, you can hardly believe how nicely every article of behaviour is weighed, measured, and estimated. What is not regulated by sentiment, is subjected to custom, by which indeed every thing here is governed. These people are all professed copyists; and, tho' they abound in originals, nobody knows any thing of them, or presumes to be so himself. To do like other people, is a maxim of the greatest weight in this country: and this is the mode——that is not the mode, are decisions from which there is no appeal.

This apparent regularity gives to the common, and even the most serious transactions of life, the most comical air in the world. They have settled even the very moment when it is proper to send cards to their acquaintance; when to visit with a card, that is, to visit without visiting at all; when to do it in person; when it is proper to be at home; when to be denied; what advances it is proper to make, or reject on every occasion; what degree of sorrow should be affected at the death of such, or such a one; [25] how long to mourn in the country; when they may come to console themselves in town; the very day, and even the minute, when the afflicted is permitted to give a ball, or go to the play. Every body in the same circumstances does the same thing: they keep time, and their motions are made all together, like the evolutions of a regiment in battalia; so that you would think them so many puppets, nailed to the same board, or danced by the same wire.

Now, as it is morally impossible that all these people, tho' they act in the same manner, should be at once equally affected, it is plain, their peculiar characters are not to be known by their actions; it is plain their discourse is only a formal jargon, which assists us less to form a judgment of the French manners in general, than the peculiar mode of conversing in Paris. In like manner, we learn only here their terms of conversation, but nothing by which we can judge of their estimation in the

conduct of life. I say the same of most of their writings; and even of their theatrical representations. The stage, since the time of Moliere, being a place where they rather repeat agreeable dialogues, than give a representation of life and manners. There are here three theatres; on two of which they only introduce imaginary characters; such as Harlequin, Pantaloon, and Scaramouch, on the one; and, on the other, gods, devils, and conjurers. On the third, they represent those immortal dramas, which give us so much pleasure in reading, and other new pieces, which are from time to time written for the stage; many of which are tragical, but not affecting. And, tho' the sentiments contained in them are sometimes natural, and well enough adapted to the human heart, they give us not the least light into the peculiar manners of the people to whom they afford entertainment.

The institution of tragedy was originally founded on religion, whose sanction was sufficient to establish its authority. Besides this, the tragic scene always presented to the Greeks an instructive and agreeable representation, either in the misfortunes of the Persians their enemies, or in the vices and follies of the kings from which they themselves were delivered. Should they represent in like manner at Berne, at Zurich, or at the Hague, the ancient tyranny of the house of Austria, the love of liberty and their country would make such a representation peculiarly interesting to the spectators: but I would be glad to know of what use are the tragedies of Corneille at Paris; and what interest its citizens can take in the fate of a Pompey or Sertorius. The Greek tragedies turned upon real events, or such as were supposed to be real, being founded on historical tradition. But what business has a refined heroic passion in the breasts of the great? the conflicts of love and virtue cause them, no doubt, many an unhappy day and sleepless night! the heart is doubtless vastly concerned in the marriage of kings! judge then of the probability and use of so many performances all turning on such imaginary subjects.

As to comedy, it should certainly be a lively representation of the manners of the people for whom it is written; that it may serve them as a mirror to shew them their

vices and follies. Terence and Plautus mistook their subjects; but their predecessors, Aristophanes and Menander, displayed Athenian manners before an Athenian audience; and since these, Moliere, and Moliere only, has represented still more ingenuously in France the manners of the French in the last age.

The objects of the picture are since changed; but they have never since had so faithful, so masterly a painter. At present, they only copy on the theatre the manner of conversing in about an hundred families in Paris; and this is their representation of French manners: so that there are in this great city five or six hundred thousand persons, whose various characters are never introduced on the stage. Moliere described the shopkeeper and artisan, as well as the Marquis; Socrates introduces the discourses of coachmen, carpenters, shoemakers, and masons. But our present writers, quite of another stamp, think it beneath them to know what passes in a trader's counting house or the shop of a mechanic: their dramas must consist of persons of the first quality; for by the grandeur of their characters, they aim at a degree of eminence they never could attain by the assistance of genius. Nay, the audience itself is become so very delicate, that the chief of the spectators are as jealous of place and precedence in going to a play as in making a visit, never condescending to be present at the representation of characters of inferior condition.

Indeed, the people of fashion here are considered by themselves as the only inhabitants of the earth; all the rest of mankind are nobody. All the world keep a coach, a Swiss and a Maitre d'Hotel: all the world, therefore, consist of a very small number of people. Those who walk afoot are nobody; they are your common people, human creatures, the vulgar, folks in short of another world: so that a coach is not so necessary to carry one about, as to give one a title to existence. And hence there is a handful of impertinent people, who look upon themselves as the only beings of any consequence in the universe: though, were it not for the mischief they occasion, they themselves would not deserve to be numbered with the rest of mankind. It is nevertheless solely for these people that theatrical entertainments are made. They are

represented by fictitious characters in the middle of the theatre, and shew themselves in real ones on each side; they are at once persons of the drama on the stage, and comedians in the boxes. It is thus that the sphere of the world and genius is contracted, while the present dramatic writers absurdly affect to introduce only characters of imaginary importance. No man is worthy of being brought upon the stage that does not wear a laced coat. A stranger would hence be apt to think France peopled only by counts and marquises, altho', in fact, the more miserable and beggarly its inhabitants grow, the more splendid and brilliant is their representation on the theatre; and hence it is, that the ridiculous behaviour of persons of rank, in being exposed on the stage, rather gains ground than diminishes, and that the common people, who are ever aping the rich, go less to the theatre to laugh at their follies than to study them, and to become by imitation greater fools than the originals.

The French are indebted even to Moliere in a great measure for this evil; he corrected the courtiers by spoiling the citizens, and his ridiculous marquises were the first model of those still more contemptible petit-maitres, which succeeded them in the city.

There is in general much discourse and but very little action on the French stage: the reason of which is, perhaps, that the French talk much more than they do, or at least, that they pay a much greater regard to what is said than to what is done. I remember the answer of a spectator, who, in coming out from the representation of one of the pieces of Dionysius the tyrant, was asked, what he had seen? I have seen nothing, said he, but I have heard a deal of talk. The same might be said of the French plays. Racine and Corneille, with all their genius, are no more than talkers, and their successor is the first of all the French poets, who, in imitation of the English, has sometimes ventured to bring scenes of action on the stage. In common, their plays consist only of witty, or florid dialogues well disposed; where it is obvious the chief design of the speakers is to display their talents of wit and elocution. In the mean

time, almost every sentiment is delivered in the stile of a general maxim. However transported they may be with passion, they always preserve their respect to the public, of whom they think more constantly than of themselves: the pieces of Racine and Moliere excepted, [26] egotism is excluded as scrupulously from the French drama as from the writings of messieurs de Port-Royal; and the passions of the human heart never speak, but with all the modesty of Christian humility, in the third person. There is besides a certain affected dignity in theatrical discourse and action, which never permits the passions to be expressed in their natural language, or suffers the writer to divest himself of the poet and attend to the scene of action, but binds him constantly down to the theatre and the audience. Hence the most critical situations, the most interesting circumstances of the piece, never make him forget the nicest arrangement, of phrase or elegancies of attitude. Should even despair plunge a dagger in the heart of his hero, not contented that, like Polixenes, he should observe a decency in falling, he would not let him fall at all: for the sake of decency, he is supported bolt upright after he is dead; and continues as erect after he has expired as before.

The reason of all this is, that a Frenchman requires on the stage neither nature nor deception, but only wit and sentiment: he requires only to be diverted, and cares not whether what he sees be a true or false representation of nature. No body goes here to the theatre for the pleasure of seeing the play, but for the sake of seeing, and being seen, by the company, and to catch a subject for conversation after the play is over. The actor with them is always the actor, never the character he represents. He who gives himself those important airs of an universal sovereign is not the emperor Augustus, it is only Baron. The relict of Pompey is no other than Adrienne, Alzira is mademoiselle Gaussin, and that formidable savage is no other than the civil Grandval. The comedians, on the other hand, give themselves no trouble to keep up an illusion which no body expects. They place the venerable heroes of antiquity between six rows of young, spruce Parisians: they have their Roman dresses made

up in the French fashion: the weeping Cornelia is seen bathed in tears, with her rouge laid on two fingers thick: Cato has his hair dressed and powdered, and Brutus struts along in a Roman hoop-petticoat; yet no body is shocked at all this absurdity, nor doth it hinder the success of the piece; for, as the actors only are seen in the characters, so what respects the author is the only thing considered in the play; and, though propriety should be entirely neglected, it is easily excused, for every one knows that Corneille was no tailor, nor Crebillon a peruke-maker.

Thus, in whatever light we view this people, all is verbosity and jargon, talk without design, and words without meaning. In the theatre, as in the world, be as attentive as ye will to what is said, you will learn nothing of what is done; when a man has spoken, it would be thought impertinent to enquire after his conduct: he has spoken, that’s sufficient, and he must stand or fall by what he has said. The respectable man here is not he that does good actions, but he that says good things; and a single sentence sometimes inadvertently uttered shall cast an odium on a man’s character, that forty years of integrity will not be able to eraze. In a word, although the conduct of men does not always resemble their discourse, yet I see they are characterized by their discourse without any regard to their actions: I have remarked also, that in a great city, society appears more free, agreeable, and even more safe, than among people less knowing and less civilized: but I will not pretend to say the latter are therefore less humane, temperate, or just. On the contrary, among the former, where every thing is governed by appearances, the heart is perhaps more hid by external shew, and lies deeper concealed under agreeable deceptions. It does not belong, however, to me, who am a stranger, without business, pleasures or connections, to decide here. I begin, nevertheless, to perceive in myself that intoxication into which such a busy tumultuous life plunges every one who leads it; and am affected with a dizziness like that of a man, before whose eyes a multitude of successive objects pass with rapidity. Not one of these, which thus strike me, affects my heart; but all together they so disturb and suspend its affections, that I sometimes forget not only

myself, but even my Eloisa. Every day, on leaving my apartment, I leave my observations locked up behind me, and proceed to make others on the frivolous objects which present themselves. Insensibly I begin to think and reason in the manner of other people; and, if ever I strive to get the better of their prejudices, and look upon things as they are, I am immediately borne down by a torrent of words, which carry with them a shew of reason. The people here will prove to a demonstration, that none but superficial, half-witted reasoners regard the reality of things; that the true philosopher considers only their appearances; that prejudice and prepossession should pass for principle, decorum for law, and that the most profound wisdom consists in living like fools.

Thus constrained to pervert the order of the moral affections, to set a value on chimeras, and put nature and reason to silence, I see with regret, how sullied and defaced is that divine image, which I cherish in my breast, once the sole object of my desires, and the only guide of my conduct: I am borne by one caprice to another, while my inclinations are continually enslaved by the general opinion, and I am never certain one day what I shall approve the next.

Abashed and confounded to find my humanity so far debased; to see myself fallen so low from that innate greatness of mind, to which our passion had reciprocally elevated us, I return home at night, with a heart swelling, yet vacant as a ball puffed up with air; sickened with disgust, and sunk in sorrow. But with what joy do I recollect myself, when alone! with what transports do I feel the sensations of love again take possession of my heart, and restore me to the dignity of a man! O love! how refined are thy sensations! how do I applaud myself when I see the image of virtue preserve its lustre still in my breast; when I contemplate thine, my Eloisa! still there, unsullied, sitting on a throne of glory, and dissipating in a moment my gloomy delusions. I feel my depressed soul revive; I seem to recover my existence, to live anew, and to regain, with my love, those sublime sentiments that render the passion worthy of its object.

Letter LXXXIII. From Eloisa.

I am just returned, my dear friend, from the enjoyment of one of the most delightful sights I shall ever behold. The most prudent, the most amiable girl in the world is at length become the most deserving, the best of women. The worthy man, to whom she has given her hand, lives only to revere, to cherish, to make her happy; and I feel that inexpressible pleasure of being a witness to the happiness of my friend, and of sharing it with her: nor will you, I am convinced, partake of it less than my self; you, for whom she had always the tenderest esteem, who were dear to her almost from her infancy, and have received from her obligations which should render her yet more dear to you. Yes, we will sympathize with all her sensations; if to her they give pleasure they shall afford us consolation; for, so great is the value of that friendship which unites us, that the happiness of either of the three is sufficient to moderate the afflictions of the other two. Let us not, however, too highly felicitate ourselves; our incomparable friend is going in some measure to forsake us. She is now entered on a new scene of life, is bound by new engagements, and become subject to new obligations. Her heart, which once was only ours, will now find room for other affections, to which friendship must give place. We ought therefore, my friend, to be more scrupulous hereafter in the services we impose on her zeal; we ought not only to consult the sincerity of her attachment, and the need we have of her service, but what may with propriety be required in her present situation; what may be agreeable or displeasing to her husband. We have no business to enquire what virtue demands in such a case, the laws of friendship are sufficient. He, who, for his own sake, could expose his friend, deserves not to have one. When ours was unmarried, she was at liberty; she had no body to call her to account for her conduct, and the uprightness of her intentions was sufficient to justify her to herself. She considered us as man and wife, destined for each other; and, her chaste yet susceptible heart, uniting a due regard for herself to the most tender compassion for her culpable friend, she concealed my fault without abetting it: but at present, circumstances are changed;

and she is justly accountable to the man, to whom she has not only plighted her vows, but resigned her liberty. She is now entrusted not only with her own honour, but with that of her husband; and it is not enough that she is virtuous, her virtue must be respected, and her conduct approved: She must not only deserve the esteem of her husband, but she must obtain it: if he blames her, she is to blame: and tho' she be innocent, she is in the wrong the moment she is suspected; for to study appearances, is an indispensable part of her duty.

I cannot determine precisely how far I am right in my judgment; I leave that to you: but there is a monitor within that tells me it is not right, my cousin should continue to be my confident; nor that she should be the first to tell me so. I may be frequently mistaken in my arguments, but I am convinced I am always right in the sensations on which they are founded; and this makes me confide more in those sensations than on the deductions of my reason.

From this consideration, I have already formed a pretence to get back your letters, which, for fear of a surprise I had put into her hands. She returned them with an oppression of heart, which that of mine made me easily perceive; and which convinced me I had acted as I ought. We entered into no explanation, but our looks were sufficiently expressive; she embraced me, and burst into tears: the tender sensibility of friendship hath little occasion for the assistance of language.

With respect to the future address of your letters, I thought immediately of my little Anet, as the safest; but if this young woman be inferior in rank to my cousin, is that a reason we should less regard her virtue? have I not reason, on the contrary, to fear my example may be more dangerous to one of less elevated sentiments; that what was only an effort of the sublimest friendship in one, may be the first step to corruption in the other; and that, in abusing her gratitude, I may make virtue itself subservient to the promotion of vice? is it not enough, alas! for me to be culpable, without seducing accomplices, and aggravating my own crime, by involving others

in my guilt? of this, therefore, no more: I have hit on another expedient, less safe indeed, but less exceptionable, as it lays nobody open to censure, nor requires a confident. It is for you to write to me under a fictitious name; as for example, that of Mr. Bosquet, and to send your letters under cover addressed to Regianino, whom I shall take care to instruct. Thus Regianino himself may know nothing of our correspondence, or at most can only form suspicions, which he dares not confirm; for Lord B——, on whose favour he depends, has answered for his fidelity. In the mean time, while our correspondence is maintained by this means, I will try if it be possible to resume the method we made use of in your voyage to the Valois, or some other that may be durable and safe.

There is something in the turn and stile of your letters, that would convince me, were I even unacquainted with the state of your heart, that the life you lead at Paris is in no wise agreeable to your inclinations. The letters of Muralt, of which they so loudly complain in France, are even less satirical and severe than yours. Like a child that is angry with its tutors, you revenge the disagreeable necessity you are under of studying the world, upon your first teachers.

What I am surprized at the most, however, is, that the very circumstance, which usually prejudices foreigners in favour of the French, should give you disgust. I mean their polite reception of strangers, and their general turn of conversation; tho' by your own confession, you have met with great civility. I have not forgot your distinction between Paris in particular, and great cities in general; but I see plainly, that, without knowing precisely what belongs to either, you censure without considering whether it be truth or slander. But, however, this be, the French are my favourites, and you don't at all oblige me in reviling them. It is to the many excellent writings France has produced, that I am indebted for most of those lessons, by which we have together profited. If Switzerland is emerged from its ancient barbarity, to whom is it obliged? the two greatest and most virtuous men in modern story, Catinat and Fenelon, were both Frenchmen. Henry the fourth, the good king, whose

character I admire, was a Frenchman. If France be not the country of liberty, it is properly that of men; a superior advantage in the eyes of a philosopher to that of licentious freedom. Hospitable, protectors of the stranger, the French overlook real insult, and a man would be pelted in London for saying half so much against the English, as the French will bear at Paris. My father, who hath spent the greatest part of his life in France, never speaks but with rapture of this agreeable people. If he has spilt his blood in the service of its king, he has not been forgotten in his retirement, but is still honoured by royal beneficence. Hence, I think myself in some degree interested in the glory of a nation, to which that of my father is indebted. If the people of all nations, my friend, have their good and ill qualities, you ought surely to pay the same regard to that impartiality which praises, as to that which blames them.

To be more particular with you, I will ask you why you throw away in idle visits the time you are to spend at Paris? Is not Paris a theatre, wherein great talents may be displayed, as well as London? and do strangers find more difficulties in their way to reputation in the former, than they do in the latter? believe me, all the English are not like Lord B——, nor do all the French resemble those fine talkers that give you so much disgust. Try, put them to the proof, tho' it be only to acquire a more intimate acquaintance with their manners; and judge of people, that you own speak so well, by their deeds. My cousin's father says, you know the constitution of the empire, and the interests of princes. My Lord B—— acknowledges also, that you are well versed in the principles of politics, and the various systems of government: and I have got it into my head that of all countries in the world you will succeed best in that where merit is most esteemed, and that you want only to be known, to be honourably employed. As to your religion's being an obstacle, why should yours be more so than another's? is not good sense a security against fanaticism and persecution? does bigotry prevail more in France, than in Germany? and is there any thing that should hinder your succeeding at Paris, as Mr. St. Saphorin has done at Vienna? if you consider the end, the more speedy your attempts the sooner may you

promise yourself success. If you balance the means, it is certainly more reputable for a man to advance himself by his own abilities, than to be obliged for preferment to his friends. But, if you purpose a longer voyage——ah! that sea!——I should like England better if it lay on this side Paris.——But, a-propos, now I talk of Paris, may I venture to take notice of another piece of affection, I have remarked in your letters? how comes it that you, who spoke to me so freely of the women of this country, say nothing about the Parisian ladies? can those celebrated and polite females be less worth your description, than the simple and unpolished inhabitants of the mountains? or are you apprehensive of giving me uneasiness by a picture of the most charming and seductive creatures in the universe? If this be the case, my friend, undeceive yourself, and rest assured, that the worst thing you can do for my repose is to say nothing about them and that, however, you might praise them, your silence in that respect is more suspicious than would be your highest encomiums. I shall be glad also to have some little account of the opera at Paris, of which we hear such wonders; [27] for, after all, the music may be bad, and yet the representation have its beauties; but if not, it will at least, afford a subject for your criticism, which will offend no body.

I know not whether it be worth while to tell you, that my cousin's wedding produced me two suitors; they met here a few days ago; one of them from Yverdon, hunting all the way from castle to castle, and the other from Germany, in the stage-coach from Berne. The first is a kind of smart, that speaks loud and peremptory enough to make his repartees pass for wit, among those who attend only to his manner. The other is a great bashful simpleton, whose timidity, however, is not of that amiable kind which arises from the fear of displeasing; but is owing to the embarrassment of a blockhead, that knows not what to say, and the awkwardness of a libertine who is at a loss how to behave himself in the company of modest women. As I well know the intentions of my father in regard to these two gentlemen, I took, with pleasure, the freedom he gave me, of treating them agreeable to my own humour, which, I

believe, is such as will soon get the better of that which brought them hither. I hate them for their presumption, in pretending to a heart which is yours, without the least merit to dispute it with you; yet if they had ever so much, I should hate them the more; but where could they acquire it? they or any other man in the universe? no, my dear friend, rest satisfied, it is impossible. Nay, were it possible that another should be possessed of equal merit, or even that another you should attack my heart, I should never listen to any but the first. Be not uneasy, therefore, at these two animals, which I have with regret condescended to mention. What pleasure should I have in being able to give them both such equal portions of disgust, as that they should resolve to depart both together as they came.

M. de Crouzas has lately given us a refutation of the ethic epistles of Mr. Pope, which I have read, but it did not please me. I will not take upon me to say which of these two authors is in the right, but I am conscious that M. de Crouza's book will never excite the reader to do any one virtuous action, while our zeal for every thing great and good is awakened by that of Pope. For my own part, I have no other rule by which to judge of what I read, than that of consulting the dispositions in which I rise up from my book, nor can I well conceive what sort of merit any piece has to boast, the reading of which leaves no benevolent impression behind it, nor stimulates the reader to any thing that is good. [28]

Adieu, my dear friend, I would not finish my letter so soon, but am called away. I leave you with regret, for I am at present in a chearful disposition, and I love you should partake of my happiness. The cause which now inspires it is, that my dear mother is much better within these few days; she has indeed found herself so well as to be present at the wedding, and to give away her niece, or rather her other daughter. Poor Clara wept for joy to see her; and I——but you may judge of my sensations, who, deserving her so little, hourly tremble at the thoughts of losing her. In fact, she did the honours of the table, and acquitted herself on the occasion with as good a grace as if she had been in perfect health. Nay, it seemed to me that some

remains of languor in her disposition rendered her elegant complacencies still more affecting. Never did this incomparable parent appear so good, so charming, so worthy to be revered!——Do you know that she asked Mr. Orbe concerning you several times? Although she never speaks of you to me, I am not ignorant of her esteem for you; and that if ever she were consulted, your happiness and mine would be her first concern. Ah! my friend, if your heart can be truly grateful, you owe many, many obligations!

Letter LXXIV. To Eloisa.

There, my Eloisa, scold me, quarrel with me, beat me; I will endure every thing, but I will not cease to acquaint you with my thoughts. Who should be the depositary of those sentiments you have enlightened, and with whom should my heart hold converse, if you refuse to hear me? I give you an account of the observations I have made, and of my own opinions, not so much for your approbation, as correction; and the more liable I am to fall into error, the more punctual I should be in my applications to your judgment. If I censure the manners of the people in this great city, I do not seek to be justified for taking this liberty, because I write to you in confidence; for I never say any thing of a third person, which I would not aver to his face; and all I write to you concerning the Parisians, is no more than a repetition of what I daily advance in conversation with themselves: however, they are not displeased with me, and they even join with me in many particulars. They complain of our Muralt; I am persuaded, they see, and are convinced, how much he hated them, even in his panegyricks; but, I am much mistaken, if, in my criticism they do not perceive the contrary. The esteem and gratitude their generosity inspires, but increases my freedom; it may be serviceable to some of them, and, if I may judge from their manner of receiving truth from my lips, they do not think me below their regard. When this is the case, my Eloisa, true censure is more laudable than even true praise; for that only serves to corrupt the heart of those on whom it is bestowed,

and there are none so eager to obtain it as the most worthless; on the contrary, censure may be useful, and can only be endured by the most deserving. I sincerely own, I honour the French as the only people in the world who really love their fellow creatures, and who are naturally benevolent; but, for this very reason, I am less inclined to grant them that general admiration they seem to expect, even for the faults they acknowledge. If the French had no virtues, I should not mention them; if they had no vices they would not be men: they have too many excellent qualities for indiscriminate praise.

As to the attempts you mention, they are impracticable, because I should be obliged to use means which are not only inconvenient, but which you have also interdicted. Republican austerity is not in vogue here; they need more flexible virtues, which are more easily adapted to the interest of their friends or patrons. They respect merit, I confess, but the talents that acquire reputation are very different from those which lead to fortune; and, if I am so unfortunate as to possess the latter only, will Eloisa consent to become the wife of an adventurer? In England it is quite the contrary, and though their manners are perhaps less refined than in France, yet they rise to fortune by more honourable steps, because the people having more share in the government, public esteem is of more consequence. You are not ignorant of what Lord B—— proposed to do for me, and of my intention to justify his zeal. I can have no objection to any spot on the globe except its distance from you. O Eloisa! if it is difficult to procure your hand, it is still more difficult to deserve so great a blessing, and yet, methinks, ’tis a noble task.

The good account you give of your mother’s health, relieved me from the greatest anxiety. I perceived your distress, even before my departure, and therefore I durst not express my fears; but I thought her so changed, that I was apprehensive she would fall into some dangerous illness, Be careful of her, because she is dear to me, because my heart reveres her, because all my hopes are centered in her goodness, and because she is the mother of my Eloisa.

As for the two suitors, I own, I do not like to hear of them, even in jest; but the manner in which you mention them expels my fears, and I will no longer hate these unfortunate pretenders, since you imagine they are hated by you: yet I admire your simplicity in believing yourself capable of hatred. Don’t you perceive that what you take for hatred, is nothing more than the impatience of insulted love? thus anxious mourns the amorous turtle when its beloved mate is in danger of being caught. No, Eloisa, no, incomparable maid! when you are capable of hatred, I may cease to love you.

P. S. Beset by two importunate rivals! how I pity you! for your own sake, hasten their dismission.

Letter LXXXV. From Eloisa.

I have delivered into Mr. Orbe’s hands a packet which he has engaged to forward to M. Sylvester, from whom you will receive it; but I caution you, my dear friend, not to open it, till you retire into your own chamber, and are quite alone. You will find in this packet a small trinket for your particular use.

’Tis a kind of charm which lovers gladly wear. The manner of using it is very whimsical. It must be contemplated for a quarter of an hour every morning, or until it softens the spectator into a certain degree of tenderness. It is then applied to the eyes, the mouth, and next to the heart: and it is generally esteemed the best preservative against the noxious air of a country infected with gallantry. They even attribute an electrical quality, to these talismans, which is very singular, but which acts only upon faithful lovers. They say it communicates the impression of kisses from one to the other, though at the distance of a hundred leagues. I do not pretend to warrant the success of this charm from experience; only, this I know, it is your own fault if you do not put it to the proof.

Calm your fears with regard to my two gallants, or pretenders, call them which you please. They are gone: let them depart in peace; I shall no longer hate them, since

they are out of my sight.

Letter LXXXVI. To Eloisa.

And so, my Eloisa, you insist on a description of these Parisian ladies? vain girl! but it is a homage due to your charms. Notwithstanding all your affected jealousy, your modesty, and your love, I have discovered more vanity than fear disguised under this curiosity. Be it as it will, I shall be just; I may safely speak the truth; but I should undertake the taste with better spirits if I had more to praise. Why are they not a hundred times more lovely! would they had sufficient charms, to reflect new excellence upon yours by the comparison!

You complain of my silence: good heaven! what could I have written? when you have read this letter, you will perceive why I take pleasure in speaking of your neighbours, the Valesian ladies, and why I have hitherto neglected to mention those of this country: the first continually remind me of you, my Eloisa, but the others——read, and you will know. Few people think of the French ladies as I do, if indeed, I am not quite singular in my opinion. Equity obliges me therefore to give you this hint, that you may suppose I delineate them, perhaps, not as they are in reality, but as they appear to me. Nevertheless, if I am not just in my description, I know you will censure me; and then will your injustice be greater than mine, because the fault is entirely your own.

Let us begin with their exterior qualities; the greatest number of observers proceed no farther should I follow their example, the women in this country would have great cause to be dissatisfied: they have an exterior character as well as an exterior face, and as neither one or the other is much to their advantage, it would be unjust to form our opinions of them from either. Their figure, for the most part, is only tolerable, and in the general rather indifferent than perfect; yet there are exceptions. They are slender rather than well-made, and therefore they gladly embrace the fashions which disguise them most; but, I find that in other countries, the women are

foolish enough to imitate there fashions, tho’ contrived merely to hide defects which they have not.

Their air is easy and natural, their manner free and unaffected, because they hate all restraint; but they have a certain disinvoltura, [29] which, though it is not entirely destitute of grace, they frequently carry, even to a degree of absurdity. Their complexion is moderately fair, and they are commonly pale, which does not in the least add to their beauty. With regard to their necks, they are in the opposite extreme to the Valesians. Conscious of this defect, they endeavour to supply it by art; nor are they less scrupulous in borrowing an artificial whiteness. Though I have never seen these objects but at a distance, they expose so much of themselves, that they leave the spectators very little room for conjecture. In this case, these ladies seem not to understand their own interest; for if the face is but moderately handsome, the imagination heightens every concealed charm, and according to the gascon philosopher, there is no appetite so strong as that which was never satisfied, especially in this sense.

Their features are not very regular, but they have something in their countenance which supplies the place of beauty, and which is sometimes much more agreeable. Their eyes are quick and sparkling, yet they are neither penetrating nor sweet: they strive to animate them by the help of rouge, but the expression they acquire by this means, has more of anger in it than love; nature has given them sprightliness only, and though they sometimes seem to solicit tenderness, they never promise a return. [30]

They have acquired so great a reputation for their judgment in dress, that they are patterns to all Europe. Indeed, it is impossible to adapt such absurd fashions with more taste. They are, of all women, the least under subjection to their own modes. Fashion governs in the provinces, but the Parisians govern fashion, and every one of them is skilled in suiting it to her own advantage: the first are ignorant and servile

plagiarists, who copy even orthographical errors; the latter are like authors, who imitate with judgment, and have abilities to correct the mistakes of their original.

Their apparel is more uncommon than magnificent, more elegant than rich. The rapid succession of their fashions renders them old and obsolete even from one year to another; that neatness which induces them to change their dress so frequently, preserves them from much ridiculous magnificence; they do not however spend less money on that account, but their expenses are, by this means, better conducted. They differ greatly in this particular from the Italians; instead of superb trimmings and embroidery, their cloaths are always plain and new. Both sexes observe the same moderation and delicacy, which is extremely pleasing: for my part I like to see a coat neither laced nor foiled. There is no nation in the world, except our own, where the people, especially the women, wear less gold and silver. The same kind of stuffs are wore by people of all ranks, so that it would be difficult to distinguish a duchess from a citizen, if the first had not some marks of distinction which the other dares not imitate. But this seems to have its inconveniences, for whatever is the fashion at court, is immediately followed in the city, and you never see in Paris, as in other countries, a beau or belle of the last age. Nevertheless, it is not here as in most other places, where the people of the highest rank, being also the richest, the women of fashion distinguish themselves by a degree of luxury which cannot be equalled. Had the ladies of the court of France attempted this kind of distinction, they would very soon have been eclipsed by the wives of the citizens.

What then do you think was their resource? why they took a much more effectual method, and which required more abilities. They knew that the minds of the people were deeply impressed with a sense of bashfulness and modesty. This suggested to them fashions not to be easily imitated. They perceived that the people could not endure the thoughts of rouge, and that they obstinately persisted in calling it by the vulgar name of paint, and therefore they daubed their cheeks, not with paint, but with rouge; for change but the name, and ‘tis no longer the same thing. They also

perceived that a bare neck was scandalous in the eyes of the public; and, for that reason, they chose to enlarge the scene. They saw——many things, which, my Eloisa, young as she is, will never see. In their manners they are governed exactly by the same principle. That charming diffidence which distinguishes and adorns the sex, they despise as ignoble and vile; they animate their actions and discourse with a noble assurance, and, I am confident, they would look any modest man out of countenance. Thus they cease to be women, to avoid being confounded with the vulgar; they prefer their rank to their sex, and imitate women of pleasure that they themselves may be above imitation.

I know not how far they may have carried their imitation, but I am certain they have not succeeded in their design to prevent it in others. As to rouge, and the fashion of displaying those charms, which they ought to conceal, they have made all the progress that was possible. The ladies of the city had much rather renounce their natural complexion, and the charms they might borrow from the amoroso pensier [31] of their lovers, than preserve the appearance of what they are; and if this example has not prevailed among the lower sort of people, ’tis only because they are afraid of being insulted by the populace; and thus are an infinite number of women kept within the bounds of decency, by the fear of offending the delicacy of the mob. Their masculine air, and dragon-like deportment is less striking because so universal; it is conspicuous only to strangers. From one end of this metropolis to the other there is scarce a woman whose appearance is not sufficiently bold to disconcert any man who has never been accustomed to the like in his own country; from this astonishment proceeds that awkward confusion which they attribute to all strangers, and which increases the moment she opens her lips. They have not the sweet voice of our country-women; their accent is hoarse, sharp, interrogative, imperious, jibing, and louder than that of a man. If, in the tone of their voice, they retain any thing feminine, it is entirely lost in the impertinence of their manner. They seem to enjoy the bashful confusion of every foreigner; but it would probably give

them less pleasure, if they were acquainted with its true cause.

Whether it be, that I, in particular, am prejudiced in favour of beauty, or whether the power of beauty may not universally influence the judgment, I know not; but the handsomest women appear to me, rather the most decent in their dress, and in general, behave with the greatest modesty. They lose nothing by this reserve; conscious of their advantages, they know they have no need of borrowed allurements to attract our admiration. It may be also, that impudence is more intolerably disgusting when joined with ugliness; for certainly, I should much sooner be tempted to affront an impertinent ugly woman, than to embrace her; whereas, by modesty, she might excite, even a tender compassion, which is often a harbinger of love. But, though it is generally remarked, that the prettiest women are the best behaved, yet they are often so extremely affected, and are always so evidently taken up with themselves, that, in this country, there is little danger of being exposed to that temptation which M. de Muralt sometimes experienced amongst the English ladies, of telling a woman she was handsome, only for the pleasure of persuading her to think so.

Neither the natural gaiety of the French, nor their love of singularity, is the cause of this freedom of conversation and behaviour for which these ladies are so remarkable; but it is rather to be deduced from their manners, by which they are authorized to spend all their time in the company of men; and hence it is, that the behaviour of each sex seems to be copied from the other.

Our Swiss ladies, on the contrary, are fond of little female assemblies, in which they are extremely social and happy; [32] for, though they probably may not dislike the company of men, yet it is certain their presence is some constraint upon them.

In Paris it is quite the reverse; the women are never easy nor satisfied without the men. In most companies, the lady of the house is seen alone amidst a circle of gentlemen, and this is so generally the case, that one cannot help wondering how

such an unequal proportion of men can be every where assembled. But Paris is full of avanturiers, priests and abbés, who spend their whole lives in running from house to house. Thus the women learn to think, act and speak from the men, whilst these, in return, imbibe a certain degree of effeminacy; and this seems the only consequence of their trifling gallantry: however, they enjoy a fulsome adoration, in which their devotees do not think it worth while to preserve even the appearance of sincerity. No matter: in the midst of her circle, she is the sole object of attention, and that's sufficient. But, if a second female enters the room, familiarity instantly gives place to ceremony, the high airs of quality are assumed, the adoration becomes divided, and each continues to be a secret constraint upon the other till the company breaks up.

The Parisian ladies are fond of public diversions: that is, they are fond of shewing themselves in public; but the great difficulty, every time they go, is to find a female companion, for decorum will not allow one lady alone to appear in the boxes, even though attended by her husband, or by any other man. It is amazing, in this very social country, how difficult it is to form these parties; out of ten that are proposed, nine generally miscarry: they are projected by the desire of being seen, and are broken by the disagreeable necessity for a sister petticoat. I should imagine it an easy matter for the ladies to abolish this ridiculous custom. What reason can there be why a woman should not be seen alone in public? perhaps, there being no reason for it, is the very cause of its continuance. However, upon the whole, it may be prudent to preserve decency where the abolition would be attended with no great satisfaction. What great matter would there be in the privilege of appearing alone at the opera? is it not much better to reserve this exclusive privilege for the private reception of one's friends in one's own house?

Nothing can be more certain than that this custom of being alone amidst such a number of men, is productive of many secret connections: indeed the world is pretty well convinced of it, since experience has proved the absurdity of that maxim, which

told us, that by multiplying temptations we should destroy them; so that they do not defend this fashion for its decency, but that it is most agreeable; which, by the by, I do not believe. How can any love exist, where modesty is held in derision? and what pleasure can there be in a life which is at once deprived both of love and decency? but as the want of entertainment is the greatest evil which these slaves to dissipation have to fear, the ladies are solicitous for amusement rather than love; gallantry and attendance is all they require, and provided their danglers are assiduous, they are very indifferent about the violence or sincerity of their passion. The words love and lover are entirely banished even from the most private intercourse of the sexes, and are sunk into oblivion with the darts and flames of ancient romance.

One would imagine that the whole order of natural sensations was here reversed. A girl is to have no feelings, passions, or attachments; that privilege is reserved for the married women, and excludes no paramour except their husbands. The mother had better have twenty lovers, than her daughter one. Adultery is considered as no crime, and conveys no indecency in the idea: their romances, which are universally read for instruction, are full of it, and there appears nothing shocking in its consequences, provided the lovers do not render themselves contemptible by their fidelity. O Eloisa! there are many women in this city, who have defiled their marriage-bed a hundred times, yet would presume, with the voice of impurity, to slander an union like ours, that is yet unsullied with infidelity.

It should seem that in Paris, marriage is a different institution from what it is in other parts of the world: they call it a sacrament, and yet it has not half the power of a common contract. It appears to be nothing more than a private agreement between two persons to live together, to bear the same name, and acknowledge the same children; but who, in other respects, have no authority one over the other. If at Paris a man should pretend to be offended with the ill conduct of his wife, he would be as generally despised, as if, in our country, he was to take no notice of her scandalous behaviour. Nor are the ladies on their parts less indulgent to their husbands; for I

have not yet heard of an instance of their being punished for having imitated the infidelity of their wives. In short, what other effect can be expected from an union in which their hearts were never consulted? those who marry fortune or title, seem to be under no personal obligation.

Love, even love, has lost its privilege, and is no less degenerated than marriage. As man and wife may be looked upon as a bachelor and a maid, who live together for the sake of enjoying more liberty; so are lovers a kind of people, who, with great indifference, meet for amusement, through custom, or out of vanity. The heart is entirely unconcerned in these attachments, in which nothing more than certain external conveniences are ever consulted: it is, in short, to know each other, to dine together, now and then to exchange a few words, or, if possible, even less than this. An affair of gallantry lasts but a little longer than a visit, and consists chiefly in a few genteel conversations, and three or four pretty letters, filled with descriptions, maxims, philosophy, and wit. As to experimental philosophy, it does not require so much mystery; they have wisely discovered the folly of letting slip any opportunity of gratification: whether it happens to be the lover or any other man, a man is a man, and why should a lady be more scrupulous of being guilty of an infidelity to her lover than to her husband? after a certain age they may all be considered as the same kind of puppets, made up by the same fashion monger, and consequently the first that comes to hand is always the best.

Knowing nothing of these matters from experience, I can relate only what I have heard; and indeed, the representation is so very extraordinary, that I have but an imperfect idea of what I have been told. That which I chiefly comprehend is, that the gallant is generally regarded as one of the family; that if the lady happens to be dissatisfied with him, he is dismissed, or if he meets with a service more to his inclination or advantage, he takes his leave, and she engages a fresh one. There are, I have been told, some ladies so capricious as even to take up with their own husbands for a while, considering them, at least, as a kind of male creature; but this whim

seldom lasts long: as soon as it is past, the good man is entirely discarded, or, if he should happen to be obstinate, why then she takes another and keeps them both.

But I could not help objecting to the person who gave me this strange account, how it was possible, after this, to live among these discarded lovers. Live among them, says he, why, they are entire strangers to her ever after; and if they should, by chance, take it into their heads to renew their amours, they would have to begin anew, and would hardly be able to recollect their former acquaintance. I understand you, I replied, but I have great difficulty in reconciling these extravagancies. I cannot conceive how it is possible, after such a tender union, to see each other without emotion; how the heart can avoid palpitation, even at the name of a person once beloved; why they do not tremble when they meet. You make me laugh, says he, with your tremblings: and so you would have our ladies continually fainting away.

Suppress a part of this caricature representation; place my Eloisa in opposition to the rest, and remember the sincerity of my heart: I have nothing more to add.

However, I must confess, that many of these disagreeable impressions are effaced by custom. Though the dark side of their character may first catch our attention, it is no reason why we should be blind to their amiable qualities. The charms of their understanding and good humour are no small addition to their personal accomplishments. Our first repugnance overcome frequently generates a contrary sentiment. It is not just to view the picture only in its worst point of sight.

The first inconveniency of great cities is, that mankind are generally disguised, and that in society they appear different from what they really are. This is particularly true in Paris with regard to the ladies, who derive from the observation of others, the only existence about which they are solicitous. When you meet a lady in public, instead of seeing a Parisian, as you imagine, you behold only a phantom of the fashion: her stature, dimension, gait, shape, neck, colour, air, look, language, every

thing is assumed; so that, if you were to see her in her natural state, you would not know her to be the same creature. But this universal mask is greatly to her disadvantage; for nature's substitutes are always inferior to herself: besides, it is almost impossible to conceal her entirely; in spite of us, she will now and then discover herself, and in seizing her with dexterity consists the true art of observation. This is indeed no difficult matter in conversing with the women of this country, for, if you take them off their grand theatre of representation, and consider them attentively, you will see them as they really are, and it is then possible that your aversion may be changed into esteem and friendship.

I had an opportunity of verifying this remark last week, on a party of pleasure, to which, along with some other strangers, I was, abruptly enough, invited by a company of ladies, probably with a design to laugh at us without constraint or interruption. The first day the project succeeded to their wish: they immediately began to dart their wit and pleasantry in showers, but as their arrows were not retorted, their quivers were soon empty. They then behaved with great decency, and finding themselves unable to bring us to their stile, they were obliged to conform to ours. Whether they were pleased with it or not I am ignorant; however, the change was very agreeable to me, for I soon found that I stood a better chance to profit by the conversation of these females, than from the generality of men. Their wit now appeared so great an ornament to their natural good sense, that I changed my opinion of the sex, and could not help lamenting, that so many amiable women should want reason, only because it is their humour to reject it. I perceived also that their natural graces began insensibly to efface the artificial airs of the city: for, without design, our manner is generally influenced by the nature of our discourse: it is impossible to introduce much coquettish grimace in a rational conversation. They appeared much more handsome after they grew indifferent about it, and I perceived, that if they would please, they need only throw off their affectation. Hence, I am apt to conclude, that Paris, the pretended seat of taste, is of all places in the world, that

in which there is the least; since all their methods of pleasing are destructive of real beauty.

Thus we continued together four or five days, satisfied with each other, and with ourselves. Instead of satirising Paris and its innumerable follies, we forgot both the city and its inhabitants. Our whole care was to promote the happiness of our little society. We wanted no ill-natured wit or sarcasm to excite our mirth, but our laughter, like your cousin's, was the effect of good humour.

I had yet another reason to be confirmed in my good opinion of these females. Frequently in the very midst of our enjoyment, a person would come in abruptly and whisper the lady of the house. She left the room, shut herself up in her closet, and continued writing a considerable time. It was natural to suppose, that her heart was engaged in this correspondence; and of this one of the company gave a hint, which, however, was not very graciously received; a proof at least, that though she might possibly have no lovers, she was not without friends. But, judge of my surprize, when I was informed that these supposed Parisian suitors were no other than the unhappy peasants of the parish, who came in their tribulation to implore the protection of their lady; one being unjustly taxed, another enrolled in the militia, regardless of his age and family, a third groaning under a lawsuit with a powerful neighbour, a fourth ruined by a form of hail, was going to be dragged to prison. In short, each had some petition to make, each was patiently heard, and the time we supposed to be spent in an amorous correspondence, was employed in writing letters in favour of these unhappy sufferers. It is impossible to conceive how I was astonished to find with what delight, and with how little ostentation this young, this gay woman, performed these charitable offices of humanity. Oh, says I to myself, if she were even Eloisa, she could not act otherwise! From that moment I continued to regard her with respect, and all her faults vanished.

My enquiries had no sooner taken this turn, than I began to discover a thousand

advantageous particulars in the very women who before appeared so insupportable. Indeed all strangers are agreed, that, provided you exclude the fashionable topic, there is no country in the world whose women have more knowledge, talk more sensibly, with more judgment, and are more capable of giving advice. If from the Spanish, Italian, or German ladies, we should take the jargon of gallantry and wit, what would there remain of their conversation? and you, my Eloisa, are not ignorant how it is in general with our country-women. But if, with a French woman, humour to reject it. I perceived also that their natural graces began insensibly to efface the artificial airs of the city: for, without design, our manner is generally influenced by the nature of our discourse: it is impossible to introduce much coquettish grimace in a rational conversation. They appeared much more handsome after they grew indifferent about it, and I perceived, that if they would please, they need only throw off their affectation. Hence, I am apt to conclude, that Paris, the pretended seat of taste, is of all places in the world, that in which there is the least; since all their methods of pleasing are destructive of real beauty.

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I had yet another reason to be confirmed in my good opinion of these females. Frequently in the very midst of our enjoyment, a person would come in abruptly and whisper the lady of the house. She left the room, shut herself up in her closet, and continued writing a considerable time. It was natural to suppose, that her heart was engaged in this correspondence; and of this one of the company gave a hint, which, however, was not very graciously received; a proof at least, that though she might possibly have no lovers, she was not without friends. But, judge of my surprize, when I was informed that these supposed Parisian suitors were no other than the

unhappy peasants of the parish, who came in their tribulation to implore the protection of their lady; one being unjustly taxed, another enrolled in the militia, regardless of his age and family, a third groaning under a lawsuit with a powerful neighbour, a fourth ruined by a storm of hail, was going to be dragged to prison. In short, each had some petition to make, each was patiently heard, and the time we supposed to be spent in an amorous correspondence, was employed in writing letters in favour of these unhappy sufferers. It is impossible to conceive how I was astonished to find with what delight, and with how little ostentation, this young, this gay woman, performed these charitable offices of humanity. Oh, says I to myself, if she were even Eloisa, she could not act otherwise! From that moment I continued to regard her with respect, and all her faults vanished.

My enquiries had no sooner taken this turn, than I began to discover a thousand advantageous particulars in the very women who before appeared so insupportable. Indeed all strangers are agreed, that, provided you exclude the fashionable topic, there is no country in the world whose women have more knowledge, talk more sensibly, with more judgment, and are more capable of giving advice. If from the Spanish, Italian, or German ladies, we should take the jargon of gallantry and wit, what would there remain of their conversation? and you, my Eloisa, are not ignorant how it is in general with our country-women. But if, with a French woman, a man has resolution to sacrifice his pretensions to gallantry, and to draw her out of that favourite fortress, she will then make a virtue of necessity, and arming herself with reason, will fight manfully in the open field. With regard to their goodness of heart. I will not instance their zeal to serve their friends; for, as with the rest of mankind, that may partly proceed from self-love. But, though they generally love no body but themselves, long habit will frequently produce in them the effects of a sincere friendship. Those who have constancy enough to support an attachment of ten years, commonly continue it to the end of their lives, and they will then love their old friends with more tenderness, at least with more fidelity than their new lovers.

One common accusation against the women of France is, that they do every thing, and consequently more evil than good; but it may be observed in their justification, that in doing evil they are stimulated by the men, and in doing good are actuated by their own principles. This does not in any ways contradict what I said before, that the heart has no concern in the commerce between the two sexes; for the gallantry of the French has given to the women an universal power, which stands in no need of tenderness to support it. Every thing depends upon the ladies; all things are done by them or for them; Olympus and Parnassus, glory and fortune, are equally subject to their laws. Neither books nor authors have any other value or esteem than that which the ladies are pleased to allow them. There is no appeal from their decree in matters of the nicest judgment or most trivial taste. Poetry, criticism, history, philosophy, are all calculated for the ladies, and even the bible itself has lately been metamorphosed into a polite romance. In public affairs, their influence arises from their natural ascendency over their husbands, not because they are their husbands, but because they are men, and it would be monstrous for a man to refuse any thing to a lady, even though she were his wife.

Yet this authority implies neither attachment nor esteem, but merely politeness and compliance with custom; for it is as essential to French gallantry to despise the women as to oblige them; and this contempt is taken as a proof, that a man has seen enough of the world to know the sex. Whoever treats them with respect is deemed a novice, a knight-errant, one who has known woman only in romances. They judge so equitably of themselves, that to honour them is to forfeit their esteem; so that the principal requisite in a man of gallantry is superlative impertinence.

Let the ladies of this country pretend what they will, they are, in spite of themselves, extremely good-natured. All men who are burthened with a multiplicity of affairs, are difficult of access, and without commiseration; and in Paris, the center of business of one of the most considerable nations in Europe, the men of consequence are particularly obdurate: those, therefore, who have any thing to ask, naturally

apply to the ladies, whose ears are never shut against the unhappy; they console and serve them. In the midst of all their frivolous dissipation, they do not scruple to steal a few moments from their pleasure, and devote them to acts of benevolence; and though there may be some women mean enough to make an infamous traffic of their services, there are hundreds, on the contrary, who are daily employed in charitably assisting the distressed. However, it must be confessed, that they are sometimes so indiscreet, as to ruin an unfortunate man they happen not to know, in order to serve their own friend. But how is it possible to know every body in so extensive a country? or how can more be expected from good-nature destitute of real virtue, whose sublimest effort is not so much to do good, as to avoid evil? After all, it must be allowed that their inclinations are not naturally bad; that they do a great deal of good; that they do it from their hearts; that they alone preserve the remains of humanity, which are still to be found in Paris; and that without them, we should see the men avaricious and insatiable, like wolves devouring each other.

I should have remained ignorant of all this, if I had not consulted their comedies and romances, whose authors are, perhaps, too apt to stumble upon those foibles from which they themselves are not exempt, rather than the virtues they happen not to possess; who, instead of encouraging their readers by praising their real virtues, amuse themselves with painting imaginary characters too perfect for imitation.

Romances are perhaps the last vehicle of instruction that can be administered to a corrupt people. It were to be wished that none were suffered to prepare this medicine but men of honest principles and true sensibility; authors, whose writings should be a picture of their own hearts; who, instead of fixing virtue in the heavens, beyond the reach of our nature, would, by smoothing the way, insensibly tempt us out of the gulph of vice.

But to return to the Parisian ladies; concerning whom, I do not by any means agree in the common opinion. They are universally allowed to have the most enchanting

address, the most seducing manner, to be the most refined coquets, to possess the most sublime gallantry, and the art of pleasing to a most superlative degree. For my part, I think their address shocking, their coquettish airs disgusting, and their manner extremely immodest. I should imagine that the heart would shrink back at all their advances, and I can never be persuaded, that they can for a single moment, talk of love, without shewing themselves incapable of either feeling or inspiring that tender passion.

On the other hand, we find them represented frivolous, artful, false, thoughtless, inconstant, talking well, but without reflection or sentiment, and evaporating all their merit in idle chit-chat. But to me, all this appears to be as external as their hoops or rouge. They are a kind of fashionable vices, which are supposed necessary at Paris, but which are not incompatible with sense, reason, humanity and good nature. These ladies are, in many cases, more discreet, and less given to tattling than those of any other country. They are better instructed, and the things they are taught have a stronger effect upon their judgment. In short, if I dislike them for having disfigured the proper characteristics of their sex, I esteem them for those virtues in which they resemble us; and, my opinion is, that they are better calculated to be men of merit, than amiable women.

One word more and I have done. If Eloisa had never been, if my heart had been capable of any other attachment than that for which it was created, I should never have taken a wife or mistress in Paris; but I should gladly have chosen a friend, and such a treasure might possibly have consoled me for the want of the others. [33]

Letter LXXXVII. To Eloisa.

Since the receipt of your letter, I have been daily with Mr. Silvester, to see after the packet you mentioned: but my impatience has been seven times disappointed. At length, however, on the eighth time of going, I received it; and it was no sooner put into my hands, than, without staying to pay the postage, even without asking what it

came to, or speaking a word to any body, I ran with it out of doors; and, as if I had been out of my senses passed by the door of my lodgings, though it stood open before me, and traversed a number of streets that I knew nothing of, till in about half an hour I found myself at the farther end of Paris. I was then obliged to take a hackney coach in order to get the more speedily home, which is the first time I have made use of those conveniences in a morning; indeed it is with regret I use them even in an afternoon, to pay some distant visits; for my legs are good, and I should be sorry that any improvement in my circumstances should make me neglect the use of them.

When I was seated in the coach, I was a good deal perplexed with my packet; as you had laid your injunctions on me to open it no where but at home. Besides, I was unwilling to be subject to any interruption in opening the packet, and indulging myself in that exquisite satisfaction, I find in every thing that comes from you. I held it therefore with an impatience and curiosity which I could scarce contain: endeavouring to discover its contents through the covers, by pressing it every way with my hands; from the continual motions of which you would have thought the packet contained fire, and burned the ends of my fingers. Not but that from its size, weight, and the contents of your former letter, I had some suspicion; but then, how could I conceive you to have found either the opportunity or the artist? but what I then could not conceive, is one of the miracles of almighty love: the more it surpasses my conception, the more it enchants my heart, and one of the greatest pleasures it gives me arises from my ignorance in the manner in which you could effect it.

Arrived at length at my lodgings, I flew to my chamber, locked the door, threw myself, out of breath, into a chair, and with a trembling hand broke open the seal. ’Twas then, Eloisa, I felt the first effect of this powerful talisman. The palpitations of my heart increased at every paper I unfolded; till coming to the last, I was forced to stop and take breath a moment, before I could open it. It is open——my

suggestions are true,——it is so,——it is the portrait of Eloisa.——O , my love! your divine image is before me; I gaze with rapture on your charms! my lips, my heart, pay them the first homage, my knees bend;——Again, my eyes are ravished with thy heavenly beauties. How immediate, how powerful, is their magical effect! no Eloisa, it requires not, as you pretend, a quarter of an hour to make itself perceived; a minute, an instant suffices, to draw from my breast a thousand ardent sighs, and to recall, with thy image, the remembrance of my past happiness. Ah! why is the rapture of having such a treasure in possession allayed with so much bitterness? how lively is the representation it gives me of days that are no more! I gaze on the portrait, I think I see Eloisa, and enjoy in imagination those delightful moments, whose remembrance imbitters my present hours; and which heaven in its anger bestowed on me only to take them away. Alas! the next instant undeceives me; the pangs of absence throb with increased violence, after the agreeable delusion is vanished, and I am in the fate of those miserable wretches, whose tortures are remitted only to render them the more cruel. Heavens! what flames have not my eager eyes darted on this unexpected object! how has the sight of it roused in me those impetuous emotions, which used to be effected by your presence! O, my Eloisa, were it possible for this talisman to affect your senses with the phrenzy and illusion of mine——But why is it not possible? why may not those impressions, which the mind darts forth with such rapidity, reach as far as Eloisa? Ah, my charming friend! wherever you are, or however you are employed, at the time I am now writing, at the time your portrait receives the same homage I pay to the idol of my soul, do you not perceive your charming face bedewed with tears? do you not sympathize with me in love and sorrow? do you not feel the ardour of a lover’s kisses on your lips, your cheeks, your breast? do you not glow all over with the flame imparted from my burning lips?——Ha! what’s that?——some body knocks——I will hide my treasure——an impertinent breaks in upon me,——accursed be the cruel intruder, for interrupting me in transports so

delightful, may he never be capable of love,——or may he be doomed to pine in absence, like me.

Letter LXXXVIII. To Mrs. Orbe.

It is to you, dear cousin, I am to give an account of the French opera; for, although you have not mentioned it in your own letters, and Eloisa has kept your secret in hers, I am not at a loss to whom to attribute that piece of curiosity. I have been once at the opera to satisfy myself, and twice to oblige you, but am in hopes, however, this letter will be my excuse for going no more. If you command me, indeed, I can bear it again; I can suffer, I can sleep there, for your service; but to remain awake and attentive is absolutely impossible.

But, before I tell you what I think of this famous theatre, I will give you an account of what they say of it here; the opinion of the connoisseurs may perhaps rectify mine, where I happen to be mistaken. The French opera passes at Paris for the most pompous, the most delightful, the most wonderful entertainment that was ever effected by the united efforts of the human genius. It is said to be the most superb monument of the magnificence of Louis the fourteenth. In fact, every one is not so much at liberty, as you imagine, to give his opinion on so grave a subject. Every thing may be made a point of dispute here, except music and the opera; but with respect to these, it may be dangerous not to dissemble one’s thoughts, as the French music is supported by an inquisition no less arbitrary than severe. Indeed the first lesson which strangers are taught, is, that foreigners universally allow that nothing in the whole world is so fine as the opera at Paris. The truth is, discreet people are silent upon this topic, because they dare not laugh, except in private.

It must be allowed, however, that they represent at the opera, at a vast expense, not only all the wonderful things in nature, but many others still more wonderful, and which nature never produced. For my part, I cannot help thinking Mr. Pope meant this theatre, where he said, one might see there, mixed in one scene of confusion,

gods, devils, monsters, kings, shepherds, fairies, madness, joy, a wild-fire, a jig, a battle, and a ball.

This assemblage, so magnificent and well conducted, is regarded by the spectators as if all the things and characters exhibited were real. On seeing the representation of a heathen temple, they are seized with a profound reverence; and, if the goddess be at all pretty, half the men in the pit are immediately pagans.

Here the audience is not so nice as at the French comedy. Those very spectators, who could not there consider the player as the character he represented, cannot, at the opera consider him any otherwise. It seems as if they were shocked at a national deception, and could give into nothing but what was grossly absurd; or perhaps they can more easily conceive players to be gods than heroes. Jupiter being of another nature, people may think of him as they please; but Cato was a man, and how few men are there, who, to judge from themselves, have any reason to think such a man as Cato ever existed.

This opera is not composed, therefore, as in other places, of a company of mercenaries, hired to furnish out an entertainment for the public. It is true, they are paid by the public, and it is their business to attend the opera: but the nature of it is quite changed by its becoming a royal academy of music, a sort of sovereign tribunal that judges without appeal in its own cause, and is not very remarkable for justice and integrity. Thus you see, how much in some countries the essence of things depends on mere words, and how a respectable title may do honour to that which least deserves it.

The members of this illustrious academy are not degraded by their profession: in revenge, however, they are excommunicated, which is directly contrary to the custom of all other countries: but, perhaps, having had their choice, they had rather live honourably and be damned, than go, as plebeians, vulgarly to heaven. I have seen a modern chevalier, on the French theatre, as proud of the profession of a

player, as the unfortunate Laberius was formerly mortified at it, although the latter was forced into it by the commands of Caesar, and recited only his own works. [34] But then our degraded ancient could not afterwards take his place in the circus among the Roman knights; whilst the modern one found his every day at the French comedy, among the first nobility in the kingdom. And I will venture to say, never did they talk at Rome with so much respect, of the majesty of the Roman people, as they do at Paris, of the majesty of the opera.

This is what I have gathered chiefly from conversation about this splendid entertainment; I will now relate to you what I have seen of it myself.

Imagine to yourself the inside of a large box, about fifteen feet wide, and long in proportion: this box is the stage; on each side are placed screens, at different distances, on which the objects of the scene are coarsely painted. Beyond there is a great curtain, bedaubed in the same manner; which extends from one side to the other, and is generally cut through, to represent caves in the earth, and openings in the heavens, as the perspective requires. So that, if any person, in walking behind the scenes, should happen to brush against the curtain, he might cause an earthquake so violent as to shake——our sides with laughing. The skies are represented by a parcel of bluish rags, hung up with lines and poles, like wet linen at the washer-woman's. The sun, for he is represented here sometimes, is a large candle in a lanthorn. The chariots of the gods and goddesses are made of four bits of wood, nailed together in the form of a square, and hung up by a strong cord, like a swing: across the middle is fastened a board, on which the deity sits a straddle; and in the front of it hangs a piece of coarse canvas, bedaubed with paint, to represent the clouds that attend on this magnificent car. The bottom of this machine is illuminated by two or three stinking, unsnuffed candles, which, as often as the celestial personage bustles about and shakes his swing, smoke him deliciously, with incense worthy such a divinity.

As these chariots are the most considerable machines of the opera, you may judge by them of the rest. A troubled sea is made of long rollers covered with canvas or blue paper, laid parallel and turned by the dirty understrappers of the theatre. Their thunder is a heavy cart, which rumbles over the floor'd ceiling, and is not the least affecting instrument of their agreeable music. The flashes of lightning are made by throwing powdered rosin into the flame of a link; and the falling thunderbolt is a cracker at the end of a squib.

The stage is provided with little square trap doors; which, opening on occasion, give notice that the infernal demons are coming out of the cellar. And when they are to be carried up into the air, they substitute dexterously in their room little devils of brown canvas stuffed with straw, or sometimes real chimney-sweepers, that are drawn up by ropes, and ride triumphant through the air till they majestically enter the clouds, and are lost among the dirty rags I mentioned. But what is really tragical is, that when the tackle is not well managed, or the ropes happen to break, down come infernal spirits and immortal gods together, and break their limbs and sometimes their necks. To all this I shall add their monsters; which certainly make some scenes very pathetic, such as their dragons, lizards, tortoises, crocodiles, and great toads, all which stalk or crawl about the stage with a threatening air, and put one in mind of the temptation of St. Anthony: every one of these figures being animated by a looby of a Savoyard, that has not sense enough to play the brute.

Thus you see, cousin, in what consists, in a great degree, the splendid furniture of the opera; at least, thus much I could observe from the pit, with the help of my glass; for you must not imagine these expedients are much hid, or produce any great illusion: I only tell you here what I saw, and what every other unprejudiced spectator might have seen as well as myself. I was told, nevertheless, that a prodigious quantity of machinery is employed to effect all these motions, and was several times offered a sight of it; but I was never curious to see in what manner extraordinary efforts were made to be productive of insignificant effects.

The number of people engaged in the service of the opera is inconceivable. The orchestra and chorus together consist of near an hundred persons: there is a multitude of dancers, every part being doubly and triply supplied, [35] that is to say, there is always one or two inferior actors ready to take the place of the principal, and who are paid for doing nothing, till the principal is pleased to do nothing in his turn, and which is seldom long before it happens. After a few representations, the chief actors, who are personages of great consequence, honour the public no more with their presence in that piece, but give up their parts to their substitutes, or to the substitutes of those substitutes. They receive always the same money at the door, but the spectator does not always meet with the same entertainment. Every one takes a ticket, as he does in the lottery, without knowing what will be his prize; but, be what it will, no body dares complain; for you are to know, that the honourable members of this academy owe the public no manner of respect, it is the public which owes it to them.

I will say nothing to you of their music, because you are acquainted with it. But you can have no idea of the frightful cries and hideous bellowings, with which the theatre resounds during the representation. The actresses, throwing themselves into convulsions as it were, rend their lungs with squeaking: in the mean time, with their fists clenched against their stomach their heads thrown back, their faces red, their veins swelled, and their breasts heaving, one knows not which is most disagreeably affected, the eye or the ear. Their actions make those suffer as much who see them, as their singing does those who hear them; and yet what is inconceivable is, that these howlings are almost the only thing the audience applaud. By the clapping of their hands, one would imagine them a parcel of deaf people, delighted to be able to hear the voice now and then strained to the highest pitch, and that they strove to encourage the actors to repeat their efforts. For my part, I am persuaded that they applaud the squeaking of an actress at the opera, for the same reason as they do the tricks of a tumbler or posture-master at the fair: it is displeasing and painful to see

them; one is in pain while they last, but we are so glad to see all pass off without any accident, that we willingly give them applause.

Think how well this manner of singing is adapted to express all that Quinault has written the most soft and tender. Imagine the muses, loves and graces, imagine Venus herself expressing her sentiments in this delicate manner, and judge of the effects. As to their devils, let us leave their music to something infernal enough to suit it. As also that of their magicians, conjurers and witches; all which, however meets with the greatest applause at the French opera.

To these ravishing sounds, as harmonious as sweet, we may very deservedly join those of the orchestra. Conceive to yourself a continual clashing of jarring instruments, attended with the drawling and perpetual groans of the base, a noise the most doleful and insupportable that I ever heard in my life, and which I could never bear a quarter of an hour together without being seized with a violent head-ach. All this forms a species of psalmody, which has commonly neither time nor tune. But when, by accident they hit on an air a little lively, the feet of the audience are immediately in motion, and the whole house thunders with their clattering. The pit in particular, with much pains and a great noise, always imitate a certain performer in the orchestra. [36] Delighted to perceive for a moment that cadence which they so seldom feel, they strain their ears, voice, hands, feet, and in short, their whole body to keep that time, which is every moment ready to escape them. Instead of this the Italians and Germans, who are more easily affected with the measures of their music, pursue them without any effort, and have never any occasion to beat time. At least, Regianino has often told me, that, at the opera in Italy, where the music is so affecting and lively, you will never see, or hear, in the orchestra or among the spectators, the least motion of either hands or feet. But in this country, every thing serves to prove the dullness of their musical organs; their voices are harsh and unpleasing, their tones affected and drawling, and their transitions hard and dissonant: there is no cadence nor melody in their l=songs; their martial instruments,

the fifes of the infantry, the trumpets of their cavalry, their horns, their hautboys, the ballad-singers in the streets, and the fiddlers in their public-houses, all have something so horribly grating as to shock the most indelicate ear. [37] All talents are not bestowed on the same men, and the French in general are of all the people in Europe those of the least aptitude for music. Lord B—— pretends that the English have as little, but the difference is, that they know it, and care nothing about the matter, whereas the French give up a thousand just pretensions, and will submit to be censured in any other point whatever, sooner than admit they are not the first musicians in the world. There are even people at Paris who look upon the cultivation of music as the concern of the state, perhaps because the improvement of Timotheus's lyre was so at Sparta. However this be, the opera here may, for aught I know, be a good political institution, in that it pleases persons of taste no better. But to return to my description.

The ballets, which are the most brilliant parts of the opera, considered of themselves, afford a pleasing entertainment, as they are magnificent and truly theatrical; but, as they enter into the composition of the piece, it is in that light we must consider them.

You remember the operas of Quinault; you know in what manner the diversions are there introduced; it is much the same or rather worse with his successors. In every act, the action of the piece is stopt short, just at the most interesting period, by an interlude which is represented before the actors, who are seated on the stage while the audience in the pit are kept standing. From these interruptions it frequently happens, that the characters of the piece are quite forgotten, and always that the spectators are kept looking at actors that are looking at something else. The fashion of these interludes is very simple. If the prince is in a good humour, it partakes of the gaiety of his disposition, and is a dance; if he is displeased, it is contrived in order to bring him to temper again, and it is also a dance. I know not whether it be the fashion at court to make a ball for the entertainment of the king, when he is out of humour; but this I know, with respect to our opera kings, that one cannot

sufficiently admire their stoical firmness and philosophy, in sitting so tranquil to see comic dances and attend to songs, while the fate of their kingdoms, crowns and lives, is sometimes determined behind the scenes. But they have besides many other occasions for the introduction of dances; the most solemn actions of human life are here performed in a dance. The parsons dance, the soldiers dance, the gods dance, the devils dance, the mourners dance at their funerals, and in short all their characters dance upon all occasions.

Dancing is thus the fourth of the fine arts employed in the constitution of the lyric drama: the other three are arts of imitation; but what is imitated in dancing? nothing.——It is therefore foreign to the purpose, for what business is there for minuets or rigadoons in a tragedy? nay, I will venture to say, dancing would be equally absurd in such compositions, though something was imitated by it: for of all the dramatic unities the most indispensable is that of language or expression; and an opera made up partly of singing, partly of dancing, is even more ridiculous than that in which they sing half French half Italian.

Not content to introduce dancing as an essential part of the composition, they even attempt to make it the principal, having operas, which they call ballets, and which so badly answer their title, that dancing is no less out of character in them than in all the rest. Most of these ballets consist of as many different subjects as acts; which subjects are connected together by certain meta-physical relations, of which the spectator would never form the least suspicion or conjecture, if the author did not take care to advise him of it in the prologue. The seasons, ages, senses, elements, are the subjects of a dance; but I should be glad to know what propriety there is in all this, or what ideas can by this means be conveyed to the mind of the spectator? some of them again are purely allegorical, as the carnival, the folly, and are the most intolerable of all, because with a good deal of wit and finesse, they contain neither sentiment, description, plot, business, nor any thing that can either interest the audience, set off the music to advantage, flatter the passions, or heighten the

illusion. In these pretended ballets the action of the piece is performed in singing, the dancers continually finding occasion to break in upon the singers, tho' without meaning or design.

The result of all this, however, is, that these ballets, being less interesting than their tragedies, their interruptions are little remarked. Were the piece itself more affecting, the spectator would be more offended; but the one defect serves to hide the other, and, in order to prevent the spectators being tired with the dancing, the authors artfully contrive it so that they may be more heartily tired with the piece itself.

This would lead me insensibly to make some queries into the true composition of the lyric drama, but there would be too prolix to be compressed in this letter; I have therefore written a little dissertation on that subject, which you will find inclosed, and may communicate to Regianino. I shall only add, with respect to the French opera, that the greatest fault I observed in it is a false taste for magnificence; whence they attempt to represent the marvellous, which, being only the object of imagination, is introduced with as much propriety in an epic poem, as it is ridiculously attempted on the stage. I should hardly have believed, had not I seen it, that there could be found artists weak enough to attempt an imitation of the chariot of the sun, or spectators so childish as to go to see it. Bruyere could not conceive how so fine a sight as the opera could be tiresome. For my part, who am no Bruyere, I can conceive it very well, and will maintain, that to every man who has a true taste for the fine arts, the French music, their dancing, and the marvellous of their scenery put together, compose the most tiresome representation in the world. After all, perhaps the French do not deserve a more perfect entertainment, especially with respect to the performance not because they want ability to judge of what is good, but because the bad pleases them better. For, as they had rather censure than applaud, the pleasure of criticizing compensates for every defect, and they had rather laugh after they get home, than be pleased with the piece during the representation.

Letter LXXXIX. From Eloisa.

Yes, I see it well: Eloisa is still happy in your love, the same fire that once sparkled in your eyes, glows throughout your last letter, and kindles all the ardour of mine. Yes, my friend, in vain doth fortune separate us; let our hearts press forward to each other, let us preserve by such a communication, their natural warmth against the chilling coldness of absence and despair; and let every thing that tends to loosen the ties of our affections, serve only to draw them closer and bind them fast.

You will smile at my simplicity, when I tell you, that since the receipt of your letter, I have experienced something of those charming effects therein mentioned, and that the jest of the talisman, although purely my own invention, is turned upon myself and become serious. I am seized a hundred times a day, when alone, with a fit of trembling, as if you were before me. I imagine you are gazing on my portrait, and am foolish enough to feel, in conceit, the warmth of those embraces, the impression of those kisses you bestow on it. Sweet illusion! charming effects of fancy; the last resources of the unhappy. Oh, if it be possible, be ye to us a pleasing reality! ye are yet something to those who are deprived of real happiness.

As to the manner in which I obtained the portrait, it was indeed the contrivance of love; but, believe me, if mine could work miracles, it would not have made choice of this. I will let you into the secret. We had here some time ago a miniature painter, on his return from Italy: he brought letters from Lord B——, who perhaps had some view in sending him. Mr. Orbe embraced this opportunity to have a portrait of my cousin; I was desirous of one also. In return, she and my mother would each have one of me, of which the painter at my request took secretly a second copy. Without troubling myself about the original, I chose of the three that which I thought the most perfect likeness, with a design to send it to you. I made but little scruple, I own, of this piece of deceit; for, as to the likeness of the portrait, a little more or less can make no great difference with my mother and cousin but the homage you might

pay to any other resemblance than mine, would be a kind of infidelity, by so much the more dangerous, as my picture might be handsomer than me; and I would not, on any account, that you should nourish a passion for charms I do not possess. With respect to the drapery, I could have liked to have been not so negligently dressed; but I was not heard, and my father himself insisted on the portrait's being finished as it is. Except the head-dress, however, nothing of the habit was taken from mine, the painter having dressed the picture as he thought proper, and ornamented my person with the works of his own imagination.

Letter XC. To Eloisa.

I must talk to you still, my dear Eloisa, of your portrait; no longer, however, in that rapturous strain which the first sight of it inspired; and with which you yourself were so much affected; but, on the contrary, with the regret of a man deceived by false hopes, and whom nothing can recompense for what he has lost. Your portrait, like yourself, is both graceful and beautiful; it is also a tolerable likeness, and is painted by the hand of a master; but to be satisfied with it I ought never to have known you.

The first fault I find in it is, that it resembles you, and yet is not yourself; that it has your likeness, and is insensible. In vain the painter thought to copy your features; where is that sweetness of sentiment that enlivens them, and without which, regular and beautiful as they are, they are nothing? your heart, Eloisa, no painting can imitate. This defect, I own, should be attributed to the imperfection of the art; but it is the fault of the artist not to have been exact in every thing that depended on himself. He has, for instance, brought the hair too forward on the temples, which gives the forehead a less agreeable and delicate air. He has also forgotten two or three little veins, seen through the transparent skin in winding branches of purple, resembling those on the Iris we once stood admiring in the gardens of Clarens. The colouring of the cheeks is also too near the eyes, and is not softened into that glowing blush of the rose toward the lower part of the face, which distinguishes the

lovely original. One would take it for an artificial rouge, plastered on like the carmine of the French ladies. Nor is this defect a small one, as it makes the eyes appear less soft, and its looks more bold.

But pray what has he done with those dimples, wherein the little cupids lurk at the corners of your mouth; and which in my fortunate days I used to stifle with kisses? he has not given half their beauty to these charming lips. He has not given the mouth that agreeable serious turn, which changing in an instant into a smile, ravishes the heart with inconceivable enchantment, inspires it with an instantaneous rapture which no words can express. It is true, your portrait cannot pass from the serious to a smile. This is, alas! the very thing of which I complain. To paint all your charms you should be drawn every instant of your life.

But to pass over the injustice the painter has done you, in overlooking your beauties, he has done you more, in having omitted your defects. He has left out that almost imperceptible mole under your right eye, as well as that on the right side of your neck. He has not——heavens! was the man a statue? he has forgot the little scar under your lip; he has made your hair and eyebrows of the same colour: which they are not. Your eye-brows are more upon the chestnut, and your hair rather of the ash-colour.

Bionda testa occhi azurri e bruno ciglio.

He has made the lower part of the face exactly oval; not observing the small hollow between your cheeks and chin, which makes their out-lines less regular and more agreeable. These are the most palpable defects, but he has omitted several others, for which I owe him no goodwill: for I am not only in love with your beauties, but with Eloisa herself, just as she is. If you would not be obliged for any charm to the pencil, I would not have you lose by it the smallest defect; my heart can never be affected by charms that are not your own.

As to the drapery, I shall take the more notice of it, as, whether in a dishabille or

otherwise, I have always seen you dressed with more taste than you are in the portrait: the head-dress is too large; you will say it is composed only of flowers. That's true; but there are too many. Don't you remember the ball, at which you were dressed like a country girl, and your cousin told me I danced like a philosopher? You had then no other head-dress than your long tresses, turned up and fastened at top with a golden bodkin, in the manner of the villagers of Berne. No, the sun glittering in all its radiance displays not half that lustre, with which you then engaged the eyes and hearts of the beholders; and there is no one who saw you that day, that can ever forget you during his whole life. It is thus, my Eloisa, your head ought to have been dressed. It is your charming hair that should adorn your face, and not those spreading roses. Tell my cousin, for I discover her choice and direction, that the flowers with which she has thus covered and profaned your tresses, are in no better taste than those she gathers in Adonis. One might overlook them did they serve as an ornament to beauty, but I cannot permit them to hide it.

With respect to the bust, it is singular that a lover should be more nice in this particular than a father; but, to say the truth, I think you are too carelessly dressed. The portrait of Eloisa should be modest as herself. These hidden charms should be sacred to love. You say the painter drew them from his imagination. I believe it; indeed, I believe it. Had he caught the least glimpse of thine, his eyes would have gazed on them for ever, but his hand would not have attempted to paint them: why was it necessary the rash artist should form them in imagination? this was not only an offence against decency, but I will maintain it also to be want of taste. Yes, your countenance is too modest to support the disorder of your breast; it is plain that one of these objects ought to hinder the other from being seen: it is the privilege of love alone to see both together, and when its glowing hand uncovers the charms that modesty conceals, the sweet confusion of your eyes shews that you forget not that you expose them.

Such are the criticisms that a continual attention has occasioned me to make on your

portrait: in consequence of which I have formed a design to alter it, agreeable to my own taste. I have communicated my intentions to an able master, and from what he has already done, I hope to see you soon more like yourself. For fear of spoiling the picture, however, we try our alterations first on a copy, which I have made him take; and make them in the original only when we are quite sure of their effect. Although I design but indifferently, my artist cannot help admiring the subtilty of my observations, but he does not know that love, who dictates them, is a greater master than he. I seem to him also sometimes very whimsical: he tells me I am the first lover that ever chose to hide objects which others think cannot be too much exposed; and when I answer him, it is in order to have a full view of you, that I dress you up with so much care, he stares at me, as if he thought me a fool. Ah! my Eloisa, how much more affecting would be your portrait, if I could but find out the means to display it in your mind, as well as your face; to paint at once your modesty and your charms! what would not the latter gain by such an amendment! at present those only are seen which the painter imagined, and the ravished spectator thinks them such as they are. I know not what secret enchantment is about your person, but every thing that touches you seems to partake of its virtue: one need only perceive the corner of your garment to revere the wearer of it. One perceives in your dress how the veil of the graces affords a covering to the model of beauty; and the taste of your modest apparel displays to the mind all those charms it conceals.

Letter XCI. To Eloisa.

Oh, Eloisa! you whom once I could call mine, though now I profane your virtuous name! my pen drops from my trembling hand, I blot the paper with my tears, I can hardly trace the first words of a letter, which ought never to be written; alas! I can neither speak nor be silent. Come, thou dear and respectable image of my love, come, purify and strengthen a heart depressed with shame and torn to pieces by remorse. Support my resolution that fails me, and give my contrition the power to

avow the involuntary crime into which the absence of Eloisa has plunged me.

Oh! Eloisa, how contemptible will you think me! and yet you cannot hold me in greater contempt than I do myself. Abject as I may seem in your eyes, I am yet a hundred times more so in my own; for, in reflecting on my own demerits, what mortifies me most is to see, to feel you still in my heart, in a place henceforward so little worthy of your image and to think that the remembrance of the truest pleasures of love could not prevent me from falling into a snare that had no lure, from being led into a crime that had presented no temptation.

Such is the excess of my confusion, that I am afraid, even in recurring to your clemency, lest the perusal of the lines in which I confess my guilt should offend you. Let your purity and chastity forgive me a recital which should have been spared your modesty, were it not the means to expiate, in some degree, my infidelity. I know I am unworthy of your goodness; I am a mean, despicable wretch, but I will not be an hypocrite or deceive you, for I had rather you should deprive me of your love, and even life itself, than to impose on Eloisa for a moment. Lest I should be tempted, therefore, to seek excuses to palliate my crime, which will only render me the more criminal, I will confine myself to an exact relation of what has happened to me; a relation that shall be as sincere as my repentance, which is all I shall say in my defence.

I had commenced acquaintance with some officers in the guards, arid other young people among my countrymen, in whom I found a good innate disposition, which I was sorry to see spoiled by the imitation of I know not what false airs, which nature never designed for them. They laughed at me in their turn, for preserving in Paris the simplicity of our ancient Helvetian manners; and, construing my maxims and behaviour into an indirect censure of theirs, resolved to make me a convert to their own practices at all hazards. After several attempts which did not succeed, they made another too well concerted to fail of success. Yesterday morning they came to

me, with a proposal to go with the lady of a certain colonel they mentioned, who, from the report, they were pleased to say, of my good sense, had a mind to be acquainted with me. Fool enough to give into this idle story, I represented to them the propriety of first making her a visit; but they laughed at my punctilios, telling me the frankness of a Swiss did not at all agree with such formality, and that so much ceremony would only serve to give her a bad opinion of me. At nine o'clock then in the evening, we waited on the lady. She came out to receive us on the stair-case, through an excess of civility which I had never seen practised before. Having entered the apartment, I observed a servant lighting up pieces of old wax candles over the chimney, and over all an air of preparation which did not at all please me. The mistress of the house appeared handsome, tho' a little past her prime: there were also several other women with her much about the same age and figure; their dress, which was rich enough, had more of finery in it than taste; but I have already observed to you that this is not a sure sign by which to judge of the condition of the women of this country.——The first compliments were made as usual, custom teaching one to cut them short, or to turn them into pleasantry, before they grew tiresome. Something unusual however appeared as soon as our discourse became general and serious. I thought the ladies seemed to wear an air of restraint as if it were not familiar to them, and now, for the first time since I have been at Paris, I saw women at a loss to support a rational conversation. To find an easy topic, they brought up at length their family affairs, and as I knew none of them, I had little share in the conversation. Never before did I hear so much talk of the colonel, and the colonel; which not a little surprized me, in a country where it is the custom to distinguish people rather by their names than by their profession, and in which almost every man of rank in the army has besides some other title of distinction.

This affectation of dignity soon gave way to a behaviour more natural to them: they began to talk low, and, running insensibly into an air of indecent familiarity, they laughed and whispered every time they looked at me; while the lady of the house

asked me the situation of my heart, with a certain boldness of manner, not at all adapted to make a conquest of it. The table was spread, and that freedom which seems to make no distinction of persons, but generally puts every one without design in the proper place, fully convinced me what sort of company I was in. But it was too late to recede: putting my confidence therefore in my aversion, I determined to apply that evening to observation, and to employ in the study of that order of women, the only opportunity I might ever have. Little, however, was the fruit of my attention: I found them so insensible to their present situation, so void of apprehensions for the future, and, excepting the tricks of their profession, so stupid in all respects, that the contempt into which they sunk in my opinion, soon effaced the pity I first entertained for them. In speaking even of pleasure itself, I saw they were incapable of feeling it. They appeared rapacious after every thing that could gratify their avarice; and, excepting what regarded their interest, I heard not a word drop from their lips that came from the heart. I was astonished to think how men, not abandoned like themselves, could support so disgustful a society. It were, in my opinion, the most cruel punishment that could be inflicted, to oblige them to keep such company.

We sat a long while at supper, and the company at length began to grow noisy. For want of love, the wine went briskly round to inflame the guests: the discourse was not tender but immodest, and the women strove by the disorder of their dress to excite those passions which should have caused that disorder. All this had a very different effect upon me, and their endeavours to reduce me only heightened my disgust. Sweet modesty! said I to myself, it is thine to inspire the sublimest raptures love can bestow! how impotent are female charms when thou hast left them! if the sex did but know thy power, what pains would they not take to preserve thee inviolate; if not for the sake of virtue, at least for their interest! but modesty is not to be assumed. There is not a more ridiculous artifice in the world than that of the prude who affects it. What a difference, thought I, is there between the impudence of

these creatures, with their licentious expressions, and those timid and tender looks, those conversations so full of modesty, so delicate, so sentimental, which——but I dare not finish the sentence; I blush at the comparison.——I reproach myself, as if it were criminal, with the delightful remembrance of her who pursues me wherever I go. But how shall I now dare to think of her?——alas! it is impossible to eraze your image from my heart: let me then strive to conceal it there.

The noise, the discourse I heard, together with the objects that presented themselves to my view, insensibly inflamed me; my two neighbours plied me incessantly with wine. I found my head confused, and, though I drank all the while a good deal of water in my wine, I now took more water, and at length determined to drink water only. It was then I perceived the pretended water set before me was white wine, and that I had drank it from the first. I made no complaints, as they would only have subjected me to raillery, but gave over drinking entirely. But it was too late, the mischief was already done, and the intoxicating effects of what I had already drank soon deprived me of the little sense that remained. I was surprized, in recovering my senses, to find myself in a retired closet, locked in the embraces of one of those creatures I had supped with, and in the same instant had the mortification to find myself as criminal as I could possibly be.

I have finished this horrible relation. Would to heaven it might never more offend your eyes, nor torture my memory. O Eloisa! it is from you I expect my doom; I demand, I deserve, your severity. Whatever be my punishment it will be less cruel than the remembrance of my crime.

Letter XCII. The Answer.

You may be easy as to the fear of having offended me. Your letter rather excited my grief than my anger. It is not me, it is your-self you have offended, by a debauch in which the heart had no share. I am at this, however, but the more afflicted; for I had much rather you should affront Eloisa than debase yourself; and the injury you have

done to yourself is that only which I cannot forgive.——To regard only the fault of which you accuse yourself, you are not so culpable as you imagine: I can reproach you on that account only with imprudence. But what I blame you for, is of a greater moment, and proceeds from a failing, that has taken deeper root than you imagine, and which it is the part of a friend to lay before you.

Your primary error lies in having at first taken a wrong path, in which, the farther you advance the more you will go astray; and I tremble to see that, unless you tread back the steps you have taken, you are inevitably lost. You have suffered yourself to be led insensibly into the very snares I dreaded. The more gross and palpable allurements of vice I knew could not seduce you, but the bad company you keep, hath begun by deluding your reason, to corrupt your morals, and hath already made the first essay of its maxims on your behaviour.

You have told me nothing, it is true, in particular, of the acquaintance you have made in Paris; but it is easy to judge of your companions by your letters, and of those who point out the objects, by your manner of describing them. I have not concealed from you how little satisfied I have been with your remarks; you have nevertheless continued them in the same stile, which has only increased my displeasure. In fact, one would rather take your observations for the sarcasms of some petit-maitre, than for the animadversions of a philosopher; and it is hardly possible to believe them written by the same hand that wrote your former letters. Do you think to study mankind by the confined behaviour of a few societies of finical prudes and other idlers? do none of your remarks penetrate beyond the exterior and changeable varnish which ought hardly to have engaged your attention? was it worthwhile to collect with so much care those peculiarities of manners and decorum, which ten years hence will no longer exist; while the unalterable springs of the human heart, the constant and secret workings of the passions have escaped your researches? let us turn to your letter concerning women: in what have you instructed me to know them? you have given indeed a description of their dress, which all the

world might be as well acquainted with; and have made some malicious observations on the address and behaviour of some, as also of the irregularities of a few others, which you have unjustly attributed to them all, as if no person of virtuous sentiments was to be found in Paris, and every woman flaunted about there in her chariot, and sat in the front boxes. Have you told me any thing that can throw real light upon their true character, taste or maxims? and is it not strange, that in describing the women of a country, a man of sense should omit what regards their domestic concerns and education of their children? [38] the only circumstance in that letter characteristic of its author, is the apparent satisfaction with which you commend the goodness of their natural disposition, which, I must confess, doth honour to yours. And yet, what have you done more in that than barely justice to the sex in general? for in what country are not gentleness of manners and compassion for the distressed, the amiable qualities of the women?

What a difference had there been in the picture, if you had described what you had seen, rather than what you had heard; or, at least, if you had only consulted people of sense and solidity on the occasion? was it for you, who have taken so much pains to cultivate your genius, to throw away your time deliberately in the company of a parcel of inconsiderate young fellows, who take pleasure in the society of persons of virtue and understanding, not to imitate, but only to seduce and corrupt them. You lay a stress on the equality of age, with which you should have nothing to do, and forgot that of sense and knowledge, which is more peculiarly essential. In spite of your violent passions, you are certainly the most pliable man in the world; and, notwithstanding the ripeness of your judgment, permit yourself to be conducted so implicitly by those you converse with, that you cannot keep company with young people of your own age without condescending to become a mere infant in their hands. Thus you mistake in your choice of proper companions, and demean yourself in not fixing upon such as have more understanding than yourself.

I do not reproach you with having been inadvertently taken into a dishonest house;

but with having been conducted thither by a party of young officers, who ought never to have known you; or at least, whom you should never have permitted to direct your amusements. With respect to your project of making them converts to your own principles, I discover in it more zeal than prudence; if you are of too serious a turn to be their companion, you are too young to be their tutor, and you ought not to think of reforming others till there is nothing left to reform in yourself.

The next fault, which is of more moment and less pardonable, is to have passed voluntarily the evening in a place so unworthy of you, and not to have left the house the moment you knew what it was. Your excuses on this head are mean and pitiful. You say it was too late to recede, as if any decorum was necessary to be observed in such a place, or as if decorum ought ever to take place of virtue, and that it were ever too late to abstain from doing evil. As to the security you found in your aversion to the manners of such a company, I will say nothing of it; the event has shewn you how well it was founded. Speak more freely to one who so well knows how to read your heart; say, you were ashamed to leave your companions. You were afraid they would laugh at you, a momentary hiss struck you with fear, and you had rather expose yourself to the bitterness of remorse than the tartness of raillery. Do you know what a maxim you followed on this occasion? that which first vitiates every innocent mind, drowns the voice of conscience in public clamour, and represses the resolution of doing well by the fear of censure. Such a mind may overcome temptations, and yet yield to the force of bad examples, may blush at being really modest and become impudent through bashfulness, a false bashfulness that is more destructive to a virtuous mind than bad inclinations. Look well then to the security of yours; for, whatever you may pretend, the fear of ridicule which you affect to despise, prevails over you, in spite of yourself. You would sooner face a hundred dangers than one raillery, and never was seen so much timidity united to so intrepid a mind.

Not to make a parade of precepts which you know better than I, I shall content

myself with proposing a method more easy and sure perhaps than all the arguments of philosophy. This is on such occasions to make in thought a slight transposition of circumstances, to anticipate a few minutes of time. If, at that unfortunate supper, you had but fortified yourself against a moment's raillery, by the idea of the state of mind you should be in as soon as you got into the street; had you represented to yourself that inward contentment you should feel at having escaped the snares laid for you, the consciousness of having avoided the danger, the pleasure it would give you to write me an account of it, that which I should myself receive in reading it: had you, I say, called these circumstances to mind, is it to be supposed they would not have over-balanced the mortification of being laughed at for a moment; a mortification you would never have dreaded, could you but have foreseen the consequences? but what is this mortification, which gives consequence to the raillery of people for whom one has no esteem? this reflection would infallibly have saved you, in return for a moment's imaginary disgrace, much real and more durable shame, remorse and danger; it would have saved (for why should I dissemble?) your friend, your Eloisa, many tears.

You determined, you tell me, to apply that evening to your observations. What an employment! what observations! I blush for your excuses. Will you not also, when an opportunity offers, have the same curiosity to make observations on robbers in their dens? and to see the methods they take to seize their prey, and strip the unhappy passengers that fall into their hands? are you ignorant that there are objects too detestable for a man of probity to look on, and that the indignation of virtue cannot support the sight of vice?

The philosopher remarks indeed the public licentiousness which he cannot prevent; he sees it, and his countenance betrays the concern it gives him: but as to that of individuals, he either opposes it or turns away his eyes from the sight, lest he should give it a sanction by his presence. May I not ask besides what necessity there was to be eye-witness of such scenes, in order to judge of what passed, or the conversation

that was held there? for my part, I can judge more easily of the whole, from the intention and design of such a society, than from the little you tell me of it, and the idea of those pleasures that are to be found there, gives me a sufficient insight into the characters of such as go to seek them.

I know not if your commodious scheme of philosophy has already adopted the maxims, which, it is said, are established in large towns, for the toleration of such places: but I hope, at least, you are not one of those who debase themselves so much as to put them in practice, under the pretext of I know not what chimerical necessity, that is known only to men of debauched lives; as if the two sexes were in this respect of a different constitution; and, that during absence or celibacy, a virtuous man is under a necessity of indulging himself in liberties which are denied to a modest woman. But if this error does not lead you to prostitutes, I am afraid it will continue to lead your imagination astray. Alas! if you are determined to be despicable, be so at least without pretext; and add not the vice of lying to that of drunkenness. All those pretended necessities have no foundation in nature, but in the voluntary depravation of the senses. Even the fond illusions of love are refined by a chaste mind, and pollute it only when the heart is first depraved. On the contrary, chastity is its own support; the desires constantly repressed accustom themselves to remain at rest, and temptations are only multiplied by the habit of yielding to them. Friendship has made me twice overcome the reluctance I had to write on such a subject, and this shall be the last time: for on what plea can I hope to obtain that influence over you, which you have refused to virtue, to love, and to reason?

But I return to that important point, with which I began this letter; at one and twenty years of age you sent me, from the Valais, grave and judicious descriptions of men and things: at twenty-five you write me, from Paris, a pack of trifling letters, wherein good sense is sacrificed to a certain quaintness and pleasantry, very incompatible with your character. I know not how you have managed; but since you have resided among people of refined talents, yours appear to be diminished: you

profited among clowns, and have lost by the wits. This is not, however, the fault of the place you are in, but of the acquaintance you have made: for nothing requires greater judgment than to make a proper choice in a mixture of the excellent and execrable. If you would study the world, keep company with men of sense, who have known it by long experience and observations made at leisure; not with giddy-headed boys, who see only the superficies of things, and laugh at what they themselves make ridiculous. Paris is full of sensible men, accustomed to reflection, and to whom every day presents a fertile field for observation. You will never make me believe that such grave and studious persons run about, as you do, from house to house, and from club to club, to divert the women and young fellows, and turn all philosophy into chit chat. They have too much dignity thus to debase their characters, prostitute their talents, and give a sanction by their example, to modes which they ought to correct. But, if even most of them should, there are certainly many who do not, and it is those you ought to have chosen for companions.

Is it not extraordinary, that you should fall into the very same error in your behaviour, which you blame in the writings of the comic poets: from which you say one would imagine Paris was peopled only by persons of distinction. These are your constant theme, while those of your own rank escape your notice; as if the ridiculous prejudices of nobility had not cost you sufficiently dear, to make you hate them for ever; or that you thought you degraded yourself in keeping company with honest citizens and tradesmen, the most respectable order of men, perhaps in the whole country. It is in vain you endeavour to excuse yourself, in that yours are the acquaintance of Lord B——: with the assistance of these, you might easily have made others of an inferior rank. So many people are desirous to rise, that it is always easy to descend; and by your own confession the only way, to come at the true manners of a nation is to study the private life of the most numerous order among them; for to confine your observations to those who only personate assumed characters, is only to observe the actions of a company of comedians.

I would have your curiosity exerted still farther. How comes it that, in so opulent a city, the poor people are so miserable; while such extreme distress is hardly ever experienced among us, where, on the other hand, we have no examples of immense wealth? This question is, in my opinion, well worth your asking; but it is not the people you converse with that are to resolve it. It is in the splendid apartments of the rich that the novice goes to learn the manners of the world; but the man of sense and experience betakes himself to the cottages of the poor. These are the places for the detection of those iniquitous practices, that in polite circles are varnished over and hid beneath a specious shew of words. It is here that the rich and powerful, by coming to the knowledge of the basest arts of oppression, feel for the unhappy what in public they only affect. If I may believe our old officers, you will learn many things in the garrets of a fifth floor, which are buried in profound silence at the hotels, in the suburbs of St. Germain: you will find that many fine talkers would be struck dumb, if all those they have made unhappy were present to contradict their boasted pretensions to humanity.

I know the sight of misery that excites only fruitless pity is disagreeable; and that even the rich turn away their eyes from the unhappy objects to whom they refuse relief: but money is not the only thing the unfortunate stand in need of; and they are but indolent in well-doing who can exert themselves only with their purse in their hands. Consolation, advice, concern, friends, protection, there are all so many resources which compassion points out to those who are not rich, for relief of the indigent. The oppressed often stand in need only of a tongue, to make known their complaints. They often want no more than a word they cannot speak, a reason they are ashamed to give, entrance at the door of a great man which they cannot obtain. The intrepid countenance of disinterested virtue may remove infinite obstacles, and the eloquence of a man of probity make even a tyrant tremble in the midst of his guards.

If you would then act as a man, learn to descend again. Humanity, like a pure

salutary stream, flows always downwards to its level; fertilising the humble vales, while it leaves dry those barren rocks, whose threatening heads cast a frightful shade, or tumbling headlong down involve the plain in ruins.

Thus, my friend, may you make use of the past, by drawing thence instructions for your future conduct; and learn how goodness of heart may be of advantage to the understanding: whoever lives among people in office, cannot be too cautious of the corruptible maxims they inculcate; and it is only the constant exercise of their benevolence that can secure the best hearts from the contagion of ambition. Try this new kind of study: it is more worthy of you, than those you have hitherto adopted; and; believe me, as the genius is impoverished in proportion as the mind is corrupted, you will soon find, on the contrary, how much the practice of virtue elevates and improves it: you will experience how much the interest you take in the misfortunes of others will assist you in tracing their source, and will thereby learn to escape the vices that produce them.

I ought to take all the freedom with you that friendship authorises in the critical situation in which you at present appear: lest a second step towards debauchery should plunge you beyond recovery, and that, before you have time to recollect yourself. I cannot conceal from you, my friend, how much your ready and sincere confession has affected me; as I am sensible how much shame and confusion it must have cost you, and from thence how heavy this piece of ill-conduct must sit upon your heart; an involuntary crime, however, is easily forgiven and forgot. But, for the future, remember well that maxim, from which I shall never recede: he who is a second time deceived on these occasions, cannot be said to have been deceived the first.

Adieu, my friend, be careful, I conjure you, of your health; and be assured I shall not retain the least remembrance of a fault I have once forgiven.

P. S. I have seen, in the hands of Mr. Orbe, the copies of several of your letters to

Lord B——, which oblige me to retract part of the censure I have passed on the matter and manner of your observations. These letters, I must confess, treat of important subjects, and appear to be full of serious and judicious reflections. But hence it is evident, that you either treat my cousin and me disdainfully, or that you set little value on our esteem, in sending us such trivial relations as might justly forfeit it, while you transmit so much better to your friend. It is, in my opinion, doing little honour to your instructions to think your scholars unworthy to admire your talents: for you ought to affect at least, were it only through vanity, to think us capable of it.

I own political matters are not proper subjects for women: and my uncle has tired us with them so heartily, that I can easily conceive you were afraid of doing so too. To speak freely, also, these are not the topics I prefer: their utility is too foreign to affect me, and their arguments too subtle to make any lasting impression. Bound to respect the government, under which it is my fate to have been born, I give myself no trouble to enquire whether there are any better. To what end should I be instructed in the knowledge of governments, who have so little power to establish them? and why should I afflict myself with the consideration of evils too great for me to remedy, when I am surrounded with others that are in my power to redress? but, for my love to you, the interest I should not take in the subject, I should take in the writer. I collect, with a pleasing admiration, all the fruits of your genius; and, proud of merit so deserving of my heart, I beseech of love only so much wit as to make me relish yours. Refuse me not then the pleasure of knowing and admiring your works of merit. Will you mortify me so much as to give me reason to think that, if heaven should ever unite us, you will not judge your companion worthy to know and adopt your sentiments?

Letter XCIII. From Eloisa.

We are undone! all is discovered! your letters are gone! they were there last night,

and could have been taken away but to day. ’Tis my mother: it can be no body else. If my father should see them, my life is in danger. But why should he not see them, if I must renounce——Heavens! my mother sends for me, whither shall I fly? how shall I support her presence? O that I could hide myself in the centre of the earth! I tremble every limb, and am unable to move one step——the shame, the mortification, the killing reproaches——I have deserved it, I will support it all. But oh! the grief, the tears of a weeping mother——O, my heart, how piercing!——she waits for me; I can stay no longer——she will know——I must tell her all——Regianino will be dismissed. Write no more till you hear further——who knows if ever——yet I might—— what? deceive her?—— deceive my mother!—— alas! if our safety lies in supporting a falsehood, farewell, we are indeed undone!

Letter XCIV. From Mrs. Orbe.

O how you afflict all those who love you! what tears have already been shed on your account, in an unfortunate family, whose tranquillity has been disturbed by you alone! Fear to add to these tears by covering us with mourning: tremble lest the death of an afflicted parent should be the last effect of the poison you have poured into the heart of her child, and that your extravagant passion will at length fill you with eternal remorse. My friendship made me support your folly, while it was capable of being nourished by the shadow of hope; but how can it allow a vain constancy condemned by honour and reason, and which producing nothing but pain and misfortune can only deserve the name of obstinacy?

You know in what manner the secret of your passion, so long concealed from the suspicions of my aunt, has been discovered by your letters. How sensibly must such a stroke be felt by a tender and virtuous mother, less irritated against you, than against herself! she blames her blind negligence, she deplores her fatal delusion, her deepest affliction arises from her having had too high an esteem for her daughter, and her grief has filled Eloisa with a hundred times more sorrow than all her

reproaches.

My poor cousin's distress is not to be conceived. No idea can be formed of it without seeing her. Her heart seems stifled with grief, and the violence of the sensations by which it is oppressed, gives her an air of stupidity more terrifying than the most piercing cries. She continues night and day by her mother's bed, with a mournful look, her eyes fixed on the floor, and profoundly silent; yet serving her with greater attention and vivacity than ever; then instantly relapsing into a state of dejection, she appears to be no longer the same person. It is very evident, that the mother's illness supports the spirits of her daughter; and if an ardent desire to serve her did not give her strength, the extinguished lustre of her eyes, her paleness, her extreme grief, make me apprehensive she would stand in great need of the assistance she bestows. My aunt likewise perceives it, and I see from the earnestness with which she recommends Eloisa's health to my care, how her poor heart is agitated, and how much reason we have to hate you for disturbing such a pleasing union.

This anxiety is still increased by the care of hiding from a passionate father, a dangerous secret, which the mother, who trembles for the life of her daughter, would conceal. She has resolved to observe in his presence their former familiarity; but if maternal tenderness with pleasure takes advantage of this pretext, a daughter filled with confusion, dares not yield her heart to caresses which she believes feigned, and which are the more painful, in proportion as they would be engaging, could she presume to think them real. At the fond caresses of her father she looks towards her mother with an air so tender, and so humble, that she seems to say: Ah! why am I not still worthy of your tenderness!

In my frequent conversations with the baroness D'Etange I could easily find by the mildness of her reprimands, and by the tone in which she spoke of you, that Eloisa has endeavoured, to the utmost of her power, to calm her too just indignation, and that she has spared no pains to justify us both at her own expense. Even your letters,

besides a violent passion, contain a kind of excuse which has not escaped her: she reproaches you less for abusing her confidence, than she does her own weakness for putting it in your power. She has such an esteem for you, as to believe that no other man in your place would have made a better resistance; and that your faults even spring from virtue. She now, she says, perceives the vanity of that boasted probity which does not secure a person in love, who is in other respect a worthy man, from the guilt of corrupting a virtuous girl, and without scruple dishonouring a whole family, to indulge a momentary madness. But to what purpose do we recur to what is past? our present business is to conceal, under an everlasting veil, this odious mystery; to efface, if possible, the least vestige of it, and to second the goodness of heaven, which has left no visible proof of your folly. The secret is confined to six safe persons. The repose of all you have loved, the life of a mother reduced to despair, the honour of a respectable family, your own virtue, all these still depend on you, all these point out your duty: you may repair the evil you have done, you may render yourself worthy of Eloisa, and justify her fault by renouncing your pretensions. If I am not deceived in my opinion of your heart, nothing but the greatness of such a sacrifice can be equal to the love that renders it necessary. Relying on the sublimity of your sentiments, I have promised, in your name, every thing you ought to perform: dare to undeceive me, if I have presumed too much on your merit, or be now what you ought to be. It is necessary to sacrifice either your mistress or your love, and to shew yourself the most abject, or the most virtuous of mankind.

This unfortunate mother resolved to write to you: she even began the painful task. Oh! what stabs would her bitter complaints have given you! how would her affecting reproaches have wounded your heart! and her humble intreaties have filled you with shame! I have torn in pieces this distressful letter, which you would never have been able to support. I could not endure the preposterous sight of a mother humbling herself before the seducer of her child: you are worthy, at least, that we

should not use means that would rend a heart of adamant, and drive to the extremes of despair, a man of uncommon sensibility.

Were this the first effort love had demanded from you, I might doubt of the success, and hesitate as to the degree of esteem you deserve: but the sacrifice you have made to the honour of Eloisa, by quitting this country, is a pledge of that you are going to make to her repose, by putting a stop to a useless correspondence. The first efforts of virtue are always the most painful; and you will lose the advantage of that which has cost you so dear, by obstinately maintaining a vain correspondence, attended with such danger to her you love, without the least advantage to either of you; and which can only serve to prolong the torments of both. No longer doubt it; it is become absolutely necessary that this Eloisa, who was so dear to you, should be forgotten by the man she loved so well: in vain you dissemble your misfortunes, she was lost to you at the moment you left her. Or rather heaven disposed of her, before she gave herself to you; for her father had promised her to another before his return, and you too well know that the promise of that inexorable man is irrevocable. In what manner soever you regulate your conduct your desires are opposed by an inevitable fate, and you can never possess her. The only choice you have left, is either to plunge her into an abyss of misfortunes and reproach, or to honour what you have adored, and restore to her, instead of the happiness she has lost, at least, the prudence, peace, and safety, of which she has been deprived by your fatal connections.

How would you be afflicted, how would you be stung with remorse, could you contemplate the real state of this unhappy friend, and the abasement to which she is reduced by remorse and shame? how is her lustre tarnished, how languid all her gracefulness? how are all her noble and engaging sentiments unhappily absorbed in this one passion? her friendship itself is cooled; scarcely does she partake of the pleasure I feel when we meet, her sick heart is only sensible of love and grief. Alas! what is become of that fondness and sensibility, of that delicacy of taste, of that

tender interest in the pains and pleasures of others? she is still, I confess mild, generous, compassionate; the amiable habit of doing well cannot be effaced, but ’tis only a blind habit, a taste without reflection. Her actions are the same, but they are not performed with the same zeal; those sublime sentiments are weakened, that divine flame is extinguished, this angel is now no more than woman. Oh, what a noble mind have you seduced from the path of virtue!

Letter XCV. To The Baroness D’Etange.

Overwhelmed with endless sorrow, I throw myself at your feet, madam, not to shew a repentance that is out of my power; but to expiate an involuntary crime, by renouncing all that could render life a blessing. As no human passion ever equalled that inspired by your celestial daughter, never was there a sacrifice equal to that I am going to make to the most respectable of mothers; but Eloisa has too well taught me how to sacrifice happiness to duty; she has too courageously set me the example, for me, at least, in one instance, not to imitate her. Were my blood capable of removing your distress, I would shed it in silence, and complain of being able to give you only so feeble a proof of my affection; but to break the most sweet, the most pure, the most sacred bond that ever united two hearts, is alas! an effort which the whole universe could not oblige me to make, and which you alone could obtain.

Yes, I promise to live far from her, as long as you require it; I will abstain from seeing and writing to her; this I swear by your precious life, so necessary to the preservation of hers. I submit, not without horror, but without murmuring, to whatever you condescend to enjoin her and me. I will even add, that her happiness is capable of alleviating my misery, and that I shall die contented, if you give her a husband worthy of her. Oh, let him be found! and let him dare to tell me that his passion for Elois is greater than mine! In vain, may he have every thing that I want; if he has not my heart, he has nothing for Eloisa; but I have only this honest and tender heart. Alas! I have nothing more. Love, which levels all, exalts not the

person, it elevates only the sentiments. Oh, had I dared to listen to mine for you, how often, in speaking to you, madam, would my lips have pronounced the tender name of mother?

Deign to confide in oaths, which shall not be vain, and in a man who is not a deceiver. If I ever dishonour your esteem, I must first dishonour myself. My unexperienced heart knew not the danger, till it was too late to fly: I had not then learned of your daughter the cruel art she has since taught me, of conquering love with its own weapons. Banish your fears, I conjure you. Is there a person in the world to whom her repose, her felicity, her honour, is dearer than it is to me? no, my word and my heart are securities for the engagement into which I now enter, both in my own name, and in that of my lovely friend. Assure yourself that no indiscreet word shall ever pass my lips, and that I will breathe my last sigh without divulging the cause of my death. Calm therefore that affliction which consumes you, and which adds infinitely to my sufferings; dry up the tears that pierce my very soul; try to recover your health; restore to the most affectionate daughter the world ever produced, the happiness she has renounced for you; be happy; live, that she may value life; for regardless of our misfortunes, to be the mother of Eloisa, is still sufficient cause for happiness.

Letter XCVI. To Mrs. Orbe,

With the preceding Letter inclosed.

There, cruel friend! is my answer. When you read it, if you know my heart, you will burst into tears, unless yours has lost its sensibility; but no longer overwhelm me with that merciless esteem, which I so dearly purchase, and which serves but to increase my torture.

Has your barbarous hand then dared to break the gentle union formed under your eye, even almost from infancy, and which your friendship seemed to share with so much pleasure? I am now as wretched as you would have me, and as there is a

possibility of being. Do you conceive all the evil you have done? are you sensible that you have torn me from my soul? that what I have lost is beyond redemption, and that it is better to die an hundred times, than not to live for each other? why do you urge the happiness of Eloisa? can she be happy without contentment? why do you mention the danger of her mother? ah! what is the life of a mother, of mine, of yours, of hers itself, what is the existence of the whole world, to the delightful sensation by which we were united? O senseless and savage virtue! I obey thy unmeaning voice, I abhor thee, while I sacrifice all to thy dictates. What avail thy vain consolations against the distressful agonies of the soul? go, thou sullen idol of the unhappy, thou only knowest to augment their misery, by depriving them of the resources which fortune offers: yet I obey; yes, cruel friend, I obey; I will become, if possible, as insensible and savage as yourself. I will forget every thing upon earth that was dear to me. I will no longer hear or pronounce Eloisa's name, or yours. I will no more recall their insupportable remembrance. An inflexible vexation and rage shall preserve me from such misfortunes. A steady obstinacy shall supply the place of courage: I have paid too dearly for my sensibility; it were better to renounce humanity itself.

Letter XCVII. From Mrs. Orbe.

Your letter is indeed extremely pathetic, but there is so much love and virtue in your conduct, that it effaces the bitterness of your complaints: you are so generous, that I have not the courage to quarrel with you; for whatever extravagancies we may commit, if we are still capable of sacrificing all that is dear to us, we deserve praise rather than reproach; therefore, notwithstanding your abuse, you never was so dear to me, as since you have made me so fully sensible of your worth.

Return thanks to that virtue you believe you hate, and which does more for you than even your love. There is not one of us, not even my aunt, whom you have not gained by a sacrifice, the value of which she well knows. She could not read your letter

without melting into tears: she had even the weakness to shew it to her daughter; but poor Eloisa's endeavours while she read it, to stifle her sighs and tears, quite overcame her, and she fainted away.

This tender mother, whom your letters had already greatly affected, begins to perceive from every circumstance, that your hearts are of a superior mould, and that they are distinguished by a natural sympathy, which neither time nor human efforts will ever be able to efface. She who stands in such need of consolation would herself freely console her daughter, if prudence did not restrain her; and I see her too ready to become her confident, to fear that she can be angry with me. Yesterday I heard her say, even before Eloisa, perhaps a little indiscreetly, "ah! if it only depended on me!"——and tho' she said no more, I perceived by a kiss which Eloisa impressed on her hand, that she too well understood her meaning. I am even certain that she was several times inclined to speak to her inflexible husband, but whether the danger of exposing her daughter to the fury of an enraged father, or whether it was fear for herself, her timidity has hitherto kept her silent: and her illness increases so fast, that I am afraid she will never be able to execute her half-formed resolution.

However, notwithstanding the faults of which you are the cause, that integrity of heart, visible in your mutual affection, has given her such an opinion of you, that she confides in the promise you have both made, of discontinuing your correspondence, and has not taken any precaution to have her daughter more closely watched: indeed, if Eloisa makes an ill return to her confidence, she will no longer be worthy of her affection. You would both deserve the severest treatment, if you were capable of deceiving the best of mothers, and of abusing her esteem.

I shall not endeavour to revive in your mind the hopes which I myself do not entertain; but I would shew you, that the most honest, is also the wisest part, and that if you have any resource left, it is in the sacrifice which reason and honour require. Mother, relations, and friends are now all for you, except the father, who will by this

method be gained over, if any thing can do it. Whatever imprecations you may utter in the moment of despair, you have a hundred times proved to us, that there is no path more sure of leading to happiness than that of virtue. Therefore resume your courage, and be a man! be yourself. If I am well acquainted with your heart, the most cruel manner of losing Eloisa, would be by rendering yourself unworthy of her.

Letter XCVIII. From Eloisa.

She is no more! my eyes have seen hers closed for ever; my lips have received her last sigh; my name was the last word she pronounced; her last look was fixed on me. No, ’twas not life she seemed to quit; too little had I known how to render that valuable! From me alone she was torn. She saw me without a guide, and void of hope, overwhelmed by my misfortunes and my crime: to her, death was nothing; she grieved only to leave her daughter in such a state of misery. She had but too much reason. What had she to regret on earth? what could there be here below, in her eye, worth the immortal prize of patience and virtue, reserved for her in a better world? what had she to do on earth, but to lament my shame? Oh! most incomparable woman! thou now dwellest in the abode of glory and felicity! thou livest; whilst I, given up to repentance and despair, deprived for ever of thy care, of thy counsel, of thy sweet caresses, am dead to happiness, to peace, to innocence! Nothing do I feel but thy loss; nothing do I see but my reproach: my life is only pain and grief. Oh my dear, my tender mother alas, I am more dead than thou art!

Good God! to whom do I shed these tears, and vent these sighs? the cruel man who caused them, I make my confident! with him who has rendered my life unhappy, I dare to deplore my misfortunes! yes, yes, barbarous as you are, share the torments you have made me suffer. You, for whom I have plunged the poignard into a mother’s bosom, tremble at the misfortunes you have occasioned, and shudder with me at the horrid act you have committed. To what eyes dare I presume to appear, as despicable as I really am? before whom shall I degrade myself to the bent of my

remorse? to whom, but to the accomplice of my crime, can I sufficiently make it known? it is my insupportable punishment, to have no accuser but my own heart, and to see attributed to the goodness of my disposition the impure tears that flow from a bitter repentance. I saw, I trembling saw the poisonous sorrow put a period to the life of my unhappy mother. In vain did her pity for me prevent her confessing it; in vain she affected to attribute the progress of her illness to the cause by which it was produced; in vain was my cousin induced to talk in the same strain. Nothing could deceive a heart torn with regret; and to my lasting torment, I shall carry to my tomb the frightful idea of having shortened her life, to whom I am indebted for my own.

O thou, whom heaven in its anger raised up to render me guilty and unhappy, for the last time receive into thy bosom the tears thou hast occasioned! I come not, as formerly, to share with thee the grief that ought to be mutual. These are the sighs of a last adieu, which escape from me in spite of myself. It is done: the empire of love is subdued in a soul condemned wholly to despair. I will consecrate the rest of my days to lamentation for the best of mothers. To her I will sacrifice that passion which was the cause of her death: happy shall I be, if the painful conquest be sufficient to expiate my guilt! Oh, if her immortal mind penetrates into the bottom of my heart, she will know that the sacrifice I make, is not entirely unworthy of her! Share with me then an effort which you have rendered necessary. If you have any remaining respect for the memory of an union, once so dear and fatal, by that I conjure you to fly from me for ever; no more to write to me; no more to exasperate my remorse; but suffer me to forget, if possible, our former connection. May my eyes never behold you more! may I never more hear your name pronounced! may the remembrance of you never more agitate my mind! I dare still intreat, in the name of that love which ought never to have existed, that to so many causes of grief, you add not that of seeing my last request despised. Adieu then for the last time, dear and only——Ah, fool that I am, adieu for ever!

Letter XCIX. To Mrs. Orbe.

At last the veil is rent; the long illusion is vanished; all my flattering hopes are extinguished; nothing is left to feed the eternal flame, but a bitter, yet pleasing remembrance, which supports my life, and nourishes my torments with the vain recollection of a happiness that is now no more.

Is it then true, that I have tasted supreme felicity? am I the same being whose happiness was once so perfect? could any one be susceptible of such torments, who was not doomed to eternal misery? Can he who has enjoyed the blessings I have lost, be deprived of felicity, and still exist? and can such contrary sensations affect the same mind? O ye glorious and happy days, surely ye were immortal! ye were too celestial ever to perish! your whole duration was one continued extasy, by which ye were converged like eternity into a single point. I knew neither of past nor future, and I tasted at once the delights of a thousand ages. Alas! ye are vanished like a shadow! that eternity of happiness was but an instant of my life. Time now resumes his tardy pace, and slowly measures the sad remains of my existence.

To render my distress still more insupportable, my increasing affliction is cruelly aggravated by the loss of all that was dear to me. It is possible, madam, that you have still some regard for me: but you are busied by other cares, and employed in other duties. These my complaints, to which you once listened with concern, are now indiscreet. Eloisa! Eloisa herself discourages and abandons me. Gloomy remorse has banished love for ever. All is changed with respect to me; except the steadfastness of my own heart, which serves but to render my fate still more dreadful.

But, to what purpose is it to say what I am, and what I ought to be? Eloisa suffers! is it a time to think of myself? her sorrow adds bitterness to mine. Yes, I had rather she would cease to love me, and that she were happy——cease to love me!——can she——hope it?——never, never! She has indeed forbid me to see or write to her.

Alas! she removes the comforter, but never can the torment! should the loss of a tender mother deprive her of a still more tender friend? does she think to alleviate her griefs, by multiplying her misfortune? O love! can nature be revenged only at thy expense?

No, no; in vain she pretends to forget me. Can her tender heart ever be separated from mine? do I not retain it in spite of herself? are sensations like those we have experienced, to be forgotten; and can they be remembered; without feeling them still? Triumphant love was the bane of her felicity; and having conquered her passion, she will only be the more deserving of pity. Her days will pass in sorrow, tormented at once by vain regret, and vain desires, without being ever able to fulfil the obligations either of love or virtue.

Do not however imagine, that in complaining of her errors, I cease to respect them. After so many sacrifices, it is too late for me to begin to disobey. Since she commands, it is sufficient; she shall hear of me no more. Is my fate now sufficiently dreadful? renounce my Eloisa! yes, but that’s not the chief cause of my despair; it is for her I feel the keenest pangs; and her misfortunes render me more miserable than my own. You, whom she loves more than all the world, and who next to me, are best acquainted with her worth; you, my amiable friend, are the only blessing she has left: a blessing so valuable as to render the loss of all the rest supportable. Be you her recompense for the comforts of which she is deprived, and for those also which she rejects: let a sacred friendship supply at once the tenderness of a parent, and a lover, by administering every consolation that may contribute to her happiness. O let her be happy, if she can, how great soever the purchase! may she soon recover the peace of mind of which I, alas, have robbed her! I shall then be less sensible of the torment to which I am doomed. Since in my own eyes I am nothing; since it is my fate to pass my life in dying for her; let her regard me as already dead; I am satisfied, if this idea will add to her tranquillity. Heaven grant, that by your kindness she may be restored to her former excellence, and her former happiness.

Unhappy daughter! alas, thy mother is no more! this is a loss that cannot be repaired, and for which so long as she reproaches herself, she can never be consoled. Her troubled conscience requires of her this dear and tender mother; and thus the most dreadful remorse is added to her affliction. O Eloisa! oughtest thou to feel these terrible sensations? thou who wert a witness of the sickness and of the last moments of that unfortunate parent! I intreat, I conjure you to tell me, what I ought to believe? If I am guilty, tear my heart in pieces: if our crimes were the cause of her death, we are two monsters unworthy of existence, and it were a double crime to think of so fatal an union: O, it were even a crime to live! But, no; I cannot believe that so pure a flame could produce such black effects. Surely the sentiments of love are too noble. Can heaven be unjust? and could she, who sacrificed her happiness to the author of her life, ever deserve to be the cause of her death?

Letter C. The Answer.

How can I cease to love you, when my esteem for you is daily increasing? how can I stifle my affection, whilst you are growing every day more worthy of my regard? No, my dear, my excellent friend; what we were to each other in early life, we shall continue to be for ever; and if our mutual attachment no longer increases, it is because it cannot be increased. All the difference is, that I then loved you as my brother, and that now I love you as my son; for tho’ we are both younger than you, and were even your scholars, I now in some measure consider you as ours. In teaching us to think, you have learnt of us sensibility; and whatever your English philosopher may say, this education is more valuable than the other; if it is reason that constitutes the man, it is sensibility that conducts him.

Would you know why I have changed my conduct towards you? it is not, believe me, because my heart is not still the same; but because your situation is changed. I favoured your passion, while there remained a single ray of hope; but since, by obstinately continuing to aspire to Eloisa, you can only make her unhappy, to flatter

your expectations would be to injure you, I had even rather increase your discontent, and thus render you less deserving of my compassion. When the happiness of both becomes impossible, all that is left for a hopeless lover, is to sacrifice his own to that of his beloved.

This, my generous friend, you have performed in the most painful sacrifice that ever was made; but, by renouncing Eloisa, you will purchase her repose, tho' at the expense of your own.

I dare scarce repeat to you the ideas that occur to me on this subject; but they are fraught with consolation, and that emboldens me. In the first place, I believe, that true love, as well as virtue, has this advantage, that it is rewarded by every sacrifice we make to it, and that we in some measure enjoy the privations we impose on ourselves, in the very idea of what they cost us, and of the motives by which we were induced. You will be sensible that your love for Eloisa was in proportion to her merit; and that will increase your happiness. The exquisite self-love, which knows how to reap advantage from painful virtue, will mingle its charm with that of love. You will say to yourself, I know how to love, with a pleasure more durable and more delicate than even possession itself would have afforded. The latter wears out the passion by constant enjoyment; but the other sails for ever; and you will still enjoy it even when you cease to love.

Besides, if what Eloisa and you have so often told me be true, that love is the most delightful sensation that can enter into the human heart, every thing that prolongs and fixes it, even at the expense of a thousand vexations, is still a blessing. If love is a desire, that is increased by obstacles, as you still say, it ought never to be satisfied; it is better to preserve it at any rate, than that it should be extinguished in pleasure. Your passion, I confess, has stood the proof of possession, of time, of absence, and of dangers of every kind; it has conquered every obstacle, except the most powerful of all, that of having nothing more to conquer, and of feeding only on itself. The

world has never seen the passion stand this proof; what right have you then to hope, that yours would have stood the test? Time which might have joined to the disgust of a long possession, the progress of age, and the decline of beauty, seems by your separation fixed and motionless in your favour; you will be always to each other in the bloom of your years; you will incessantly see her, as she was when you beheld her at parting, and your hearts, united even to the grave, will prolong, by a charming illusion, your youth and your love.

Had you never been happy, you might have been tormented by insurmountable inquietudes; your heart might have panted after a felicity of which it was not unworthy; your warm imagination would have incessantly required that which you have not obtained. But love has no delights which you have not tasted, and to write like you, you have exhausted in one year the pleasures of a whole life. Remember the passionate letter you wrote after a rash interview. I read it with an emotion I had never before experienced; it had no traces of the permanent state of a truly tender heart, but was filled with the last delirium of a mind inflamed with passion, and intoxicated with pleasure. You yourself may judge that such transports are not to be twice experienced in this life, and that death ought immediately to succeed. This, my friend, was the summit of all, and whatever love or fortune might have done for you, your passion and your felicity must have declined. That instant was also the beginning of your disgrace, and Eloisa was taken from you, at the moment when she could inspire no new sensations, as if fate intended to secure your passion from being exhausted, and to leave in the remembrance of your past pleasures, a pleasure more sweet than all those you could now have enjoyed.

Comfort yourself then with the loss of a blessing that would certainly have escaped you, and would besides have deprived you of that you now possess. Happiness and love would have vanished at once; you have at least preserved that passion, and we are not without pleasure, while we continue to love. The idea of extinguished love is more terrifying to a tender heart, than that of an unhappy flame; and to feel a disgust

for what we possess, is an hundred times worse than regretting what is lost.

If the reproaches made you, by my afflicted cousin, on the death of her mother, were well founded, the cruel remembrance would, I confess, poison that of your love, which ought for ever to be destroyed by so fatal an idea; but give no credit to her grief; it deceives her; or rather the cause to which she would ascribe her sorrow, is only a pretence to justify its excess. Her tender mind is always in fear that her affliction is not sufficiently severe, and she feels a kind of pleasure in adding bitterness to her distress; but she certainly imposes on herself, she cannot be sincere.

Do you think she could support the dreadful remorse she would feel, if she really believed she had shortened her mother's life? no, no, my friend, she would not then weep, she would have sunk with her into the grave. The baronet D'Etange's disease is well known; it was a dropsy of the pericardium, which was incurable, and her life was despaired of, even before she had discovered your correspondence. I own it afflicted her much, but she had great consolation. How comfortable was it to that tender mother to see, while she lamented the fault of her daughter, by how many virtues it was counter-balanced, and to be forced to admire the dignity of her soul, while she lamented the weakness of nature? how pleasing to perceive with what affection she loved her? such indefatigable zeal! such continual solicitude! such grief at having offended her! what regret, what tears, what affecting caresses, what unwearied sensibility! In the eyes of the daughter were visible all the mother's sufferings; it was she who served her in the day, and watched her by night; it was from her hand that she received every assistance: you would have thought her some other Eloisa, for her natural delicacy disappeared, she was strong and robust, the most painful services caused no fatigue, and the intrepidity of her soul seemed to have created her a new body. She did every thing, yet appeared to be unemployed; she was every where, and yet rarely left her; she was perpetually on her knees by the bed, with her lips pressed to her mother's hand, bewailing her illness and her own misfortunes, and confounding these two sensations, in order to increase her

affliction. I never saw any person enter my aunt's chamber, during the last days, without being moved even to tears, at this most affecting spectacle, to behold two hearts more closely uniting, at the very moment when they were to be torn asunder. It was visible that their only cause of anguish was their separation, and that to live or die would have been indifferent to either, could they have remained, or departed together.

So far from adopting Eloisa's gloomy ideas, assure yourself that every thing that could be hoped for from human assistance and consolation, have on her part concurred to retard the progress of her mother's disease, and that her tenderness and care have undoubtedly preserved her longer with us, than she would otherwise have continued. My aunt herself has told me a hundred times that her last days were the sweetest of her life, and that the happiness of her daughter was the only thing wanting to compleat her own.

If grief must be supposed in any degree to have hastened her dissolution, it certainly sprang from another source. It is to her husband it ought to be ascribed. Being naturally inconstant, he lavished the fire of his youth on a thousand objects infinitely less pleasing, than his virtuous wife; and when age brought him back to her, he treated her with that inflexible severity with which faithless husbands are accustomed to aggravate their faults. My poor cousin has felt the effects of it. An high opinion of his nobility, and that roughness of disposition which nothing can ever soften, have produced your misfortunes and hers. Her mother, who had always a regard for you, and who discovered Eloisa's love when it was too violent to be extinguished, had long secretly bemoaned the misfortune of not being able to conquer either the inclinations of her daughter, or the obstinacy of her husband, and of being the first cause of an evil which she could not remedy. When your letters unexpectedly fell into her hands, and she found how far you had misused her confidence, she was afraid of losing all by endeavouring to save all, and to hazard the life of her child in attempting to restore her honour. She several times sounded

her husband without success. She often resolved to venture an entire confidence in him, and to shew him the full extent of his duty; but she was always restrained by her timidity. She hesitated while it was in her power, and when she would have told him, she was no longer able to speak; her strength failed her, she carried the fatal secret with her to the grave, and I who know this austerity, without having the least idea how far it may be tempered by natural affection, am satisfied, since Eloisa's life is in no danger.

All this she knows; but you will ask, what I think of her apparent remorse? in answer to which I must tell you, that Love is more ingenuous than she. Overcome with grief for the loss of her mother, she would willingly forget you, and yet in spite of herself, Love disturbs her conscience in order to bring you to her memory. He chuses that her tears should be connected with the object of her passion, but she not daring to employ her thoughts directly on you, he deceives her into it under the mask of repentance: thus he imposes on her with so much art, that he is willing to increase her woes rather than banish you from her thoughts. Your heart may perhaps be ignorant of such subterfuges, but they are not the less natural; for though your passion may be equal in degree, its nature in each of you is very different. Yours is warm and violent, hers soft and tender; your sensations are breathed forth with vehemence, but hers retort upon herself, and pierce and poison her very inmost soul. Love animates and supports your heart, whilst hers is oppressed and dejected with its weight, all its springs are relaxed, her strength is gone, her courage is extinguished, and her virtue has lost its power. Her heroic faculties are not however annihilated but suspended: a momentary crisis may restore them to their full vigour, or totally destroy their existence. One step farther in this gloomy path and she is lost; but if her incomparable soul should recover itself, she will be greater, more heroic, more virtuous than ever, and there will be no danger of a relapse. Learn then, in this perilous situation, to revere the object of your love. Any thing that should come from you, though it were against yourself, would at this time prove mortal. If you

are determined to persist, your triumph will be certain, but you will never possess the same Eloisa.

Letter CI. From Lord B——.

I had some pretentions to your friendship, you were become serviceable to me, and I was prepared to meet you. But what are my pretensions, my necessities, or my eagerness to you? you have forgot me, you do not even deign to write to me. I am not ignorant of your solitude, nor of your secret design; you are weary of existence. Die then, weak youth: yes die, thou daring yet cowardly mortal; but, in thy last moments, remember that thou hast stung the soul of thy sincere friend with the recollection having served an ungrateful man.

Letter CII. The Answer.

Yes, my kind friend, you may come. I was determined to taste no more pleasure upon earth, but we will meet once more. You are wrong; it is as impossible that you should meet with ingratitude as that I should ever be ungrateful.

Billet. From Eloisa.

It is time to renounce the errors of youth, and to abandon an illusive hope. I can never be yours. Restore to me that liberty of which my father chuses to dispose; or compleat my misery by a refusal which will ruin me for ever, without producing any advantage to yourself.

Eloisa Etange.

Letter CIII. From the Baron D’Etange.

In which the preceding billet was inclosed.

If there remains in the mind of a seducer the least sentiment of honour or humanity, answer the billet of an unhappy girl, whose heart you have corrupted, and who

would no longer exist, if I could suppose her to have carried the forgetfulness of herself any farther. I should not indeed be much surprized if the same philosophy which taught her to catch at the first man she saw, should also instruct her to disobey her father. Think of this matter. I always chuse to proceed with lenity and decency, when those methods are likely to succeed; but because I act thus with you, you are not to suppose me ignorant in what manner a gentleman should take revenge of those beneath him.

Letter CIV. The Answer.

Let me intreat you, Sir, to spare those vain menaces, and that unjust reproach, which can neither terrify nor humble me. Between two persons of the same age there can be no seducer but love, and you can have no right to vilify a man whom your daughter honoured with her esteem.

What concessions do you expect, and from what authority are they imposed? is it to the author of all my misfortunes that I must sacrifice my remaining glimpse of hope? I will respect the father of Eloisa; but let him deign to be mine if he expects obedience. No, Sir, what opinion soever you may entertain of your proceedings, they will not oblige me, for your sake, to relinquish such valuable and just pretensions. As you are the sole cause of my misery, I owe you nothing but hatred; your pretensions are without foundation. But Eloisa commands: her I shall never disobey; therefore you have my consent. Another may possess her, but I shall be more worthy.

If your daughter had deigned to consult me concerning the limits of your authority, doubt not but I would have taught her to disregard your unjust pretensions. How despotic soever may be the empire you assume, my rights are infinitely more sacred. The chain by which we are united marks the extent of paternal dominion, even in the estimation of human laws, and whilst you appeal to the law of nature, you yourself are trampling upon its institutions.

Do not alledge that delicate phantom honour, which you seem so determined to vindicate; for here again you are the sole offender. Respect Eloisa's choice, and your honour is secure; for I honour you in my heart, regardless of your insults. Notwithstanding all your gothic maxims, one honest man was never dishonoured by his alliance with another. If my presumption offends you, attempt my life; against you I shall never defend it. As to the rest, I am little anxious to know in what consists the honour of a gentleman; but with regard to that of an honest man, I own, it concerns me, and therefore I shall defend and preserve it pure and spotless to the end of my life.

Go, inhuman father, and meditate the destruction of your only child, whilst she, full of duty and affection, stands ready to yield her happiness a victim to prejudice and opinion: but be assured your own remorse will one day severely revenge my injuries, and you will then perceive, when it is too late, that your blind and unnatural hatred was no more fatal to me than to yourself. That I shall be wretched, is most certain; but if ever the just feelings of nature should emerge from the bottom of your heart, how infinitely greater will be your unhappiness in having sacrificed the only daughter of your bosom to a mere phantom: a daughter who has no equal in beauty, merit or virtue, and on whom indulgent heaven has bestowed every blessing, except a kind father.

Billet.

Inclosed in the foregoing.

I restore to Eloisa Etange the power to dispose of herself, and to give her hand without consulting her heart.

S. G.

Letter CV. From Eloisa.

I designed to give you a description of the scene which produced the billet you have

received; but my father took his measures so skilfully, that it ended only the instant before the post went out. His letter as certainly saved the mail as this will be too late; so that your resolution will be taken, and your answer dispatched before it can possibly reach you: therefore all detail would now be useless. I have done my duty; you will do yours: but fate will overwhelm us, and we are betrayed by honour. We are divided for ever! and to increase my horror, I am going to be forced into the——O heavens! it was once in my power to live in thine. Just God!——we must tremble and be silent.

The pen falls from my hand. I have been of late much indisposed. This morning's affair has hurt me not a little——Oh, my head, my poor heart! I feel, I feel, I shall faint——Will heaven have no mercy on my sufferings?——I am no longer able to support myself——I will retire to my bed, and console myself, in the hope of rising no more. Adieu, my only love! adieu, for the last time, my dear, my tender friend. Ah! I live no longer for thee! have I not then already ceased to live?

Letter CVI. From Eloisa to Mrs. Orbe.

Can it be true, my dear, my cruel friend, that you have called me back to life and sorrow? I saw the happy instant when I was going to be again united to the tenderest of mothers; but thy inhuman kindness has condemned me to bemoan her yet longer: when my desire to follow her had almost snatched me from this earth, my unwillingness to leave thee behind held me fast. If I am at all reconciled to life, it is from the comfort of not having entirely escaped the hand of death. Thank heaven! that beauty is no more for which my heart has paid so dearly. The distemper from which I have risen has happily deprived me of it. This circumstance I hope will abate the gross ardour of a man so indelicate as to dare to marry me without my consent. When the only thing which he admired no longer exists, surely he will be little anxious about the rest. Without breach of promise to my father, without injuring that friend whose life is in his power, I shall be able to repulse this

importunate wretch: my lips will be silent, but my looks will speak for me. His disgust will defend me against his tyranny, and he will find me too disagreeable to dare to make me unhappy.

Ah, my dear cousin! you know a constant tender heart that would not be so repulsed. His passion was not confined to outward form or charms of person; it was me that he loved, and not my face; we were united in every part of our being, and so long as Eloisa had remained, her beauty might have fled, but love would for ever have continued. And yet he could consent——ungrateful youth!——yet it was but just, since I could ask it. Who would wish to retain by promise those who could withdraw their heart? and did I attempt to withdraw mine?——have I done it?——O heavens! why must every thing conspire to remind me of times that are no more, and to increase a flame which ought to be extinguished? In vain, Eloisa, are thy endeavours to tear the dear image from thy heart: 'tis too firmly attached; thy heart itself would first be torn in pieces, and all thy endeavours serve but to engrave it the deeper.

May I venture to tell you a vision of my delirium during my fever, which has continued to torment me ever since my recovery? Yes, learn and pity the distraction of your unhappy friend, that you may thank heaven for preserving your heart from the horrid passion by which it is occasioned. During the most violent moment of my phrenzy, when my fever was at the height, I thought I beheld the unhappy youth kneeling by my bed-side: not such as when he charmed my senses during the short period of my felicity; but pale, wild, and lost in despair. He took my hand, not disgusted with its appearance, and fearless of the sad infection, eagerly kissed and bathed it with his tears. I felt at the sight of him that pleasing emotion which his unexpected appearance used formerly to occasion. I endeavoured to dart towards him, but was restrained. You tore him from me, and what affected me most was his sighs and groans, which seemed to increase as he went farther from me.

It is impossible to describe the effect of this strange dream. My fever was long and

violent; I continued many days insensible; I have seen him often in my phrenzy; but none of my dreams have left half the impression on my memory which this last did: it is impossible to drive it from my imagination. Methinks I see him every moment in that attitude. His air, his dress, his manner, his sorrowful and tender look, are continually before my eyes. His lips seem still to press my hand; I feel it wet with his tears. His plaintive voice melts my heart; now I behold him dragged far from me, whilst I endeavour in vain to hold him fast. In short, the whole imaginary scene appears in my mind more real than reality itself.

I deliberated long before I could resolve to tell you this. Shame kept me silent when we were together; but the idea grows every day stronger, and torments me to such a degree, that I can no longer conceal my folly. Would that I were entirely a fool! why should I wish to preserve that reason which serves only to make me wretched?

But to return to my dream. Rally me, my dear friend, if you will, for my simplicity; but surely there is something mysterious in this vision, which distinguishes it from common phrenzy. Can it be a presage of his death? or is he already dead? and was it thus that heaven deigned, for once to be my guide, and invite me to follow him whom I was ordained to love? Alas! a summons to the grave would be the greatest blessing I could receive.

To what purpose do I recall these vain maxims of philosophy which amuse only those who have no feelings? they impose on me no longer, and I cannot help despising them. I believe that spirits are invisible; but is it impossible that, between two lovers so closely united, there should be an immediate communication, independent of the body and the senses? may not their mutual impressions be transmitted through the brain?——Poor Eloisa, what extravagant ideas! how credulous are we rendered by our passions! and how difficult it is for a heart severely affected to relinquish its errors, even after conviction!

Letter CVII. The Answer.

Ah, thou most unfortunate and tender girl! art thou then destined to be unhappy? I try in vain to keep thee from sorrow, but thou dost seem to court affliction; thy evil genius is more powerful than all my endeavours. Do not however add chimerical apprehensions to so many real causes of inquietude: and since my caution has been more prejudicial than serviceable to you, let me free you from a mistake which aggravates your misery; perhaps the melancholy truth will be less tormenting. Know then that your dream, was not a dream; that it was not the phantom of your friend which you beheld, but his real person; and that the affecting scene, which is ever present to your imagination, did actually pass in your room, on the day after your disorder was at the crisis.

On the preceding day, I left you very late; and Mr. Orbe, who would take me from you that night, was ready to depart; when on a sudden we perceived that unhappy wretch, whose condition is truly deplorable, enter hastily, and throw himself at our feet. He took post horses immediately on the receipt of your last letter. By travelling day and night, he performed the journey in three days, and never stopped till the last stage; where he waited in order to enter the town under favour of the night. I am ashamed to confess, that I was less eager than Mr. Orbe to embrace him: without knowing the intent of his journey, I foresaw the consequence. The bitter recollection of former times, your danger and his, his manifest discomposure of mind, all contributed to check so agreeable a surprize; and I was too powerfully affected to salute him with eagerness. I nevertheless embraced him with a heart-felt emotion in which he sympathized, and which reciprocally displayed itself in a kind of mute grief, more eloquent than tears and lamentations. The first words he uttered were——“How does she? O, how is my Eloisa? am I to live or die?” I concluded from thence, that he was informed of your illness, and upon the supposition that he was likewise acquainted with the nature of it, I spoke without any other precaution than that of extenuating the danger. When he understood that it was the small-pox, he made dreadful lamentation, and was taken suddenly ill. Fatigue and the want of

sleep, together with perturbation of mind, had so entirely overcome him, that it was some time before we could bring him to himself. He had scarce strength to speak; we persuaded him to take rest.

Nature being quite spent, he slept twelve hours successively, but with so much agitation that such a sleep must rather impair than recruit his strength. The next day gave birth to new perplexity: he was absolutely determined to see you. I represented to him the danger there was that his presence might occasion some fatal revolution in your distemper. He proposed to wait till there was no risque; but his stay itself was a terrible risque, of which I endeavoured to make him sensible. He rudely interrupted me. “Cease, said he, with a tone of indignation, your cruel eloquence: it is too much, to exert it for my ruin. Do not hope to drive me from hence as you did when I was forced into exile. I would travel a hundred times from the farthest extremity of the world for one glance of my Eloisa: but I swear, added he with vehemence, by the author of my being, that I will not stir till I have seen her. We will try for once, whether I shall move you with compassion, or you make me guilty of perjury.”

His resolution was fixed. Mr. Orbe was of opinion that we should contrive some means to gratify him, that we might send him away before his return was discovered: for he was only known to one person in the house, of whose secrecy I was assured; and we called him by a feigned name before the family. [39] I promised him that he should see you the next night, upon condition that he staid but a minute, that he did not utter a syllable, and that he departed the next morning before break of day. To these conditions, I exacted his solemn promise; then I was easy, I left my husband with him, and returned to you.

I found you much better, the irruption was quite compleat; and the physician raised my courage, by giving me hope. I laid my plan beforehand with Bab, and the increase of your fever, though a little abated, leaving you still somewhat

light-headed, I took that opportunity to dismiss every body, and send my husband word to introduce his guest, concluding that before the paroxysm of your disorder was over, you would be less likely to recollect him. We had all the difficulty in the world to get rid of your disconsolate father, who was determined to sit up with you every night. At length I told him with some warmth, that he would spare nobody the trouble of watching, for that I was determined likewise to sit up with you, and that he might be assured, though he was your father, his tenderness for you was not more diligent than mine. He departed with reluctance, and we remained by ourselves Mr. Orbe came about eleven, and told me that he had left your friend in the street. I went in search of him: I took him by the hand: he trembled like a leaf. As he went through the anti-chamber, his strength failed him: he drew his breath with difficulty, and was forced to sit down.

At length, having singled out some objects by the faint glimmering of a distant light——yes, said he, with a deep sigh, I recollect these apartments. Once in my life I traversed them——about the same hour——with the same mysterious caution——I trembled as I do now——My heart fluttered with the same emotion——O! rash creature that I was——though but a poor mortal, I nevertheless dared to taste.——What am I now going to behold in that same spot, where every thing diffused a delight with which my soul was intoxicated? what am I going to view, in that same object which inspired and shared my transports?——the retinue of melancholy, the image of death, afflicted virtue, and expiring beauty!

Dear cousin; I will spare thy tender heart the dismal detail of such an affecting scene. He saw you, and was mute. He had promised to be silent;——but such a silence! he fell upon his knees; he sobbed, and kissed the curtains of your bed; he lifted up his hands and eyes; he fetched deep and silent groans; he could scarce stifle his grief and lamentations. Without seeing him, you accidentally put one of your hands out of bed; he seized it with extravagant eagerness; the ardent kisses he impressed on your sick hand, awaked you sooner than all the noise and murmur

which buzzed about you. I perceived that you recollected him, and in spite of all his resistance and complaints, I forced him from your chamber directly, hoping to elude the impression of such a fleeting apparition, under the pretence of its being the effect of your delirium. But finding that you took no notice of it, I concluded that you had forgot it. I forbad Bab to mention it, and I am persuaded she has kept her word. A needless caution which love has disconcerted, and which has only served to aggravate the pain of a recollection which it is too late to efface.

He departed as he had promised, and I made him swear not to stop in the neighbourhood. But, my dear girl, this is not all; I must acquaint you with another circumstance, of which likewise you cannot long remain ignorant. Lord B—— passed by two days afterwards; he hastened to overtake him; he joined him at Dijon, and found him ill. The unlucky wretch had caught the small-pox. He kept it secret from me that he had never had the distemper, and I introduced him without precaution. As he could not cure your disorder, he was determined to partake of it. When I recollect the eagerness with which he kissed your hand, I make no doubt but he underwent inoculation purposely. It is impossible to have been worse prepared to receive it; but it was the inoculation of love, and it proved fortunate. The author of life preserved the most tender lover that ever existed; he is recovered, and according to my lord’s last letter, they are by this time actually set out for Paris.

You see, my too lovely cousin, that you ought to banish those melancholy terrors, which alarm you without reason. You have long since renounced the person of your friend, and you find that his life is safe. Think of nothing therefore, but how to preserve your own, and how to make the promised sacrifice to paternal affection with becoming grace. Cease to be the sport of vain hope, and to feed yourself with chimeras. You are in great haste to be proud of your deformity; let me advise you to be more humble; believe me you have yet too much reason to be so. You have undergone a cruel infection, but it has spared your face. What you take for seams, is nothing but a redness which will quickly disappear. I was worse affected than you,

yet nevertheless you see I am tolerable. My angel, you will still be beautiful in spite of yourself; and do you think that the enamoured Wolmar, who, in three years absence, could not conquer a passion conceived in eight days, is likely to be cured of it, when he has an opportunity of seeing you every hour? Oh! if your only resource is the hope of being disagreeable, how desperate is your condition!

Letter CVIII. From Eloisa.

It is too much. It is too much. O my friend! the victory is yours. I am not proof against such powerful love; my resolution is exhausted. My conscience affords me the consolatory testimony, that I have exerted my utmost efforts. Heaven, I hope, will not call me to account for more than it has bestowed upon me. This sorrowful heart which cost you so dear, and which you have more than purchased, is yours without reserve; it was attached to you the first moment my eyes beheld you; and it will remain yours to my dying breath. You have too much deserved it, ever to be in danger of losing it; and I am weary of being the slave of a chimerical virtue, at the expense of justice.

Yes, thou most tender and generous lover, thy Eloisa will be ever thine, will love thee ever: I must, I will, I ought. To you I resign the empire which love has given you; a dominion of which nothing shall ever deprive thee more. The deceitful voice which murmurs at the bottom of my soul, whispers in vain: it shall no longer betray me. What are the vain duties it prescribes, in opposition to a passion which heaven itself inspire? is not the obligation which binds me to you, the most solemn of all? is it not to you alone that I have given an absolute promise? was not the first vow of my heart never to forget you; and is not your insoluble attachment a fresh tie to secure my constancy? ah! in the transports of love with which I once more surrender my heart to thee, my only regret is, that I have struggled against sentiments so agreeable and so natural. Nature, O gentle nature, resume thy rights! I abjure the savage virtues which conspire to thy destruction. Can the inclinations which you

have inspired, be more seductive, than a specious reason which has so often misled me?

O my dear friend, have some regard for the tenderness of my inclinations; you are too much indebted to them, to abhor them; but allow of a participation which nature and affection demands; let not the rights of blood and friendship be totally extinguished by those of love. Do not imagine that to follow you, I will ever quit my father's house. Do not hope that I will refuse to comply with the obligations imposed on me by parental authority. The cruel loss of one of the authors of my being, has taught me to be cautious how I afflict the other. No, she whom he expects to be his only comfort hereafter, will not increase the affliction of his soul, already oppressed with disquietude: I will not destroy all that gave me life. No, no, I am sensible of my crime, but cannot abhor it. Duty, honour, virtue, all these considerations have lost their influence, but yet I am not a monster; I am frail, but not unnatural. I am determined, I will not grieve any of the object of my affection. Let a father, tenacious of his word, and jealous of a vain prerogative, dispose of my hand according to his promise, but let love alone dispose of my heart; let my tears incessantly trickle down the bosom of my tenderest friend. Let me be lost and wretched, but, if possible, let every one dear to me, be happy and contented. On you three my existence depends, and may your felicity make me forget my misery and despair.

Letter CIX. The Answer.

We revive my Eloisa; all the real sentiments of our souls resume their wonted course. Nature has preserved our existence, and love has restored us to life. Did you suppose, could you be rash enough to imagine you could withdraw your affections from me? I am better acquainted with your heart than yourself: that heart which heaven destined to be mine! I find them united by one common thread, which death alone can divide. Is it in our power to separate them, or ought we even to attempt it?

are they joined together by ties which man hath formed, and which man can dissolve? No, no, my Eloisa! if cruel destiny bars our claim to tender conjugal titles, yet nothing can deprive us of the character of faithful lovers; that shall be the comfort of our melancholy days, and we will carry it with us to the grave.

Thus we recover life only to renew our sufferings, and the consciousness of our existence is nothing more than a sense of affliction. Unfortunate beings! how we are altered? how have we ceased to be what we were formerly? where is that enchantment of supreme felicity? where are those exquisite raptures which enlivened our passion? nothing is left of us but our love; love alone remains, and all its charms are eclipsed. O, thou dear and too dutiful girl, thou fond fair one without resolution! all our misfortunes are derived from thy errors. Alas! a heart of less purity would not have so fatally misled thee! yes, the honour of thy heart has been our ruin, the upright sentiments which fill thy breast, have banished discretion. You would endeavour to reconcile filial tenderness with unconquerable love; by attempting to gratify all your inclinations, you confound instead of conciliating them, and your very virtue renders you guilty. O Eloisa, how incredible is your power! by what strange magic do you fascinate my reason! even while you endeavour to make me blush at our passion, you have the art of appearing amiable in your very failings. You force me to admire you, even while I partake of your remorse——your remorse!——does it become you to feel remorse?——you, whom I loved——you, whom I shall never cease to adore——can guilt ever approach thy spotless heart?——O cruel Eloisa! if you mean to restore the heart which belongs to me alone, return it to me such as it was, when you first bestowed it.

What do you tell me?——will you venture to intimate——you, fall into the arms of another?——shall another possess you?——will you be no longer mine?——or, to compleat my horror, will you not be solely mine?——I——shall I suffer such dreadful punishment——shall I see you survive yourself?——no I had rather lose you entirely, than share you with another.——Why has not heaven armed me with

courage equal to the rage which distracts me?——sooner than thy hand should debase itself by a fatal union which love abhors, and honour condemns, I would interpose my own, and plunge a poignard in thy breast. I would drain thy chaste heart of blood which infidelity never tainted: with that spotless blood I would mix my own, which burns in my veins with inextinguishable ardour; I would fall in thy arms; I would yield my last breath on thy lips——I would receive thine——How! Eloisa expiring! those lovely eyes closed by the horrors of death!——that breast, the throne of love, mangled by my hand, and pouring forth copious streams of blood and life!——No, live and suffer, endure the punishment of my cowardice. No, I wish thou wert no more, but my passion is not so violent as to stab thee. O, that you did but know the state of my heart, which is ready to burst with anguish! Never did it burn with so pure a flame. Never were your innocence and virtue so dear to me. I am a lover, I know how to prize an amiable object, I am sensible that I do: but I am no more than man, and it is not within the compass of human power to renounce supreme felicity. One night, one single night, has made a thorough change in my soul. Preserve me, if thou canst, from that dangerous recollection, and I am virtuous still. But that fatal night is sunk to the bottom of my soul, and the remembrance of it will darken all the rest of my days. O Eloisa, thou most adorable object! if we must be wretched for ever, yet let us enjoy one hour of transport, and then resign ourselves to eternal lamentations.

Listen to the man who loves you. Why should we alone affect to be wiser than the rest of mankind, and pursue, with puerile simplicity, those chimerical virtues, which all the world talks of, and no one practises. What! shall we pretend to be greater moralists than the crowd of philosophers which people London and Paris, who all laugh at conjugal fidelity, and treat adultery as a jest? instances of this nature are far from being scandalous; we are not at liberty even to censure them, and people of spirit would laugh at a man who should stifle the affections of his heart out of respect to matrimony. In fact, say they, an injury which only consists in opinion, is

no injury while it remains secret. What injury does a husband receive from an infidelity to which he is a stranger? by how many obliging condescensions, does a woman compensate for her failings? [40] what endearments she employs to prevent, and to remove his suspicions? deprived of an imaginary good, he actually enjoys more real felicity, and this supposed crime which makes such a noise, is but an additional tie, which secures the peace of society.

O God forbid, thou dear partner of my soul, that I should wish to preserve thy affections by such shameful maxims. I abhor them, though I am not able to confute them, and my conscience is a better advocate than my reason. Not that I pride myself upon a spirit which I detest, or that I am fond of a virtue bought so dear: but I think it less criminal to reproach myself with my failings, than to attempt to vindicate them, and I consider an endeavour to stifle remorse, as the strongest degree of guilt.

I know not what I write. I find my mind in a horrid state, much worse than it was, even before I received your letter. The hope you tender me, is gloomy and melancholy; it totally extinguishes that pure light, which has so often been our guide; your charms are blasted, and yet appear more affecting; I perceive that you are affectionate and unhappy: my heart is overwhelmed with the tears which flow from your eyes, and I vent bitter reproaches on myself for having presumed to taste a happiness, which I can no longer enjoy, but at the hazard of your peace.

Nevertheless I perceive that a secret ardour fires my soul, and revives that courage which my remorse has subdued. Ah, lovely Eloisa, do you know how many losses a love like mine can compensate for? do you know how far a lover, who only breathes for you, can make your life agreeable? are you sensible that it is for you alone I wish to live, to move, to think? no, thou delicious source of my existence, I will have no soul but thine, I will no longer be any thing but a part of thy lovely self, and you will meet with such a kind reception in the inmost recesses of my heart, that you will

never perceive any decay in your charms. Well, we shall be guilty, yet we will not be wicked; we shall be guilty, yet we will be in love with virtue: so far from attempting to palliate our failings, we will deplore them; we will lament together; if possible, we will work our redemption, by being good and benevolent. Eloisa! O Eloisa! what will you do? what can you do? you can never disengage yourself from my heart: is it not espoused to thine?

I have long since bid adieu to those vain prospects of fortune which so palpably deluded me. I now solely confine my attention to the duties I owe Lord B——; he will force me with him to England; he imagines I can be of service to him there. Well, I will attend him. But I will steal away once every year; I will come in secret to visit you. If I cannot speak to you, at least I shall have the pleasure of gazing on you; I may at least kiss your footsteps; one glance from your eyes will support me ten months. When I am forced to return, and retire from her I love, it will be some consolation to me, to count the steps which will bring me back again. These frequent journeys will be some amusement to your unhappy lover; when he sets out to visit you, he will anticipate the pleasure of beholding you; the remembrance of the transports he has felt, will enchant his imagination during his absence; in spite of his cruel destiny, his melancholy time will not be utterly lost; every year will be marked with some tincture of pleasure, and the short-lived moments he passes near you, will be multiplied during his whole life.

Letter CX. From Mrs. Orbe.

Your mistress is no more; but I have recovered my friend, and you too have gained one, whose affection will more than recompense your loss. Eloisa is married, and her merit is sufficient to make the gentleman happy, who has blended his interest with hers. After so many indiscretions, thank heaven which has preserved you both, her from ignominy, and you from the regret of having dishonoured her. Reverence her change of condition; do not write to her, she desires you will not. Wait till she

writes to you, which she will shortly do. Now is the time to convince me that you merit that esteem I ever entertained for you, and that your heart is susceptible of a pure and disinterested friendship.

Letter CXI. From Eloisa.

I have been so long accustomed to make you the confident of all the secrets of my soul, that it is not in my power to discontinue so agreeable a correspondence. In the most important occurrences of life I long to disclose my heart to you. Open yours, my beloved friend, to receive what I communicate; treasure up in your mind the long discourse of friendship, which, though it sometimes renders the speaker too diffusive, always makes the friendly hearer patient.

Attached to the fortune of a husband, or rather to the will of a parent, by an indissoluble tie, I enter upon a new state of life, which death alone can terminate: let us for a moment cast our eyes on that which I have quitted; the recollection of former times cannot be painful to us. Perhaps it will afford some lessons, which will teach me how to make a proper use of the time to come: perhaps it will open some lights which may serve to explain those particulars of my conduct, which always appeared mysterious in your eyes. At least, by reflecting in what relation we lately stood to each other, our hearts will become more sensible of the reciprocal duties, from which death alone can release us.

It is now near six years since I first saw you. You was young, genteel, and agreeable. I had seen others more comely, and more engaging; but no one ever excited the least emotion within me, and my heart surrendered itself to you [41] on the first interview. I imagin’d that I saw, in your countenance, the traces of a soul which seemed the counterpart of mine. I thought that my senses only served as organs to more refined sentiments; and I loved in you, not so much what I saw, as what I imagined, I felt within myself. It is not two months since, that I still flattered myself I was not mistaken: blind Love, said I, was in the right; we were made for each

other, if human events do not interrupt the affinity of nature; and if we are allowed to enjoy felicity in this life, we shall certainly be happy together.

These sentiments were reciprocal; I should have been deceived, had I entertained them alone. The love I felt, could not arise but from a mutual conformity and harmony of souls. We never love, unless we are beloved; at least our passion is short-lived. Those affections which meet with no return, and which are supposed to make so many wretched, are only founded on sensuality; if ever they penetrate the heart, it is by means of some false resemblance, and the mistake is quickly discovered. Sensual love cannot subsist without fruition, and dies with it: the sublimer passion cannot be satisfied without engaging the heart, and is as permanent as the analogy which gave it birth. [42] Such was ours from the beginning; and such, I hope, it will ever be to the end of our days. I perceived, I felt that I was beloved, and that I merited your affection. My lips were silent, my looks were constrained; but my heart explained itself: we quickly experienced I know not what, which renders silence eloquent, which gives utterance to the downcast eye, which occasions a kind of forward bashfulness which discovers the tumult of desire through the veil of timidity, and conveys ideas which it dares not express.

I perceived the situation of my heart, and gave myself over for lost, the first word you spoke. I found what pain your reserve cost you. I approved of the distance you observed, and admired you the more; I endeavoured to recompense you for such a necessary and painful silence, without prejudice to my innocence; I offered violence to my natural disposition; I imitated my cousin; I became, like her, arch and lively, to avoid too serious explanations, and to indulge a thousand tender caresses, under cover of that affected sprightliness. I took such pains to make your situation agreeable, that the apprehensions of a change increased your reserve. This scheme turned to my disadvantage: we generally suffer for assuming a borrowed character. Fool that I was! I accelerated my ruin, instead of preventing it; I employed poison as a palliative, and what should have induced you to preserve silence, was the occasion

which tempted you to explain yourself. In vain did I attempt, by an affected indifference, to keep you at a distance in our private interviews; that very constraint betrayed me: you wrote. Instead of committing your first letter to the fire, or delivering it to my mother, I ventured to open it. That was my original crime, and all the rest was a necessary consequence of that first fault. I endeavoured to avoid answering those fatal letters, which I could not forbear reading. This violent struggle affected my health. I saw the abyss in which I was going to plunge. I looked upon myself with horror, and could not resolve to endure your absence. I fell into a kind of despair; I had rather that you had ceased to live, than not to live to me: I even went so far as to wish, and to desire your death. Heaven knew my heart; these efforts may make amends for some failings.

Finding you disposed to implicit obedience, I was determined to speak. Chaillot had given me some instructions, which made me too sensible of the danger of avowing my passion. But love, which extorted the confession, taught me to elude its consequence. You was my last resort; I had such an entire confidence in you, that I furnished you with arms against my weakness; such was my opinion of your integrity, that I trusted you would preserve me from myself, and I did you no more than justice. When I found the respect you paid to so valuable a trust, I perceived that my passion had not blinded me in my opinion of those virtues with which I supposed you endowed. I resigned myself with greater security, as I imagined that we should both of us be contented with a sentimental affection. As I discovered nothing at the bottom of my heart but sentiments of honour, I tasted without reserve the charms of such a delightful intimacy. Alas! I did not perceive that my disorder grew inveterate from inattention, and that habit was still more dangerous than love. Being sensibly affected by your reserve, I thought I might relax mine without any risk; in the innocence of my desires, I hoped to lead you to the heights of virtue, by the tender caresses of friendship. But the grove at Clarens soon convinced me that I trusted myself too far, and that we ought not to grant the least indulgence to the

senses, where prudence forbids us to gratify them to the full. One moment, one single moment, fired me with a desire which nothing could extinguish; and if my will yet resisted, my heart was from that time corrupted.

You partook of my distraction; your letter made me tremble. The danger was double: to preserve me from you and from myself, it was necessary to banish you. This was the last effort of expiring virtue; but by your flight, you made your conquest sure, and when I saw you no more, the languor your absence occasioned, deprived me of the little strength I had left to resist you.

When my father quitted the service, he brought M. Wolmar home with him. His life which he owed to him, and an intimacy of twenty years, rendered this friend so dear, that he could never part from him. M. Wolmar was advanced in years, and tho' of high birth, he had met with no woman who had fixed his affections. My father mentioned me to him, as to a man whom he wished to call his son: he was desirous to see me, and it was with this intent that they came together. It was my fate to be agreeable to him, who was never susceptible of any impression before. They entered into secret engagements, and M. Wolmar, who had some affairs to settle in one of the northern courts, where his family and fortune were, desired time, and took leave upon their mutual engagement. After his departure, my father acquainted my mother and me, that he designed him for my husband; and commanded me, with a tone which cut off all reply from my timidity, to prepare myself to receive his hand. My mother, who too plainly perceived the inclinations of my heart, and who had a natural liking for you, made several attempts to shake my father's resolution; she durst not absolutely propose you, but she spoke of you in such terms as she hoped might make my father esteem you, and wish to be acquainted with you; but your rank in life made him insensible to all your accomplishments; and though he allowed, that high birth could not supply them, yet he maintained that birth alone could make them of any value.

The impossibility of being happy, fanned the flame which it ought to have extinguished. A flattering delusion had supported me under all my troubles; when that was gone, I had no strength to oppose them. While I had the least hope of being yours, I might have triumphed over my inclinations; it would have cost me less to have spent my whole life in resistance, than to renounce you for ever; and the very idea of an everlasting opposition, deprived me of fortitude to subdue my passion.

Grief and love preyed upon my heart; I fell into a state of dejection, which you might perceive in my letters: yours, which you wrote to me from Meillerie, compleatd my affliction; to the measure of my own troubles, was added the sense of your despair. Alas! the weakest mind is always destined to bear the troubles of both. The scheme you ventured to propose to me, put the finishing stroke to my perplexity. Misery seemed to be the infallible lot of my days, the inevitable choice which remained for me to make, was to add to it either my parents or your infelicity. I could not endure the horrible alternative; the power of nature has its bounds; such agitations overpowered my strength. I wished to be delivered from life. Heaven seemed to take pity of me; but cruel death spared me for my destruction. I saw you, I recovered, and was undone.

If my failings did not contribute to my felicity, I was not disappointed: I never considered them as the means to procure happiness. I perceived that my heart was formed for virtue, without which I could never be happy; I fell through weakness, not from error; I had not even blindness to plead in excuse for my frailty, I was bereaved of every hope; it was impossible for me to be otherwise than unfortunate. Innocence and love were equally requisite to my peace: as I could not preserve them both, and was witness to your distraction, I consulted your interest alone in the choice I made, and to save you, I ruined myself.

But it is not so easy, as many imagine to forsake virtue. She continues for some time, to torment those who abandon her, and her charms, which are the delight of

refined souls, constitute the chief punishment of the wicked, who are condemned to be in love with her when they can no longer enjoy her. Guilty, yet not depraved, I could not escape the remorse which pursued me; honour was dear to me, even after it was gone; though my shame was secret, it was not less grievous; and though the whole world had been witness to it, I could not have been more sensibly affected. I comforted myself under my affliction, like one who having a wound, dreads a mortification; and who, by the sense of pain, is encouraged not to despair of a cure.

Nevertheless, my shameful state was insupportable. By endeavouring to stifle the reproach of guilt, without renouncing the crime, I experienced what every honest mind feels when it goes astray, and is fond of its mistake. A new delusion lent its aid to assuage the bitterness of repentance; I flattered myself, that my frailty would afford me the means of repairing my indiscretion, and I ventured to form a design of forcing my father to unite our hands. I depended on the first pledge of our love to close this delightful union. I prayed to heaven for offspring as the pledge of my return to virtue, and of our mutual happiness: I wished for it with as much earnestness as another, in my place, would have dreaded it. The tenderness of love, by its soft illusion, allayed the murmurs of my conscience; the effects I hoped to derive from my frailty inspired me with consolation, and this pleasing expectation was all the hope and comfort of my life.

Whenever I should discover evident symptoms of my pregnancy, I was determined to make a public declaration of my condition to Mr. Perret, [43] in the presence of the whole family. I am timorous, it is true; I was sensible how dear such a declaration would cost me, but honour itself inspired me with courage, and I chose rather to bear at once the confusion I deserved, than to nourish everlasting infamy at the bottom of my soul. I knew that my father would either doom me to death, or give me to my lover; this alternative had nothing in it terrible to my apprehension, and whatever might be the event, I concluded that this step would put an end to all my sufferings.

This, my dear friend, was the mystery which I concealed from you, and which you endeavoured to penetrate with such solicitous curiosity. A thousand reasons conspired to make me use this reserve with a man of your impetuosity, not to mention that it would have been imprudent to have furnished you with a new pretence for pressing your indiscreet and importunate application. It was above all things requisite to remove you during such a perilous situation, and I was very sensible that you would never have consented to leave me in such an extremity, had you known my danger.

Alas! I was once more deceived by such a flattering expectation. Heaven refused to favour designs which were conceived in wickedness. I did not deserve the honour of being a mother; my scheme was abortive, and I was even deprived of an opportunity of expiating my frailty, at the expense of my reputation. Disappointed in my hope, the indiscreet assignation which exposed your life to danger, was a rashness which my fond love coloured with this gentle palliation: I imputed the ill success of my wishes to myself, and my heart, misled by its desires, flattered itself that its eagerness to gratify them arose entirely from my anxiety to render them lawful hereafter.

At one time I thought my wishes accomplished: that mistake was the source of my most bitter affliction, and after nature had granted the petition of love, the stroke of destiny came with aggravated cruelty. You know the accident which destroyed my last hopes, together with the fruit of my love. That misfortune happened during our separation, as if heaven at that time intended to oppress me with all the evils I merited, and to separate me at once from every connection which might contribute to our union.

Your departure put an end to my delusion and to my pleasures; I discovered, but too late the chimeras which had imposed upon me. I perceived that I had fallen into a state truly despicable, and I felt myself compleatly wretched; which was the

inevitable consequence of love without innocence, and hopeless desires which I could never extinguish. Tortured by a thousand fruitless griefs, I stifled reflections which were as painful as unprofitable; I no longer looked upon myself as worthy of consideration, and I devoted my life to solitude for you: I had no honour, but yours; no hope, but in your happiness, and the sentiments which you communicated were alone capable of affecting me.

Love did not make me blind to your faults, but it made those faults dear to me; and its delusion was so powerful, that, had you been more perfect, I should have loved you less. I was no stranger to your heart, to your impetuosity. I was sensible, that with more courage than I, you had less patience, and that the afflictions which oppressed my soul, would drive yours to despair. It was for this reason that I always carefully kept my father's promise a secret from you, and at our parting, taking advantage of Lord B——'s zeal for your interest, and with a view to make you more attentive to your own welfare, I flattered you with a hope which I myself did not entertain. Yet more; apprized of the danger which threatened us, I took the only precaution for our mutual security, and by a solemn engagement having made you, as much as possible, master of my will, I hoped to inspire you with confidence, and myself with fortitude, by mean of a promise which I never durst violate, and which might ensure your peace of mind. I own it was a needless obligation, and yet I should never have infringed it. Virtue is so essential to our souls, that when we have once abandoned that which is real, we presently fashion another after the same model, and we keep the more strongly attached to this substitute, because, perhaps, it is of our own election.

I need not tell you what perturbation I felt after your departure. The worst of my apprehensions was the dread of being forsaken. The place of your residence made me tremble. Your manner of living increased my terror. I imagined that I already saw you debased into a man of intrigue. An ignominy of this nature touched me more sensibly than all my afflictions; I had rather have seen you wretched than

contemptible; after so many troubles to which I had been inured, your dishonour was the only one I could not support.

My apprehensions, which the stile of your letters confirmed, were quickly removed; and that by such means as would have made any other compleatly uneasy. I allude to the disorderly course of life into which you was seduced, and of which your ready and frank confession was, of all the proofs of your sincerity, that which affected me most sensibly. I knew you too well to be ignorant what such a confession must have cost you, even if I had been no longer dear to you. I perceived that love alone had triumphed over shame, and extorted it from you. I concluded that a heart so sincere, was incapable of disguised infidelity; I discovered less guilt in your failing, than merit in the confession; and calling to mind your former engagements, I was entirely cured of jealousy.

My worthy friend, my cure did not increase my felicity; for one torment less, a thousand others rose up incessantly, and I was never more sensible of the folly of seeking that repose in an unsettled mind, which nothing but prudence can bestow. I had for a long time secretly lamented the best of mothers, who insensibly wasted away with a fatal decay. Bab, whom the unhappy consequence of my misconduct obliged me to make my confident, betrayed me, and discovered our mutual love, and my frailty, to my mother. I had just received your letters from my cousin, when they were seized. The proofs were too convincing; grief deprived her of the little strength her illness had left her. I thought I should have expired at her feet with remorse. So far from consigning me to the death I merited, she concealed my shame, and was contented to bemoan my fall. Even you, who had so ungratefully abused her kindness, was not odious to her. I was witness to the effect which your letter produced on her tender and affectionate mind. Alas! she wished for your happiness and mine. She attempted more than once——but why should I recall a hope which is now for ever extinguished? heaven decreed it otherwise. She closed her melancholy days with the afflicting consideration of being unable to move a rigid

husband, and of leaving a daughter behind her so little worthy of such a parent.

Oppressed with such a crude loss, my soul had no other strength than what it received from that impression; the voice of nature uttered groans which stifled the murmurs of love. I regarded the author of my troubles with a kind of horror. I endeavoured to stifle the detestable passion which had brought them upon me, and to renounce you for ever. This, no doubt, was what I ought to have done; had I not sufficient cause of lamentation the remainder of my days, without being in continual quest of new subjects of affliction? every thing seemed to favour my resolution. If melancholy softens the mind, deep affliction hardens it. The remembrance of my dying mother effaced your image; we were distant from each other; hope had entirely abandoned me; my incomparable friend was never more great or more deserving wholly to engross my heart. Her virtue, her discretion, her friendship, her tender caresses, seemed to have purified it; I thought I had forgotten you, and imagined myself cured. But it was too late; what I took for the indifference of extinguished love, was nothing but the heaviness of despair.

As a sick man who falls into a weak state when free from pain, is suddenly revived by more acute sensations, so I quickly perceived all my troubles renewed when my father acquainted me with Mr. Wolmar’s approaching return. Invincible love then gave me incredible strength. For the first time I ventured to oppose my father to his face. I frankly protested that I could never like Mr. Wolmar; that I was determined to die single; that he was master of my life, but not of my affections, and that nothing could ever make me alter my resolution. I need not describe the rage he was in, nor the treatment I was obliged to endure. I was immoveable; my timidity once vanquished, carried me to the other extreme, and if my tone was less imperious than my father’s, it was nevertheless equally resolute.

He found that I was determined, and that he should make no impression on me by dint of authority. For a minute I thought myself freed from his persecution. But what

became of me, when on a sudden I saw the most rigid father softened into tears, and prostrate at my feet? without suffering me to rise, he embraced my knees, and fixing his streaming eyes on mine, he addressed himself to me in a plaintive voice, which still murmurs within me. O my child! have some respect for the grey hairs of your unhappy father; do not send me with sorrow to the grave, after her who bore thee. Ah! will you be the death of all your family?

Imagine my grief and astonishment. That attitude, that tone, that gesture, those words, that horrible idea, overpowered me to that degree, that I dropped half dead into his arms, and it was not till after repeated sobs, which for some time stifled utterance, that I was able to answer him in a faint and faltering voice. O my father! I was armed against your menaces, but I am not proof against your tears. You will be the death of your daughter.

We were both of us in such violent agitation that it was a long while before we could recover. In the mean time, recollecting his last words, I concluded that he was better informed of the particulars of my conduct than I had imagined, and being resolved to turn those circumstances of information against him, I was preparing, at the hazard of my life, to make a confession which I had too long deferred, when he hastily interrupted me, and as if he had foreseen and dreaded what I was going to declare, he spoke to me in the following terms.

“I know you have encouraged inclinations unworthy a girl of your birth. It is time to sacrifice to duty and honour a shameful passion which you shall never gratify but at the expense of my life. Attend to what your father’s honour, and your own require of you, and then determine for yourself.”

“Mr. Wolmar is of noble extraction, one who is distinguished by all the accomplishments requisite to maintain his dignity; one who enjoys the public esteem, and who deserves it. I am indebted to him for my life; and you are no stranger to the engagement I have concluded with him. You are farther to understand

that on his return home to settle his concerns, he found himself involved by an unfortunate turn of affairs: he had lost the greatest part of his estate, and it was by singular good luck that he himself escaped from exile to Siberia: he is coming back with the melancholy wreck of his fortune, upon the strength or his friend's word, which never yet was forfeited. Tell me now, in what manner I shall receive him on his, return? shall I say to him? Sir, I promised you my daughter while you were in affluent circumstances, but now your fortune is ruined I must retract my word, for my daughter will never be yours. If I do not express my refusal in these words, it will be interpreted in this manner. To alledge your pre-engagement, will be considered as a pretence, or it will be imputed as an additional disgrace to me, and we shall pass, you for an abandoned girl, and I for a dishonest man, who has sacrificed his word and honour to forbid interest, and has added ingratitude to infidelity. My dear child, I have lived too long, now to close an unblemished life with infamy, and sixty years spent with honour are not to be prostituted in a quarter of an hour."

"You perceive therefore, continued he, how unreasonable is every objection which you can offer. Judge whether the giddy passion of youth, whether attachments which modesty disavows, are to be put in competition with the duty of a child, and the honour by which a parent stands bound. If the dispute was, which of us two should fall a victim to the happiness of the other, my tenderness would challenge the right of making that sacrifice to affection; but honour, my child, calls upon me, and that always determines the resolution of him whose blood you inherit."

I was not without a pertinent answer to these remonstrances; but my father's prejudices confirmed him in his principles, so different from mine, that reasons which appeared to me unanswerable, would not have had the least weight with him. Besides, not knowing whence he had gathered the intelligence he seemed to have gained with respect to my conduct, or how far his information extended; apprehending likewise by his eagerness to interrupt me, that he had formed his

resolution with regard to the matter I was going to communicate, and above all, being restrained by a sense of shame which I could never subdue, I rather chose to avail myself of an excuse, which I thought would have greater weight, as it squared more with my father's peculiarity of thinking. I therefore made a frank declaration of the engagement I had made with you; I protested that I would never be false to my word, and that whatever was the consequence, I would never marry without your consent.

In truth, I was delighted to find that my scruples did not offend him; he reproached me severely for entering into such an engagement, but he made no objection to its validity. So exalted are ideas which a gentleman of honour naturally entertains with regard to the faith of engagements, and so sacred a thing does he esteem a promise! instead of attempting therefore to dispute the force of my obligation to you, he made me write a note, which he inclosed in a letter and sent away directly. [44] With what agitation did I expect your answer! how often did I wish that you might shew less delicacy than you ought! but I knew you too well, however, to doubt your compliance, and was sensible that the more painful you felt the sacrifice required of you, the readier you would be to undergo it. Your answer came, it was kept a secret from me during my illness; after my recovery, my fears were confirmed, and I was cut off from all farther excuses. At least, my father declared he would admit of no more, and the dreadful expression he had made use of gave him such an ascendency over my will that he made me swear never to say any thing to M. Wolmar which might make him averse from marrying me; for, he added, that will appear to him like a trick concerted between us, and at all events the marriage must be concluded.

You know, my dear friend, that my constitution, which is strong enough to endure fatigue and inclemency of weather, is not able to resist the violence of passion, and that too exquisite a sensibility is the source of all the evils which have afflicted my mind and body. Whether continued grief had tainted my blood, or whether nature took that opportunity to purify it from the fatal effects of fermentation, however it

was, I found myself violently disordered at the end of our conversation. When I left my father's room, I endeavoured to write a line to you, but found myself so ill, that I was obliged to go to bed, from whence I hoped never to rise. You are too well acquainted with the rest. My imprudence led you to indiscretion. You came, I saw you, and thought that I had only beheld you in one of those dreams, which, during my delirium, so often presented your image before me. But when I found that you had really been there, that I had actually seen you, that being resolved to partake of my distemper which you could not cure, you had purposely caught the infection; I could no longer resist this last proof, and finding that the tenderness of your affection survived even hope itself, my love which I had taken such pains to smother, instantly broke through all restraint, and revived with more ardour than ever. I perceived that I was doomed to love in spite of myself; I was sensible that I must be guilty; that I could neither resist my father nor my love, and that I could never reconcile the rights of love and consanguinity, but at the expense of honour. Thus all my noble sentiments were utterly extinguished; all my faculties were altered; guilt was no longer horrible in my sight; I felt a thorough change within me; at length, the unruly transports of a passion, rendered impetuous by opposition, threw me into the most dismal dejection with which human nature was ever oppressed; I even dared to despair of virtue. Your letter, which was rather calculated to awaken remorse than to stifle it, put the finishing stroke to my distraction. My heart was so depraved, that my reason could not withstand the arguments of your plausible philosophy. Horrible ideas ventured to crowd into my mind, with which it had never been tainted before. My will still opposed them, but my imagination grew familiar with them, and if my soul did not harbour anticipated guilt, yet I was no longer mistress of that noble resolution which alone is capable of resisting temptation.

I am scarce able to proceed. Let me stop a while. Recall to your mind those days of innocence and felicity, when the lively and tender passion with which we were

mutually animated, only served to refine our sentiments, when that holy ardour contributed to render modesty more lovely, and honour more amiable, when our very desires seemed kindled only that we might have the glory of subduing them, and of rendering ourselves more worthy of each other. Look over our first letters; reflect on those moments so fleeting and so little enjoyed, when love appeared to us arrayed in all the charms of virtue, and when we were too fond of each other to enter into any connections which she condemned.

What were we then, and what are we now? Two tender lovers spent a whole year together in painful silence; they scarce ventured to breathe a sigh, but their hearts understood each other; they thought their sufferings great, but, had they known it, they were happy. Their mutual silence was so intelligible, that at length they ventured to converse; but, satisfied with the power of triumphing over their inclinations, and with giving each other the glorious proofs of their victory, they passed another year in a reserve scarce less severe; they imparted their troubles to each other, and were happy. But these violent struggles were too painful to be supported long; one moment's weakness led them astray; they forgot themselves in their transports; but if they were no longer chaste, they were still constant; at least, heaven and nature authorized the ties which united them; at least virtue was still dear to them; they still loved and honoured her charms; they were less corrupted than debased. Though they were less worthy of felicity, they still continued happy.

What now are those affectionate lovers who glowed with so refined a passion, and were so sensible of the worth of honour? who can be acquainted with their condition, without sighing over them?——behold them a prey to guilt. Even the idea of defiling the marriage bed does not now strike them with horror——they meditate adultery!——how, is it possible that they can be the same pair? Are not their souls entirely altered? how could that lovely image which the wicked never behold, be effaced in the minds where it once shone so bright? are not they, who have once felt the charms of virtue, for ever after disgusted with vice? how many ages have passed

to produce this astonishing alteration? what length of time could be capable of destroying so delightful a remembrance, and of extinguishing the true sense of happiness in those who had once enjoyed it? Ah! if the first step of irregularity moves with slow and painful pace, how easy and precipitate are those which follow! O, the illusion of passion! it is that which fascinates reason, betrays prudence, and new models nature, before we perceive the change. A single moment leads us astray; one step draws us out of the right path. From that time an irresistible propensity hurries us on to our ruin. From that time we fall into a gulph, and arise frightened to find ourselves oppressed with crimes, with a heart formed to virtue. My dear friend, let us drop the curtain. Can it be necessary to see the dangerous precipice it conceals from us, in order to avoid approaching it? I resume my narrative.

M. Wolmar arrived, and made no objection to the alteration in my features. My father pressed me. The mourning for my mother was just over, and my grief was proof against time. I could form no pretence to elude my promise; and was under a necessity of fulfilling it. I thought the day which was to separate me for ever from you and from myself, would have been the last of my life. I could have beheld the preparations for my funeral, with less horror than those for my marriage. The nearer the fatal moment drew, the less I found myself able to root out my first affections from my soul; my efforts rather served to inflame than to extinguish them. At length I gave over the fruitless struggle. At the very time that I was prepared to swear eternal constancy to another, my heart still vowed eternal love to thee, and I was carried to the temple as a polluted victim, which defiles the altar on which it is sacrificed.

When I came to the church, I felt, at my entrance, a kind of emotion which I had never experienced before. An inconceivable terror seized my mind in that solemn and august place which was full of the Being worshipped there. A sudden horror made me shiver. Trembling and ready to faint, it was with difficulty that I reached the altar. Far from being composed, I found my disorder increase during the

ceremony, and every object I beheld struck me with terror. The gloomy light of the temple, the profound silence of the spectators, their decent and collected deportment, the train of all my relations, the awful look of my venerable father, all contributed to give the ceremony an air of solemnity which commanded my attention and reverence, and which made me tremble at the very thought of perjury. I imagined that I beheld the instrument of Providence, and that I heard the voice of heaven, in the minister who pronounced the holy liturgy with uncommon solemnity. The purity, the dignity, the sanctity of marriage, so forcibly expressed in the words of scripture, the chaste, the sublime duties it inculcates, and which are so important to the happiness, the order, the peace, the being of human nature, so agreeable in themselves to be observed; all conspired to make such an impression upon me, that I felt a thorough revolution within ne. An invisible power seemed suddenly to rectify the disorder of my affections, and to settle them according to the laws of duty and nature. The eternal and omnipresent Power, said I to myself, now reads the bottom of my soul; he compares my secret will with my verbal declaration: heaven and earth are witness to the solemn engagement I am going to contract; and they shall be witness of my fidelity in observing the obligation. What human duty can they regard, who dare to violate the first and most sacred of all?

A casual glance on Mr. and Mrs. Orbe, whom I saw opposite to each other, fixing their tender looks on me, affected me more powerfully than all the other objects around me. O most amiable and virtuous pair! though your love is less violent, are you therefore less closely attached to each other? duty and honour are the bonds which unite you; affectionate friends! faithful couple! you do not burn with that devouring flame which consumes the soul, but you love each other with a gentle and refined affection, which nourishes the mind, which prudence authorizes, and reason directs; you therefore enjoy more substantial felicity. Ah! that, in an union like yours, I could recover the same innocence, and attain the same happiness! if I have not like you deserved it, I will at least endeavour to make myself worthy of it by

your example.

These sentiments renewed my hopes, and revived my courage. I considered the sacred tie I was preparing to form, as a new state which would purify my soul, and restore me to a just sense of my duty. When the minister asked me, whether I promised perfect obedience and fidelity to him whom I received for my husband, I made the promise not only with my lips but with my heart; and I will keep it inviolably till my death.

When we returned one, I sighed for an hour's solitude and recollection. I obtained it, not without difficulty; and however eager I was to make the best advantage of it, I nevertheless entered into self-examination with reluctance, being afraid lest I should discover that I had only been affected by some transitory impressions, and that at the bottom I should find myself as unworthy a wife, as I had been an indiscreet girl. The method of making the trial was sure, but dangerous; I began it by turning my thoughts on you. My heart bore witness that no tender recollection had profaned the solemn engagement I had lately made. I could not conceive, without astonishment, how your image could have forborne its obstinate intrusion, and have left me so long at rest, amidst so many occasions which might have recalled you to my mind; I should have mistrusted my insensibility and forgetfulness, as treacherous dependencies, which were too unnatural to be lasting. I found however that I was in no danger of delusion: I was sensible that I still loved you as much, if not more than ever; but I felt my affection for you without a blush. I found that I could venture to think of you, without forgetting that I was the wife of another. When a tacit self-confession reported how dear you was to me, my heart was affected, but my conscience and my senses were composed; and from that moment I perceived that my mind was changed in reality. What a torrent of pure joy then rushed into my soul! what tranquil sensations, so long effaced, then began to revive a heart which ignominy had stained, and to diffuse an unusual serenity through my whole frame! I felt as if I had been new born; and I fancied that I was entering into another life. O

gentle and balmy virtue! I am regenerated for thee; thou alone canst make life dear to me; to thee alone I consecrate my being. Oh I have too fatally experienced the loss of thee, ever to abandon thee a second time.

In the rapture of so great, so sudden, so unexpected a change I ventured to reflect on the state I was in the preceding day: I trembled on thinking what a state of unworthy debasement I had been reduced by forgetting what I owed to myself; and I shuddered at all the dangers I had since my first step of deviation. What a happy revolution of mind enabled me to discover the horror of the crime which threw temptation before me; and how did the love of discretion revive within me! by what uncommon accident, said I, could I hope to be more faithful to love, than to honour, which I held in such high esteem? what good fortune would prevent your inconstancy or my own, from delivering me a prey to new attachments? how could I oppose to another lover, that resistance which the first had conquered, and that shame which had been accustomed to yield to inclination? should I pay more regard to the rights of extinguished love, than I did to the claim of virtue, while it maintained its full empire in my soul? what security could I have to love no other but you, except that inward assistance which deceives all lovers, who swear eternal constancy, and inconsiderately perjure themselves upon every change of their affections? thus one deviation from virtue would have led to another; and vice, grown habitual, would no longer have appeared horrible in my sight. Fallen from honour to infamy, without any hold to stop me; from a seduced virgin I should have become an abandoned woman, the scandal of my sex and the torment of my family. What has saved me from so natural a consequence of my first transgression? what checked me after my first guilty step? what has preserved my reputation, and the esteem of my beloved friends? what has placed me under the protection of a virtuous and discreet husband, whose character is amiable, whose person is agreeable, and who is full of that respect and affection for me, which I have so little deserved? what, in short, enables me to aspire after the character of a virtuous wife, and gives

me courage to render myself worthy of that title? I see it, I feel it; it is the friendly hand which has conducted me thro' the paths of darkness, that now removes the veil of error from my eyes; and, in my own despite, restores me to myself. The gentle voice which incessantly murmured within me, now raised its tone, and thundered in my ears, at the very moment that I was near being lost for ever. The author of all truth would not allow me to quit his presence with the conscious guilt of detestable perjury; and preventing my crime by my remorse, he has shewn me the frightful abyss into which I was ready to fall. Eternal Providence! who dost make the insect crawl, and the heavens revolve, thou art watchful over the least of all thy works! thou hast recalled me to that virtue, which I was born to revere! deign therefore to receive, from a heart purified by thy goodness, that homage which thou alone hast rendered worthy thy acceptance.

That instant, being impressed with a lively sense of the danger I had escaped, and of the state of honour and security in which I was happily re-established, I prostrated myself on the ground, and lifting my suppliant hands to heaven, I invoked that Being enthroned on high, whole pleasure supports or destroys, by means of our own strength, that free-will he has bestowed. I eagerly, said I, embrace the professed good, of which Thou alone art the author. I will love the husband to whom thou hast attached me. I will be faithful, because it is the chief duty which unites private families and society in general. I will be chaste, because it is the parent virtue which nourishes all the rest. I will adhere to everything relative to the order of nature which thou hast established, and to the dictates of reason which I derive from thee. I recommend my heart to thy protection, and my desires to thy guidance. Render all my actions conformable to my steadfast will, which is ever thine, and never more permit momentary error to triumph over the settled choice of my life.

Having finished this short prayer, the first I ever made with true devotion, I found myself confirmed in virtuous resolutions; it seemed so easy and so agreeable to follow these dictates, that I clearly perceived where I must hereafter resort for that

power to resist my inclinations, which I could not derive from myself. From this new discovery, I acquired fresh confidence, and lamented that fatal blindness, which had so long disguised it from me. I had never been devoid of religion, but perhaps I had better have been wholly so, than to have professed one which was external and mechanical; and which satisfied the conscience, without affecting the heart; one which was confined to set forms; and taught me to believe in God at stated hours, without thinking of him the remainder of my time. Scrupulously attendant on public worship, I nevertheless drew no advantage from it to assist me in the practice of my duty. Knowing that I was of good family, I indulged my inclinations, I was fond of speculation, and put my trust in reason. Not being able to reconcile the Spirit of the Gospel with the manners of the world, nor faith with works, I steered a middle course which satisfied the vanity of my wisdom; I had one set of maxims for speculation, and another for practice; I forgot in one place, the opinions I formed in another; I was devotee at church, and a philosopher at home: Alas! was nothing any where; my prayers were but words, my reasoning mere sophistry, and the only light I followed was the false glimmering of an ignis fatuus which guided me to destruction.

I cannot describe to you how much this inward principle, which had escaped me till now, made me despise those which had so shamefully misled me. Tell me, I intreat you, what was the strongest reason in their support, and on what foundation did they rest? A favourable instinct directs me to good, some impetuous passion rises in opposition: it takes root in the same instant, and what must I do to destroy it? From a contemplation on the order of nature, I discover the beauty of virtue; and from its general utility, I derive its excellence. But what do these arguments avail, when they stand in competition to my private interest; and which in the end is of most consequence to me, to procure my own happiness at the expense of others, or to promote the felicity of others at the expense of my own happiness? if the dread of shame or punishment deter me from committing evil for the sake of my own private

good, I have nothing more to do than to sin in secret; virtue then cannot upbraid me, and if I am detected, I shall be punished, as at Sparta, not on account of my crime, but because I had not ingenuity to conceal it. In short, admitting the character and the love of virtue to be imprinted in my heart by nature, it will serve me as a rule of conduct till its impressions are dead; but how shall I be sure always to preserve this inward effigies in its original purity, which has no model, among sublunary beings, to which it can be referred? Is it not evident, that irregular afflictions corrupt the judgement as well as the will, and that conscience changes, and in every age, in every people, in every individual, accommodates itself to inconstancy of opinion and diversity of prejudice.

Adore the supreme Being, my worthy and prudent friend; with one puff of breath you will be able to dissipate those chimeras of reason, which have a visionary appearance, and which fly like so many others, before immutable truth. Nothing exists but through him, who is self-existent. It is he who directs the tendency of justice, fixes the basis of virtue, and gives a recompense to a short life spent according to his will; it is he who proclaims aloud to the guilty that their secret crimes are detected, and gives assurance to the righteous in obscurity, that their virtues are not without a witness; it is he, it is his unalterable substance, that is the true model of those perfections, of which we all bear the image within us. It is in vain that our passions disfigure it; its traces which are allied to the infinite Being, ever present themselves to our reason, and serve to re-establish what error and imposture have perverted. These distinctions seem to me extremely natural; common sense is sufficient to point them out. Every thing which we cannot separate from the idea of divine essence, is God; all the rest is the work of men. It is by the contemplation of this divine model, that the soul becomes refined and exalted, that it learns to despise low desires, and to triumph over base inclinations. A heart impressed with these sublime truths, is superior to the mean passions of human nature; the idea of infinite grandeur subdues the pride of man; the delight of

contemplation abstracts him from gross desires; and if the immense Being, who is the subject of his thoughts had no existence, it would nevertheless be of use to exercise his mind in such meditations, in order to make him more master of himself, more vigorous, more discreet, and more happy.

Do you require a particular instance of the vain subtleties framed by that self sufficient reason, which so vainly relies on its own strength? Let us coolly examine the arguments of those philosophers, those worthy advocates of a crime, which never yet reduced any whose minds were not previously corrupted. Might one not conclude that, by a direct attack of the most holy and most solemn of all contracts, these dangerous disputants were determined at one stroke to annihilate human society in general, which is founded on the faith of engagements? But let us consider, I beseech you, how they exculpate secret adultery? it is because, say they, no mischief arises from it; not even to the husband, who is ignorant of the wrong. But, can they be certain that he will always remain ignorant of the injury offered him? is it sufficient to authorise perjury and infidelity, that they do no wrong to others? is the mischief which the guilty do to themselves, not sufficient to create an abhorrence of guilt? is it no crime to be false to our word, to destroy, as far as we are able, the obligation of oaths, and the most inviolable contracts? is it no crime to take pains to render ourselves false, treacherous, and perjured? is it no crime to form attachments, which occasion you to desire the prejudice, and to wish the death of another? even the death of one whom we ought to love above others, and with whom we have sworn to live? is not that state in itself an evil, which is productive of a thousand consequential crimes? even good itself, if attended with so many mischiefs, would, for that reason only, be an evil.

Shall one of the parties pretend to innocence, who may chance to be disengaged, and have pledged his faith to no one? He is grossly mistaken. It is not only the interest of husband and wife, but it is the common benefit of mankind, that the purity of marriage be preserved unsullied. Whenever two persons are joined together by that

solemn contract, all mankind enter into a tacit engagement to respect the sacred tie, and to honour the conjugal union; and this appears to be a powerful reason against clandestine marriages, which, as they express no public sign of such an union, expose innocent maids to the temptation of adulterous passion. The public are in some measure guarantees of a control which passes in their presence; and we may venture to say, that the honour of a modest woman is under the special protection of all good and worthy people. Whoever therefore dares to seduce her, sins; first because he has tempted her to sin, and that every one is an accomplice in those crimes which he persuades others to commit: in the next place, he sins directly himself, because he violates the public and sacred faith of matrimony, without which no order or regularity can subsist in society.

The crime, say they, is secret, consequently no injury can result from it to any one. If these philosophers believe the existence of a God and the immortality of the human soul, can they call that crime secret, which has for its witness the Being principally offended, and the only righteous judge? it is a strange kind of a secret, which is hid from all eyes, except those from which it is our interest most to conceal it! if they do not however admit of the omnipresence of the Divinity, yet how can they dare to affirm that they do injury to no one? how can they prove that it is a matter of indifference to a parent to educate heirs who are strangers to his blood; to be encumbered perhaps with more children than he would otherwise have had, and to be obliged to distribute his fortune among those pledges of his dishonour, without feeling for them any sensations of parental tenderness, and natural affection. If we suppose these philosophers to be materialists, we have then a stronger foundation for opposing their tenets by the gentle dictates of nature, which plead in every breath against the principles of a vain philosophy, which have never yet been controverted by sound reasoning. In short, if the body alone produces cogitation, and sentiment depends entirely on organization, will there not be a more strict analogy between two beings of the same blood; will they not have a more violent attachment to each

other, will there not be a resemblance between their souls as well as their features, which is a most powerful motive to inspire mutual affection?

Is it doing no injury therefore, in your opinion, to destroy or disturb this natural union by the mixture of adulterate blood, and to pervert the principle of that mutual affection, which ought to cement all the members of one family? who would not shudder with horror at the thoughts of having one infant changed for another by a nurse? and is it a less crime to make such a change before the infant is born?

If I consider my own sex in particular, what mischiefs do I discover in this incontinency, which is supposed to do no injury! the debasement of a guilty woman, who, after the loss of her honour, soon forfeits all other virtues, is alone sufficient. What manifest symptoms convey to a tender husband the intelligence of that injury which they think to justify by secrecy! the loss of the wife's affection is sufficient proof. To what purpose will all her affected endeavours serve, but to manifest her indifference the more? can we impose upon the jealous eye of love by feigned caresses? and what torture must he feel, who is attached to a beloved object, whose hand embraces, while her heart rejects him! Admitting however that fortune should favour a conduct which she has so often betrayed, and to say nothing of the rashness of trusting our own affected innocence and another's peace to precautions which Providence often thinks proper to disconcert——yet what deceit, what falsehood, what imposture, is requisite to conceal a criminal commerce, to deceive a husband, to corrupt servants, and to impose upon the public! what a disgrace to the accomplices! what an example to children! what must become of their education amidst so much solicitude how to gratify a guilty passion with impunity! how is the peace of the family and the union of the heads of it to be maintained? what! in all these circumstances does the husband receive no injury? but who can make him recompense for a heart which should have been devoted to him? who can restore him the affections of a valuable woman? who can give him peace of mind, and conjugal confidence! who can cure him of his well-grounded suspicions? who can

engage a father to trust the feelings of nature, when he embraces his child?

With regard to the pretended connections which may be formed in families by means of adultery and infidelity, it cannot be considered as a serious argument, but rather as an absurd and brutal mockery, which deserves no other answer than disdain and indignation. The treasons, the quarrels, the battles, the murders with which this irregularity has in all ages pestered the earth, are sufficient proofs how far the peace and union of mankind is to be promoted by attachments founded in guilt. If any social principle results from this vile and despicable commerce, it may be compared to that which unites a band of robbers, and which ought to be destroyed and annulled, in order to ensure the safety of lawful communities.

I have endeavoured to suppress the indignation which these principles excited in me, in order to discuss them with greater moderation. The more extravagant and ridiculous I find them, the more I am interested to refute them, in order to make myself ashamed of having listened to them with too little reserve. You see how ill they can endure the test of sound reason; but from whence can we derive the sacred dictates of reason, if not from him who is the source of all? and what shall we think of those who, in order to mislead mankind, pervert this heavenly ray, which he gave them as an unerring guide to virtue? Let us abandon this philosophy of words; let us distrust a fallacious virtue which undermines all other virtues, and attempts to vindicate every vice, to authorize the practice of every species of guilt. The surest method of discovering our duty is diligently to examine what is right, and we cannot long continue the examination, without recurring to the author of all goodness. This is what I have done, since I have taken pains to rectify my principals, and improve my reason: this is a task you will perform better than I, when you are disposed to pursue the same course. It is a comfort to me to reflect, that you have frequently nourished my mind with elevated notions of religion, and you whose heart disguised nothing from me, would not have talked to me in that strain, had your sentiments differed from your declaration. I recollect that conversations of this kind were ever

delightful to us. We never found the presence of the supreme Being troublesome: it rather filled us with hope than terror: it never yet dismayed any but guilty souls; we were pleased to think that he was witness to our interviews, and we loved to exalt our minds to the contemplation of the deity. If we were now and then abased by shame, we reflected, that at least he was privy to our in most thoughts, and that idea renewed our tranquillity.

If this confidence led us astray, nevertheless the principle on which it was founded, is alone capable of reclaiming us to virtue. Is it not unworthy of a man to be always at variance with himself, to have one rule for his actions, another for his opinions, to think as if he was abstracted from matter, to act as if he was devoid of soul, and never to be capable of appropriating a single action of his life to his own entire self? for my own part, I think the principles of the ancients are sufficient to fortify us, when they are not confined to mere speculation. Weakness is incident to human nature, and the merciful Being who made man frail, will no doubt pardon his frailty; but guilt is a quality which belongs only to the wicked, and will not remain unpunished by the author of all justice. An infidel, who is otherwise well inclined, praises those virtues he admires; he acts from taste, not from choice. If all his desires happen to be regular, he indulges them without reserve. He would gratify them in the same manner, if they were irregular; for what should restrain him? But he who acknowledges and worships the common father of mankind, perceives that he is destined for nobler purposes. An ardent wish to fulfil the end of his being, animates his zeal; he follows a more certain rule of action than appetite; he knows how to do what is right at the expense of his inclinations, and to sacrifice the desires of his heart to the call of duty. Such, my dear friend, is the heroic sacrifice required of us both. The love which attached us would have proved the delight of our lives; it survived hope, it bid defiance to time and absence, it endured every kind of proof. So sincere a passion ought not ever to have decayed of itself; it was worthy to be sacrificed to virtue alone.

I must observe farther. All circumstances are altered between us, and your heart must accommodate itself to the change. The wife of Mr. Wolmar is not your former Eloisa; your change of sentiment, with regard to her, is unavoidable; and it depends upon your own choice to make the alteration redound to your honour, according to the election you make of vice or virtue. I recollect a passage in an author, whose authority you will not controvert. Love, says he, is destitute of its greatest charm, when it is abandoned by honour. To be sensible of its true value, it must warm the heart, and exalt us by raising the object of our desires. Take away the idea of perfection, and you deprive love of all its enthusiasm; banish esteem, and love is no more. How can a woman honour the man whom she ought to despise? how can he himself honour her, who has not scrupled to abandon herself to a vile seducer? thus they will soon entertain a mutual contempt for each other. Love, that celestial principle, will be debased into a shameful commerce between them. They will have lost their honour without attaining felicity. [4] This, my dear friend, is our lesson, penned by your own hand! Never were our hearts more agreeably attached, and never was honour so dear to us as in those happy days when this letter was written. Reflect then, how we should be misled at this time by a guilty passion, nourished at the expense of the most agreeable transports which can inspire the soul! The horror of vice which is so natural to us both, would soon extend to the partner of our guilt; we should entertain mutual hatred, for having loved each other indiscreetly, and remorse would quickly extinguish affection. Is it not better to refine a generous sentiment, in order to render it permanent? is it not better at least to preserve what we may grant with innocence? is not this preserving what is more delightful than all other enjoyments? yes, my dear and worthy friend, to keep our love inviolable, we must renounce each other. Let us forget all that has passed, and continue the lover of my soul. This idea is so agreeable that it compensates for every thing.

Thus have I drawn a faithful picture of my life, and given you a genuine detail of every inward sentiment. Be assured that I love you still. I am still attached to you

with such a tender and lively affection, that any other than myself would be alarmed: but I feel a principle of a different kind within me, which secures me against any apprehensions from my attachment. I perceive that the nature of my affection is entirely altered, and in this respect, my past failings are the grounds of my present security; I know that scrupulous decorum and the parade of virtue might require more of me, and not be satisfied unless I utterly forgot you. But I have a more certain rule of conduct, and I will abide by it. I attend to the secret dictates of conscience; I find nothing there which reproaches me, and it never deceives those who consult it with sincerity. If this is not sufficient to justify me before the world, it is enough to restore me to composure of mind. How has this happy change been produced? I know not how. All I know is, that I wished for it most ardently. God alone has accomplished the rest. I am convinced that a mind once corrupted, will ever remain so, and will never recover of itself, unless some sudden revolution, some unexpected change of fortune and condition, entirely alters its connections. When all its habits are destroyed, and all its passions modified, by that thorough revolution, it sometimes resumes its primitive characters, and becomes like a new being recently formed by the hands of nature. Then the recollection of its former unworthiness may serve as a preservative against relapse. Yesterday we were base and abject; to-day we are vigorous and magnanimous. By thus making a close compassion between the two different states, we become more sensible of the value of that which we have recovered, and more attentive to support it.

My marriage has made me experience something like the change I endeavour to explain to you. This tie, which I dreaded so much, has extricated me from a slavery much more dreadful; and my husband becomes dearer to me, for having restored me to myself.

You and I were, however, too closely attached, for a change of this kind to destroy the unison between us. If you lose an affectionate mistress, you gain a faithful friend; and whatever we may have imagined in our state of delusion, I cannot

believe that the alteration is to your prejudice. Let it, I conjure you, encourage you to take the same resolution that I have formed, to become hereafter more wise and virtuous, and to refine the lessons of philosophy, by the precepts of Christian morality. I shall never be thoroughly happy, unless you likewise enjoy happiness, and I am more convinced than ever, that there is no real felicity without virtue. If you sincerely love me, afford me the agreeable consolation to find that our hearts correspond in their return to virtue, as they unhappily agreed in their deviation from it.

I need not make any apology for the length of my epistle. Were you less dear to me, I should have shortened it. Before I conclude, I have one favour to request of you. M. Wolmar is a stranger to my past conduct; but a frank sincerity is part of the duty I owe to him; I should have made the confession a hundred times; you alone have restrained me. Though I am acquainted with M. Wolmar's discretion and moderation, yet to mention your name, is always to bring you in competition, and I would not do it without your consent. Can this request be disagreeable to you, and when I flatter myself to obtain your leave, do I depend too much on you or on myself? consider, I beseech you, that this reserve is inconsistent with innocence, that it grows every day more insupportable, and that I shall not enjoy a moment's rest till I receive your answer.

Letter CXII. To Eloisa.

And will you no longer be my Eloisa? ah! do not tell me so, thou most worthy of all thy sex! Thou art more mine than ever. Thy merit claims homage from the whole world. It was thee whom I adored, when I first became susceptible of the impressions of beauty: and I shall never cease to adore thee, even after death, if my soul still retains any recollection of those truly celestial charms, which were my sole delight when living. The courageous effort by which you have recovered all your virtue, renders you more equal to your lovely self. No, whatever torment the

sensation and the confession give me, yet I must declare that you never were my Eloisa more perfectly, than at this moment in which you renounce me. Alas! I regain my Eloisa, by losing her for ever. But I, whose heart shudders even at an attempt to imitate your virtue, I, who am tormented with a criminal passion which I can neither support nor subdue, am I the man whom I vainly imagined myself to be? was I worthy of your esteem? what right had I to importune you with my complaints and my despair? did it become me, to presume so high for you? Ah! what was I, that I should dare to love Eloisa?

Fool that I am! as tho' I did not feel myself sufficiently humbled, without taking pains to seek fresh circumstances of humiliation! why should I increase my mortification by enumerating distinctions unknown to love? It was that which exalted me; and which made me your equal. Our hearts were blended, we shared our sentiments in common, and mine partook of the elevation of yours. Behold me now sunk into my pristine baseness! thou gentle hope, which didst so long feed my soul to deceive me, art thou then extinguished without a prospect of return? will she not be mine? must I lose her for ever? does she make another happy?——O rage! O torments of hell!——O faithless! ought you ever——pardon me, pardon me! dearest madam! have pity on my distraction. O! you had too much reason when you told me, she is no more——She is indeed no more than affectionate Eloisa, to whom I could disclose every emotion of my heart. How could I complain when I found myself unhappy? could she listen to my complaints? was I unhappy?——what then am I now? No, I will not make you blush for yourself or me. Hope is no more, we must renounce each other; we must part. Virtue herself has pronounced the decree; and your hand has been capable of transcribing it. Let us forget each other——Forget me, at least. I am determined, I swear, that I will never speak to you of myself again.

May I yet venture to talk of you, and to interest myself in what is now the only object of my concern; I mean your happiness? In describing to me the state of your

mind, you say nothing of your present situation. As a reward of the sacrifice I have made, of which you ought to be sensible, at least deign to deliver me from this insupportable doubt. Eloisa, are you happy? if you are, give me the only comfort of which my despair is susceptible; if you are not, be compassionate enough to tell me so; my misery then will be less durable.

The more I reflect on the confession you propose to make, the less I am inclined to consent to it, and the same motive which always deprived me of resolution to deny your requests, renders me inexorable in this particular. It is a subject of the last importance, and I conjure you to weigh my reasons with attention. First, your excessive delicacy seems to lead you into a mistake, and I do not see on what foundation the most rigid virtue can exact such a confession from you. No engagement whatever can have any retro-active effect. We cannot bind ourselves with respect to time past, nor promise what is not in our power to perform! how can you be obliged to give your husband an account of the use you formerly made of your liberty, or how can you be responsible to him for a fidelity which you never promised to him? Do not deceive yourself, Eloisa; it is not to your husband, it is to your friend, that you have violated your engagement. Before we were separated by your father’s tyranny, heaven and nature had formed us for each other. By entering into other connections, you have been guilty of a crime, which love and honour can never forgive; and it is I who have a right to reclaim the prize, which M. Wolmar has ravished from my arms.

If, under any circumstances, duty can exact such a confession, it is when the danger of a relapse obliges a prudent woman to take precautions for her security. But your letter has given me more light into your real sentiments than you imagine. In reading it, I felt in my own heart, how much yours, upon a near approach, nay even in the bosom of love, would have abhorred a criminal connection, the horror of which was only diminished by its distance.

As duty and honour do not require such confidence, prudence and reason forbid it; for it is running a needless risk of forfeiting every thing that is dear in wedlock, the attachment of a husband, mutual confidence, and the peace of the family. Have you thoroughly weighed the consequences of such a step? are you sufficiently acquainted with your husband, to be certain of the effect it will produce in his disposition? do you know how many men there are, who, from such a confession, would conceive an immoderate jealousy, and an invincible contempt, and would probably be provoked, even to attempt your life? in such a nice examination, we ought to attend to time, place, and the difference of characters. In the country where I reside at present, such a confidence would be attended with no danger; and they who make so light of conjugal fidelity, are not people to be violently affected by any frailty of conduct prior to the engagement. Not to mention reasons which sometimes render those confessions indispensable, and which cannot be applied to your case, I knew some women of tolerable estimation, who, with very little risk, have made a merit of that kind of sincerity, in order perhaps by that sacrifice, to obtain a confidence which they might afterwards abuse at will. But in those countries where the sanctity of marriage is more respected, in those countries where that sacred tie forms a solid union, and where husbands have a real attachment to their wives, they require a more severe account of their conduct; they expect that their hearts should never have felt any tender affections but for themselves; usurping a right which they have not, they unreasonably expect their wives to have been theirs, even before they belonged to them, and they are as unwilling to excuse an abuse of liberty, as a real infidelity.

Believe me, virtuous Eloisa, and distrust this fruitless and unnecessary zeal. Keep this dangerous secret, which nothing can oblige you to reveal; the discovery of which might utterly ruin you, without being of any advantage to your husband. If he is worthy of such a confession, it will disturb his peace of mind; and you will have the mortification of having afflicted him without reason; if he is unworthy, why will

you give him a pretence for using you ill? How do you know whether your virtue, which has defended you from the assaults of your heart, will likewise support you against the influence of domestic troubles daily reviving? Do not voluntarily increase your misfortunes, lest they become too powerful for your resistance, and you should at length relapse by means of your scruples into a worse condition, than that from which you have with so much difficulty disengaged yourself. Prudence is the basis of every virtue; consult that, I intreat you, in this most important crisis of your life; and if the fatal secret oppresses you so violently, wait at least, before you unbosom yourself, till time and a length of years, shall have made you more perfectly acquainted with your husband: stay till his heart, now affected by the power of your beauty, shall be susceptible of those more lasting impressions, which the charms of your disposition cannot fail to make, and till he is become habitually sensible of your perfections. After all, if these reasons, powerful as they are, should not convince you, yet do not refuse to listen to the voice which utters them. O Eloisa, hearken to a man who is yet, in some degree, susceptible of virtue, and who has a right to expect some concession from you at least, in return for the sacrifice he has made to you to-day.

I must conclude this letter. I find that I cannot forbear resuming a strain, to which you must no longer give ear. Eloisa, I must part with you! young as I am, am I already destined to renounce felicity? O time, never to be recalled! time irrevocably past, source of ever-lasting sorrows! pleasures, transports, delightful ecstasies, delicious moments, celestial raptures! my love, my only love, the honour and delight of my soul! Farewell for ever.

Letter CXIII. From Eloisa.

You ask me, whether I am happy? The question affects me, and by your manner of asking it, you facilitate my answer; for so far from wishing to banish you from my memory as you desire me, I confess that I should not be happy was your affection

for me to cease: yet at present I am happy in most respects, and nothing but your felicity is wanting to compleat mine. If, in my last, I avoided making any mention of Mr. Wolmar, it was out of tenderness to you. I was too well acquainted with your sensibility of temper, not to be under apprehensions of irritating your pain; but your solicitude with regard to my felicity, obliging me to mention him on whom it depends, I cannot speak of him without doing justice to his worth, as becomes his wife, and a friend to truth.

Mr. Wolmar is near fifty years of age; but by means of an uniform regular course of life, and a serenity not ruffled by any violent passions, he has preserved such a healthy constitution, and such a florid complexion, that he scarce appears to be forty, and he bears no symptoms of age, but prudence and experience. His countenance is noble and engaging, his address open and unaffected, his manner rather sincere than courteous, he speaks little and with great judgment, but without any affectation of being concise and sententious. His behaviour is the same to every one, he neither courts nor shuns any individual, and he never gives any preference but what reason justifies.

In spite of his natural indifference, his heart, seconding my father’s inclinations, entertained a liking for me, and for the first time formed a tender attachment. This moderate and lasting affection has been governed by such strict rules of decorum, and observed such a constant uniformity, that he was under no necessity of altering his manners on changing his condition, and, without violating conjugal decorum, his behaviour to me now is the time as it was before marriage. I never saw him either gay or melancholy, but always contented; he never talks to me of himself, and seldom of me; he is not in continual search after me, but he does not seem displeased that I should seek his company, and he seems to part from me unwillingly. He is serious without disposing others to be grave; on the contrary, his serenity of manners seems an invitation to me to be sprightly; and as the pleasures I relish are the only pleasures of which he is susceptible, an endeavour to amuse

myself is among the duties I owe to him. In one word, he wishes to see me happy; he has not told me so, but his conduct declares it; and to wish the happiness of a wife, is to make her really happy.

With all the attention with which I have been able to observe him, I cannot discover any particular passion to which he is attached, except his affection for me; it is however so even and temperate, that one would conclude he had power to limit the degree of his passion, and that he had determined not to love beyond the bounds of discretion. He is in reality what Lord B—— is in his own imagination; in this respect I find him greatly preferable to those passionate lovers, of whom we are so fond; for the heart deceives us a thousand ways, and acts from a suspicious principle; but reason always proposes a just end; the rules of duty which it enjoins are sure, evident and practicable; and whenever our reason is led astray we enter into idle speculations, which were never intended to be objects of her examination.

Mr. Wolmar's chief delight is observation. He loves to judge of men's characters and actions. He generally forms his judgment with perfect impartiality and profound penetration. If an enemy was to do him an injury, he would discuss every motive and expedient with as much composure, as if he was transacting any indifferent concern. I do not know by what means he has heard of you, but he has often spoken of you, with great esteem, to me; and I am sure he is incapable of disguise. I have imagined sometimes that he took particular notice of me during these conversations; but in all probability, the observation I apprehended, was nothing but the secret reproach of an alarmed conscience. However it be, in this respect I did my duty; neither fear nor shame occasioned me to shew an unjust reserve; and I did you justice before him, as I now do him justice before you.

I forgot to tell you concerning our income, and the management of it. The wreck of Mr. Wolmar's inheritance, with the addition from my father, who has only reserved a pension for himself, makes up a handsome and moderate fortune, which Mr.

Wolmar uses with generosity and discretion, by maintaining in his family, not an inconvenient and vain display of luxury, [46] but plenty, with the real conveniences of life; and by distributing necessaries among his indigent neighbours. The economy he has established in his houshold, is the image of that order which reigns in his own breast; and his little family seems to be a model of that regularity, which is observable in the government of the world. You neither discover that inflexible formality which is rather inconvenient than useful, and which no one but he who exerts it can endure; nor do you perceive that mistaken confusion, which, by being encumbered with superfluities, renders every thing useless. The master's hand is seen throughout, without being felt, and he made his first arrangement with so much discretion, that every thing now goes on by itself; and regularity is preserved, without any abridgment of liberty.

This, my worthy friend, is a succinct but faithful account of Mr. Wolmar's character, as far as I have been able to discover it since I lived with him. Such as he appeared to me the first day, such he seemed the last, without any alteration; which induces me to hope that I know him thoroughly, and that I have no farther discoveries to make; for I cannot conceive any change in his behaviour which will not be to his disadvantage.

From this account, you may anticipate the answer to your question, and you must think despicably of me not to suppose me happy, when I have so much reason to be so. What led me into a mistake, and what perhaps still misleads you, is the opinion, that love is necessary to make the married state happy. My good friend, this is a vulgar error; honour, virtue a certain conformity, not so much of age and condition as of temper and inclination, are the requisites in the conjugal state: nevertheless it must not be inferred from hence that this union does not produce an affectionate attachment, which, though it does not amount to love, is not less agreeable, and is much more permanent. Love is attended with a continual inquietude of jealousy, or the dread of separation, by no means suitable with a married life, which should be a

state of peace and tranquillity. The intent of matrimony is not for man and wife to be always taken up with each other, but jointly to discharge the duties of civil society, to govern their family with prudence, and educate their children with discretion. Lovers attend to nothing but each other, they are incessantly engaged with each other; and all that they regard, is how to shew their mutual affection. But this is not enough for a married pair, who have so many other objects to engage their attention. There is no passion whatever which exposes us to such delusion, as that of love. We take its violence for a symptom of its duration; the heart over-burthened with such an agreeable sensation, extends itself to futurity; and while the heat of love continues, we flatter ourselves that it will never cool. But, on the contrary, it is consumed by its own ardour; it glows in youth, it grows faint with decaying beauty, it is utterly extinguished by the frost of age; and since the beginning of the world, there never was an instance of two lovers who sighed for each other, when they became grey-headed. We may be assured that, sooner or later, adoration will cease; then the idol which we worshipped being demolished, we reciprocally see each other in a true light. We look with surprise, for the object on which we doated; not being able to discover it more. We are displeased with that which remains in its stead, and which our imagination often disfigures, as much as it embellished it before; there are few people, says Rochefoucauld, who are not ashamed of having loved each other, when their affection is extinguished. How much is it to be dreaded therefore, lest these two lively sensations should be succeeded by an irksome state of mind, lest their decline instead of stopping at indifference, should even reach absolute disgust; lest, in short, being entirely satiated, they, who were too passionately fond of each other as lovers, should come to hate each other as husband and wife! My dear friend, you always appeared amiable in my eyes, too fatally so for my innocence and repose, but I never yet saw you but in the character of a lover, and how do I know in what light you would have appeared, when your passion was no more? I must confess, that when love expired, it would still have left you in possession of virtue;

but is that alone sufficient to make an union happy, which the heart ought to cement? and how many virtuous men have made intolerable husbands? In all these respects, you may say the same of me.

As to Mr. Wolmar, no delusion is the foundation of our mutual liking; we see each other in a true light; the sentiment which unites us is not the blind transport of passionate desire; but a constant and invariable attachment between two rational people, who being destined to pass the remainder of their lives together, are content with their lot, and endeavour to make themselves mutually agreeable. It seems as if we could not have suited each other better, had we been formed on purpose for our union. Had his heart been as tender as mine, it is impossible but so much sensibility on each side must sometimes have clashed, and occasioned disagreements. If I was as composed as he, there would be too much indifference between us, and our union would be less pleasing and agreeable. If he did not love me, we should be uneasy together; if his love for me was too passionate, he would be troublesome to me. We are each of us exactly made for the other; he instructs me, I enliven him; the value of both is increased by our union, and we seem destined to form but one soul between us; to which he gives intelligence, and I direct the will. Even his advanced age redounds to our common advantage; for with the passion which agitated me, it is certain that had he been younger, I should have married him with more unwillingness, and my extreme reluctance would probably have prevented the happy revolution I have experienced.

My worthy friend, heaven directs the good intention of parents, and rewards the docility of children. God forbid that I should wish to insult your affliction. Nothing but a strong desire of giving you the firmest assurance with respect to my present condition, could induce me to add what I am going to mention. If, with the sentiments I formerly entertained for you, with the knowledge I have since acquired, I was once more my own mistress, and at liberty to chuse a husband, I call that Being, who has vouchsafed to enlighten me, and who reads the bottom of my heart,

to witness my sincerity when I declare that I should make choice, not of you, but Mr. Wolmar.

Perhaps it may be necessary, to compleat your cure, that I should inform you of what farther remains in my mind. Mr. Wolmar is much older than me. If, to punish my failings, heaven should deprive me of a worthy husband, whom I so little deserved, it is my firm resolution never to espouse another. If he has not had the good fortune to meet with a chaste virgin, at least he will leave behind him a continent widow. You know me too well, to imagine that, after I have made this declaration, I shall ever recede from it.

What I have said to remove your doubts, may, in some measure, serve to resolve your objections against the confession which I think it my duty to make to my husband. He is too discreet to punish me for a mortifying step which repentance alone may atone for, and I am not more incapable of the artifice common to the women you speak of, than he is of harbouring such a suspicion. With respect to the reason you assign why such a confession is needless, it is certainly sophistical; for, though we can be under no obligation to a husband, as such, before marriage, yet that does not authorise one to pass upon him, for what one really is not. I perceived this before I married him, and tho' the oath which my father extorted from me prevented me from discharging my duty in this respect, I am not the less blameable, since it is a crime to take an unjust oath, and a farther crime to keep it. But I had another reason, which my heart dared not avow, and which made my guilt greater still. Thank heaven, that reason subsists no longer.

A consideration more just, and of greater weight with me, is the danger of unnecessarily disturbing the peace of a worthy man, who derives his happiness from the esteem he bears to his wife. It certainly is not now in his power to break the tie which binds us together, nor in mine to have been more worthy of his choice. Therefore, by an indiscreet confidence, I run the risk of afflicting him without any

advantage, and without reaping any other benefit from my sincerity, than that of discharging my mind of a cruel secret which oppresses me heavily. I am sensible that I shall be more composed when I have made the discovery; but perhaps he would be less happy, and to prefer my own peace to his, would be a bad method of making reparation for my faults.

What then shall I do in this dilemma? Till heaven shall better instruct me in my duty, I will follow your friendly advice; I will be silent; conceal my failings from my husband, and endeavour to repair them by a conduct, which may hereafter secure me a pardon.

To begin this necessary reformation, you must consent, my dear friend, that from this time, all correspondence between us shall cease. If Mr. Wolmar had received my confession, he might have determined how far we ought to gratify the sensations of friendship, and give innocent proofs of our mutual attachment; but since I dare not consult him in this particular, I have learned to my cost, how far habits the most justifiable in appearance, are capable of leading us astray. It is time to grow discreet. Notwithstanding I think my heart securely fortified, yet I will no longer venture to be judge in my own cause, nor now am I a wife, will I gave way to the same presumption which betrayed me when I was a maid. This is the last letter you will ever receive from me. I intreat you never to write to me again. Nevertheless, as I shall always continue to interest myself with the most tender concern for your welfare, and as my sentiment in this respect is as pure as the light, I shall be glad to hear of you occasionally, and to find you in possession of that happiness you deserve. You may write to Mr. Orbe from time to time when you have any thing interesting to communicate. I hope that the integrity of your soul will be expressed in your letters. Besides, my cousin is too virtuous and discreet, to shew me any part which is not fit for my perusal, and would not fail to suppress the correspondence, if you were capable of abusing it.

Farewell, my dear and worthy friend; if I thought that fortune could make you happy, I should desire you to go in pursuit of her; but perhaps you have reason to despise her, being master of such accomplishments as will enable you to thrive without her assistance. I would rather desire you to seek happiness, which is the fortune of the wise; we have ever experienced that there is no felicity without virtue but examine carefully whether the word virtue, taken in too abstracted a sense, has not more pomp than solidity in it, and whether it is not a term of parade, more calculated to dazzle others, than to satisfy ourselves. I shudder when I reflect that they who secretly meditated adultery, should dare to talk of virtue! do you know in what sense we understood this respectable epithet, which we abused while we were engaged in a criminal commerce? it was the impetuous passion with which we were mutually inflamed, that disguised its transports under this sacred enthusiasm, in order to render them more dear to us, and to hold us longer in delusion. We were formed, I dare believe, to practise and cherish real virtue, but we were misguided in our pursuit it, and we pursued a vain phantom. It is time to recover from this delusion; it is time to return from a deviation which has carried us too far astray. My dear friend, your return to wisdom will not be so difficult as you conceive. You have a guide within yourself, whose directions you have disregarded, but never entirely rejected. Your mind is sound, it is attached to what is right, and if just principles sometimes forsake you, it is because you do not use your utmost efforts to maintain them. Examine your conscience thoroughly, see whether you will not discover some neglected principle, which might have served to put your actions under better regulations, to have made them more consistent with each other, and with one common object. Believe me, it is not sufficient that virtue is the basis of your conduct, unless that basis itself is fixed on a firm foundation. Call to your mind those Indians, who imagine the world is supported by a great elephant, that elephant by a tortoise, and when you ask them on what the tortoise rests, they can answer you no farther.

I conjure you to regard the remonstrances of friendship, and to chuse a more certain road to happiness than that which has so long misguided us. I shall incessantly pray to heaven to grant us pure felicity, and I shall never be satisfied till we both enjoy it. And, if our hearts, spite of our endeavours, recall the errors of our youth, let the reformation they produced at least warrant the recollection, that we may say, with the ancient philosopher——Alas! we should have perished, if we had not been undone.

Here ends the tedious sermon I have preached to you. I shall have enough to do hereafter to preach to myself. Farewell, my amiable friend, farewell for ever! so inflexible duty decrees: but be assured that the heart of Eloisa can never forget what was so dear to her——my God! what am I doing? the condition of the paper will tell you. Ah! is it not excusable to dissolve in tenderness, when we take the last farewell of a friend?

Letter CXIV. To Lord B——.

Yes, my Lord, I confess it; the weight of life is too heavy for my soul. I have long endured it as a burthen; I have lost every thing which could make it dear to me, and nothing remains but irksomeness and vexation. I am told however, that I am not at liberty to dispose of my life, without the permission of that Being from whom I received it. I am sensible likewise, that you have a right over it by more titles than one. Your care has twice preserved it, and your goodness is its constant security. I will never dispose of it, till I am certain that I may do it without a crime, and till I have not the least hope of employing it for your service.

You told me that I should be of use to you; why did you deceive me? Since we have been in London, so far from thinking of employing me in your concerns, you have been kind enough to make me your only concern. How superfluous is your obliging solicitude! My lord, you know I abhor a crime, even worse than I detest life; I adore the supreme Being.——I owe every thing to you. I have an affection for you, you

are the only person on earth to whom I am attached. Friendship and duty may chain a wretch to this earth: sophistry and vain pretences will never detain him. Enlighten my understanding, speak to my heart; I am ready to hear you, but remember, that despair is not to be imposed upon.

You would have me apply to the test of reason: I will; let us reason. You desire me to deliberate in proportion to the importance of the question in debate; I agree to it. Let us investigate truth with temper and moderation. Let us discuss this general proposition with the same indifference we would treat any other. Robeck wrote an apology for suicide before he put an end to his life. I will not, after his example, write a book on the subject, neither am I well satisfied with that which he has penned, but I hope in this discussion, at least to imitate his moderation.

I have for a long time meditated on this awful subject. You must be sensible that I have; for you know my destiny, and yet I am alive. The more I reflect, the more I am convinced that the question may be reduced to this fundamental proposition. Every man has a right by nature, to pursue what he thinks good, and avoid what he thinks evil, in all respects which are not injurious to others. When our life therefore becomes a misery to ourselves, and is of advantage to no one, we are at liberty to put an end to our being. If there is any such thing as a clear and self-evident principle, certainly this is one, and if this is subverted, there is scarce an action in life, which may not be made criminal.

Let us hear what the philosophers say on this subject. First, they consider life as something which is not our own, because we hold it as a gift; but because it has been given to us, it is for that reason our own. Has not God given these sophists two arms? nevertheless when they are under apprehensions of a mortification, they do not scruple to amputate one, or both if there is occasion. By a parity of reasoning, we may convince those who believe in the immortality of the soul; for if I sacrifice my arm to the preservation of something more precious, which is my body, I have

the same right to sacrifice my body to the preservation of something more valuable, which is the happiness of my existence. If all the gifts which heaven has bestowed, are naturally designed for our good, they are certainly too apt to change their nature; and Providence has endowed us with reason, that we may discern the difference. If this rule did not authorize us to chuse the one and reject the other, to what use would it serve among mankind?

But they turn this weak objection into a thousand shapes. They consider a man living upon earth, as a soldier placed on duty. God, say they, has fixed you in this world, why do you quit your station without his leave. But you, who argue thus, has he not stationed you in the town where you was born, why therefore do you quit it without his leave? is not misery, of itself, a sufficient permission? whatever station Providence has assigned me, whether it be in a regiment, or on the earth at large, he intended me to stay there while I found my situation agreeable, and to leave it when it became intolerable. This is the voice of nature, and the voice of God. I agree that we must wait for an order; but when I die a natural death, God does not order me to quit life, he takes it from me: it is by rendering life insupportable, that he orders me to quit it. In the first case, I resist with all my force; in the second, I have the merit of obedience.

Can you conceive that there are some people so absurd as to arraign suicide as a kind of rebellion against Providence, by an attempt to fly from his laws? but we do not put an end to our being, in order to withdraw ourselves from his commands, but to execute them. What! does the power of God extend no farther than my body? is there a spot in the universe, is there any being in the universe which is not subject to his power, and will that power have less immediate influence over me, when my being is refined and thereby becomes less compound, and of nearer resemblance to the divine essence? no, his justice and goodness are the foundation of my hopes, and if I thought that death would withdraw me from his power I would give up my resolution to die.

This is one of the quibbles of the Phaedo, which, in other respects, abounds with sublime truths. If your slave destroys himself says Socrates to Cebes, would you not punish him, for having unjustly deprived you of your property: prithee, good Socrates, do we not belong to God after we are dead? The case you put, is not applicable; you ought to argue thus: if you incumber your slave with a habit which confines him from discharging his duty properly, will you punish him for quitting it in order to render you better service? the grand error lies in making life of too much importance; as if our existence depended upon it, and that death was a total annihilation. Our life is of no consequence in the sight of God; it is of no importance in the eyes of reason, neither ought to be of any in our sight, and when we quit our body, we only lay aside an inconvenient habit. Is this circumstance so painful, to be the occasion of so much disturbance? my lord, these declaimers are not in earnest. Their arguments are absurd and cruel, for they aggravate the supposed crime, as if it put a period to existence, and they punish it, as if that existence was eternal.

With respect to Plato's Phaedo, which has furnished them with the only specious argument that has ever been advanced, the question is discussed there in a very light and desultory manner. Socrates being condemned, by an unjust judgement, to lose his life in a few hours, had no occasion to enter into an accurate inquiry whether he was at liberty to dispose of it himself. Supposing him really to have been the author of those discourses which Plato ascribes to him, yet believe me, my lord, he would have meditated with more attention on the subject, had he been in circumstances which required him to reduce his speculations to practice;——and a strong proof that no objection can be drawn from that immortal work against the right of disposing of our own lives is, that Cato read it twice through the very night that he destroyed himself.

The same sophisters make it a question whether life can ever be an evil? but when we consider the multitude of errors, torments and vices with which it abounds, one would rather be inclined to doubt whether it can ever be a blessing. Guilt incessantly

besieges the most virtuous of mankind. Every moment he lives, he is in danger of falling a prey to the wicked, or of being wicked himself. To struggle, and to endure, is his lot in this world; that of the dishonest man is to do evil, and to suffer. In every other particular they differ, and only agree in sharing the miseries of life in common. If you required authorities and facts, I could cite you the oracles of old, the answers of the sages; and produce instances where acts of virtue have been recompensed with death. But let us leave these considerations, my lord; it is to you whom I address myself, and I ask you what is the chief attention of a wise man in this life, but, if I may be allowed the expression, to collect himself inwardly, and endeavour, even while he lives, to be dead to every object of sense? The only way by which wisdom directs us to avoid the miseries of human nature, is it not to detach ourselves from all earthly objects, from every thing that is gross in our composition, to retire within ourselves, and to raise our thoughts to sublime contemplations? If therefore our misfortunes are derived from our passions and our errors, with what eagerness should we wish for a state which will deliver us both from the one and the other? what is the fate of those sons of sensuality, who indiscreetly multiply their torments by their pleasures? they in fact destroy their existence, by extending their connections in this life; they increase the weight of their crimes by their numerous attachments; they relish no enjoyments but what are succeeded by a thousand bitter wants; the more lively their sensibility, the more acute their sufferings; the stronger they are attached to life, the more wretched they become.

But admitting it, in general, a benefit to mankind to crawl upon the earth with gloomy sadness; I do not mean to intimate that the human race ought with one common consent to destroy themselves, and make the world one immense grave. But there are miserable beings, who are too much exalted to be governed by vulgar opinion; to them, despair and grievous torments are the passports of nature. It would be as ridiculous to suppose that life can be a blessing to such men, as it was absurd in the sophister Posidonius to deny that it was an evil, at the same time that he

endured all the torments of the gout. While life is agreeable to us, we earnestly wish to prolong it, and nothing but a sense of extreme misery can extinguish the desire of existence; for we naturally conceive a violent dread of death, and this dread conceals the miseries of human nature from our sight. We drag a painful and melancholy life, for a long time before we can resolve to quit it; but when once life becomes so insupportable as to overcome the horror of death, then existence is evidently a great evil, and we cannot disengage ourselves from it too soon. Therefore, though we cannot exactly ascertain the point at which it ceases to be a blessing, yet at least we are certain that it is an evil long before it appears to be such, and with every sensible man the right of quitting life, is by a great deal precedent to the temptation.

This is not all. After they have denied that life can be an evil, in order to bar our right of making away with ourselves; they confess immediately afterwards that it is an evil, by reproaching us with want of courage to support it. According to them, it is cowardice to withdraw ourselves from pain and trouble, and there are none but dastards who destroy themselves. O Rome, thou victrix of the world, what a race of cowards did thy empire produce! let Arria, Eponina, Lucretia, be of the number; they were women. But Brutus, but Cassius, and thou great and divine Cato, who didst share with the gods the adoration of an astonished world, thou whose sacred and august presence animated the Romans with holy zeal, and made tyrants tremble, little did thy proud admirers imagine that paltry rhetoricians immured in the dusty corner of a college, would ever attempt to prove that thou wert a coward, for having preferred death to a shameful existence.

O the dignity and energy of your modern writers! how sublime, how intrepid you are with your pens? but tell me thou great and valiant hero, who dost so courageously decline the battle, in order to endure the pain of living somewhat longer; when a spark of fire lights upon your hand, why do you withdraw it in such haste? how! are you such a coward that you dare not bear the scorching of fire? nothing, you say, can oblige you to endure the burning spark; and what obliges me to endure life? was the

creation of a man of more difficulty to Providence, than that of a straw, and is not both one and the other equally the work of his hands?

Without doubt, it is an evidence of great fortitude to bear with firmness the misery which we cannot shun; none but a fool however, will voluntarily endure evils which he can avoid without a crime, and it is very often a great crime to suffer pain unnecessarily. He who has not resolution to deliver himself from a miserable being by a speedy death, is like one who would rather suffer a wound to mortify, than trust to the surgeon's knife for his cure. Come, thou worthy——cut off this leg, which endangers my life. I will see it done without shrinking, and will give that hero leave to call me coward, who suffers his leg to mortify, because he does not dare to undergo the same operation.

I acknowledge that there are duties owing to others, the nature of which will not allow every man to dispose of his life; but in return, how many are there which give him a right to dispose of it? let a magistrate on whom the welfare of a nation depends, let a father of a family who is bound to procure subsistence for his children, let a debtor who might ruin his creditors, let these at all events discharge their duty; admitting a thousand other civil and domestic relations to oblige an honest and unfortunate man to support the misery of life, to avoid the greater evil of doing injustice, is it therefore, under circumstances totally different, incumbent on us to preserve a life oppressed with a swarm of miseries, when it can be of no service but to him who has not courage to die? "Kill me, my child, says the decrepit savage to his son who carries him on his shoulders, and bends under his weight; the enemy is at hand; go to battle with thy brethren, go and preserve thy children, and do not suffer thy helpless father to fall alive into the hands of those whose relations he has mangled." Though hunger, sickness and poverty, those domestic plagues, more dreadful than savage enemies, may allow a wretched cripple to confuse, in a sick bed, the provisions of a family which can scarce subsist itself; yet he who has no connections, whom heaven has reduced to the necessity of living alone, whose

wretched existence can produce no good, why should not he, at least, have the right of quitting a station where his complaints are troublesome, and his sufferings of no benefit.

Weigh these considerations, my lord; collect these arguments, and you will find that they may be reduced to the most simple of nature's rights, of which no man of sense yet ever entertained a doubt. In fact, why should we be allowed to cure ourselves of the gout, and not to get rid of the misery of life? do not both evils proceed from the same hand? to what purpose is it to say, that death is painful? are drugs agreeable to be taken? no, nature revolts against both. Let them prove therefore that it is more justifiable to cure a transient disorder by the application of remedies, than to free ourselves from an incurable evil by putting an end to life; and let them shew how it can be less criminal to use the bark for a fever, than to take opium for the stone. If we consider the object in view, it is in both cases to free ourselves from painful sensations; if we regard the means, both one and the other are equally natural; if we consider the repugnance of our nature, it operates equally on both sides; if we attend to the will of Providence, can we struggle against any evil, of which he is not the author? can we deliver ourselves from any torment which his hand has not inflicted? what are the bounds which limit his power, and when is resistance lawful? are we then to make no alteration in the condition of things, because every thing is in the state he appointed? must we do nothing in this life, for fear of infringing his laws, or is it in our power to break them if we would? no, my lord, the occupation of man is more great and noble. God did not give him life, that he should remain supinely in a state of constant inactivity. But he gave him freedom to act, conscience to will, and reason to chuse what is good. He has constituted him sole judge of all his actions. He has engraved this precept in his heart, do whatever you conceive to be for your own good, provided you thereby do injury to no one. If my sensations tell me that death is eligible, I resist his orders by an obstinate resolution to live, for by making death desirable, he directs me to put an end to my being.

My lord, I appeal to your wisdom and candour; what more infallible maxims can reason deduce from religion, with respect to suicide. If Christians have adopted contrary tenets, they are neither drawn from the principles of religion, nor from the only sure guide, the scriptures, but borrowed from the pagan philosophers. Lactantius and Augustine, the first who propagated this new doctrine, of which Jesus Christ and his apostles take no notice, ground their arguments entirely on the reasoning of Phaedo, which I have already contraverted; so that the believers, who, in this respect, think they are supported by the authority of the gospel, are in fact only countenanced by the authority of Plato. In truth, where do we find throughout the whole bible any law against suicide, or so much as a bare disapprobation of it; and is it not very unaccountable, that among the instances produced of persons who devoted themselves to death, we do not find the least word of improbation against examples of this kind? nay, what is more; the instance of Samson's voluntary death is authorized by a miracle, by which he revenges himself of his enemies. Would this miracle have been displayed to justify a crime, and would this man who lost his strength; by suffering himself to be seduced by the allurements of a woman, have recovered it to commit an authorized crime, as if God himself would practise deceit on men?

Thou shalt do no murder, says the decalogue? what are we to infer from this? if this commandment is to be taken literally, we must not destroy malefactors, nor our enemies: and Moses, who put so many people to death, was a bad interpreter of his own precept. If there are any exceptions, certainly the first must be in favour of suicide, because it is exempt from any degree of violence and injustice; the two only circumstances which can make homicide criminal; and because nature, moreover, has in this respect, thrown sufficient obstacles in the way.

But still, they tell us, we must patiently endure the evils which God inflicts; and make a merit of our sufferings. This application however of the maxims of Christianity is very ill calculated to satisfy our judgment. Man is subject to a

thousand troubles, his life is a complication of evils, and he seems to have been born only to suffer. Reason directs him to shun as many of these evils as he can avoid; and religion, which is never in contradiction to reason, approves of his endeavours. But how inconsiderable is the account of these evils, in comparison with those he is obliged to endure against his will? It is with respect to these, that a merciful God allows man to claim the merit of resistance; he receives the tribute he has been pleased to impose, as a voluntary homage, and he places our resignation in this life to our profit in the next. True repentance is derived from nature; if man endures patiently whatever he is obliged to suffer, he does, in this respect, all that God requires of him; and if any one is so inflated with pride, as to attempt more, he is a madman, who ought to be confined, or an impostor, who ought to be punished. Let us therefore, without scruple, fly from all the evils we can avoid; there will still be too many left for us to endure. Let us, without remorse, quit life itself when it becomes a torment to us, since it is in our own power to do it; and that in so doing, we neither offend God nor man. If we would offer a sacrifice to the supreme Being, is it nothing to undergo death? let us devote to God that which he demands by the voice of reason, and into his hands let us peaceably surrender our souls.

Such are the liberal precepts which good sense dictates to every man, and which religion authorises. [47] Let us apply these precepts to ourselves. You have condescended to disclose your mind to me; I am acquainted with your uneasiness; you do not endure less than myself; your troubles, like mine, are incurable; and they are the more remediless, as the laws of honour are more immutable than those of fortune. You bear them, I must confess, with fortitude. Virtue supports you; advance but one step farther, and she disengages you. You intreat me to suffer; my lord! I dare importune you to put an end to your sufferings; and I leave you to judge which of us is most dear to the other.

Why should we delay doing that, which we must do at last? shall we wait till old age and decrepit baseness attach us to life, after they have robbed it of its charms, and

till we are doomed to drag an infirm and decrepit body with labour, ignominy, and pain. We are at an age when the soul has vigour to disengage itself with ease from its shackles, and when a man knows how to die as he ought; when farther advanced in years, he suffers himself to be torn from life, which he quits with groans. Let us take advantage of this time when the tedium of life makes death desirable; and let us tremble for fear it should come in all its horrors, at the moment when we could wish to avoid it. I remember the time, when I prayed to heaven only for a single hour of life, and when I should have died in despair, if it had not been granted. Ah! what a pain it is to burst asunder the ties which attach our hearts to this world, and how advisable it is to quit life the moment the connection is broken! I am sensible, my lord, that we are both worthy of a purer mansion; virtue points it out, and destiny invites us to seek it. May the friendship which unites us, preserve our union to the latest hour. O what a pleasure for two sincere friends voluntarily to end their days in each other's arms, to intermingle their latest breath, and at the same instant to give up the soul which they shared in common! What pain, what regret can infect their last moments? what do they quit by taking leave of the world? They go together; they quit nothing.

Letter CXV. Answer.

Thou art distracted, my friend, by a blind passion; be more discreet; do not give council, while you stand in need of advice. I have known greater evils than yours. I am armed with fortitude of mind; I am an English man, and not afraid to die; for I know how to live and suffer, as becomes a man. I have seen death near at hand, and have viewed it with too much indifference to go in search of it.

It is true, I thought you might be of use to me; my affection stood in need of yours: your endeavours might have been serviceable to me; your understanding might have enlightened me in the most important concern of my life; if I do not avail myself of it, who are you to impute it to? where is it? what is become of it? what are you

capable of? of what use can you be in the condition you are in? what service can I expect from you? a senseless grief renders you stupid and unconcerned. Thou art no man; thou art nothing; and if I did not consider you might be, in your present state I cannot conceive any being more abject.

There is need of no other proof than your letter itself. Formerly I could discover in you good sense and truth. Your sentiments were just, your reflections proper, and I liked you not only from judgment but choice; for I considered your influence as an additional motive to excite me to study of wisdom. But what do I perceive now in the arguments of your letter, with which you appear to be to highly satisfied? A wretched and perpetual sophistry, which, in the erroneous deviations of your reason, shew the disorder of your mind; and which I would not stoop to refute, if I did not commiserate your delirium.

To subvert all your reasoning with one word, I would only ask you a single question. You who believe in the existence of a God, in the immortality of the soul, and in the free-will of man; you surely cannot suppose that an intelligent being is embodied, and stationed on the earth by accident only, to exist, to suffer, and to die. It is certainly most probable that the life of man is not without some design, some end, some moral object. I intreat you to give me a direct answer to this point; after which we will deliberately examine your letter, and you will blush to have written it.

But let us wave all general maxims, about which we often hold violent disputes, without adopting any of them in practice; for in their application, we always find some particular circumstances, which make such an alteration in the state of things, that every one thinks himself dispensed from submitting to the rules, which he prescribes to others; and it is well known, that every man who establishes general principles, deems them obligatory on all the world, himself excepted. Once more let us speak to you in particular.

You believe that you have a right to put an end to your being. Your proof is of a

very singular nature; “because I am disposed to die, say you, I have a right to destroy myself.” This is certainly a very convenient argument for villains of all kinds: they ought to be very thankful to you, for the arms with which you have furnished them; there can be no crimes, which, according to your arguments, may not be justified by the temptation to perpetrate them, and as soon as the impetuosity of passion shall prevail over the horror of guilt, their disposition to do evil will be considered as a right to commit it.

Is it lawful for you therefore to quit life? I should be glad to know whether you have yet begun to live? what! was you placed here on earth to do nothing in this world? did not heaven when it gave you existence, give you some task or employment? If you have accomplished your day’s work before evening, rest yourself for the remainder of the day, you have a right to do it; but let us see your work. What answer are you prepared to make the supreme judge, when he demands an account of your time? Tell me, what can you say to him——I have seduced a virtuous girl: I have forsaken a friend in his distress. Thou unhappy wretch! point out to me that just man who can boast that he has lived long enough; let me learn from him in what manner I ought to have spent my days, to be at liberty to quit life.

You enumerate the evils of human nature. You are not ashamed to exhaust common place topics, which have been hackney’d over a hundred times; and you conclude that life is an evil. But search, examine into the order of things; and see whether you can find any good which is not intermingled with evil. Does it therefore follow that there is no good in the universe, and can you confound what is in its own nature evil, with that which is only an evil accidentally? You have confessed yourself, that the transitory and passive life of man is of no consequence, and only bears respect to matter, from which he will soon be disencumbered; but his active and moral life, which ought to have most influence over his nature, consists in the exercise of free-will. Life is an evil to a wicked man in prosperity, and a blessing to an honest man in distress: for it is not its casual modification, but its relation to some final

object, which makes it either good or bad. After all, what are these cruel torments which force you to abandon life? do you imagine that under your affected impartiality in the enumeration of the evils of this life, I did not discover that you was ashamed to speak of your own? Trust me, and do not at once abandon every virtue. Preserve at least your wonted sincerity, and speak thus openly to your friend; I have lost all hope of seducing a modest woman, I am obliged therefore to be a man of virtue; I had much rather die."

You are weary of living; and you tell me, that life is an evil. Sooner or later you will receive consolation, and then you will say life is a blessing. You will speak with more truth, though not with better reason; for nothing will have altered but yourself. Begin the alteration then from this day, and since all the evil you lament is in the disposition of your own mind, correct your irregular appetites, and do not set your house on fire, to avoid the trouble of putting it in order.

I endure misery, say you; is it in my power to avoid suffering? But this is changing the state of the question for the subject of enquiry is, not whether you suffer, but whether your life is an evil? Let us proceed. You are wretched, you naturally endeavour to extricate yourself from misery. Let us see whether, for that purpose, it is necessary to die.

Let us for a moment examine the natural tendency of the afflictions of the mind, as in direct opposition to the evils of the body, the two substances being of contrary natures. The latter become worse and more inveterate the longer they continue, and at length utterly destroy this mortal machine. The former, on the contrary, being only external and transitory modifications of an immortal and uncompounded essence, are insensibly effaced, and leave the mind in its original form, which is not susceptible of alteration. Grief, disquietude, regret, and despair, are evils of short duration which never take root in the mind, and experience always falsifies that bitter reflection, which makes us imagine our misery will have no end. I will go

farther; I cannot imagine that the vices which contaminate us, are more inherent in our nature, than the troubles we endure; I not only believe that they perish with the body which gives them birth, but I think, beyond all doubt, that a longer life would be sufficient to reform mankind, and that many ages of youth would teach us that nothing is preferable to virtue.

However this may be, as the greatest part of our physical evils are incessantly increasing, the acute pains of the body, when they are incurable, may justify a man's destroying himself; for all his faculties being distracted with pain, and the evil being without remedy, he has no longer any use either of his will or of his reason; he ceases to be a man before he is dead, and does nothing more in taking away his life, than quit a body which incumbers him, and in which his soul is no longer resident.

But it is otherwise with the afflictions of the mind; which, let them be ever so acute, always carry their remedy with them. In fact, what is it that makes any evil intolerable? nothing but its duration. The operations of surgery are generally much more painful, than the disorders they cure; but the pain occasioned by the latter is lasting, that of the operation is momentary, and therefore preferable. What occasion is there therefore for any operation to remove troubles which die of course by their duration, the only circumstance which could render them insupportable? Is it reasonable to apply such desperate remedies to evils which expire of themselves? To a man who values himself on his fortitude, and who estimates years at their real value, of two ways by which he may extricate himself from the same troubles, which will appear preferable, death or time? Have patience, and you will be cured. What would you desire more?

Oh! you will say, it doubles my afflictions, to reflect that they will cease at last! this is the vain sophistry of grief! an apothegm void of reason, of propriety, and perhaps of sincerity. What an absurd motive of despair is the hope of terminating misery! [48] Even allowing this fantastical reflection, who would not chuse to increase the

present pain for a moment, under the assurance of putting an end to it, as we scarify a wound in order to heal it? and admitting any charm in grief, to make us in love with suffering, when we release ourselves from it by putting an end to our being, do we not at that instant incur all that we apprehend hereafter?

Reflect thoroughly, young man; what are ten, twenty, thirty years, in competition with immorality? pain and pleasure pass like a shadow; life slides away in an instant; it is nothing of itself; its value depends on the use we make of it. The good that we have done is all that remains, and it is that alone which marks its importance.

Therefore do not say any more that your existence is an evil, since it depends upon yourself to make it a blessing; and if it is an evil to have lived, this is an additional reason for prolonging life. Do not pretend neither to say any more that you are at liberty to die; for it is as much as to say that you have power to alter your nature, that you have a right to revolt against the Author of your being, and to frustrate the end of your existence. But when you add, that your death does injury to no one, do you recollect that you make this declaration to your friend?

Your death does injury to no one? I understand you! You think the loss I shall sustain by your death of no importance, you deem my affliction of no consequence. I will urge to you no more the rights of friendship which you despise, but are there not obligations still more dear, [49] which ought to induce you to preserve your life? If there is a person in the world who loved you to that degree as to be unwilling to survive you, and whose happiness depends on yours, do you think that you have no obligations to her? will not the execution of your wicked design disturb the peace of a mind, which has been, with such difficulty, restored to its former innocence? are not you afraid to add fresh torments to a heart of such sensibility? are not you apprehensive lest your death should be attended with a loss more fatal, which would deprive the world and virtue itself of its brightest ornament? and if she should survive you, are not you afraid to rouse up remorse in her bosom, which is more

grievous to support than life itself? Thou ungrateful friend, thou indelicate lover! wilt thou always be taken up wholly with thyself? wilt thou always think on thy own troubles alone? hast thou no regard for the happiness of one who was so dear to thee? and cannot you resolve to live for her, who was willing to die with you?

You talk of the duties of a magistrate, and of a father of a family; and because you are not under those circumstances, you think yourself absolutely free. And are you then under no obligations to society, to whom you are indebted for your preservation, your talents, your understanding: do you owe nothing to your native country, and to those wretches who may need your assistance? O what an accurate calculation you make! among the obligations you have enumerated, you have only omitted those of a man and of a citizen. Where is the virtuous patriot, who refused to enlist under a foreign prince, because his blood ought not to be spilt but in the service of his country; and who now, in a fit of despair, is ready to shed it against the express prohibition of the laws? The laws, the laws, young man! did any wise man ever despise them? Socrates, though innocent, out of regard to them, refused to quit his prison. You do not scruple to violate them by quitting life unjustly; and you ask, what injury do I?

You endeavour to justify yourself by example. You presume to mention the Romans: you talk of the Romans! it becomes you indeed to cite those illustrious names. Tell me, did Brutus die a lover in despair, and did Cato tear out his entrails for his mistress? Thou weak and abject man, what resemblance is there between Cato and thee? shew me the common standard between that sublime soul and thine. Ah vain wretch, hold thy peace! I am afraid to profane his name by a vindication of his conduct. At that august and sacred name, every friend to virtue should bow to the ground, and honour the memory of the greatest hero in silence.

How ill you have selected your examples, and how meanly you judge of the Romans, if you imagine that they thought themselves at liberty to quit life so soon as

it become a burthen to them. Recur to the excellent days of that republic, and see whether you will find a single citizen of virtue, who thus freed himself from the discharge of his duty, even after the most cruel misfortunes. When Regulus was on his return to Carthage, did he prevent the torments which he knew were preparing for him, by destroying himself? What would not Posthumius have given, when obliged to pass under the yoke at Caudium, had this resource been justifiable? how much did even the senate admire that effort of courage, which enabled the consul Varro to survive his defeat? For what reason did so many generals voluntarily surrender themselves to their enemies, they to whom ignominy was so dreadful, and who were so little afraid of dying? It was because they considered their blood, their life, and their latest breath, as devoted to their country; and neither shame nor misfortune could dissuade them from this sacred duty. But when the laws were subverted, and the state became a prey to tyranny, the citizens resumed their natural liberty, and the right they had over their own lives. When Rome was no more, it was lawful for the Romans to give up their lives; they had discharged their duties on earth, they had no longer any country to defend, they were therefore at liberty to dispose of their lives, and to obtain that freedom for themselves, which they could not recover for their country. After having spent their days in the service of expiring Rome, and in fighting for the defence of its laws, they died great and virtuous as they had lived, and their death was an additional tribute to the glory of the Roman name, since none of them beheld a sight above all others most dishonourable, that of a true citizen stooping to an usurper.

But thou, what art thou? what has thou done? dost thou think to excuse thyself on account of thy obscurity? does thy weakness exempt thee from thy duty, and because thou hast neither rank nor distinction in thy country, art thou less subject to the laws? It becomes you vastly to presume to talk of dying, while you owe the service of your life to your equals? Know that a death such as you meditate, is shameful and surreptitious. It is a theft committed on mankind in general. Before

you quit life, return the benefits you have received from every individual. But, say you, I have no attachments. I am useless in the world. O thou young philosopher! art thou ignorant that thou canst not move a single step without finding some duty to fulfil; and that every man is useful to society, even by means of his existence alone.

Hear me, thou rash young man! thou art dear to me. I commiserate thy errors. If the least sense of virtue still remains in thy breast, attend, and let me teach thee to be reconciled to life. Whenever thou art tempted to quit it, say to thyself——"Let me at least do one good action before I die." Then go in search for one in a state of indigence whom thou may'st relieve; for one under misfortunes, whom thou may'st comfort; for one under oppression, whom thou may'st defend. Introduce to me those unhappy wretches whom my rank keeps at a distance. Do not be afraid of misusing my purse, or my credit: make free with them; distribute my fortune, make me rich. If this consideration restrains you to day, it will restrain you to-morrow; if to-morrow, it will restrain you all your life. If it has no power to restrain you, die! you are below my care.

Letter CXVI. From Lord B——.

I cannot, my dear friend, embrace you to-day as I was in hopes I should, being detained two days longer at Kensington. It is the way of the court to be very busy in doing nothing, and all affairs run in a constant succession without being dispatched. The business which has confined me here eight days, might have been concluded in two hours; but as the chief concern of the ministry is to preserve an air of business, they waste more time in putting me off, than it would cost them to dispatch me. My impatience, which is rather too evident, does not contribute to shorten the delay. You know that the court is not suited to my turn; I find it more intolerable since we have lived together, and I had rather a hundred times share your melancholy, than be pestered with the knaves which abound in this country.

Nevertheless, in conversing with these busy sluggards, a thought struck me with

regard to you, and I only wait your consent to dispose of you to advantage. I perceive that in struggling with your affliction, you suffer both from your uneasiness of mind, and from your resistance. If you are determined to live and overcome it, you have formed this resolution less in conformity to the dictates of reason and honour, than in compliance with your friends. But this is not enough. You must recover the relish of life to discharge its duties as you ought; for with so much indifference about every thing, you will succeed in nothing. We may both of us talk as we will; but reason alone will never restore you to your reason. It is necessity that a multiplicity of new and striking objects should in some measure withdraw you from that attention which your mind fixes solely on one object of its affections. To recover yourself, you must be detached from inward reflection, and nothing but the agitation of an active life, can restore you to serenity.

An opportunity offers for this purpose, which is not to be disregarded; a great and noble enterprise is on foot, and such an one as has not been equalled for ages. It depends on you to be a spectator and assistant in it. You will see the grandest sight which the eye of man ever beheld, and your turn for observation will be abundantly gratified. Your appointment will be honourable, and, with the talents you are master of, will only require courage and good health. You will find it attended with more danger than confinement, which will make it more agreeable to you; and, in few words, your engagement will not be for any long time. I cannot give you farther information at present; because this scheme, which is almost ripe for discovery, is nevertheless a secret with which I am not yet acquainted in all its particulars. I will only add, that if you decline this lucky and extraordinary opportunity, you will probably never recover it again, and will regret it as long as you live.

I have ordered my servant, who is the bearer of this letter, to find you out wherever you are, and not to return without a line; for the affair requires dispatch, and I must give an answer before I leave this place.

Letter CXVII. Answer.

Do, my lord; dispose of me; I will agree to whatever you propose. Till I am worthy to serve you; at least I claim the merit of obeying you.

Letter CXVIII. From Lord B——.

Since you approve of the thought I suggested, I will not delay a minute to acquaint you that every thing is concluded, and to explain to you the nature of the engagement I have entered into, in pursuance of the authority you gave me to make the agreement on your behalf.

You know that a squadron of five men of war is equipped at Plymouth, and that they are ready to set sail. The commodore is Mr. George Anson, a brave and experienced officer, and an old friend of mine. It is destined for the South-sea, whither it is to sail through the straits of Le Maire, and to come back by the East-Indies. You see therefore that the object is no less than to make the tour of the world, an expedition which, it is imagined, will take up three years. I could have entered you as a volunteer; but to give you more importance among the crew, I have obtained the addition of a title for you, and you stand on the list in the capacity of engineer of the land forces: this will be more suitable to you, because, having followed the bent of your genius from your first outset in the world, I know you made it your early study.

I propose to return to London tomorrow, [50] to present you to Mr. Anson within two days. In the mean time, take care to get your equipage ready, and provide yourself with books and instruments; for the embarkation is ready, and only waits for sailing orders. My dear friend, I hope that God will bring you back from this long voyage, in full health of mind and body; and that at your return, we shall meet never to part again.

Letter CXIX. To Mrs. Orbe

My dear and lovely cousin, I am preparing to make the tour of the world; I am going

into another hemisphere, in pursuit of that peace which I could not enjoy in this. Fool that I am! I am going to wander over the universe, without being able to find one place where my heart can rest. I am going to find a retreat from the world, where I may be at a distance from you. But it becomes me to regard the will of a friend, a benefactor, a father. Without the smallest hopes of a cure, at least I will take pains for it; Eloisa and virtue require the sacrifice. In three hours time I shall be at the mercy of the winds; in three days, I shall lose sight of Europe; in three months, I shall be in unknown seas, raging with perpetual tempests; in three years perhaps... How dreadful is the thought of never seeing you more! alas! the greatest danger is in my own breast; for whatever may be my fate, I am resolved, I swear, that you shall see me worthy to appear in your sight, or you shall never behold me more.

Lord B——, who is on his return to Rome, will deliver this letter in his way, and acquaint you with all particulars concerning me. You are acquainted with his disposition, and you will easily guess at those circumstances which he does not chuse to communicate. You was once no stranger to mine; therefore you may likewise form some judgment of those things which I do not care to relate myself.

Your friend, I hear, has the happiness to be a mother as well as yourself. Ought she then to be? ... O inexorable heaven! ... O my mother, why did heaven in its wrath grant you a son? ...

I must conclude; I feel that I must. Farewell, ye pure and celestial souls! Farewell ye tender and inseparable friends, the best women on earth! Each of you is the only object worthy of the other’s affections. May you mutually contribute to each other’s happiness. Deign now and then to call to mind the memory of an unfortunate wretch, who only existed to share with you every sentiment of his soul, and who ceased to live, the moment he was divided from you. If ever——... I hear the signal, and the shouts of the sailors. The wind blows strong, and the sails are spread. I must on

board: I must be gone. Thou vast and immense sea, which perhaps wilt bury me beneath thy waves! O that upon thy swelling surge I could recover that calm which has forsaken my troubled soul!

Volume III

Letter CXX. From Mrs. Wolmar to Mrs. Orbe.

How tedious is your stay! This going backward and forward is very disagreeable. How many hours are lost before you return to the place where you ought to remain for ever, and therefore, how much worse is it in you ever to go away! The idea of seeing you for so short a time, takes from the pleasure of your company. Do not you perceive that by residing at your own house and mine alternately, you are in fact at home in neither, and cannot you contrive some means by which you may make your abode in both at once?

What are we doing, my dear cousin? How many precious moments we lose, when we have none to waste! Years steal upon us; youth begins to vanish; life slides away imperceptibly; its momentary bliss is in our possession, and we refuse to enjoy it! Do you recollect the time when we were yet girls, those early days so agreeable and delightful, which no other time of life affords, and which the mind with so much difficulty forgets? How often, when we were obliged to part for a few days, or even for a few hours, have we sadly embraced each other, and vowed that when we were our own mistresses, we would never be asunder? We are now our own mistresses, and yet we pass one half of the year at a distance from each other. Is then our affection weaker? My dear and tender friend, we are both sensible how much time, habit, and your kindness have rendered our attachment more strong and indissoluble. As to myself, your absence daily becomes more insupportable, and I can no longer live a minute without you. The progress of our friendship is more natural than it appears to be; it is founded not only on a similarity of character, but of condition. As

we advance in years, our affections begin to centre in one point. We every day lose something that was dear to us, which we can never replace. Thus we perish by degrees, till at length, being wholly devoted to self-love, we lose life and sensibility, even before our existence ceases. But a susceptible mind arms itself with all its force against this anticipated death; when a chillness begins to seize the extremities, it collects all the genial warmth of nature round its own centre; the more connections it loses, the closer it cleaves to those which remain, and all its former ties are combined to attach it to the last object.

This is what I seem to experience, young as I am. Ah! my dear, my poor heart has been too susceptible of tender impressions! It was so early exhausted, that it grew old before its time, and so many different affections have absorbed it to that degree, that it has no room for any new attachments. You have known me in the successive capacities of a daughter, a friend, a mistress, a wife, and a mother. You know how every character has been dear to me! Some of these connections are utterly destroyed, others are weakened. My mother, my affectionate mother is no more; tears are the only tribute I can pay to her memory, and I do but half enjoy the most agreeable sensations of nature. As to love, it is wholly extinguished, it is dead for ever, and has left a vacancy in my heart, which will never be filled up again. We have lost your good and worthy husband, whom I loved as the dear part of yourself, and who was so well deserving of your friendship and tenderness. If my boys were grown up, maternal affection might supply these vacancies; but that affection, like all others, has need of participation, and what return can a mother expect from a child, only four or five years old? Our children are dear to us, long before they are sensible of our love, or capable of returning it; and yet, how much we want to express the extravagance of our fondness, to some one who can enter into our affection. My husband loves them; but not with that degree of sensibility I could wish; he is not intoxicated with fondness as I am; his tenderness for them is too rational; I would have it to be more lively, and more like my own. In short, I want a

friend, a mother, who can be as extravagantly fond of my children, and her own, as myself. In a word, the fondness of a mother makes the company of a friend more necessary to me, that I may enjoy the pleasure of talking continually about my children, without being troublesome. I feel double the pleasure in the caress of my little Marcellinus, when I see that you share it with me. When I embrace your daughter, I fancy that I press you to my bosom. We have observed a hundred times, on seeing our little cherubs at play together, that the union of our affections has so united them, that we have not been able to distinguish to which of us they severally belonged.

This is not all: I have powerful reasons for desiring to have you always near me, and your absence is painful to me in more respects than one. Think on my aversion to all hypocrisy, and reflect on the continual reserve in which I have lived upwards of six years with the man whom I love above all others in the world. My odious secret oppresses me more and more, and my duty to reveal it seems every day more indispensable. The more I am prompted by honour to disclose it, the more I am obliged by prudence to conceal it. Consider what a horrid state it is for a wife to carry mistrust, falsehood and fear, even to her husband’s arms; to be afraid of opening her heart to him who is master of it, and to conceal one half of my life to ensure the peace of the other? Good God! from whom do I conceal my secret thoughts, and hide the recesses of a soul with which he has so much reason to be satisfied? From my Wolmar, my husband, and the most worthy husband with which heaven ever rewarded the virtue of unsullied chastity. Having deceived him once, I am obliged to continue the deceit, and bear the mortification of finding myself unworthy of all the kindness he expresses. My heart is afraid to receive any testimony of his esteem, his most tender caresses make me blush, and my conscience interprets all his marks of respect and attention, into symptoms of reproach and disdain. It is a cruel pain constantly to harbour this remorse, which tells me, that he mistakes the object of his esteem. Ah! if he but knew me, he would

not use me thus tenderly! No, I cannot endure this horrid state; I am never alone with that worthy man, but I am ready to fall on my knees before him, to confess my fault, and to expire at his feet with grief and shame.

Nevertheless, the reasons which at first restrained me, acquire fresh strength every day, and every motive which might induce me to make the declaration, conspires to enjoin me silence. When I consider the peaceable and tranquil state of the family, I cannot reflect without horror, what an irreparable disturbance might be occasioned by a single word. After six years passed in perfect union, shall I venture to disturb the peace of so good and discreet a husband, who has no other will than that of his happy wife, no other pleasure than to see order and tranquility throughout his family? Shall I afflict with domestic broils, an aged father who appears to be so contented, and so delighted with the happiness of his daughter and his friend? Shall I expose my dear children, those lovely and promising infants, to have their education neglected and shamefully slighted, to become the melancholy victims of family discord, between a father inflamed with just indignation, tortured with jealousy, and an unfortunate and guilty mother, always bathed in tears? I know what Mr. Wolmar is, how he esteems his wife; but how do I know what he will be when he no longer regards her? Perhaps he seems calm and moderate, because his predominant passion has had no room to display itself. Perhaps he would be as violent in the impetuosity of his anger, as he is gentle and composed now he has nothing to provoke him.

If I owe such regard to every one about me, is not something likewise due to myself? Does not a virtuous and regular course of life for six years obliterate, in some measure, the errors of youth, and am I still obliged to undergo the punishment of a failing which I have so long lamented? I confess, my dear cousin, that I look backwards with reluctance; the reflection humbles me to that degree that it dispirits me, and I am too susceptible of shame, to endure the idea, without falling into a kind of despair. I must reflect on the time which has passed since my marriage, in order to recover myself. My present situation inspires me with a confidence of which

those disagreeable reflections would deprive me. I love to nourish in my breast these returning sentiments of honour. The rank of a wife and mother exalts my soul, and supports me against the remorse of my former condition. When I view my children and their father about me, I fancy that every thing breathes an air of virtue, and they banish from my mind the disagreeable remembrance of my former frailties. Their innocence is the security of mine; they become dearer to me, by being the instruments of my reformation; and I think on the violation of honour with such horror, that I can scarce believe myself the same perfect who formerly was capable of forgetting its precepts. I perceive myself so different from what I was, so confirmed in my present state, that I am almost induced to consider what I have to declare, as a confession which does not concern me, and which I am not obliged to make.

Such is the state of anxiety and uncertainty in which I am continually fluctuating in your absence. Do you know what may be the consequence of this one day or other? My father is soon to set out for Bern, and is determined not to return till he has put an end to a tedious lawsuit, not being willing to leave us the trouble of concluding it, and perhaps doubting our zeal in the prosecution of it. In the interim, between his departure and his return, I shall be alone with my husband, and I perceive that it will then be impossible for me to keep the fatal secret any longer. When we have company, you know Mr. Wolmar often chuses to retire and take a solitary walk; he chats with the peasants; he enquires into their situation; he examines the condition of their grounds; and assists them, if they require it, both with his purse and his advice. But when we are alone, he never walks without me; he seldom leaves his wife and children, and he enters into their little amusements with such an amiable simplicity, that on these occasions I always feel a more than common tenderness for him. In these tender moments, my reserve is in so much more danger, as he himself frequently gives me opportunities of throwing it aside, and has a hundred times held conversation with me which seemed to excite me to confidence. I perceive, that

sooner or later, I must disclose my mind to him; but since you would have the confession concerted between us, and made with all the precaution which discretion requires, return to me immediately, or I can answer for nothing.

My dear friend, I must conclude, and yet what I have to add, is of such importance, that you must allow me a few words more. You are not only of service to me when I am with my children and my husband, but above all when I am alone with poor Eloisa: solitude is more dangerous, because it grows agreeable to me, and I court it without intending it. It is not, as you are sensible, that my heart still smarts with the pain of its former wounds; no, they are cured, I perceive that they are, I am very certain, I dare believe myself virtuous. I am under no apprehensions about the present, it is the time past which torments me. There are some reflections as dreadful, as the original sensation; the recollection moves us; we are ashamed to find that we shed tears, and we do but weep the more. They are tears of compassion, regret, and repentance; love has no share in them; I no longer harbour the least spark of love; but I lament the mischiefs it has occasioned; I bewail the fate of a worthy man who has been bereft of peace and perhaps of life, by gratifying an indiscreet passion. Alas! he has undoubtedly perished in this long and dangerous voyage which he undertook out of despair. If he was living, he would send us tidings from the farthest part of the world; near four years have elapsed since his departure. They say the squadron on which he is aboard, has suffered a thousand disasters, that they have lost three fourths of their crew, that several ships have gone to the bottom, and that no one can tell what is become of the rest. He is no more, he is no more! A secret foreboding tells me so. The unfortunate wretch has not been spared, any more than so many others. The distresses of his voyage, and melancholy, still more fatal than all, have shortened his days. Thus vanishes every thing which glitters for a while on earth. The reproach of having occasioned the death of a worthy man, was all that was wanting to compleat the torments of my conscience. With what a soul was he endued! how susceptible of the tenderest love! He deserved to live!

I try in vain to dissipate these melancholy ideas; but they return every minute in spite of me. Your friend requires your assistance, to enable her to banish them, or to moderate them; and since I cannot forget this unfortunate man, I had rather talk of him with you, than think of him by myself.

You see how many reasons concur to make your company continually necessary to me. If you, who have been more discreet and fortunate, are not moved by the same reasons, yet does not your inclination persuade you of the same necessity? If it is true that you will never marry again, having so little satisfaction in your family, what house can be more convenient for you than mine? For my part, I am in pain, as I know what you endure in your own; for notwithstanding your dissimulation, I am no stranger to your manner of living, and I am not to be duped by those gay airs which you affected to display at Clarens. You have often reproached me with my failings; and I have a very great one to reproach you with in your turn; which is, that your grief is too solitary and confined. You get into a corner to indulge your affliction, as if you were ashamed to weep before your friend. Clara, I do not like this. I am not ungenerous like you; I do not condemn your tears, I would not have you cease at the end of two or ten years, or while you live, to honour the memory of so tender a husband; but I blame you that after having passed the best of your days in weeping with your Eloisa, you rob her of the pleasure of weeping in her turn with you, and of washing away, by more honourable tears, the scandal of those which she shed in your bosom. If you are ashamed of your grief, you are a stranger to real affliction! If you find a kind of pleasure in it, why will you not let me partake of it? Are you ignorant that a participation of affections communicates a soft and affecting quality to melancholy, which content never feels? And was not friendship particularly designed to alleviate the evils of the wretched, and lessen their pains?

Such, my dear, are the reflections you ought to indulge; to which I must add, that when I propose your coming to live with me, I make the proposal no less in my husband’s name than in my own. He has often expressed his surprize, and even been

offended, that two such intimates as we, should live asunder: he assures me that he has told you so, and he is not a man who talks inadvertently. I do not know what solution you will take with respect to these proposals; I have reason to hope, that it will be such as I could wish. However it be, mine is fixed and unalterable. I have not forgotten the time when you would have followed me to England. My incomparable friend! it is now my turn. You know my dislike of the town, my taste for the country, for rural occupations, and how strongly a residence of three years has attached me to my house at Clarens. You are no stranger likewise to the trouble of removing a whole family, and you are sensible that it would be abusing my father's good nature to oblige him to move so often. Therefore if you will not leave your family and come to govern mine, I am determined to take a house at Lausanne, where we will all live with you. Prepare yourself therefore; every thing requires it; my inclination, my duty, my happiness. The security of my honour, the recovery of my reason, my condition, my husband, my children, myself, I owe all to you; I am indebted to you for all the blessings I enjoy, I see nothing but what reminds me of your goodness, and without you I am nothing. Come then, my much loved friend, my guardian angel; come and enjoy the work of your own hands; come and gather the fruits of your benevolence. Let us have but one family, as we have but one soul to cherish it; you shall superintend the education of my sons, and I will take care of your daughters; we will share the maternal duties between us, and make our pleasure double. We will raise our minds together to the contemplation of that Being, who purified mine by means of your endeavours and having nothing more to hope for in this life, we will quietly wait for the next, in the bosom of innocence and friendship.

Letter CXXI. Answer.

Good heaven! my dear cousin, how I am delighted with your letter! Thou lovely preacher! ... Lovely indeed: but in the preaching strain nevertheless. What a charming peroration! A perfect model of ancient oratory. The Athenian architect! ...

That florid speaker! ... You remember him... In your old Plutarch... Pompous descriptions, superb temple! ... When he had finished his harangue, comes another; a plain man; with a grave, sober, and unaffected air...who answered, as your cousin Clara might do...with a low, hollow, and deep tone...All that, he has said, I will do. Here he ended, and the assembly rang with applause! Peace to the man of words. My dear, we may be considered in the light of these two architects; and the temple in question, is that of friendship.

But let us recapitulate all the fine things you have said to me. First, that we loved each other; secondly, that my company was necessary to you; thirdly, that yours was necessary to me likewise; and lastly, that as it was in our power to live together the rest of our days, we ought to do it. And you have really discovered all this without a guide! In truth, thou art a woman of vast eloquence! Well, but let me tell how I was employed on my part, while you was composing this sublime epistle. After that, I will leave you to judge, whether what you say, or what I do, is most to the purpose.

I had no sooner lost my husband, than you supplied the vacancy he had left in my heart. While he was living, he shared my affections with you; when he was gone, I was yours entirely, and as you observe with respect to the conformity of friendship and maternal affection, my daughter was an additional tie to unite us. I not only determined, from that time, to pass my days with you, but I formed a more enlarged plan. The more effectually to blend our two families into one, I proposed, on a supposition that all circumstances prove agreeable, to marry my daughter some day or other to your eldest son, and the name of husband assumed in jest, seemed to be a lucky omen of his taking it one day in earnest.

With this view, I endeavoured immediately to put an end to the trouble of a contested inheritance, and finding that my circumstances enabled me to sacrifice some part of my claim in order to settle the rest, I thought of nothing but placing my daughter’s fortune in some sure funds, where it might be secure from any

apprehensions of a law suit. You know that I am whimsical in most things; my whim in this was to surprize you. I intended to come into your room one morning early, with my child in one hand, and the parchment in the other; and to have presented them both to you, with a fine compliment on committing to your care the mother, the daughter, and their effects, that is to say, my child's fortune. Govern her, I proposed to have said, as best suits the interest of your son; for from henceforwards it is your concern and his; for my own part, I shall trouble myself about her no longer.

Full of this pleasing idea, it was necessary for me to open my mind to somebody who might assist me to execute my project. Guess now whom I chose for a confident? One Mr. Wolmar: Should not you know him? "My husband, cousin?" Yes, your husband, cousin. The very man from whom you make such a difficulty of concealing a secret, which it is of consequence to him never to know, is he who has kept a secret from you, the discovery of which would have given you so much pleasure. This was the true subject of all that mysterious conversation between us, about which you used to banter us with so much humour. You see what hypocrites these husbands are. Is it not very droll in them to accuse us of dissimulation? But I required much more of your husband. I perceived that you had the same plan which I had in view, but you kept it more to yourself, as one who did not care to communicate her thoughts, till she was led to the discovery. With an intent therefore to make your surprize more agreeable, I would have had him, when you proposed our living together, to have seemed as if he disapproved of your eagerness, and to have given his consent with reluctance. To this he made me an answer, which I well remember, and which you ought never to forget; for since the first existence of husbands, I doubt whether any one of them ever made such an answer before. It was as follows. "My dear little cousin, I know Eloisa... I know her well... better than she imagines perhaps...her generosity of heart is so great, that what she desires ought not to be refused, and her sensibility is too strong to bear a denial, without being

afflicted. During these five years that we have married, I do not know that I have given her the least uneasiness; and I hope to die without ever being the cause of her feeling a moment's inquietude." Cousin, reflect on this: This is the husband whose peace of mind you are incessantly meditating to disturb.

For my part I had less delicacy, or more gentleness of disposition, and I so naturally diverted the conversation to which your affection so frequently led you, that as you could not tax me with coldness or indifference towards you, you took it into your head that I had a second marriage in view, and that I loved you better than any thing, except a husband. You see, my dear child, your most inmost thoughts do not escape me. I guess your meaning, I penetrate your designs; I enter into the bottom of your soul, and for that reason I have always adored you. This suspicion, which so opportunely led you into a mistake, appeared to me well worth encouraging. I took upon me to play the part of the coquettish widow, which I acted so well as to deceive even you. It is a part for which I have more talents than inclination. I skilfully employed that piquant air which I know how to put on, and with which I have entertained myself in making a jest of more than one young coxcomb. You have been absolutely the dupe of my affectation, and you thought me in haste to supply the place of a man, to whom of all others it would be most difficult to a fit successor. But I am too ingenuous to play the counterfeit long, and your apprehensions were soon removed. But to confirm you the more, I will explain to you my real sentiments on that head.

I have told you an hundred times when I was a maid, that I was never designed for a wife. Had my determination depended on myself alone, I should never have married. But our sex cannot purchase liberty but by slavery; and before we can become our own mistresses, we must begin by being servants. Though my father did not confine me, I was not without uneasiness in my family. To free myself from that vexation, therefore, I married Mr. Orbe. He was such a worthy man, and loved me with such tenderness, that I most sincerely loved him in my turn. Experience gave me a more

advantageous opinion of marriage than I had conceived of it, and effaced those impressions I had received from Chaillot. Mr. Orbe made me happy, and did not repent his endeavours. I should have discharged my duty with any other, but I should have vexed him, and I am sensible that nothing but so good a husband could have made me a tolerable wife. Would you think that even this afforded me matter of complaint? My dear, we loved each other too affectionately; we were never gay. A slighter friendship would have been more sprightly; I should even have preferred it, and I think I should have chosen to have lived with less content, if I could have laughed oftener.

Add to this, that the particular circumstances of your situation, gave me uneasiness. I need not remind you of the dangers to which an unruly passion exposed you. I reflect on them with horror. If you had only hazarded your life, perhaps I might have retained some remains of gaiety: but terror and grief pierced my soul, and till I saw you married, I did not enjoy one moment of real pleasure. You are no stranger to my affliction at that time, you felt it. It had great influence over your good disposition, and I shall always bless those fortunate tears, which were probably the occasion of your return to virtue.

In this manner I passed all the time that I lived with my husband. Since it has pleased the Almighty to take him from me, judge whether I can hope to find another so much to my mind, and whether I have any temptation to make the experiment? No, cousin, matrimony is too serious a state for me; its gravity does not suit with my humour; it makes me dull, and sits awkwardly upon me; not to mention that all constraint whatever is intolerable to me. Consider, you who know me, what charms can an attachment have in my eyes, during which, for seven years together, I have not laughed seven times heartily! I do not propose, like you, to turn matron at eight and twenty. I find myself a smart little widow, likely to get a husband still, and I think that if I was a man, I should have no objection to such a one as myself. But to marry again, cousin! hear me; I sincerely lament my poor husband, I would have

given up one half of my days, to have passed the other half with him; and nevertheless, could he return to life, I should take him again for no other reason, than because I had taken him before.

I have declared to you my real intentions. If I have not been able to put them in execution, notwithstanding Mr. Wolmar's kind endeavours, it is because difficulties seem to increase, as my zeal to surmount them strengthens. But my zeal will always gain the ascendency, and before the summer is over, I hope to return to you for the remainder of my days.

I must now vindicate myself from the reproach of concealing my uneasiness, and choosing to weep alone; I do not deny it, and this is the way I spend the most agreeable time I pass here. I never enter my house, but I perceive some traces which remind me of him, who made it agreeable to me. I cannot take a step, I cannot view a single object, without perceiving some signs of his tenderness and goodness of heart; and would you have my mind to be unaffected? When I am here, I am sensible of nothing but the loss I have sustained. When I am near you, I view all the comfort I have left. Can you make your influence over my disposition, a crime in me? If I weep in your absence, and laugh in your company, whence proceeds the difference? Ungrateful woman! it is because you alleviate all my afflictions, and I cannot grieve while I enjoy your society.

You have said a great deal in favour of our long friendship; but I cannot pardon you for omitting a circumstance that does me most honour; which is, that I love you, though you eclipse me! Eloisa, you were born to rule. Your empire is more despotic than any in the world. It extends even over the will, and I am sensible of it more than any one. How happens it, my Eloisa? We are both in love with virtue; honour is equally dear to us; our talents are the same; I have very near as much spirit as you; and am not a bit less handsome. I am sensible of all this, and yet notwithstanding all, you prescribe to me, you overcome me, you cast me down, your genius crushes

mine, and I am nothing before you. Even while you were engaged in an attachment with which you reproached yourself, and that I, who had not copied your failing, might have taken the lead in my turn, yet the ascendency still remained in you. The frailty I condemned in you, appeared to me almost in the light of a virtue; I could scarce forbear admiring in you, what I should have censured in another. In short, even at that time, I never accosted you without a sensible emotion of involuntary respect; and it is certain that nothing but your gentleness and affability of manners could entitle me to the rank of your friend: by nature, I ought to be your servant. Explain this mystery if you can; for my part, I am at a loss how to solve it.

But after all, I do in some measure conceive the reason, and I believe that I have explained it before now. The reason is, that your disposition enlivens every one round you, and gives them a kind of new existence, for which they are bound to adore you, since they derive it entirely from you. It is true, I have done you some signal services; you have so often acknowledged them, that it is impossible for me to forget them. I cannot deny but that, without my assistance, you had been utterly undone. But what did I do, more than return the obligation I owed you? Is it possible to have a long acquaintance with you without finding one's mind impressed with the charms of virtue, and the delights of friendship? Do not you know that you have power to arm in your defence everyone who approaches you, and that I have no advantage whatever over others, but that of being, like the guards of Serositis, of the same age and sex, and of having been brought up with you. However it be, it is some comfort to Clara, that, though she is of less estimation than Eloisa, yet without Eloisa she would be of less value still; and in short, to tell you the truth, I think that we stood in great need of each other, and that we should both have been losers if fate had parted us.

I am chiefly concerned lest, while my affairs detain me here, you should discover your secret, which you are every minute ready to disclose. Consider, I intreat you, that there are solid and powerful reasons for concealing it, and that nothing but a

mistaken principle can tempt you to reveal it. Besides, our suspicion that it is no longer a secret to him who is most interested in the discovery, is an additional argument against making any declaration without the greatest circumspection. Perhaps your husband's reserve may serve as an example and a lesson to us: for in such cases there is very often a great difference between pretending to be ignorant of a thing, and being obliged to know it. Stay therefore, I beseech you, till we consult once more on this affair. If your apprehensions were well grounded, and your lamented friend was no more, the best resolution you could take, would be to let your history and his misfortunes be buried together. If he is alive, as I hope he is, the case may be different; but let us wait till we are sure of the event. In every state of the case, do not you think that you ought to pay some regard to the last advice of an unfortunate wretch, whose evils all spring from you?

With respect to the danger of solitude, I conceive and cannot condemn your fears, though I am persuaded that they are ill founded. Your past terrors have made you fearful; but I presage better of the time present, and you would be less apprehensive, if you had more reason to be so. But I cannot approve of your anxiety with regard to the fate of our poor friend. Now your affections have taken a different turn, believe me he is as dear to me as to yourself. Nevertheless I have forebodings quite contrary to yours, and more agreeable to reason. Lord B—— has heard from him twice, and wrote to me on the receipt of the last letter, to acquaint me that he was in the South seas, and had already escaped all the dangers you apprehend. You know all this as well as I, and yet you are as uneasy as if you were a stranger to these particulars. But there is a circumstance you are ignorant of, and of which I must inform you; it is, that the ship on which he is on board, was seen two months ago off the Canaries, making sail for Europe. This is the account my father received from Holland, which he did not fail to transmit to me; for it is his custom to be more punctual in informing me concerning public affairs, than in acquainting me with his own private concerns. My heart tells me that it will not be long before we hear news of our

philosopher, and that your tears will be dried up, unless after having lamented him as dead, you weep to find him alive, But, thank God, you are no longer in danger from your weakness.

Deh! fosse or qui quel miser puer un poco, Ch’ e giá di piangere e di viver lasso!

This is the sum of my answer. Your affectionate friend proposes, and shares with you the agreeable expectation of a lasting re-union. You find that you are neither the first, nor the only author of this project; and that the execution of it is more forward than you imagined. Have patience therefore, my dear friend, for this summer: It is better to delay our meeting for same time, than to be under the necessity of parting again.

Well, good Madam, have not I been as good as my word, and is not my triumph compleat? Come, fall on your knees, kiss this letter with respect, and humbly acknowledge that, once in her life at least, Eloisa Wolmar has been outdone in friendship.

Letter CXXII. To Mrs. Orbe.

My dear cousin, my benefactress, my friend! I come from the extremities of the earth, and bring a heart full of affection for you. I have crossed the line four times; I have traversed the two hemispheres; I have seen the four quarters of the globe; its diameter has been between us; I have been quite round it, and yet could not escape from you one moment. It is in vain to fly from the object of our adoration: the image, more fleet than the winds, pursues us from the end of the world, and wherever we transport ourselves, we bear with us the idea by which we are animated. I have endured a great deal; I have seen others suffer more. How many unhappy wretches have I seen perish! Alas! They rated life at a high price! And yet I survived them... Perhaps my condition was less to be pitied; the miseries of my companions affected me more than my own. I am wretched here, said I to myself, but there is a corner of the globe where I am happy and tranquil; and the prospect of

felicity on the side of the lake at Geneva, made me amends for what I suffered on the ocean. I have the pleasure on my return to find my hopes confirmed: Lord B——informs me that you both enjoy health and peace; and that if you, in particular, have lost the agreeable distinction of a wife, you nevertheless retain the title of a friend and mother, which may contribute to your happiness.

I am at present too much in haste to send you a detail of my voyage in this letter. I dare hope that I shall soon have a more convenient opportunity; meantime I must be content to give you a slight sketch, rather to excite than gratify your curiosity. I have been near four years in making this immense tour, and I returned in the same ship in which I set sail, the only one of the whole squadron which we have brought back to England.

I have seen South-America, that vast continent which for want of arms has been obliged to submit to the Europeans, who have made it a desert, in order to secure their dominion. I have seen the coasts of Brazil, from whence Lisbon and London draw their treasures, and where the miserable natives tread upon gold and diamonds, without daring to lay hands on them for their own life. I crossed, in mild weather, those stormy seas under the Antarctic circle, and I met with the most horrible tempests in the Pacific ocean.

E in mar dubbioso sotto ignoto polo Provai l’onde fallaci, e’l vento in fido.

I have seen, at a distance, the abode of those supposed giants, who are no otherwise greater than the rest of their species, than as they are more courageous, and who maintain their dependence more by a life of simplicity and frugality, than by their extraordinary stature. I made a residence of three months in a desert and delightful island, which afforded an agreeable and lively representation of the primitive beauty of nature, and which seems to be fixed at the extremity of the world to serve as an asylum to innocence and persecuted love; but the greedy European indulges his brutal disposition in preventing the peaceful Indian from residing there, and does

justice on himself, by not making it his own abode.

I have seen, in the rivers of Mexico and Peru, the same scenes as at Brazil; I have seen the few wretched inhabitants, the sad remains of two powerful nations, loaded with irons, ignominy and misery, weeping in the midst of their precious metals, and reproaching heaven for having lavished such treasures among them. I have seen the dreadful conflagration of a whole city, which perished in the flames without having made any resistance or defence. Such is the right of war among the intelligent, humane, and refined Europeans! They are not satisfied with doing the enemy all the mischief from whence they can reap any advantage, but they reckon as clear gain, all the destruction they can make among his possessions. I have coasted along almost the whole western part of America, not without being struck with admiration on beholding fifteen hundred leagues of coast, and the greatest sea in the world, under the dominion of a single potentate, who may be said to keep the keys of one hemisphere.

After having crossed this vast sea, I beheld a new scene on the other continent, I have seen the most numerous and most illustrious nation in the world, in subjection to a handful of Banditti; I have had close intercourse with this famous people, and I do not wonder that they are slaves. As often conquered as attacked, they have always been a prey to the first invader, and will be so to the end of the world. They are well suited to their servile state, since they have not the courage even to complain. They are learned, lazy, hypocritical, and deceitful: they talk a great deal without saying anything; they are full of spirit, without any genius; they abound in signs, but are barren in ideas; they are polite, full of compliments, dextrous, crafty, and knavish; they comprise all the duties of life in trifles, all morality in grimace, and have no other idea of humanity, than what consists in bows and salutations. I landed upon a second desert island, more unknown, more delightful still than the first, and where the most cruel accident had like to have confined us for ever. I was the only one perhaps, whom so agreeable an exile did not terrify; am I not doomed

to be an exile every where? In this place of terror and delight, I saw the attempts of human industry to disengage a civilized being from a solitude where he wants nothing; and plunge him into an abyss of new necessities.

On the vast ocean, where one would imagine men would be glad to meet with their own species, I have seen two great ships sail up to each other, join, attack, and fight together with fury, as if that immense space was too little for either of them. I have seen them discharge flames and bullets against each other. In a sight which was not of long duration, I have seen the picture of hell. I have heard the triumphant shouts of the conquerors, drown the cries of the wounded, and the groans of the dying. I blushed to receive my share of an immense plunder; but I received it in the nature of a trust, and as it was taken from the wretched, to the wretched it shall be restored.

I have seen Europe transported to the extremities of Africa, by the labours of that avaricious, patient, and industrious people, who by time and perseverance have surmounted difficulties which all the heroism of other nations could never overcome. I have seen those immense and miserable countries, which seem destined to no other purpose than to cover the earth with herds of slaves. At their vile appearance, I turned away my eyes, out of disdain, horror and pity; and on beholding one fourth part of my fellow creatures transformed into beast for the service of the rest, I could not forbear lamenting that I was a man.

Lastly, I beheld, in my fellow travellers, a bold and intrepid people, whose freedom and example retrieved, in my opinion, the honour of the species; a people, who despised pain and death, and who dreaded nothing but hunger and disquiet. In their commander, I beheld a captain, a soldier, a pilot, a prudent and great man, and to say still more perhaps, a friend worthy of Lord B——. But throughout the whole world, I have never met with any resemblance of Clara Orbe, or Eloisa Etange, or found one who could recompense a heart truly sensible of their worth, for the loss of their society.

How shall I speak of my cure? It is from you that I must learn how far it is perfect. Do I return more free, and more discreet than I departed? I dare believe that I do, and yet I cannot affirm it. The same image has constant possession of my heart; you know how impossible it is for me ever to efface it; but her dominion over me is more worthy of her, and if I do not deceive myself, she holds the same empire in my heart, as in your own. Yes, my dear cousin, her virtue has subdued me; I am now, with regard to her, nothing more than a most sincere and tender friend, my adoration of her is of the same nature with yours; or rather, my affections do not seem to be weakened, but rectified, and however nicely I examine, I find them to be as pure as the object which inspires them. What can I say more, till I am put to the proof, by which I may be able to form a right judgment of myself? I am honest and sincere; I will be what I ought to be; but how shall I answer for my affections, when I have so much reason to mistrust them? Have I power over the past? How can I avoid recollecting a thousand passions which have formerly distracted me? How shall my imagination distinguish what is, from what has been? And how shall I consider her as a friend, whom I never yet saw but as a mistress? Whatever you may think of the secret motive of my eagerness, it is honest and rational, and merits your approbation. I will answer beforehand, at least for my intentions. Permit me to see you, and examine me yourself, or allow me to see Eloisa, and I shall then know my own heart.

I am to attend Lord B—— into Italy. Shall I pass close by your house, and not see you? Do you think this possible? Ah! if you are so cruel to require it, you ought not to be obeyed! But why should you desire it? Are you not the same Clara, as kind and compassionate as you are virtuous and discreet, who condescended from her infancy to love me, and who ought to love me still more, now that I am indebted to her for every thing. [51] No, my dear and lovely friend, such a cruel denial will not become you, nor will it be just to me; it shall not put the finishing stroke to my misery. Once more, once more in my life, I will lay my heart at your feet. I will see you, you shall

consent to an interview. I will see Eloisa likewise, and she too shall give her consent. You are both of you too sensible of my regard for her. Can you believe me capable of making this request, if I found myself unworthy to appear in her presence? She has long since bewailed the effects of her charms, ah! let her for once behold the fruits of her virtue!

P. S. Lord B——'s affairs detain him here for some time; if I may be allowed to see you, why should not I get the start of him, to be with you the sooner?

Letter CXXIII. From Mr. Wolmar.

Though we are not yet acquainted, I am commanded to write to you. The most discreet and most beloved wife, has lately disclosed her heart to her happy husband. He thinks you worthy to have been the object of her affections, and he makes you an offer of his house. Peace and innocence reign in this mansion; you will meet with friendship, hospitality, esteem and confidence. Examine your heart, and if you find nothing there to deter you, come without any apprehensions. You will not depart from him, without leaving behind you at least one friend, by name.

WOLMAR.

P. S. Come, my friend, we expect you with eagerness. I hope I need not fear a denial.

ELOISA.

Letter CXXIV. From Mrs. Orbe.

In which the preceding Letter was inclosed.

Welcome, welcome a thousand times, dear St. Preux! for I intend that you shall retain that name, at least among us. I suppose it will be sufficient to tell you, that you will not be excluded, unless you mean to exclude yourself. When you find, by the inclosed letter, that I have done more than you required of me, you will learn to

put more confidence in our friends, and not to reproach them on account of those inquietudes which they participate when, compelled by reason, they are under a necessity of making you uneasy. Mr. Wolmar has a desire to see you, he makes you an offer of his house, his friendship, and his advice; this is more than requisite to quiet my apprehensions with regard to your journey, and I should injure myself, if I mistrusted you one moment. Mr. Wolmar goes farther, he pretends to accomplish your cure, and he says that neither Eloisa, you, nor I, can be perfectly happy till it is compleat. Though I have great confidence in his wisdom, and more in your virtue, yet I cannot answer for the success of this undertaking. This I know, that considering the disposition of his wife, the pains he proposes to take, is out of pure generosity to you.

Come then, my worthy friend, in all the security of an honest heart, and satisfy the eagerness with which we all long to embrace you, and to see you easy and contented: come to your native land, and in the midst of your friends, rest yourself after all your travels, and forget all the hardships you have undergone. The last time you saw me, I was a grave matron, and my friend was on the brink of the grave; but now that she is well, and I am once more single, you will find me as gay, and almost as handsome as ever. One thing however is very certain, that I am not altered with respect to you, and you may travel many times round the world, and not find one who has so sincere a regard for you as your, &c.

Letter CXXV. To Lord B——.

Just risen from my bed: ’tis yet the dead of night. I cannot rest a moment. My heart is so transported, that I can scarce confine it within me. You, my Lord, who have so often rescued me from despair, shall be the worthy confident of the first pleasure I have tasted for many a year.

I have seen her, my Lord! My eyes have beheld her! I heard her voice. I have prest her hand with my lips. She recollected me; she received me with joy; she called me

her friend, her dear friend; she admitted me into her house: I am happier than ever I was in my life. I lodge under the same roof with her, and while I am writing to you, we are scarce thirty paces asunder.

My ideas are too rapid to be exprest; they crowd upon me all at once, and naturally impede each other. I must pause a while to digest my narrative into some kind of method.

After so long an absence, I had scarce given way to the first transports of my heart, while I embraced you as my friend, my deliverer, and my father, before you thought of taking a journey to Italy. You made me wish for it, in hopes of relief from the burthen of being useless to you. As you could not immediately dispatch the affairs which detained you in London, you proposed my going first, that I might have more time to wait for you here. I begged leave to come hither; I obtained it, I set out, and though Eloisa made the first advances towards an interview, yet the pleasing reflection that I was going to meet her, was checked by the regret of leaving you. My Lord, we are now even, this single sentiment has cancelled my obligations to you.

I need not tell you that my thoughts were all the way taken up with the object of my journey; but I must observe one thing, that I began to consider that same object, which had never quitted my imagination, quite in another point of view. till then I used to recall Eloisa to my mind, sparkling, as formerly, with all the charms of youth. I had always beheld her lovely eyes, enlivened by that passion with which she inspired me. Every feature which I admired, seemed, in my opinion, to be a surety of my happiness. My affection was so interwoven with the idea of her person, that I could not separate them. Now I was going to see Eloisa married, Eloisa a Mother, Eloisa indifferent! I was disturbed, when I reflected how much an interval of eight years might have impaired her beauty. She had had the small-pox; she was altered; how great might that alteration be? My imagination obstinately refused to allow any

blemish in that lovely face. I reflected likewise on the expected interview between us, and what kind of reception I might expect. This first meeting presented itself to my mind under a thousand different appearances, and this momentary idea came athwart my imagination a thousand times a day.

When I perceived the top of the hills, my heart beat violently, and told me, There she is! I was affected in the same manner at sea, on viewing the coast of Europe. I felt the same emotions at Meillerie, when I discovered the house of the Baron D'Etange. The world, in my imagination, is divided only into two regions, that where she is, and that where she is not. The former dilates as I remove from her, and contracts when I approach her, as a spot where I am destined never to arrive. It is at present confined to the walls of her chamber. Alas! that place alone is inhabited; all the rest of the universe is an empty space.

The nearer I drew to Switzerland, the more I was agitated. That instant in which I discovered the lake of Geneva from the heights of Jura, was a moment of rapture and extasy. The light of my country, that beloved country, where a deluge of pleasures had overflowed my heart; the pure and wholesome air of the Alps; the gentle breeze of the country, more sweet than the perfumes of the East; that rich and fertile spot, that unrivalled landskip, the most beautiful that ever struck the eye of man; that delightful abode, to which I found nothing comparable in the vast tour of the globe; the aspect of a free and happy people; the mildness of the season, the serenity of the climate; a thousand pleasing recollections, which recalled to my mind the pleasures I had enjoyed: all these circumstances together threw me into a kind of transport which I cannot describe, and seemed to collect the enjoyment of my whole life into one happy moment. Having crossed the lake, I felt a new impression, of which I had no idea. It was a certain emotion of fear, which checked my heart, and disturbed me in spite of all my endeavours. This dread, of which I could not discover the cause, increased as I drew nearer to the town; it abated my eagerness to get thither, and rose to such a degree, that my expedition gave me as much

uneasiness as my delay had occasioned me before. When I came to Vevey, I felt a sensation which was very far from being agreeable. I was seized with a violent palpitation, which stopped my breath, and I spoke with a trembling and broken accent. I could scarce make myself understood when I enquired for Mr. Wolmar; for I durst not mention his wife. They told me he lived at Clarens. This information eased my breast from a pressure equal to five hundred weight, and considering the two leagues I had to travel farther as a kind of respite, I was rejoiced at a circumstance which at any other time would have made me uneasy; but I learnt with concern that Mrs. Orbe was at Lausanne. I went into an inn to recruit my strength, but I could not swallow a morsel: when I attempted to drink I was almost suffocated, and could not empty a glass but at several sips. When I saw the horses put to, my apprehensions were doubled. I believe I should have given any thing in the world to have had one of the wheels broken by the way. I no longer saw Eloisa; my disturbed imagination presented nothing but confused objects before me; my soul was in a general tumult. I had experienced grief and despair, and should have preferred them to that horrible state. In a few words, I can assure you, that I never in my life underwent such cruel agitation as I suffered in this little way, and I am persuaded that I could not have supported it a whole day.

When I arrived, I ordered the chaise to stop at the gate, and finding that I was not in a condition to walk, I sent the postillion to acquaint Mr. Wolmar that a stranger wanted to speak with him. He was taking a walk with his wife. They were acquainted with the message, and came round another way, while I kept my eyes fixed on the avenue, and waited, in a kind of trance, in expectation of seeing somebody come from thence.

Eloisa had no sooner perceived me than she recollected me. In an instant, she saw me, she shrieked, she ran, she leaped into my arms. At the sound of her voice I started, I revived, I saw her, I felt her. O my Lord! O my friend!... I cannot speak... Her look, her shriek, her manner inspired me with confidence, courage, and strength,

in an instant. In her arms I felt warmth, and breathed new life. A sacred transport kept us for some time closely embraced in deep silence; and it was not till after we recovered from this agreeable delirium, that our voices broke forth in confused murmurs, and our eyes intermingled tears. Mr. Wolmar was present; I knew he was, I saw him: but what was I capable of seeing? No, though the whole universe had been united against me; though a thousand torments had surrounded me, I would not have detached my heart from the least of those caresses, those tender offerings of a pure and sacred friendship, which we will bear with us to heaven!

When the violent impetuosity of our first meeting began to abate, Mrs. Wolmar took me by the hand, and turning towards her husband, she said to him, with a certain air of candor and innocence which instantly affected me, Tho' he is my old acquaintance, I do not present him to you, but I receive him from you, and he will hereafter enjoy my friendship no longer than he is honoured with yours——If new friends, said Mr. Wolmar, embracing me, express less natural ardor than those of long standing, yet they will grow old in their turn, and will not yield to any in affection. I received his embraces; but my heart had quite exhausted itself, and I was entirely passive.

After this short scene was over, I observed, by a side-glance, that they had put up my chaise, and taken off my trunk. Eloisa held by my arm, and I went with them towards the house, almost overwhelmed with pleasure, to find they were determined I should remain their guest.

It was then that, upon a more calm contemplation of that lovely face, which I imagined might have grown homely, I saw with an agreeable, yet sad surprize, that she was really more beautiful and sparkling than ever. Her charming features are now more regular; she is grown rather fatter, which is an addition to the resplendent fairness of her complexion. The small-pox has left some slight marks on her cheeks scarce perceptible. Instead of that mortifying bashfulness which formerly used to

make her cast her eyes downwards, you may perceive in her chaste looks, the security of virtue allied with gentleness and sensibility; her countenance, tho' not less modest, is less timid; an air of greater freedom, and more liberal grace, has succeeded that constrained carriage which was compounded of shame and tenderness; and if a sense of her failing rendered her then more bewitching, a consciousness of her purity now renders her more celestial.

We had scarce entered the parlour, when she disappeared, and returned in a minute. She did not come alone. Who do you think she brought with her? Her children! Those two lovely little ones, more beauteous than the day; in whose infant faces you might trace all the charms and features of their mother. How was I agitated at this sight? It is neither to be described nor conceived. A thousand different emotions seized me at once. A thousand cruel and delightful reflections divided my heart. What a lovely sight! What bitter regrets! I found myself distracted with grief, and transported with joy. I saw, if I may be allowed the expression, the dear object of my affections multiplied before me. Alas! I perceived at the same time too convincing a proof that I had no longer any interest in her, and my losses seemed to be multiplied with her increase.

She led them towards me. Behold, said she, with an affecting tone that pierced my soul, behold the children of your friend: they will hereafter be your friends. Henceforward I hope you will be theirs. And immediately the two little creatures ran eagerly to me, took me by the hand, and so overwhelmed me with their innocent caresses, that every emotion of my soul centered in tenderness. I took them both in my arms, and pressing them against my throbbing breast, Dear and lovely little souls, said I, with a sigh, you have an arduous task to perform. May you resemble the authors of your being; may you imitate their virtues; and by your own hereafter, administer comfort to their unfortunate friends. Mrs. Wolmar, in rapture threw herself round my neck a second time, and seemed disposed to repay me, by her embraces, those caresses which I had bestowed on her two sons. But how different

was this from our first embrace! I perceived the difference with astonishment. It was the mother of a family whom I now embraced; I saw her surrounded by her husband and children: and the scene struck me with awe. I discovered an air of dignity in her countenance, which had not affected me till now: I found myself obliged to pay her a different kind of respect; her familiarity was almost uneasy to me; lovely as she appeared to me, I could have kissed the hem of her garment, with a better grace than I saluted her cheek. In a word, from that moment, I perceived that either she or I were no longer the same, and I began in earnest to have a good opinion of myself.

Mr. Wolmar at length took me by the hand, and conducted me to the apartment which had been prepared for me. This, said he, as he entered, is your apartment: it is not destined to the use of a stranger; it shall never belong to another, and hereafter, if you do not occupy it, it shall remain empty. You may judge whether such a compliment was not agreeable to me; but as I had not yet deserved it, I could not hear it without confusion. Mr. Wolmar, however, spared me the trouble of an answer. He invited me to take a turn in the garden. His behaviour there was such as made me less reserved, and assuming the air of a man who was well acquainted with my former indiscretions, but who entirely confided in my integrity, he conversed with me as a father would speak to his child; and by conciliating my esteem, made it impossible for me ever to deceive him. No, my Lord, he is not mistaken in me; I shall never forget that it is incumbent on me to justify his and your good opinion. But why should my heart reject his favours? Why should the man whom I am bound to love be the husband of Eloisa?

That day seemed defined to put me to every kind of proof which I could possibly undergo. After we had joined Mrs. Wolmar, her husband was called away to give some necessary orders, and I was left alone with her.

I then found myself involved in fresh perplexity, more painful and more unexpected than any which I had yet experienced. What should I say to her? How could I

address her? Should I presume to remind her of our former connections, and of those times which were so recent in my memory? Should I suffer her to conclude that I had forgot them, or that I no longer regarded them? Think what a punishment it must be to treat the object nearest your heart as a stranger! What infamy, on the other hand, to abuse hospitality so far as to entertain her with discourse to which she could not now listen with decency? Under these various perplexities I could not keep my countenance; my colour went and came; I durst not speak, nor lift up my eyes, nor make the least motion; and I believe that I should have remained in this uneasy situation till her husband's return, if she had not relieved me. For her part, this tete a tete did not seem to embarrass her in the least. She preserved the same manner and deportment as before, and continued to talk to me with the same freedom; the only, as I imagined, endeavoured to affect more ease and gaiety, tempered with a look, not timid or tender, but soft and affectionate, as if she meant to encourage me to recover my spirits, and lay aside a reserve which she could not but perceive.

She talked to me of my long voyages; she enquired into particulars; into those especially which related to the dangers I had escaped, and the hardships I had endured: for she was sensible, she said, that she was bound in friendship to make me some reparation. Ah, Eloisa! said I, in a plaintive accent, I have enjoyed your company but for a moment; would you send me back to the Indies already? No, she answered, with a smile, but I would go thither in my turn.

I told her that I had given you a detail of my voyage, of which I had brought her a copy for her perusal. She then enquired after you with great eagerness. I gave her an account of you, which I could not do without recounting the troubles I had undergone, and the uneasiness I had occasioned you. She was affected; she began to enter into her own justification in a more serious tone, and to convince me that it was her duty to act as she had done. Mr. Wolmar joined us in the middle of her discourse, and what confounded me was, that she proceeded in the same manner as if he had not been there. He could not forbear smiling, on discovering my

astonishment. After she concluded, You see, said he, an instance of the sincerity which reigns in this house. If you mean to be virtuous, learn to copy it: it is the only request I have to make, and the only lesson I would teach you. The first step towards vice, is to make a mystery of actions innocent in themselves, and whoever is fond of disguise, will sooner or later have reason to conceal himself. One moral precept may supply the place of all the rest, which is this: neither to say or do any thing, which you would not have all the world see and hear. For my part, I have always esteemed that Roman, above all other men, who wished that his house was built in such manner, that the world might see all his transactions.

I have two proposals, he continued, to make to you. chuse freely that which you like best; but accept either one or the other. Then taking his wife's hand and mine, and closing them together, he said, Our friendship commences from this moment; this forms the dear connection, and may it be indissoluble. Embrace her as your sister and your friend; treat her as such constantly; the more familiar you are with her, the better I shall esteem you: but behave, when tete a tete, as if I was present; or in my presence, as if I was absent. This is all I desire. If you prefer the latter, you may chuse it without any inconvenience; for as I reserve to myself the right of intimating to you any thing which displeases me, so long as I am silent in that respect, you may be certain that I am not offended.

I should have been greatly embarrassed by this discourse two hours before, but Mr. Wolmar began to gain such an ascendancy over me, that his authority already grew somewhat familiar to me. We all three entered once more into indifferent conversation, and every time I spoke to Eloisa, I did not fail to address her by the stile of Madam. Tell me sincerely, said her husband at last, interrupting me, in your tete a tete party just now, did you call her Madam? No, answered I, somewhat disconcerted, but politeness... Such politeness, he replied, is nothing but the mask of vice; where virtue maintains its empire, it is unnecessary; and I discard it. Call my wife Eloisa in my presence, or Madam when you are alone; it is indifferent to me. I

began to know what kind of man I had to deal with, and I resolved always to keep my mind in such a state as to bear his examination.

My body drooping with fatigue, stood in need of refreshment, and my spirits required rest; I found both one and the other at table. After so many years absence and vexation, after such tedious voyages, I said to myself, in a kind of rapture, I am in company with Eloisa, I see her, I talk with her; I sit at table with her, she views me without inquietude, and entertains me without apprehensions. Nothing interrupts our mutual satisfaction. Gentle and precious innocence, I never before relished thy charms, and to-day, for the first time, my existence ceases to be painful.

At night, when I retired to rest, I passed by their chamber; I saw them go in together; I proceeded to my own in a melancholy mood, and this moment was the least agreeable to me of any I that day experienced.

Such, my Lord, were the occurrences of this first interview, so passionately wished for, and so dreadfully apprehended. I have endeavoured to collect myself since I have been alone; I have compelled myself to self-examination; but as I am not yet recovered from the agitation of the preceding day, it is impossible for me to judge of the true state of my mind. All that I know for certain, is, that if the nature of my affection for her is not changed, at least the mode of it is altered, for I am always anxious to have a third person between us, and I now dread being alone with her, as much as I longed for it formerly.

I intend to go to Lausanne in two or three days. I have seen Eloisa but half, not having seen her cousin; that dear and amiable friend, to whom I am so much indebted, and who will always share my friendship, my services, my gratitude, and all the affections of my soul. On my return I will take the first opportunity to give you a farther account. I have need of your advice, and I shall keep a strict eye over my conduct. I know my duty, and will discharge it. However agreeable it may be to fix my residence in this house, I am determined, I have sworn, that when I grow too

fond of my abode, I will quit it immediately.

Letter CXXVI. Mrs. Wolmar to Mrs. Orbe.

If you had been kind enough to have staid with us as long as we desired, you would have had the pleasure of embracing your friend before your departure. He came hither the day before yesterday, and wanted to visit you to day; but the fatigue of his journey confines him to his room, and this morning he was let blood. Besides, I was fully determined, in order to punish you, not to let him go so soon; and unless you will come hither, I promise you that it will be a long time before you shall see him. You know it would be very improper to let him see the inseparables asunder.

In truth, Clara, I cannot tell what idle apprehensions bewitched my mind with respect to his coming hither, and I am ashamed to have opposed it with such obstinacy. As much as I dreaded the sight of him, I should now be sorry not to have seen him, for his presence has banished those fears which yet disturbed me, and which, by fixing my attention constantly on him, might at length have given me just cause of uneasiness. I am so far from being apprehensive of the affection I feel for him, that I believe I should mistrust myself more was he less dear to me; but I love him as tenderly as ever, though my love is of a different nature. It is by comparing my present sensations with those which his presence formerly occasioned, that I derive my security, and the difference of such opposite sentiments is perceived in proportion to their vivacity.

With regard to him, though I knew him at the first glance, he nevertheless appeared to be greatly altered; and what I should formerly have thought impossible, he seems, in many respects, to be changed for the better. On the first day, he discovered many symptoms of perplexity, and it was with great difficulty that I concealed mine from him. But it was not long before he recovered that free deportment and openness of manner which becomes his character. I had always seen him timid and bashful; the fear of offending me, and perhaps the secret shame of acting a part unbecoming a

man of honour, gave him an air of meanness and servility before me, which you have more than once very justly ridiculed. Instead of the submission of a slave, at present he has the respectful behaviour of a friend, who knows how to honour the object of his esteem. He now communicates his sentiments with freedom and honesty; he is not afraid lest his severe maxims of virtue should clash with his interest; he is not apprehensive of injuring himself or affecting me, by praising what is commendable in itself, and one may perceive in all that he says the confidence of an honest man, who can depend upon himself, and who derives that approbation from his own conscience, which he formerly sought for only in my looks. I find also that experience has cured him of that dogmatical and peremptory air which men are apt to contract in their closets; that he is less forward to judge of mankind, since he has observed them more; that he is less ready to establish general propositions, since he has seen so many exceptions; and that in general, the love of truth has banished the spirit of system: so that he is become less brilliant, but more rational; and one receives much more information from him, now that he does not affect to be so wise.

His figure likewise is altered, but nevertheless not for the worse; his countenance is more open; his deportment more stately; he has contracted a kind of martial air in his travels, which becomes him the better, as the lively and spirited gesture he used to express when he was in earnest, is now turned into a more grave and sober demeanour. He is a seaman, whose appearance is cold and phlegmatic, but whose discourse is fiery and impetuous. Though he is turned of thirty, he has the look of a young man, and joins all the spirit of youth to the dignity of manhood. His complexion is entirely altered; he is as black as a Negro, and very much marked with the small-pox. My dear, I must own the truth; I am uneasy whenever I view those marks, and I catch myself looking at them very often in spite of me.

I think I can discover that if I am curious in examining him, he is not less attentive in viewing me. After so long an absence, it is natural to contemplate each other with

a kind of curiosity; but if this curiosity may be thought to retain any thing of our former eagerness, yet what difference is there in the manner as well as the motive of it! If our looks do not meet so often, we nevertheless view each other with more freedom. We seem to examine each other alternately by a kind of tacit agreement. Each perceives, as it were, when it is the other's turn, and looks a different way to give the other an opportunity. Though free from the emotions I formerly felt, yet how is it possible to behold with indifference one who inspired the tenderest passion, and who, to this hour, is the object of the purest affection? Who knows whether self-love does not endeavour to justify past errors? Who knows whether, though no longer blinded by passion, we do not both flatter ourselves by secretly approving our former choice? Be it as it may, I repeat it without a blush, that I feel a most tender affection for him, which will endure to the end of my life. I am so far from reproaching myself for harbouring these sentiments, that I think they deserve applause; I should blush not to perceive them, and consider it as a defect in my character, and the symptom of a bad disposition. With respect to him, I dare believe, that next to virtue, he loves me beyond any thing in the world. I perceive that he thinks himself honoured by my esteem; I in my turn will regard his in the same light, and will merit its continuance. Ah! if you saw with what tenderness he caresses my children; if you knew what pleasure he takes in talking of you, you would find, Clara, that I am still dear to him.

What increases my confidence in the opinion we both entertain of him, is that Mr. Wolmar joins with us, and since he has seen him, believes, from his own observation, all that we have reported to his advantage. He has talked of him much these two evenings past, congratulating himself on account of the measures he has taken, and rallying me for my opposition. No, said he yesterday, we will not suffer so worthy a man to mistrust himself; we will teach him to have more confidence in his own virtue, and perhaps we may one day or other reap the fruits of our present endeavours with more advantage than you imagine. For the present, I must tell you

that I am pleased with his character, and that I esteem him particularly for one circumstance which he little suspects, that is, the reserve with which he behaves towards me. The less friendship he expresses for me, the more he makes me his friend; I cannot tell you how much I dreaded lest he should load me with caresses. This was the first trial I prepared for him, there is yet another by which I intend to prove him; and after that I shall cease all farther examination. As to the circumstance you mentioned, said I, it only proves the frankness of his disposition; for he would never resolve to put on a pliant and submissive air before my father, though it was so much his interest, and I so often intreated him to do it. I saw with concern that his behaviour deprived him of the only resource, and yet could not dislike him for not being able to play the hypocrite on any occasion. The case is very different, replied my husband: there is a natural antipathy between your father and him, founded on the opposition of their sentiments. With regard to myself, who have no symptoms or prejudices, I am certain that he can have no natural aversion to me. No one can hate me; a man without passions cannot inspire any one with an aversion towards him: but I deprived him of the object of his wishes, which he will not readily forgive. He will however conceive the stronger affection for me, when he is perfectly convinced that the injury I have done him does not prevent me from looking upon him with an eye of kindness. If he caressed me now, he would be a hypocrite; if he never caresses me, he will be a monster.

Such, my dear Clara, is the situation we are in, and I begin to think that heaven will bless the integrity of our hearts, and the kind intentions of my husband. But I am too kind to you in entering into all these details; you do not deserve that I should take such pleasure in conversing with you; but I am determined to tell you no more, and if you desire farther information, you must come hitherto receive it.

P. S. I must acquaint you nevertheless with what has passed with respect to the subject of this letter. You know with what indulgence Mr. Wolmar received the late confession which our friend’s unexpected return obliged me to make. You saw with

what tenderness he endeavoured to dry up my tears, and dispel my shame. Whether, as you reasonably conjectured, I told him nothing new, or whether he was really affected by a proceeding which nothing but sincere repentance could dictate, he has not only continued to live with me as before, but he even seems to have increased his attention, his confidence, and esteem, as if he meant, by his kindness, to repay the confusion which my confession cost me. My dear Clara, you know my heart; judge then what an impression such a conduct must make!

As soon as I found that he was determined to let our old friend come hither, I resolved on my part, to take the best precautions I could contrive against myself: which was to chuse my husband himself for my confident; to hold no particular conversation, which I did not communicate to him, and to write no letter which I did not shew to him. I even made it a part of my duty to write every letter as if it was not intended for his inspection, and afterwards to shew it to him. You will find an article in this which was penned on this principle; if while I was writing, I could not forbear thinking that he might read it, yet my conscience bears witness that I did not alter a single word on that account; but when I shewed him my letter, he bantered me, and had not the civility to read it.

I confess that I was somewhat piqued at his refusal; as if he had doubted my honour. My emotion did not escape his notice, and this most open and generous man soon removed my apprehensions. Confess, said he, that you have said less concerning me than usual in that letter. I owned it; was it decent to say much of him, when I intended to shew him what I had written? Well, he replied with a smile, I had rather that you would talk of me more, and not know what you say of me. Afterwards, he continued, in a more serious tone; Marriage, said he, is too grave and solemn a state to admit of that free communication which tender friendship allows. The latter connection often happily contributes to moderate the rigour of the former; and it may be reasonable in some cases for a virtuous and discreet woman to seek for that comfort, intelligence, and advice from a faithful confident, which it might not be

proper for her to desire of her husband. Though nothing passes between you but what you would chuse to communicate, yet take care not to make it a duty, lest that duty should become a restraint upon you, and your correspondence grow less agreeable by being more diffusive. Believe me, the open-hearted sincerity of friendship is restrained by the presence of a witness, whoever it be. There are a thousand secrets of which three friends ought to participate; but which cannot be communicated but between two. You may impart the same things to your friend and to your husband, but you do not relate them in the same manner; and if you will confound these distinctions, the consequence will be, that your letters will be addressed more to me than to her, and that you will not be free from restraint either with one or the other. It is as much for my own interest as for yours, that I urge these reasons. Do not you perceive that you are already, with good reason, apprehensive of the indelicacy of praising me to my face? Why will you deprive yourself of the pleasure of acquainting your friend how tenderly you love your husband, and me of the satisfaction of supposing that in your most private intercourses, you take delight in speaking well of me? Eloisa! Eloisa! he added, pressing my hand, and looking at me with tenderness, why will you demean yourself by taking precautions so unworthy of you, and will you never learn to make a true estimate of your own worth?

My dear friend, it is impossible to tell you how this incomparable man behaves to me: I no longer blush in his presence. Spite of my frailty, he lifts me above myself, and by dint of reposing confidence in me, he teaches me to deserve it.

Letter CXXVII. Answer.

Impossible! our traveller returned, and have I not yet seen him at my feet, loaded with the spoils of America? But it is not him, I assure you, whom I accuse of this delay; for I am sensible it is as grievous to him as to me: but I find that he has not so thoroughly forgotten his former state of servility as you pretend, and I complain less

of his neglect, than of your tyranny. It is very droll in you indeed, to desire such a prude as I am, to make the first advances, and run to salute a swarthy pockfretten face, which has passed four times under the line. But you make me smile to see you in such haste to scold, for fear I should begin first. I should be glad to know what pretence you have to make such an attempt? Quarrelling is my talent. I take pleasure in it, I acquit myself to a miracle, and it becomes me well; but you, my dear cousin, are a mere novice at this work. If you did but know how graceful you appear in the act of confession, how lovely you look with a supplicating eye, and an air of confusion, instead of scolding you would spend your days in asking pardon, were it only out of coquetry.

For the present, you must ask my pardon in every respect. A fine project truly, to chuse a husband for a confident, and a most obliging precaution indeed for a friendship so sacred as ours! Thou faithless friend, and pusillanimous woman! On whom can you depend, if you mistrust yourself and me? Can you, without offence to both, considering the sacred tie under which you live, suspect your own inclinations and my indulgence? I am amazed that the very idea of admitting a third person into the tittle tattle secrets of two women, did not disgust you! As for my part, I love to prattle with you at my ease, but if I thought that the eye of man ever pried into my letters, I should no longer have any pleasure in corresponding with you; such a reserve would insensibly introduce a coldness between us, and we should have no more regard for each other than two indifferent women. To what inconveniences your silly distrust would have exposed us, if your husband had not been wiser than you!

He acted very discreetly in not reading your letter. Perhaps he would have been less satisfied with it than you imagine, and less than I am myself, who am better capable of judging of your present condition, by the fate in which I have seen you formerly. All those contemplative sages who have passed their lives in the study of the human heart, are less acquainted with the real symptoms of love, than the most shallow

woman, if she has any sensibility. Mr. Wolmar would immediately have observed that our friend was the subject of your whole letter, and he would not have seen the postscript, in which you do not once mention him. If you had written this postscript ten years ago, my dear, I cannot tell how you would have managed, but your friend would certainly have been crowded into some corner, especially as there was no husband to overlook it.

Mr. Wolmar would have observed farther with what attention you examined his guest, and the pleasure you take in describing his person; but he might devour Plato and Aristotle, before he would know that we look at a lover, but do not examine him. All examination requires a degree of indifference, which we never feel when we behold the object of our passion.

In short, he would imagine that all the alterations you remark might have escaped another, and I on the contrary was afraid of finding that they had escaped you. However your guest may be altered from what he was, he would appear the same, if your affections were not altered. You turn away your eyes whenever he looks at you; this is a very good symptom. You turn them away, cousin? You do not now cast them down? Surely you have not mistaken one word for another. Do you think that our philosopher would have perceived this distinction?

There is another circumstance very likely to disturb a husband; it is a kind of tenderness and affection which still remains in your stile, when you speak of the object who was once so dear to you. One who reads your letters, or hears you speak, ought to be well acquainted with you, not to be mistaken with regard to your sentiments; he ought to know that it is only a friend to whom you are speaking, or that, you speak in the same manner of all your friends; but as to that, it is the natural effect of your disposition, with which your husband is too well acquainted to be alarmed. How is it possible but that, in a mind of such tenderness, pure friendship will bear some resemblance to love? Pray observe, my dear cousin, that all I say to

you on this head ought to inspire you with fresh courage: your conduct is discreet, and that is a great deal; I used to trust only to your virtue, but I begin now to rely on your reason; I consider your cure at present, though not perfect, yet as easily accomplished, and you have now made a sufficient progress, to render you inexcusable if you do not compleat it.

Before I came to your postscript, I remarked the passage which you had the sincerity not to suppress or alter, though conscious that it would be open to your husband's inspection. I am certain, that if he had read it, it would, if possible, have doubled his esteem for you; nevertheless it would have given him no great pleasure. Upon the whole, your letter was very well calculated to make him place an entire confidence in your conduct, but at the same time it tended to give him uneasiness with respect to your inclinations. I own those marks of the small-pox, which you view so much, give me some apprehensions; love never yet contrived a more dangerous disguise. I know that this would be of no consequence to any other; but always remember, Eloisa, that she who was not to be reduced by the youth and fine figure of her lover, was lost when she reflected on the sufferings he had endured for her. Providence no doubt intended that he should retain the marks of that distemper, to exercise your virtue, and that you should be free from them, in order to put his to the proof.

I come now to the principal subject of your letter; you know that on the receipt of our friend's, I flew to you immediately; it was a matter of importance. But at present, if you knew in what difficulties that short absence has involved me, and how many things I have to do at once, you would be sensible how impossible it is for me to leave my house again, without exposing myself to fresh inconveniencies, and putting myself under a necessity of passing the winter here again, which is neither for your interest or mine. Is it not better to deprive ourselves of the pleasure of a hasty interview of two or three days, that we may be together for six months. I imagine likewise that it would not be improper for me to have a little particular and private conversation with our philosopher: partly to found his inclinations and

confirm his mind; partly to give him some useful advice with regard to the conduct he should observe towards your husband, and even towards you; for I do not suppose that you can talk to him with freedom on that subject, and I can perceive, even from your letter, that he has need of council. We have been so long used to govern him, that we are in conscience responsible for his behaviour; and till he has regained the free use of his reason, we must supply the deficiency. For my own part, it is a charge I shall always undertake with pleasure; for he has paid such deference to my advice as I shall never forget, and since my husband is no more, there is not a man in the world whom I esteem and love so much as himself. I have likewise reserved for him the pleasure of doing me some little services here. I have a great many papers in confusion, which he will help me to regulate, and I have some troublesome affairs in hand in which I shall have occasion for his diligence and understanding. As to the rest, I do not propose to detain him above five or six days at most, and perhaps I may send him to you the next day. For I have too much vanity to wait till he is seized with impatience to return, and I have too much discernment to be deceived in that case.

Do not fail therefore as soon as he is recovered, to send him to me; that is, to let him come, or I shall give over all raillery. You know very well that if I laugh whilst I cry, and yet am not the less in affliction, so I laugh likewise at the same time that I scold, and yet am not the less in a passion. If you are discreet, and do things with a good grace, I promise you that I will send him back to you with a pretty little present, which will give you pleasure, and a great deal of pleasure; but if you suffer me to languish with impatience, I assure you that you shall have nothing.

P.S. A propos; tell me, does our seaman smoak? does he swear? does he drink brandy? Does he wear a great cutlass? has he the look of a Buccaneer? O how I long to see what sort of an air a man has who comes from the Antipodes!

Letter CXXVIII. Clara to Eloisa.

Here, take back your slave, my dear cousin. He has been mine for these eight days past, and he bears his chains with so good a grace, that he seems formed for captivity. Return me thanks that I did not keep him still eight days longer; for without offence to you, if I had kept him till he began to grow tired of me, I should not have sent him back so soon. I therefore detained him without any scruple; but I was so scrupulous however, that I durst not let him lodge in my house. I have sometimes perceived in myself that haughtiness of soul, which disdains servile ceremonies, and which is so confident with virtue. In this instance however, I have been more reserved than usual, without knowing why: and all that I know for certain is, that I am more disposed to censure, than to applaud my reserve.

But can you guess what induced our friend to stay here so patiently? First, he had the pleasure of my company, and I presume that circumstance alone was sufficient to make him patient. Then he saved me a great deal of confusion, and was of service to me in my business; a friend is never tired of such offices. A third reason which you have probably conjectured, though you pretend not to know it, is that he talked to me about you; and if we subtract the time employed in this conversation from the whole time which he has passed here, you will find that there is very little remaining to be placed to my account. But what an odd whim, to leave you, in order to have the pleasure of talking of you! Not so odd as may be imagined. He is under constraint in your company; he must be continually upon his guard; the least indiscretion would become a crime, and in those dangerous moments, minds endued with sentiments of honour, never fail to recollect their duty; but when we are remote from the object of our affections, we may indulge ourselves with feasting our imaginations. If we stifle an idea when it becomes criminal, why should we reproach ourselves for having entertained it when it was not so? Can the pleasing recollection of innocent pleasures, ever be a crime? This, I imagine, is a way of reasoning, which you will not acquiesce in, but which nevertheless may be admitted. He began, as I may say, to run over the whole course of his former affections. The days of his

youth passed over a second time in our conversation. He renewed all his confidence in me; he recalled the happy time, in which he was permitted to love you; he painted to my imagination, all the charms of an innocent passion——Without doubt, he embellished them!

He said little of his present condition with regard to you, and what he mentioned rather denoted respect and admiration, than love; so that I have the pleasure to think that he will return, much more confident as to the nature of his affections, than when he came hither. Not but that, when you are the subject, one may perceive at the bottom of that susceptible mind, a certain tenderness, which friendship alone, though not less affecting, still expresses in a different manner; but I have long observed that it is impossible to see you, or to think of you with indifference; and if to that general affection which the sight of you inspires, we add the more tender impression which an indelible recollection must have left upon his mind, we shall find that it is difficult and almost impossible that, with the most rigid virtue, he should be otherwise than he is. I have fully interrogated him, carefully observed him, and watched him narrowly; I have examined him with the utmost attention. I cannot read his inmost thoughts, nor do I believe them more intelligible to himself: but I can answer, at least, that he is struck with a sense of his duty and of yours, and that the idea of Eloisa abandoned and contemptible, would be more horrible than his own annihilation. My dear cousin, I have but one piece of advice to give you, and I desire you to attend to it; avoid any detail concerning what is passed, and I will take upon me to answer for the future.

With regard to the restitution which you mentioned, you must think no more of it. After having exhausted all the reasons I could suggest, I intreated him, pressed him, conjured him, but in vain. I pouted, I even kissed him, I took hold of both his hands, and would have fallen on my knees to him if he would have suffered me; but he would not so much as hear me. He carried the obstinacy of his humour so far, as to swear that he would sooner consent never to see you again, than part with your

picture. At last, in a fit of passion, he made me feel it. It was next his heart. There, said he, with a sigh which almost stopped his breath, there is the picture, the only comfort I have left, and of which nevertheless you would deprive me; be assured that it shall never be torn from me, but at the expense of my life. Believe me, Eloisa, we had better be discreet, and suffer him to keep the picture. Afterall, where is the importance? His obstinacy will be his punishment.

After he had thoroughly unburthened and eased his mind, he appeared so composed that I ventured to talk to him about his situation. I found that neither time nor reason had made any alteration in his system, and that he confined his whole ambition to the passing his life in the service of Lord B——. I could not but approve such honourable intentions, so consistent with his character, and so becoming that gratitude, which is due to such unexhausted kindness. He told me that you were of the same opinion; but that Mr. Wolmar was silent. A sudden thought strikes me. From your husband's singular conduct, and other symptoms, I suspect that he has some secret design upon our friend, which he does not disclose. Let us leave him to himself, and trust to his discretion. The manner in which he behaves, sufficiently proves that, if my conjecture is right, he meditates nothing but what will be for the advantage of the person, about whom he has taken such uncommon pains.

You gave a very just description of his figure and of his manners, which proves that you have observed him more attentively than I should have imagined. But don't you find that his continued anxieties have rendered his countenance more expressive than it used to be? Notwithstanding the account you gave me, I was afraid to find him tinctured with that affected politeness, those apish manners which people seldom fail to contract at Paris, and which, in the round of trifles which employ an indolent day, are vainly displayed under different modes. Whether it be that some minds are not susceptible of this polish, or whether the sea air entirely effaced it, I could not discover in him the least marks of affectation; and all the zeal he expressed for me, seemed to flow entirely from the dictates of his heart. He talked to

me about my poor husband; but instead of comforting me, he chose to join with me in bewailing him, and never once attempted to make any fine speeches on the subject. He caressed my daughter, but instead of admiring her as I do, he reproached me with her failings, and, like you, complained that I spoiled her; he entered into my concerns with great zeal, and was seldom of my opinion in any respect. Moreover, the wind might have blown my eyes out, before he would have thought of drawing a curtain; I might have been fatigued to death in going from one room to another, before he would have had gallantry enough to have stretched out his hand, covered with the skirt of his coat, to support me: my fan lay upon the ground yesterday for more than a second, and he did not fly from the bottom of the room, as if he was going to snatch it out of the fire. In the morning, before he came to visit me, he never once sent to inquire how I did. When we are walking together, he does not affect to have his hat nailed upon his head, to shew that he knows the pink of the mode. [52] At table, I frequently asked him for his snuff-box, which he always gave me in his hand, and never presented it upon a plate, like a fine gentleman; or rather like a footman. He did not fail to drink my health twice at least at dinner, and I will lay a wager that if he stays with us this winter, we shall see him sit round the fire with us, and warm himself like an old cit. You laugh, cousin; but shew me one of our gallants newly arrived from Paris, who preserves the same manly deportment. As to the rest, I think you must allow that our philosopher is altered for the worse in one respect, which is, that he takes rather more notice of people who speak to him, which he cannot do but to your prejudice; nevertheless, I hope that I shall be able to reconcile him to Madam Belon. For my part, I think him altered for the better, because he is more serious than ever. My dear, take great care of him till my arrival. He is just the man I could wish to have the pleasure of plaguing all day long.

Admire my discretion; I have taken no notice yet of the present I send you, and which is an earnest of another to come. But you have received it before you opened my letter, and you know how much, and with what reason I idolize it; you, whose

avarice is so anxious about this present, you must acknowledge that I have performed more than I promised. Ah! the dear little creature! While you are reading this, she is already in your arms; she is happier than her mother; but in two months time I shall be happier than she, for I shall be more sensible of my felicity. Alas! dear cousin, do not you possess me wholly already? Where you and my daughter are, what part of me is wanting? There she is, the dear little infant; take her as your own; I give her up; I put her into your hands: I consign all maternal authority over to you; correct my failings; take that charge upon yourself, of which I acquitted myself so little to your liking: henceforward be as a mother to her, who is one day to be your daughter-in-law, and to render her dearer to me still, make another Eloisa of her if possible. She is like you in the face already; as to her temper, I guess that she will be grave and thoughtful; when you have corrected those little caprices which I have been accused of encouraging you will find that my daughter will give herself the airs of my cousin; but she will be happier than Eloisa in having less tears to shed, and less struggles to encounter. Do you know that she can't be any longer without her little M——, and that it is partly for that reason I send her back? I had a conversation with her yesterday, which made our friends ready to die with laughing. First, she leaves me without the least regret, I, who am her humble servant all day long, and can deny her nothing she asks for; and you, of whom she is afraid, and who answer her, No, twenty times a day; you, by way of excellence, are her little mamma, whom she visits with pleasure, and whose denials she likes better than all my fine presents: when I told her that I was going to send her to you, she was transported as you may imagine; but to perplex her, I told her that you, in return was to send me little M.——in her stead, and that was not agreeable to her. She was quite at a non-plus, and asked what I would do with him. I told her that I would take him to myself: she began to pout. Harriot, said I, won't you give up your little M——to me? No, said she, somewhat coldly. No? But if I won't give him up neither, who shall settle it between us? Mamma, my little mamma shall settle it.

Then I shall have the preference, for you know she will do whatever I desire. Oh, but mamma will do nothing but what's right! And do you think I should desire what's wrong? The sly little jade began to smile. But after all, I continued, for what reason should she refuse to give me little M——? Because he is not fit for you. And why is he not fit for me? Another arch smile as full of meaning as the former. Tell me honestly, is it not because you think me too old for him? No, mamma, but he is too young for you... This from a child but seven years old...

I amused myself with piquing her still farther. My dear Henriette, said I, assuming a serious air, I assure you that he is not fit for you neither. Why so? she cried, as if she had been suddenly alarmed. Because he is too giddy for you. Oh, mamma, is that all? I will make him wise. But if unfortunately he should make you foolish? Then, mamma, I should be like you. Like me, impertinence? Yes, mamma, you are saying all day that you are foolishly fond of me. Well then, I will be foolishly fond of him, that's all.

I know you don't approve of this pretty prattle, and that you will soon know how to check it. Neither will I justify it, though I own it delights me; but I only mention it to convince you, that my daughter is already in love with her little M——, and that if he is two years younger than her, she is not unworthy of that authority, which she may claim by right of seniority. I perceive likewise, by opposing your example and my own to that of your poor mother's, that where the woman governs, the house is not the worse managed. Farewell, my dear friend; farewell, my constant companion! The time is approaching, and the vintage shall not be gathered without me.

Letter CXXIX. To Lord B——.

What pleasures, too late enjoy'd, (alas, enjoy'd too late) have I tasted these three weeks past! How delightful to pass one day in the bosom of calm friendship, secure from the tempests of impetuous passion! What a pleasing and affecting scene, my Lord, is a plain and well-regulated family, where order, peace, and innocence reign

throughout; where, without pomp or retinue, everything is assembled, which can contribute to the real felicity of mankind! The country, the retirement, the season, the vast body of water which opens to my view, the wild prospect of the mountains, everything conspires to recall to my mind the delightful island of Tinian. I flatter myself that the earnest prayers, which I there so often repeated, are now accomplished. I live here agreeably to my taste, and enjoy society suitable to my liking. I only want the company of two persons to compleat my happiness, and I hope to see them here soon.

In the mean time, till you and Mrs. Orbe come to perfect those charming and innocent pleasures, which I begin to relish here, I will endeavour, by way of detail, to give you an idea of that domestic economy, which proclaims the happiness of the master and mistress, and communicates their felicity to every one under their roof. I hope that my reflections may one day be of use to you, with respect to the project you have in view, and this hope encourages me to pursue them.

I need not give you a description of Clarens house. You know it. You can tell how delightful it is, what interesting recollections it presents to my mind; you can judge how dear it must be to me, both on account of the present scenes it exhibits, and of those which it recalls to my mind. Mrs. Wolmar, with good reason, prefers this abode to that of Etange, a superb and magnificent castle, but old, inconvenient, and gloomy, its situation being far inferior to the country round Clarens.

Since Mr. and Mrs. Wolmar have fixed their residence here, they have converted to use every thing which served only for ornament: it is no longer a house for shew, but for convenience. They have shut up a long sweep of rooms, to alter the inconvenient situation of the doors; they have cut off some over-sized rooms, that the apartments might be better distributed. Instead of rich and antique furniture, they have substituted what is neat and convenient. Every thing here is pleasant and agreeable; every thing breathes an air of plenty and propriety, without any appearance of pomp

and luxury. There is not a single room, in which you do not immediately recollect that you are in the country, but in which, nevertheless, you will find all the conveniences you meet with in town. The same alterations are observable without doors. The yard has been enlarged at the expense of the coach-houses. Instead of an old tattered billiard-table, they have made a fine press, and the spot which used to be filled with screaming peacocks, which they have parted with, is converted into a dairy. The kitchen-garden was too small for the kitchen; they have made another out of a flower garden, but so convenient and so well laid out, that the spot, thus transformed, looks more agreeable to the eye than before. Instead of the mournful yews which covered the wall, they have planted good fruit-trees. In the room of the useless Indian black-berry, fine young mulberry-trees now begin to shade the yard, and they have planted two rows of walnut-trees quite to the road, in the place of some old linden trees which bordered the avenue. They have throughout substituted the useful in the room of the agreeable, and yet the agreeable has gained by the alteration. For my own part, at least, I think that the noise of the yard, the crowing of the cocks, the lowing of the cattle, the harness of the carts, the rural repasts, the return of the husband-men, and all the train of rustic economy, give the house a more rural, more lively, animated and gay appearance, than it had in its former state of mournful dignity.

Their estate is not out upon lease, but they are their own farmers, and the cultivation of it employs a great deal of their time, and makes a great part both of their pleasure and profit. The manor of Etange is nothing but meadow, pasture and wood: but the produce of Clarens consists of vineyards, which are considerable objects, and in which, the difference of culture produces more sensible effects than in corn; which is a farther reason why, in point of economy, they should prefer the latter as a place of residence. Nevertheless, they generally go to Etange every year at harvest time, and Mr. Wolmar visits it frequently. It is a maxim with them, to cultivate their lands to the utmost they will produce, not for the sake of extraordinary profit, but as a

means of employing more hands. Mr. Wolmar maintains that the produce of the earth is in proportion to the number of hands employed; the better it is tilled, the more it yields; and the surplus of its produce furnishes the means of cultivating it still farther; the more it is stocked with men and cattle, the greater abundance it yields for their support. No one can tell, says he, where this continual and reciprocal increase of produce and of labour may end. On the contrary, land neglected loses its fertility; the less men a country produces, the less provisions it furnishes. The scarcity of inhabitants is the reason why it is insufficient to maintain the few it has, and in every country which tends to depopulation, the people will sooner or later die of famine.

Therefore having a great deal of land, which they cultivate with the utmost industry, they require, besides the servants in the yard, a great number of day labourers, which procures them the pleasure of maintaining a great number of people without any inconvenience to themselves. In the choice of their labourers, they always prefer neighbours and those of the same place, to strangers and foreigners. Though by this means they may sometimes be losers in not choosing the most robust, yet this loss is soon made up by the affection which this preference inspires in those whom they chuse, by the advantage likewise of having them always about them, and of being able to depend on them at all times, though they keep them in pay but part of the year.

They always make two prices with these labourers. One is a strict payment of right, the current price of the country, which they engage to pay them when they hire them. The other, which is more liberal, is a payment of generosity; it is bestowed only as they are found to deserve it, and it seldom happens that they do not earn the surplus: for Mr. Wolmar is just and strict, and never suffers institutions of grace and favour to degenerate into custom and abuse. Over these labourers there are overseers, who watch and encourage them. These overseers work along with the rest; and are interested in their labour, by a little augmentation which is made to

their wages, for every advantage that is reaped from their industry. Besides, Mr. Wolmar visits them almost every day himself, sometimes often in a day, and his wife loves to take these walks with him. In times of extraordinary business, Eloisa every week bestows some little gratifications to such of the labourers, or other servants, as, in the judgment of their master, shall have been most industrious for eight days past. All these means of promoting emulation, though seemingly expensive, when used with justice and discretion, insensibly make people laborious and diligent, and in the end bring in more than is disbursed; but as they turn to no profit, but by time and perseverance, few people know any thing of them, or are willing to make use of them.

But the most effectual method of all, which is peculiar to Mrs. Wolmar, and which they who are bent on economy seldom think of, is that of gaining the hearts of those good people, by making them the objects of her affection. She does not think it sufficient to reward their industry, by giving them money, but she thinks herself bound to do farther services to those who have contributed to hers. Labourers, domestics, all who serve her, if it be but for a day, become her children; she takes part in their pleasures, their cares, and their fortune; she inquires into their affairs, and makes their interests her own; she engages in a thousand concerns for them, she gives them her advice, she composes their differences, and does not shew the affability of her disposition in smooth and fruitless speeches, but in real services, and continual acts of benevolence. They, on their parts, leave everything to serve her, on the least motion. They fly when she speaks to them; her look alone animates their zeal; in her presence they are contented; in her absence they talk of her, and are eager to be employed. Her charms, and her manner of conversing do a great deal, but her gentleness and her virtues do more. Ah! my Lord, what a powerful and adorable empire is that of benevolent beauty!

With respect to their personal attendants, they have within doors eight servants, three women and five men, without reckoning the baron’s valet de chambre, or the

servants in the out-houses. It seldom happens that people, who have but few domestics, are ill served; but, from the uncommon zeal of these servants, one would conclude that each thought himself charged with the business of the other seven, and from the harmony among them, one would imagine that the whole business was done by one man. You never see them in the out-houses idle and unemployed, or playing in the court-yard, but always about some useful employment; they help in the yard, in the cellar, and in the kitchen; The gardener has nobody under him but them, and what is most agreeable, you see them do all this chearfully and with pleasure.

They take them young, in order to form them to their minds. They do not follow the maxim here, which prevails at Paris and London, of choosing domestics ready formed, that is to say, compleat rascals, runners of quality, who in every family they go through, catch the failings both of master and man, and make a trade of serving every body, without being attached to any one. There can be neither honesty, fidelity, or zeal among such fellows, and this collection of rabble serves to ruin the masters and corrupt the children in all wealthy families. Here, the choice of domestics is considered as an article of importance. They do not regard them merely as mercenaries, from whom they only require a stipulated service, but as members of a family, which, should they be ill chosen, might be ruined by that means. The first thing they require of them is to be honest, the next is to love their master, and the third to serve him to his liking; but where a master is reasonable, and servant intelligent, the third is the consequence of the two first. Therefore they do not take them from town, but from the country. This is the first place they live in, and it will assuredly be the last if they are good for any thing. They take them out of some numerous family overstocked with children, whose parents come to offer them of their own accord. They chuse them young, well made, healthy, and of a pleasant countenance. Mr. Wolmar interrogates and examines them, and then presents them to his wife. If they prove agreeable to both, they are received at first upon trial,

afterwards they are admitted among the number of servants, or more properly the children of the family, and they employ some days in teaching their duty with a great deal of care and patience. The service is so simple, so equal and uniform, the master and mistress are so little subject to whims and caprice, and the servants so soon conceive an affection for them, that their business is soon learned. Their condition is agreeable; they find conveniences which they had not at home; but they are not suffered to be enervated by idleness, the parent of all vice. They do not allow them to become gentlemen, and to grow proud in their service. They continue to work as they did with their own family; in fact, they do but change their father and mother, and get more wealthy parents. They do not therefore hold their old rustic employments in contempt. Whenever they leave this place, there is not one of them who had not rather turn peasant, than take any other employment. In short, I never saw a family, where every one acquits himself so well in his service, and thinks so little of the trouble of servitude.

Thus by training up their servants themselves, in this discreet manner, they guard against the objection which is so very trifling, and so frequently made, viz. “I shall only bring them up for the service of others.” Train them properly, one might answer, and they will never serve any one else. If in bringing them up, you solely regard your own benefit, they have a right to consult their own interest in quitting you; but if you seem to consider their advantage, they will remain constantly attached to you. It is the intention alone which constitutes the obligation, and he who is indirectly benefited by an act of kindness, wherein I meant to serve my self only, owes me no obligation whatever.

As a double preventive against this inconvenience, Mr. and Mrs. Wolmar take another method, which appears to me extremely prudent. At the first establishment of their houshold, they calculated what number of servants their fortune would allow them to keep, and they found it to amount to fifteen or sixteen; in order to be better served they made a reduction of half that number; so that with less retinue, their

service is more exactly attended. To be more effectually served still, they have made it the interest of their servants to continue with them a long time. When a domestic first enters into their service, he receives the common wages; but those wages are augmented every year by a twentieth part: so that at the end of twenty years, they will be more than doubled, and the charge of keeping these servants will be nearly the same, in proportion to the master's circumstances. But there is no need of being a deep algebraist to discover that the expense of this augmentation is more in appearance than reality, that there will be but few to whom double wages will be paid, and that if they were paid to all the servants, yet the benefit of having been well served for twenty years past, would more than compensate the extraordinary expense. You perceive, my Lord, that this is a certain expedient of making servants grow continually more and more careful, and of attaching them to you, by attaching yourself to them. There is not only prudence, but justice in such a provision. Is it reasonable that a new-comer, who has no affection for you, and who is perhaps an unworthy object, should receive the same salary, at his first entrance into the family, as an old servant, whose zeal and fidelity have been tried in a long course of services, and who besides, being grown in years, draws near the time when he will be incapable of providing for himself? The latter reason, however, must not be brought into the account, and you may easily imagine that such a benevolent master and mistress do not fail to discharge that duty, which many, who are devoid of charity, fulfill out of ostentation; and you may suppose that they do not abandon those whose infirmities or old age render them incapable of service.

I can give you a very striking instance of their attention to this duty. The Baron D'Etange being desirous to recompense the long services of his valet de chambre, by procuring him an honourable retreat, had the interest to obtain for him the L.S.E.E. an easy and lucrative post. Eloisa has just now received a most affecting letter from this old servant, in which he intreats her to get him excused from accepting this employment. "I am in years, says he, I have lost all my family; I have no relations

but my master and his family; all my hope is to end my days quietly in the house where I have passed the greatest part, of them. Often, dear madam, as I have held you in my arms when but an infant, I prayed to heaven that I might one day hold your little ones in the same manner. My prayers have been heard; do not deny me the happiness of seeing them grow and prosper like you. I who have been accustomed to a quiet family, where shall I find such another place of rest in my old age? Be so kind to write to the Baron in my behalf. If he is dissatisfied with me, let him turn me off, and give me no employment; but if I have served him faithfully for these forty years past, let him allow me to end my days in his service and yours; he cannot reward me better." It is needless to enquire whether Eloisa wrote to the Baron or not. I perceive that she would be as unwilling to part with this good man, as he would be to leave her. Am I wrong, my Lord, when I compare a master and mistress, thus beloved, to good parents, and their servants to obedient children? You find that they consider themselves in this light.

There is not a single instance in this family of a servant's giving warning. It is even very seldom that they are threatened with a dismission. A menace of this kind alarms them in proportion as their service is pleasant and agreeable. The best subjects are always the soonest alarmed, and there is never any occasion to come to extremities but with such as are not worth regretting. They have likewise a rule in this respect. When Mr. Wolmar says, I discharge you, they may then implore Mrs. Wolmar to intercede for them, and through her intercession may be restored; but if she gives them warning, it is irrevocable, and they have no favour to expect. This agreement between them is very well calculated both to moderate the extreme confidence which her gentleness might beget in them, and the violent apprehensions they might conceive from his inflexibility. Such a warning nevertheless is excessively dreaded from a just and dispassionate master; for besides that they are not certain of obtaining favour, and that the same person is never pardoned twice, they forfeit the right which they acquire from their long service, by having had

warning given, and when they are restored, they begin a new service as it were. This prevents the old servants from growing insolent, and makes them more circumspect, in proportion as they have more to lose.

The three maid-servants are, the chamber-maid, the governess, and the cook. The latter is a country girl, very proper and well qualified for the place, whom Mrs. Wolmar has instructed in cookery: for in this country, which is as yet in some measure in a state of simplicity, young ladies learn to do that business themselves, that when they keep house, they may be able to direct their servants; and consequently are less liable to be imposed upon by them. B——is no longer the chambermaid; they have sent her back to Etange, where she was born; they have again entrusted her with the care of the castle, and the superintendence of the receipts, which makes her in some degree comptroller of the houshold. Mr. Wolmar intreated his wife to make this regulation; but it was a long time before she could resolve to part with an old servant of her mother's, though she had more than one reason to be displeased with her. But after their last conference, she gave her consent, and B——is gone. This girl is handy and honest, but babbling and indiscreet. I suspect that she has, more than once, betrayed the secrets of her mistress, that Mr. Wolmar is sensible of it, and to prevent her being guilty of the same indiscretion with respect to a stranger, he has prudently taken this method to avail himself of her good qualities, without running any hazard from her imperfections. She who is taken in her room, is that same Fanny, of whom you have often heard me speak with so much pleasure. Notwithstanding Eloisa's prediction, her favours, her father's kindness and yours, this deserving and discreet woman has not been happy in her connection. Claud Anet, who endured adversity so bravely, could not support a more prosperous state. When he found himself at ease, he neglected his business, and his affairs being quite embarrassed, he fled the country, leaving his wife with an infant whom she has since lost. Eloisa having taken her home, instructed her in the business of a chamber-maid, and I was never more

agreeably surprized than to find her settled in her employment, the first day of my arrival. Mr. Wolmar pays great regard to her, and they have both entrusted her with the charge of superintending their children, and of having an eye likewise over their governess, who is a simple credulous country lass, but attentive, patient, and tractable; so that in short, they have omitted no precaution to prevent the vices of the town from creeping into a family, where the master and mistress are strangers to them, and will not suffer them under their roof.

Though there is but one table among all the servants, yet there is but little communication between the men and women, and this they consider as a point of great importance. Mr. Wolmar is not of the same opinion with those masters, who are indifferent to every thing which does not immediately concern their interests, and who only desire to be well served, without troubling themselves about what their servants do beside. He thinks, on the contrary, that they who regard nothing but their own service, cannot be well served. Too close a connection between the two sexes, frequently occasions mischief. The disorders of most families arise from the rendezvous which are held in the chamber-maid’s apartment. If there is one whom the steward happens to be fond of, he does not fail to seduce her at the expense of his master. A good understanding among the men, or among the women, is not alone sufficiently firm to produce any material consequences. But it is always between the men and the women that those secret monopolies are established, which in the end ruin the most wealthy families. They pay a particular attention therefore to the discretion and modesty of the women, not only from principles of honesty and morality, but from well-judged motives of interest. For whatever some may pretend, no one who does not love his duty, can discharge it as he ought; and none ever loved their duty, who were devoid of honour.

They do not, to prevent any dangerous intimacy between the two sexes, restrain them by positive rules which they might be tempted to violate in secret, but without any seeming intention, they establish good customs, which are more powerful than

authority itself. They do not forbid any intercourse between them, but ’tis contrived in such a manner that they have no occasion or inclination to see each other. This is effectuated by making their business, their habits, their tastes, and their pleasures entirely different. To maintain the admirable order which they have established, they are sensible that in a well-regulated family there should be as little correspondence as possible between the two sexes. They, who would accuse their master of caprice, was he to enforce such a rule by way of injunction, submit, without regret, to a manner of life which is not positively prescribed to them, but which they themselves conceive to be the best and most natural. Eloisa insists that it must be so in fact; she maintains that neither love nor conjugal union is the result of a continual commerce between the sexes. In her opinion, husband and wife were designed to live together, but not to live in the same manner. They ought to act in concert, but not to do the same things. The kind of life, says she, which would delight the one, would be insupportable to the other; the inclinations which nature has given them, are as different as the occupations she has assigned them: they differ in their amusements as much as in their duties. In a word, each contributes to the common good by different ways, and the proper distribution of their several cares and employments, is the strongest tie that cements their union.

For my own part, I confess that my observations are much in favour of this maxim. In fact, is it not the general practice, except among the French, and those who imitate them, for the men and women to live separately? If they see each other, it is rather by short interviews, and as it were by stealth, as the Spartans visited their wives, than by an indiscreet and constant intercourse, sufficient to confound and destroy the wisest bounds of distinction which nature has set between them. We do not, even among the savages, see men and women intermingle indiscriminately. In the evening, the family meet together; every one passes the night with his wife; when the day begins, they separate again, and the two sexes enjoy nothing in common, but their meals at most. This is the order, which, from its universality,

appears to be most natural, and even in those countries where it is perverted, we may perceive some vestiges of it remaining. In France, where the men have submitted to live after the fashion of the women, and to be continually shut up in a room with them, you may perceive from their involuntary motions that they are under confinement. While the ladies, sit quietly, or loll upon their couch, you may perceive the men get up, go, come, and sit down again, perpetually restless, as if a kind of mechanical instinct continually counteracted the restraint they suffered, and prompted them, in their own respite, to that active and laborious life for which nature intended them. They are the only people in the world where the men stand at the theatre, as if they went into the pit to relieve themselves of the fatigue of having been sitting all day in a dining room. In short, they are to sensible of the irksomeness of this effeminate and sedentary indolence, that in order to checquer it with some degree of activity at least, they yield their places at home to strangers, and go to other mens' wives in order to alleviate their disgust!

The example of Mrs. Wolmar's family contributes greatly to support the maxim she establishes. Every one, as it were, being confined to their proper sex, the women there live in a great measure apart from the men. In order to prevent any suspicious connections between them, her great secret is to keep both one and the other constantly employed; for their occupations are so different, that nothing but idleness can bring them together. In the morning, each apply to their proper business, and no one is at leisure to interrupt the other. After dinner, the men are employed in the garden, the yard, or in some other rural occupation: the women are busy in the nursery till the hour comes at which they take a walk with the children, and sometimes indeed with the mistress, which is very agreeable to them, as it is the only time in which they take the air. The men, being sufficiently tired with their day's work, have seldom any inclination to walk, and therefore rest themselves within doors.

Every Sunday, after evening service, the women meet again in the nursery, with

some friend or relation whom they invite in their turns by Mrs. Wolmar's consent. There, they have a little collation prepared for them by Eloisa's direction; and she permits them to chat, sing, run or play at some little game of skill, fit to please children, and such as they may bear a part in themselves. The entertainment is composed of syllabubs, cream, and different kinds of cakes, with such other little viands as suit the taste of women and children. Wine is almost excluded, and the men, who are rarely admitted of this little female party, never are present at this collation, which Eloisa seldom misses. I am the only man who has obtained this privilege. Last Sunday, with great importunity, I got leave to attend her there. She took great pains to make me consider it as a very singular favour. She told me aloud that she granted it for that once only, and that she had even refused Mr. Wolmar himself. You may imagine whether this difficulty of admission does not flatter female vanity a little, and whether a footman would be a welcome visitor, where his master was excluded.

I made a most delicious repast with them. Where will you find such cream-cakes as we have here? Imagine what they must be, made in a dairy where Eloisa presides, and eaten in her company. Fanny presented me with some cream, some seed cake, and other little comfits. All was gone in an instant. Eloisa smiled at my appetite. I find, said she, giving me another plate of cream, that your appetite does you credit every where, and that you make as good a figure among a club of females, as you do among the Valaisians. But I do not, answered I, make the repast with more impunity; the one may be attended with intoxication as well as the other; and reason may be as much distracted in a nursery, as in a wine cellar. She cast her eyes down without making any reply, blushed, and began to play with her children. This was enough to sting me with remorse. This, my Lord, was my first indiscretion, and I hope it will be the last.

There was a certain air of primitive simplicity in this assembly, which affected me very sensibly. I perceived the same chearfulness in every countenance, and perhaps

more openness than if there had been men in company. The familiarity which was observable between the mistress and her servants, being founded on sincere attachment and confidence, only served to establish respect and authority; and the services rendered and received, appeared like so many testimonies of reciprocal friendship. There was nothing, even to the very choice of the collation, but what contributed to make this assembly engaging. Milk and sugar are naturally adapted to the taste of the fair sex, and may be deemed the symbols of innocence and sweetness, which are their most becoming ornaments. Men, on the contrary, are fond of high flavours, and strong liquors; a kind of nourishment more suitable to the active and laborious life for which nature has designed them; and when these different tastes come to be blended, it is an infallible sign that the distinction between the two sexes is inordinately confounded. In fact, I have observed that in France, where the women constantly intermix with the men, they have entirely lost their relish for milk meats, and the men have in some measure lost their taste for wine; and in England, where the two sexes are better distinguished, the proper taste of each is better preserved. In general, I am of opinion, that you may very often form some judgment of people's disposition, from their choice of food. The Italians, who live a great deal on vegetables, are soft and effeminate. You Englishmen, who are great eaters of meat, have something harsh in your rigid virtue, and which favours of barbarism. The Swiss, who is naturally of a calm, gentle and cold constitution, but hot and violent when in a passion, is fond both of one and the other, and drinks milk and wine indiscriminately. The Frenchman, who is pliant and changeable, lives upon all kinds of food, and conforms himself to every taste. Eloisa herself may serve as an instance: for though she makes her meals with a keen appetite, yet she does not love meat, ragouts, or salt, and never yet tasted wine by itself. Some excellent roots, eggs, cream and fruit, compose her ordinary diet, and was it not for fish, of which she is likewise very fond, she would be a thorough Pythagorean.

To keep the women in order would signify nothing, if the men were not likewise

under proper regulations; and this branch of domestic economy, which is not of less importance, is still more difficult; for the attack is generally more lively than the defence: the guardian of human nature intended it so. In the common wealth, citizens are kept in order by principles of morality and virtue; but how are we to keep servants and mercenaries under proper regulations, otherwise than by force and restraint? The art of a master consists in disguising this restraint under the veil of pleasure and interest, that what they are obliged to do, may seem the result of their own inclination. Sunday being a day of idleness, and servants having a right of going where they please, when business does not require their duty at home, that one day often destroys all the good examples and lessons of the other six. The habit of frequenting public houses, the converse and maxims of their comrades, the company of loose women, soon render them unserviceable to their masters, and unprofitable to themselves; and by teaching them a thousand vices, make them unfit for servitude, and unworthy of liberty.

To remedy this inconvenience, they endeavour to keep them at home by the same motives which induce them to go abroad. Why do they go abroad? To drink and play at a public house. They drink and play at home. All the difference is, that the wine costs them nothing, that they do not get drunk, and that there are some winners at play, without any losers. The following is the method taken for this purpose.

Behind the house is a shady walk, where they have fixed the lifts. There, in the summertime, the livery servants and the men in the yard meet every Sunday after sermon time, to play in little detached parties, not for money, for it is not allowed, nor for wine, which is given them; but for a prize furnished by their master’s generosity: which is generally some piece of goods or apparel fit for their use. The number of games is in proportion to the value of the prize, so that when the prize is somewhat considerable, as a pair of silver buckles, a neckcloth, a pair of silk stockings, a fine hat, or any thing of that kind, they have generally several bouts to decide it. They are not confined to one particular game, but they change them, that

one man, who happens to excel in a particular game, may not carry off all the prizes, and that they may grow stronger and more dextrous by a variety of exercises. At one time, the contest is who shall first reach a mark at the other end of the walk; at another time it is who shall throw the same stone farthest; then again it is who shall carry the same weight longest. Sometimes they contend for a prize by shooting at a mark. Most of these games are attended with some little preparations, which serve to prolong them; and render them entertaining. Their master and mistress often honour them with their presence; they sometimes take their children with them; nay even strangers resort thither, excited by curiosity, and they desire nothing better than to bear a share in the sport; but none are ever admitted without Mr. Wolmar's approbation and the consent of the players, who would not find their account in granting it readily. This custom has imperceptibly become a kind of shew, in which the actors, being animated by the presence of the spectators, prefer the glory of applause to the lucre of the prize. As these exercises make them more active and vigorous, they set a greater value on themselves, and being accustomed to estimate their importance from their own intrinsic worth, rather than from their possessions, they prize honour, notwithstanding they are footmen, beyond money.

It would be tedious to enumerate all the advantages which they derive from a practice so trifling in appearance, and which is always despised by little minds; but it is the prerogative of true genius to produce great effects by inconsiderable means. Mr. Wolmar has assured me that these little institutions which his wife first suggested, scares stood him in fifty crowns a year. But, said he, how often do you think I am repaid this sum in my housekeeping and my affairs in general, by the vigilance and attention with which I am served by these faithful servants, who derive all their pleasures from their master; by the interest they take in a family which they consider as their own; by the advantage I reap, in their labours, from the vigour they acquire at their exercises; by the benefit of keeping them always in health, in preserving them from those exercises which are common to men in their station, and

from those disorders which frequently attend such excesses; by securing them from any propensity to knavery, which is an infallible consequence of irregularity, and by confirming them in the practice of honesty; in short, by the pleasure of having such agreeable recreations within ourselves at such a trifling expense? If there are any among them, either man or woman, who do not care to conform to our regulations, but prefer the liberty of going where they please on various pretences, we never refuse to give them leave; but we consider this licentious turn as a very suspicious symptom, and we are always ready to mistrust such dispositions. Thus these little amusements which furnish us with good servants, serve also as a direction to us in the choice of them.——I must confess my Lord, that, except in this family, I never saw the same men made good domestics for personal service, good husbandmen for tilling the ground, good soldiers for the defence of their country, and honest fellows in any station into which fortune may chance to throw them.

In the winter, their pleasures vary as well as their labours. On a Sunday, all the servants in the family and even the neighbours, men and women indiscriminately, meet after service-time in a hall where there is a good fire, some wine, fruits, cakes, and a fiddle to which they dance. Mrs. Wolmar never fails to be present for some time at least, in order to preserve decorum and modesty by her presence, and it is not uncommon for her to dance herself, though among her own people. When I was first made acquainted with this custom, it appeared to me not quite conformable to the strictness of Protestant morals. I told Eloisa so; and she answered me to the following effect.

Pure morality is charged with so many severe duties, that if it is over burthened with forms which are in themselves indifferent they will always be of prejudice to what is really essential. This is said to be the case with the monks in general, who being slaves to rules totally immaterial, are utter strangers to the meaning of honour and virtue. This defeat is less observable among us, though we are not wholly exempt from it. Our churchmen, who are as much superior to other priests in knowledge, as

our religion is superior to all others in purity, do nevertheless maintain some maxims, which seem to be rather founded on prejudice than reason. Of this kind, is that which condemns dancing and assemblies, as if there were more harm in dancing than singing, as if each of these amusements were not equally a propensity of nature, and as if it were a crime to divert ourselves publicly with an innocent and harmless recreation. For my own part, I think, on the contrary, that every time there is a concourse of the two sexes, every public diversion becomes innocent, by being public; whereas the most laudable employment becomes suspicious in a tete a tete party. [53] Man and woman were formed for each other, their union by marriage is the end of nature. All false religion is at war with nature, ours which conforms to and rectifies natural propensity, proclaims a divine institution which is most suitable to mankind. Religion ought not to increase the embarrassment which civil regulations throw in the way of matrimony, by difficulties which the gospel does not create, and which are contrary to the true spirit of Christianity. Let any one tell me which young people can have an opportunity of conceiving a mutual liking, and of seeing each other with more decorum and circumspection, than in an assembly where the eyes of the spectators being constantly upon them, oblige them to behave with peculiar caution? How can we offend God by an agreeable and wholesome exercise, suitable to the vivacity of youth, an exercise which consists in the art of presenting ourselves to each other with grace and elegance, and wherein the presence of the spectator imposes a decorum, which no one dares to violate? Can we conceive a more effectual method to avoid imposition with respect to person at least, by displaying ourselves with all our natural graces and defects before those whose interest it is to know us thoroughly, ere they oblige themselves to love us? Is not the obligation of reciprocal affection greater than that of self-love, and is it not an attention worthy of a pious and virtuous pair who propose to marry, thus to prepare their hearts for that mutual love, which heaven prompts.

What is the consequence, in those places where people are under a continual

restraint, where the most innocent gaiety is punished as criminal, where the young people of different sexes dare not meet in public, and where the indiscreet severity of the pastor preaches nothing, in the name of God, but servile constraint, sadness and melancholy? They find means to elude an insufferable tyranny, which nature and reason disavow. When gay and sprightly youth are debarred from lawful pleasures, they substitute others more dangerous in their stead. Tete a tete parties artfully concerted, supply the place of public assemblies. By being obliged to concealment as if they were criminal, they at length become so in fact. Harmless joy loves to display itself in the face of the world, but vice is a friend to darkness; and innocence and secrecy never subsist long together. My dear friend, said she, grasping my hand, as if she meant to convey her repentance, and communicate the purity of her own heart to mine; who can be more sensible of the importance of this truth than ourselves? What sorrow and troubles, what tears and remorse we might have prevented for so many years past, if we could, but have foreseen how dangerous a tete a tete intercourse was to that virtue which we always loved!

Besides, said Mrs. Wolmar, in a softer tone, it is not in a numerous assembly, where we are seen and heard by all the world, but in private parties, where secrecy and freedom is indulged, that our morals are in danger. It is from this principle, that whenever my domestics meet, I am glad to see them all together. I even approve of their inviting such young people in the neighbourhood whose company will not corrupt them; and I hear with pleasure, that, when they mean to commend the morals of any of our young neighbours, they say——He is admitted at Mr. Wolmar’s. We have a farther view in this. Our men servants are all very young, and, among the women, the governess is yet single; it is not reasonable that the retired life they lead with us, should debar them of an opportunity of forming an honest connection. We endeavour therefore, in these little meetings, to give them this opportunity, under our inspection, that we may assist them in their choice; and thus by endeavouring to make happy families, we increase the felicity of our own.

I ought now to justify myself for dancing with these good people; but I rather chuse to pass sentence on myself in this respect, and I frankly confess that my chief motive is the pleasure I take in the exercise. You know that I always resembled my cousin in her passion for dancing; but after the death of my mother, I bade adieu to the ball and all public assemblies; I kept my resolution, even to the day of my marriage, and will keep it still, without thinking it any violation to dance now and then in my own house with my guests and my domestics. It is an exercise very good for my health during the sedentary life which we are obliged to live here in winter. I find it an innocent amusement; for after a good dance, my conscience does not reproach me. It amuses Mr. Wolmar likewise, and all my coquetry in this particular is only to please him. I am the occasion of his coming into the ball room; the good people are best satisfied when they are honoured with their master's presence; and they express a satisfaction when they see me amongst them. In short, I find that such occasional familiarity forms an agreeable connection and attachment between us, which approaches nearer the natural condition of mankind, by moderating the meanness of servitude, and the rigour of authority.

Such, my Lord, are the sentiments of Eloisa, with respect to dancing, and I have often wondered how so much affability could consist with such a degree of subordination, and how she and her husband could so often stoop to level themselves with their servants, and yet the latter never be tempted to assume equality in their turn. I question if any Asiatic monarchs are attended in their palaces with more respect, than Mr. and Mrs. Wolmar are served in their own house. I never knew any commands less imperious than theirs, or more readily executed: if they ask for any thing, their servants fly; if they excuse their failings, they themselves are nevertheless sensible of their faults. I was never better convinced how much the force of what is said, depends on the mode of expression.

This has led me into a reflection on the affected gravity of masters; which is, that it is rather to be imputed to their own failings, than to the effects of their familiarity,

that they are despised in their families, and that the insolence of servants is rather an indication of a vicious than of a weak master: for nothing gives them such assurance, as the knowledge of his vices, and they consider all discoveries of that kind as so many dispensations, which free them from their obedience to a man whom they can no longer respect.

Servants imitate their masters, and by copying them awkwardly, they render those defects more conspicuous in themselves, which the polish of education, in some measure, disguised in the others. At Paris, I used to judge of the ladies of my acquaintance, by the air and manners of their waiting-women, and this rule never deceived me. Besides that the lady's woman, when she becomes the confident of her mistress's secrets, makes her buy her discretion at a dear rate, she likewise frames her conduct according to her lady's sentiments, and discloses all her maxims, by an awkward imitation. In every instance, the master's example is more efficacious than his authority; it is not natural to suppose that their servants will be honester than themselves. It is to no purpose to make a noise, to swear, to abuse them, to turn them off, to get a new set; all this avails nothing towards making good servants. When they, who do not trouble themselves about being hated and despised by their domestics, nevertheless imagine that they are well served, the reason of their mistake is, that they are contented with what they see, and satisfied with an appearance of diligence, without observing the thousand secret prejudices they suffer continually, and of which they cannot discover the source. But where is the man so devoid of honour, as to be able to endure the contempt of everyone round him? Where is the woman so abandoned as not to be susceptible of insults? How many ladies, both at Paris and in London, who think themselves greatly respected, would burst into tears if they heard what was said of them in their anti-chambers? Happily for their peace, they comfort themselves by taking these Arguses for weak creatures, and by flattering themselves that they are blind to those practices which they do not even deign to hide from them. They likewise in their turn discover, by

their sullen obedience, the contempt they have for their mistresses. Masters and servants become mutually sensible, that it is not worth their while to conciliate each other's esteem.

The behaviour of servants seems to me to be the most certain and nice proof of the master's virtue; and I remember, my Lord, to have formed a good opinion of yours at Valais without knowing you, purely because, though you spoke somewhat harshly to your attendants, they were not the less attached to you, and that they expressed as much respect for you in your absence, as if you had been within hearing. It has been said that no man is a hero in the eyes of his Valet de Chambre; perhaps not; but every worthy man will enjoy his servant's esteem; which sufficiently proves that heroism is only a vain phantom, and that nothing is solid but virtue. The power of its empire is particularly observable here in the lowest commendations of the servants. Commendations the less to be suspected, as they do not consist of vain eulogiums, but of an artless expression of their feelings. As they cannot suppose, from any thing which they see, that other masters are not like theirs, they therefore do not commend them on account of those virtues which they conceive to be common to masters in general, but, in the simplicity of their hearts, they thank God for having sent the rich to make those under them happy, and to be a comfort to the poor.

Servitude is a state so unnatural to mankind, that it cannot subsist without some degree of discontent. Nevertheless they respect their master, and say nothing. If any murmurings escape them against their mistress, they are more to her honour than encomiums would be. No one complains that she is wanting in kindness to them, but that she pays so much regard to others; no one can endure that his zeal should be put in competition with that of his comrades, and as every one imagines himself foremost in attachment, he would be first in favour. This is their only complaint, and their greatest injustice.

There is not only a proper subordination among those of inferior station, but a

perfect harmony among those of equal rank; and this is not the least difficult part of domestic economy. Amidst the clashings of jealousy and self-interest, which makes continual divisions in families not more numerous than this, we seldom find servants united but at the expense of their masters. If they agree, it is to rob in concert; if they are honest, every one shews his importance at the expense of the rest; they must either be enemies or accomplices, and it is very difficult to find a way of guarding at the same time both against their knavery and their dissentions. The masters of families in general know no other method but that of choosing the alternative between these two inconveniencies. Some, preferring interest to honour, foment a quarrelsome disposition among their servants by means of private reports, and think it a masterpiece of prudence to make them superintendents and spies over each other. Others, of a more indolent nature, rather chuse that their servants should rob them, and live peaceably among themselves; they pique themselves upon discountenancing any information which a faithful servant may give them out of pure zeal. Both are equally to blame. The first, by exciting continual disturbances in their families, which are incompatible with good order and regularity, get together a heap of knaves and informers, who are busy in betraying their fellow servants, that they may hereafter perhaps betray their masters. The second, by refusing all information with regard to what passes in their families, countenance combinations against themselves, encourage the wicked, dishearten the good, and only maintain a pack of arrogant and idle rascals at a great expense, who, agreeing together at their master’s cost, look upon their service as a matter of favour, and their thefts as perquisites. [54]

It is a capital error in domestic as well as in civil economy, to oppose one vice to another, or to attempt an equilibrium between them, as if that which undermines the foundations of all order, could ever tend to establish regularity. This mistaken policy only serves to unite every inconvenience. When particular vices are tolerated in a family, they do not reign alone. Let one take root, a thousand will soon spring up.

They presently ruin the servants who harbour them, undo the master who tolerates them, and corrupt or injure the children who remark them with attention. What father can be so unworthy as to put any advantage whatever in competition with this last inconvenience? What honest man would chuse to be master of a family, if it was impossible for him to maintain peace and fidelity in his house at the same time, and if he must be obliged to purchase the attachment of his servants; at the expense of their mutual good understanding?

Who does not see, that in this family, they have not even an idea of any such difficulty? So much does the union among the several members proceed from their attachment to the head. It is here we may perceive a striking instance, how impossible it is to have a sincere affection for a master without loving every thing that belongs to him; a truth which is the real foundation of Christian charity. Is it not very natural, that the children of the same father should live together like brethren? This is what they tell us every day at church, without making us feel the sentiment; and this is what the domestics in this family feel, without being told it.

This disposition to good fellowship is owing to a choice of proper subjects. Mr. Wolmar, when he hires his servants, does not examine whether they suit his wife and himself, but whether they suit each other, and if they were to discover a settled antipathy between two of the best servants, it would be sufficient for them to discharge one: for, says Eloisa, in so small a family, a family where they never go abroad, but are constantly before each other, they ought to agree perfectly among themselves. They ought to consider it as their father’s house, where all are of the same family. One, who happens to be disagreeable to the rest, is enough to make them hate the place; and that disagreeable object being constantly before their eyes, they would neither be easy themselves, nor suffer us to be quiet.

After having made the best assortment in their power, they unite them as it were by the services which they oblige each to render the other, and they contrive that it shall

be the real interest of every one to be beloved by his fellow servants. No one is so well received who solicits a favour for himself, as when he asks it for another; so that whoever has any thing to request, endeavours to engage another to intercede for him; and this they do with greater readiness, since, whether their master grants or refuses the favour requested, he never fails to acknowledge the merit of the person interceding. On the contrary, both he and Mrs. Wolmar always reject the solicitations of those who only regard themselves. Why, say they, should I grant, what is desired in your favour, who have never made me any request in favour of another? Is it reasonable, that you should be more favoured than your companions, because they are more obliging than you? They do more; they engage them to serve each other in private, without any ostentation, and without assuming any merit. This is the more easily accomplished, as they know that their master, who is witness of their discretion, will esteem them the more, thus self-interest is a gainer, and self-love no loser. They are so convinced of this general disposition to oblige, and they have such confidence in each other, that when they have any favour to ask, they frequently mention it at table by way of conversation; very often, without farther trouble, they find that the thing has been requested and granted, and as they do not know whom to thank, their obligation is to all.

It is by this, and such like methods, that they beget an attachment among them, resulting from, and subordinate to, the zeal they have for their master. Thus, far from leaguing together to his prejudice, they are only united for his service. However it may be their interest to love each other, they have still stronger motives for pleasing him; their zeal for his service gets the better of their mutual good will, and each considering himself as injured by losses which may make their master less able to recompense a faithful servant, they are all equally incapable of suffering any individual to do him wrong unnoticed. This principle of policy which is established in this family, seems to have somewhat sublime in it; and I cannot sufficiently admire how Mr. and Mrs. Wolmar have been able to transform the vile function of

an informer into an office of zeal, integrity, and courage, as noble, or at least as praise-worthy, as it was among the Romans.

They began by subverting, or rather by preventing, in a plain and perspicuous manner, and by affecting instances, that servile and criminal practice, that mutual toleration at the master's cost, which a worthless servant never fails to inculcate to a good one, under the mask of a charitable maxim. They made them understand, that the precept which enjoins us to hide our neighbour's faults, relates to those only which do injury to no one; that if they are witness to any injustice which injures a third person, and do not discover it, they are guilty of it themselves; and that as nothing can oblige us to conceal such faults in others, but a consciousness of our own defects, therefore no one would chuse to countenance knaves, if he was not a knave himself. Upon these principles, which are just in general, as between man and man, but more strictly so with respect to the close connection between master and servant, they hold it here as an incontestable truth, that whoever sees their master wronged, without making a discovery, is more guilty than he who did the wrong; for he suffers himself to be misled by the prospect of advantage, but the other in cool blood and without any view of interest, can be induced to secrecy by no other motive than a thorough disregard of justice, an indifference towards the welfare of the family he serves, and a hidden desire of copying the example he conceals. Therefore even where the fault is considerable, the guilty party may nevertheless sometimes hope for pardon, but the witness who conceals the fact, is infallibly dismissed as a man of a bad disposition.

In return, they receive no accusation which may be suspected to proceed from injustice and calumny; that is to say, they admit of none in the absence of the accused. If any one comes to make a report against his fellow servant, or to prefer a personal complaint against him, they ask him whether he is sufficiently informed, that is to say, whether he has entered into any previous inquiry with the person whom he is going to accuse. If he answers in the negative, they ask him how he can

judge of an action, when he is not acquainted with the motives to it? The fact, say they, may depend on some circumstance to which you are a stranger; there may be some particulars which may serve to justify or excuse it, and which you know nothing of. How can you presume to condemn any one's conduct, before you know by what motives it is directed? One word of explanation would probably have rendered it justifiable in your eyes. Why then do you run the risk of condemning an action wrongfully, and of exposing me to participate of your injustice? If he assures them, that he has entered into a previous explanation with the accused; why then, say they, do you come without him, as if you was afraid that he would falsify what you are going to relate? By what right do you neglect taking the same precaution with respect to me, which you think proper to use with regard to yourself? Is it reasonable to desire me to judge of a fact from your report, of which you refuse to judge yourself by the testimony of your own eyes; and would not you be answerable for the partial judgment I might form, if I was to remain satisfied with your bare deposition? In the end, they direct them to summon the party accused; if they consent, the matter is soon decided; if they refuse, they dismiss them with a severe reprimand, but they keep the secret, and watch them both so narrowly, that they are not long at a loss to know which is in fault.

This rule is so well known and so well established, that you never hear a servant in this family speak ill of his absent comrade, for they are all sensible that it is the way to pass for a liar and a coward. When any one of them accuses another, it is openly, frankly, and not only to his face, but in the presence of all his fellow servants, that they who are witnesses to their accusation, may be vouchers of their integrity. In case of any personal disputes among them, the difference is generally made up by mediators without troubling Mr. and Mrs. Wolmar; but when the interest of the master is at stake, the matter cannot remain a secret; the guilty party must either accuse himself or be accused. These little pleadings happen very seldom, and never but at table, in the rounds which Eloisa makes every day while her people are at

dinner or supper, which Mr. Wolmar pleasantly calls her general sessions. After having patiently attended to the accusation and the defence, if the affair regards her interest, she thanks the accuser for his zeal. I am sensible, says she, that you have a regard for your fellow servant, you have always spoken well of him, and I commend you because the love of your duty and of justice has prevailed over your private affections; it is thus that a faithful servant and an honest man ought to behave. If the party accused is not in fault, she always subjoins some compliment to her justification of his innocence. But if he is really guilty, she in some measure spares his shame before the rest. She supposes that he has something to communicate in his defence, which he does not chuse to declare in public; she appoints an hour to hear him in private, and it is then that she or her husband talk to him as they think proper. What is very remarkable is, that the most severe of the two is not most dreaded, and that they are less afraid of Mr. Wolmar's solemn reprimand, than of Eloisa's affecting reproaches. The former, speaking the language of truth and justice, humbles and confounds the guilty; the latter strikes them with the most cruel remorse, by convincing them with what regret she is forced to withdraw her kindness from them. She sometimes extorts tears of grief and shame from them, and it is not uncommon for her to be moved herself when she sees them repent, in hopes that she may not be obliged to abide by her word.

They who judge of these concerns by what passes in their own families, or among their neighbours, would probably deem them frivolous or tiresome. But you, my Lord, who have such high notions of the duties and enjoyments of a master of a family, and who are sensible what an ascendency natural disposition and virtue have over the human heart, you perceive the importance of these minutiae, and know on what circumstances their success depends. Riches do not make a man rich, as is well observed in some romance. The wealth of a man is not in his coffers, but in the use he makes of what he draws out of them; for our possessions do not become our own, but by the uses to which we allot them, and abuses are always more inexhaustible

than riches; whence it happens that our enjoyments are not in proportion to our expenses, but depend on the just regulation of them. An idiot may toss ingots of gold into the sea, and say he has enjoyed them: but what comparison is there between such an extravagant enjoyment, and that which a wise man would have derived from the least part of their value? Order and regularity, which multiply and perpetuate the use of riches, are alone capable of converting the enjoyment of them into felicity. But if real property arises from the relation which our possessions bear to us, if it is rather the use than the acquisition of riches which confers it, what can be more proper subjects of attention for a master of a family than domestic economy, and the prudent regulation of his houshold, in which the most perfect correspondences more immediately concern him, and where the happiness of every individual is an addition to the felicity of the head?

Are the most wealthy the most happy? No: how then does wealth contribute to felicity? But every well regulated family is emblematic of the master’s mind. Gilded ceilings, luxury and magnificence, only serve to shew the vanity of those who display such parade; whereas, whenever you see order without melancholy, peace without slavery, plenty without profusion, you may say with confidence, the master of this house is a happy being.

For my own part, I think the most certain sign of true content is a domestic and retired life, and that they who are continually resorting to others in quest of happiness, do not enjoy it at home. A father of a family who amuses himself at home, is rewarded for his continual attention to domestic concerns, by the constant enjoyment of the most agreeable sensations of nature. He is the only one who can be properly said to be master of his own happiness, because, like heaven itself, he is happy in desiring nothing more than he enjoys. Like the Supreme Being, he does not wish to enlarge his possessions, but to make them really his own, under proper directions, and by using them conformably to the just relations of things: if he does not enrich himself by new acquisitions, he enriches himself by the true enjoyment of

what he possesses. He once only enjoyed the income of his lands, he now enjoys the lands themselves, by over-looking their culture, and surveying them from time to time. His servant was a stranger to him: he is now part of his enjoyment; his child; he makes him his own. Formerly, he had only power over his servant's actions, now he has authority over his inclinations. He was his master only by paying him wages, now he rules by the sacred dominion of benevolence and esteem. Though fortune spoils him of his wealth, she can never rob him of those affections which are attached to him; she cannot deprive a father of his children; all the difference is, that he maintained them yesterday, and that they will support him tomorrow. It is thus that we may learn the true enjoyment of our riches, of our family, and of ourselves; it is thus that the minutiae of a family become agreeable to a worthy man who knows the value of them; it is thus that, far from considering these little duties as troublesome, he makes them a part of his happiness, and derives the glory and pleasure of human nature from these noble and affecting offices.

If these precious advantages are despised or little known, and if the few who endeavour to acquire them seldom obtain them, the reason, in both cases, is the same. There are many simple and sublime duties, which few people can relish and fulfil. Such are those of the master of a family, for which the air and bustle of the world gives him a disgust, and which he never discharges properly when he is only inflamed by motives of avarice and interest. Some think themselves excellent masters, and are only careful economists; their income may thrive, and their family nevertheless be in a bad condition. They ought to have more enlarged views to direct an administration of such importance, so as to give it a happy issue. The first thing to be attended to in the due regulation of a family, is to admit none but honest people, who will not have any secret intention to disturb that regularity. But are honesty and servitude so compatible, that we may hope to find servants who are honest men? No, my Lord, if we would have them, we must not inquire for them, but we must make them; and none who are not men of integrity themselves are

capable of making others honest. It is to no purpose for a hypocrite to affect an air of virtue, he will never inspire any one with an affection for it; and if he knew how to make virtue amiable, he would be in love with it himself. What do formal lessons avail, when daily example contradicts them, unless to make us suspect that the moralist means to sport with our credulity? What an absurdity are they guilty of who exhort us to do as they say, and not as they act themselves! He who does not act up to what he says, never speaks to any effect; for the language of the heart is wanting, which alone is persuasive and affecting. I have sometimes heard conversations of this kind held, in a gross manner, before servants, in order to read them lectures, as they do to children sometimes, in an indirect way. Far from having any reason to imagine that they were the dupes of such artifice, I have always observed them smile in secret at their master's folly, who must have taken them for blockheads, by making an awkward display of sentiments before them, which they knew were none of his own.

All these idle subtleties are unknown in this family, and the grand art by which the master and mistress make their servants what they would desire them to be, is to appear themselves before them what they really are. Their behaviour is always frank and open, because they are not in any fear lest their actions should bely their processions. As they themselves do not entertain principles of morality different from those which they inculcate to others, they have no occasion for any extraordinary circumspection in their discourse; a word blundered out unseasonably does not overthrow the principles they have laboured to establish. They do not indiscreetly tell all their affairs, but they openly proclaim all their maxims. Whether at table, or abroad, tete a tete, or in public, their sentiments are still the same; they ingenuously deliver their opinions on every subject, and without their having any individual in view, every one is instructed by their conversation. As their servants never see them do any thing but what is just, reasonable and equitable, they do not consider justice as a tax on the poor, as a yoke on the unhappy, and as one of the

evils of their condition. The care they take never to let the labourers come in vain, and lose their day's work in seeking after their wages, teaches their servants to set a just value on time. When they see their master so careful of other men's time, each concludes that his own time must be of consequence, and therefore deems idleness the greatest crime he can be guilty of. The confidence which their servants have in their integrity, gives that force to their regulations which makes them observed, and prevents abuses. They are not afraid, when they come to receive their weekly gratuities, that their mistress should partially determine the youngest and most active to have been the most diligent. An old servant is not apprehensive lest they should start some quibble, to save the promised augmentation to their wages. They can never hope to take advantage of any division between their master and mistress, in order to make themselves of consequence, and to obtain from one what the other has refused. They who are unmarried, are not afraid lest they should oppose their settlement, in order to detain them longer; and by that means make their service a prejudice to them. If a strange servant was to tell the domestics of this family, that master and servants are in a state of war with each other, that when the latter do the former all the injury they can, they only make lawful reprisals, that masters being usurpers, liars and knaves, there can consequently be no harm in using them as they use their prince, the people, or individuals, and in returning those injuries with dexterity, which they offer openly——one who should talk in this manner would not be attended to; they would not give themselves the trouble to controvert or obviate such sentiments; they who give rise to them, are the only persons whose business it is to refute them.

You never perceive any sullenness or mutiny in the discharge of their duty, because there is never any haughtiness or capriciousness in the orders they receive; nothing is required of them but what is reasonable and expedient, and their master and mistress have too much respect for the dignity of human nature, even in a state of servitude, to put them upon any employment which may debase them. Moreover,

nothing here is reckoned mean but vice, and whatever is reasonable and necessary, is deemed honourable and becoming.

They do not allow of any intrigues abroad, neither has any one any inclinations of that kind. They are sensible that their fortune is most firmly attached to their masters, and that they shall never want any thing while his family prospers. Therefore in serving him, they take care of their own patrimony, and increase it by making their service agreeable; this above all things is their interest. But this word is somewhat misapplied here, for I never knew any system of policy by which self-interest was so skilfully directed, and where at the same time it had less influence than in this family. They all act from a principle of attachment, and one would think that venal souls were purified as soon as they entered into this dwelling of wisdom and union. He would imagine that part of the master's intelligence, and of the mistress's sensibility, was conveyed to each of their servants; they seem so judicious, benevolent, honest, and so much above their station. Their greatest ambition is to do well, to be valued and esteemed; and they consider an obliging expression from their master or mistress, in the light of a present.

These, my Lord, are the most material observations I have made on that part of the economy of this family, which regards the servants and labourers. As to Mr. and Mrs. Wolmar's manner of living, and the education of their children, each of these articles very well deserves a separate letter. You know with what view I began these remarks; but in truth the whole forms such an agreeable representation, that we need only meditate upon it to advance it, and we require no other inducement, than the pleasure it affords us.

Letter CXXX. To Lord B——.

No, my Lord, I do not retract what I have said; in this family, the useful and agreeable are united throughout; but occupations of use are not confined to those pursuits which yield profit: they comprehend farther every innocent and harmless

amusement which may serve to improve a relish for retirement, labour, and temperance, which may contribute to preserve the mind in a vigorous state, and to keep the heart free from the agitation of tumultuous passions. If inactive indolence begets nothing but melancholy and irksomeness, the delights of an agreeable leisure are the fruits of a laborious life. We only work to enjoy ourselves; this alternative of labour and recreation is our natural state. The repose which serves to refresh us after past labours, and encourage us to renew them, is not less necessary for us than labour itself.

After having admired the good consequences attending the vigilance and attention of the prudent Eloisa in the conduct of her family, I was witness of the good effects of the recreation she uses in a retired place, where she takes her favourite walk, and which she calls her elysium.

I had often heard them talk of this elysium, of which they made a mystery before me. Yesterday however the excessive heat being almost equally intolerable both within doors and without, Mr. Wolmar proposed to his wife to make holiday that afternoon, and instead of going into the nursery towards evening as usual, to come and breathe the fresh air with us in the orchard; she consented, and thither we went.

This place, though just close to the house, is hidden in such a manner by a shady walk which parts it from the house, that it is not visible from any point. The thick foliage with which it is environed renders it impervious to the eye, and it is always carefully locked up. I was scarce got within-side, but, the door being covered with alder and hazel trees, I could not find out which way I came in, when I turned back, and seeing no door, it seemed as if I had dropped from the clouds.

On my entrance into this disguised orchard, I was seized with an agreeable sensation; the freshness of the thick foliage, the beautiful and lively verdure, the flowers scattered on each side, the murmuring of the purling stream, and the warbling of a thousand birds, struck my imagination as powerfully as my senses; but

at the same time I thought myself in the most wild and solitary place in nature, and I appeared as if I had been the first mortal who had ever penetrated into this desert spot. Being seized with astonishment, and transported at so unexpected a sight, I remained motionless for some time, and cried out, in an involuntary fit of enthusiasm, O Tinian! O Juan Fernandez! [55] Eloisa, the world's end is at your threshold! Many people, said she, with a smile, think in the same manner; but twenty paces at most presently brings them back to Clarens: let us see whether the charm will work longer upon you. This is the same orchard where you have walked formerly, and where you have played at romps with my cousin. You may remember that the grass was almost burned up, the trees thinly planted, affording very little umbrage, and that there was no water. You find that now it is fresh, verdant, cultivated, embellished with flowers, and well watered; what do you imagine it may have cost me to put it in the condition you see? For you must know that I am the superintendent, and that my husband leaves the entire management of it to me. In truth, said I, it has cost you nothing but inattention. It is indeed a delightful spot, but wild and rustic; and I can discover no marks of human industry. You have concealed the door; the water springs I know not whence; nature alone has done all the rest, and even you could not have mended her work. It is true, said she, that nature has done every thing, but under my direction, and you see nothing but what has been done under my orders. Guess once more. First, I replied, I cannot conceive how labour and expense can be made to supply the effects of time. The trees... As to them, said Mr. Wolmar, you may observe that there are none very large, and they were here before. Besides, Eloisa began this work a long while before her marriage, and presently after her mother's death, when she used to come here with her father in quest of solitude. Well, said I, since you will have these large and massy bowers, these sloping tufts, these umbrageous thickets to be the growth of seven or eight years, and to be partly the work of art, I think you have been a good economist if you have done all within this vast circumference for two thousand crowns. You have

only guessed two thousand crowns too much, says she, for it cost me nothing. How, nothing? No, nothing; unless you place a dozen days work in the year to my gardener's account, as many to two or three of my people, and some to Mr. Wolmar, who has sometimes condescended to officiate, in my service, as a gardener. I could not comprehend this riddle; but Eloisa, who had hitherto held me, said to me, letting me loose, Go, and you will understand it. Farewell Tinian, farewell Juan Fernandez, farewell all enchantment! In a few minutes you will find your way back from the end of the world.

I began to wander over the orchard thus metamorphosed with a kind of extasy; and if I found no exotic plants, nor any of the products of the Indies, I found all those which were natural to the soil disposed and blended in such a manner, as to produce the most chearful and lively effect. The verdant turf, thick but short and close, was intermixed with wild thyme, balm, sweet marjoram, and other fragrant herbs. You might perceive a thousand wild flowers dazzle your eyes, among which you would be surprized to discover some garden flowers, which seemed to grow natural with the rest. I now and then met with shady tufts as impervious to the rays of the sun, as if they had been in a thick forest. These tufts were composed of trees of a very flexible nature, the branches of which they bend, till they hang on the ground, and take root, as I have seen some trees naturally do in America. In the more open spots, I saw here and there bushes of roses, raspberries, and gooseberries, little plantations of lilac, hazel trees, alders, feringa, broom, and trifolium, dispersed without any order or symmetry, and which embellished the ground, at the same time that it gave it the appearance of being overgrown with weeds. I followed the track through irregular and serpentine walks, bordered by these flowery thickets, and covered with a thousand garlands composed of vines, hops, rose-weed, snake-weed, and other plants of that kind, with which honey-suckles and jessamine deigned to inter-twine. These garlands seemed as if they were scattered carefully from one tree to another, and formed a kind of drapery over our heads which sheltered us from the sun; while

under foot we had smooth, agreeable, and dry walking upon a fine moss, without sand or grass or any rugged shoots. Then it was I first discovered, not without astonishment, that this verdant and bushy umbrage, which had deceived me so much at a distance, was composed of these luxuriant and creeping plants, which running all along the trees, formed a thick foliage over head, and afforded shade and freshness underfoot. I observed likewise, that by means of common industry, they had made several of these plants take root in the trunks of the trees, so that they spread more, being nearer the top. You will readily conceive that the fruit is not the better for these additions; but this is the only spot where they have sacrificed the useful to the agreeable, and in the rest of their grounds they have taken such care of the trees that, without the orchard, the return of fruit is greater than it was formerly. If you do but consider how delightful it is to meet with wild fruit in the midst of a wood, and to refresh one's self with it, you will easily conceive what a pleasure it must be to meet with excellent and ripe fruit in this artificial desert, though it grows but here and there, and has not the best appearance; which gives one the pleasure of searching and selecting the best.

All these little walks were bordered and crossed by a clear and limpid rivulet, which one while winded through the grass and flowers in streams scarce perceptible; at another, rushed in more copious floods upon a clear and speckled gravel, which rendered the water more transparent. You might perceive the springs rise and bubble out of the earth, and sometimes you might observe deep canals, in which the calm and gentle fluid served as a mirror to reflect the objects around. Now, said I to Eloisa, I comprehend all the rest: but these waters which I see on every side?... They come from thence she replied, pointing to that side where the terrass lies. It is the same stream which, at a vast expense, supplied the fountain, in the flower garden, for which nobody cares. Mr. Wolmar will not destroy it, out of respect to my father who had it made; but with what pleasure we come here everyday to see this water run through the orchard, which we never look at in the garden! The fountain plays

for the entertainment of strangers; this little rivulet flows for our amusement. It is true that I have likewise brought hither the water from the public fountain, which emptied itself into the lake, through the highway, to the detriment of passengers, besides its running to waste without profit to any one. It formed an elbow at the foot of the orchard between two rows of willows; I have taken them within my inclosure, and I bring the same water hither through different channels.

I perceived then that all the contrivance consisted in managing these streams, so as to make them flow in meanders, by separating and uniting them at proper places, by making them run as little upon the slope as possible, in order to lengthen their course, and make the most of a few little murmuring cascades. A lay of earth, covered with some gravel from the lake, and strewed over with shells, forms a bed for these waters. The same streams running at proper distances under some large tiles covered with earth and turf, on a level with the ground, forms a kind of artificial springs where they issue forth. Some small streams spout through pipes on some rugged places, and bubble as they fall. The ground thus refreshed and watered, continually yields fresh flowers, and keeps the grass always verdant and beautiful.

The more I wandered over this delightful asylum, the more I found the agreeable sensation improve which I experienced at my first entrance: nevertheless my curiosity kept me in exercise; I was more eager to view the objects around me, than to inquire into the cause of the impressions they made on me, and I chose to resign myself to that delightful contemplation, without taking the trouble of reflection; but Mrs. Wolmar drew me out of my reverie, by taking me under the arm; All that you see, said she, is nothing but vegetable and inanimate nature, which in spite of us, always leaves behind it a melancholy idea of solitude. Come and view nature animated and more affecting. There you will discover some new charm every minute in the day. You anticipate me, said I, I hear a confused chirping noise, and I see but few birds; I suppose you have an aviary. True, said she, let us go to it. I durst not as yet declare what I thought of this aviary; but there was something in the idea

of it which disgusted me, and did not seem to correspond with the rest.

We went down, through a thousand turnings, to the bottom of the orchard, where I found all the water collected in a fine rivulet, flowing gently between two rows of old willows, which had been frequently lopped. Their tops being hollow and half bare, formed a kind of vessel, from whence, by the contrivance I just now mentioned, grew several tufts of honey-suckles, of which one part intertwined among the branches, and the other dropped carelessly along the side of the rivulet. Near the extremity of the inclosure, was a little bason, bordered with grass, bulrushes, and weeds, which served as a watering place to the aviary, and was the last use made of this water, so precious and so well husbanded.

Somewhat beyond this bason was a platform, which was terminated, in an angle of the inclosure, by a hillock planted with a number of little trees of all kinds; the smallest stood towards the summit, and their size increased, in proportion as the ground grew lower, which made their tops appear to be horizontal, or at least shewed that they were one day intended to be so. In the front stood a dozen of trees, which were young as yet, but of a nature to grow very large, such as the beech, the elm, the ash, and the acacia. The groves on this side, served as an asylum to that vast number of birds which I had heard chirping at a distance, and it was under the shade of this foliage, as under a large umbrella, that you might see them hop about, run, frisk, provoke each other, and fight, as if they had not perceived us. They were so far from flying at our approach, that, according to the notion with which I was prepossessed, I imagined them to have been inclosed within a wire; but when we came to the border of the bason, I saw several of them alight, and come towards us through a short walk which parted the platform in two, and made a communication between the bason and the aviary. Mr. Wolmar then going round the bason, scattered two or three handfuls of mixed grain, which he had in his pocket, along the walk, and when he retired, the birds flocked together and began to seed like so many chickens, with such an air of familiarity, that I plainly perceived they had been

trained up to it. This is charming, said I: your using the word aviary, surprized me at first, but I now see what it is; I perceive that you invite them as your guests, instead of confining them as your prisoners. What do you mean by our guests? replied Eloisa; it is we who are theirs. They are masters here, and we pay them for being admitted some times. Very well, said I, but how did these masters get possession of this spot? How did you collect together so many voluntary inhabitants? I never heard of any attempt of this kind, and I could not have believed that such a design could have succeeded, if I had not evidence of it before my eyes.

Time and patience, said Mr. Wolmar, have worked this miracle. These are expedients which the rich scarce ever think of in their pleasures. Always in haste for enjoyment, force and money are the only instruments they know how to employ; they have birds in cage, and friends at so much a mouth. If the servants ever came near this place, you would soon see the birds disappear, and if you perceive vast numbers of them at present, the reason is that this spot has always, in some degree, been a refuge for them. There is no bringing them together where there are none to invite them, but where there are some already, it is easy to increase their numbers by anticipating all their wants, by not frightening them, by suffering them to hatch with security, and by never disturbing the young ones in their nest; for by these means, such as are there, abide there, and those which come after them continue. This grove was already in being, though it was divided from the orchard; Eloisa has only inclosed it by a quick-set hedge, removed that which parted it, and enlarged and adorned it with new designs. You see to the right and left of the walk which leads to it, two spaces filled with a confused mixture of grass, straw, and all sorts of plants. She orders them every year to be sown with corn, millet, turnsol, hemp-seed, vetch; and in general all sorts of grain which birds are fond of, and nothing is ever reaped. Besides this, almost every day she or I bring them something to eat, and when we neglect, Fanny supplies our place. They are supplied with water, as you see, very easily. Mrs. Wolmar carries her attention so far as to provide for them, every spring,

little heaps of hair straw, wool, moss, and other materials proper to build their nests. Thus by their having materials at hand, provisions in abundance, and by the great care we take to secure them from their enemies, [56] the uninterrupted tranquility they enjoy induces them to lay their eggs in this convenient place, where they want for nothing, and where nobody disturbs them. Thus the habitation of the fathers becomes the abode of the children, and the colony thrives and multiplies.

Ah! said Eloisa, do you see nothing more? No one thinks beyond himself; but the affection of a constant pair, the zeal of their domestic concerns, paternal and maternal fondness, all this is lost upon you. Had you been here two months ago, you might have feasted your eyes with the most lovely sight, and have gratified your feelings with the most tender sensations in nature. Madam, said I, somewhat gravely, you are a wife and a mother; there are pleasures of which it becomes you to be susceptible. Mr. Wolmar then taking me cordially by the hand, said, You have friends, and those friends have children; how can you be a stranger to paternal affection? I looked at him, I looked at Eloisa, they looked at each other, and cast such an affecting eye upon me, that embracing them alternately, I said with tender emotion, They are as dear to me as to yourself. I do not know by what strange effect a single word can make such an alteration in our minds, but since that moment, Mr. Wolmar appears to me quite another man, and I consider him less in the light of a husband to her whom I have so long adored, as in that of the father of two children for whom I would lay down my life.

I was going to walk round the bason, in order to draw nearer to this delightful asylum, and its little inhabitants, but Mrs. Wolmar checked me. Nobody, says she, goes to disturb them in their dwelling, and you are the first of our guests whom I ever brought so far. There are four keys to this orchard, of which my father and we have each of us one: Fanny has the fourth, as superintendent, and to bring the children here now and then; the value of which favour is greatly enhanced by the extreme circumspection which is required of them while they are here. Even Gustin

never comes hither without one of the four: when the two spring months are over in which his labours are useful, he scarce ever comes hither afterwards, and all the rest we do ourselves. Thus, said I, for fear of making our birds slaves to you, you make yourselves slaves to your birds. This, she replied, is exactly the sentiment of a tyrant, who never thinks that he enjoys liberty, but while he is disturbing the freedom of others.

As we were coming back, Mr. Wolmar threw a handful of barley into the bason, and on looking into it, I perceived some little fish. Ah, ah, said I immediately, here are some prisoners nevertheless. Yes, said he, they are prisoners of war, who have had their lives spared. Without doubt, added his wife. Some time since Fanny stole two perch out of the kitchen, and brought them hither without my knowledge. I leave them here, for fear of offending her if I sent them to the lake; for it is better to confine the fish in too narrow a compass, than to disoblige a worthy creature. You are in the right, said I, and the fish are not much to be pitied for having escaped from the frying-pan into the water.

Well, how does it appear to you? said she, as we were coming back; are you got to the end of the world yet? No, I replied, I am quite out of the world, and you have in truth transported me into elysium. The pompous name she has given this orchard, said Mr. Wolmar, very well deserves that raillery. Be modest in your commendation of childish amusements, and be assured that they have never intrenched on the concerns of the mistress of a family. I know it, I am sure of it, I replied, and childish amusements please me more in this way than the labours of men.

Still there is one thing here, I continued, which I cannot conceive: which is, that though a place: so different from what it was, can never have been altered to its present state; but by great care and culture; yet I can no where discover the least trace of cultivation. Every thing is verdant, fresh, and vigorous, and the hand of the gardener is no where to be discerned: nothing contradicts the idea of a desert island,

which struck me at the first entrance, and I cannot perceive any footsteps of men. Oh, said Mr. Wolmar, it is because they have taken great pains to efface them. I have frequently been witness to, and sometimes an accomplice in this roguery. They sow all the cultivated spots with grass, which presently hides all appearance of culture. In the winter, they cover all the dry and barren spots with some lays of manure, the manure eats up the moss, revives the grass and the plants; the trees themselves do not fare the worse, and in the summer there is nothing of it to be seen. With regard to the moss which covers some of the walks, Lord B—— sent us the secret of making it grow from England. These two sides, he continued, were inclosed with walls; the walls have been covered not with hedges, but with thick trees, which make the boundaries of the place appear like the beginning of a wood. The two other sides are secured by strong thickset hedges well stocked with maple, hawthorn, holy-oak, privet, and other small trees, which destroy the appearance of the hedges, and make them look more like coppice-woods. You see nothing here in an exact row, nothing level; the line never entered this place; nature plants nothing by the line; the affective irregularity of the winding walks are managed with art, in order to prolong the walk, to hide the boundaries of the island, and to enlarge its extent in appearance, without making inconvenient and too frequent turnings. [57]

Upon considering the whole, I thought it somewhat extraordinary that they should take so much pains to conceal the labour they had been at; would it not have been better to have taken no such pains? Notwithstanding all we have told you, replied Eloisa, you judge of the labour from its effect, and you deceive yourself. All that you see are wild and vigorous plants which need only to be put into the earth, and which afterwards spring up of themselves. Besides, nature seems desirous of hiding her real charms from the sight of men, because they are too little sensible of them, and disfigure them when they are within their reach; she flies from public places; it is on the tops of mountains, in the midst of forests, in desert islands, that she displays her most affecting charms. They who are in love with her and cannot go so

far in pursuit of her, are forced to do her violence, by obliging her, in some measure, to come and dwell with them, and all this cannot be effected without some degree of illusion.

At these words, I was struck with an idea which made them laugh. I am supposing to myself, said I, some rich man to be master of this house, and to bring an architect who is paid an extravagant price for spoiling nature. With what disdain would he enter this plain and simple spot! With what contempt would he order these ragged plants to be torn up! What fine lines he would draw! What fine walks he would cut! What fine geese-feet, what fine trees in the shape of umbrellas and fans he would make! What fine arbor work——nicely cut out! What beautiful grass-plats of fine English turf, round, square, sloping, oval! What fine yew-trees cut in the shape of dragons, pagods, marmosets, and all sorts of monsters! With what fine vases of brass, with what fine fruit in stone he would decorate his garden! [58] ... When he had done all this, said Mr. Wolmar, he would have made a very fine place, which would scarce ever be frequented, and from whence one should always go with eagerness to enjoy the country; a dismal place where nobody would walk, but only use it as a thoroughfare when they were setting out to walk; whereas in my rural rambles, I often make haste to return that I may walk here.

I see nothing in those extensive grounds so lavishly ornamented, but the vanity of the proprietor and of the artist, who being eager to display, one his riches and the other his talents, only contribute, at a vast expense, to tire those who would enjoy their works. A false taste of grandeur, which was never designed for man, poisons all his pleasures. An air of greatness has always something melancholy in it; it leads us to consider the wretchedness of those who affect it. In the midst of these grass-plats and fine walks, the little individual does not grow greater; a tree twenty feet high will shelter him as well as one of sixty, [59] he never occupies a space of more than three feet, and in the midst of his immense possessions he is lost like a poor worm.

There is another taste directly opposite to this, and still more ridiculous, because it does not allow us the pleasure of walking, for which gardens were intended. I understand you, said I; you allude to those petty virtuosi, who die away at the sight of a ranunculus, and fall prostrate before a tulip. Hereupon, my Lord, I gave them an account of what happened to me formerly at London in the flower-garden into which we were introduced with so much ceremony, and where we saw all the treasures of Holland displayed with so much lustre upon four beds of dung. I did not forget the ceremony of the umbrella and the little rod with which they honoured me, unworthy as I was, as well as the rest of the spectators. I modestly acknowledged how, by endeavouring to appear a virtuoso in my turn, and venturing to fall in ecstasies at the sight of a tulip which seemed to be of a fine shape and of a lively colour, I was mocked, hooted at, and hissed by all the connoisseurs, and how the florist who despised the flower despised its panegyrist likewise to that degree, that he did not even deign to look at me all the time we were together. I added, that I supposed he highly regretted having prostituted his rod and umbrello on one so unworthy.

This taste, said Mr. Wolmar, when it degenerates into a passion, has something idle and little in it, which renders it puerile and ridiculously expensive. The other, at least, is noble, grand, and has something real in it. But what is the value of a curious root which an insect gnaws or spoils perhaps as soon as it is purchased, or of a flower which is beautiful at noon day, and fades before sun-set; what signifies a conventional beauty, which is only obvious to the eyes of virtuosi, and which is a beauty only because they will have it to be so? The time will come when they will require different kinds of beauty in flowers, from that which they seek after at present, and with as good reason; then you will be the connoisseur in your turn, and your virtuoso will appear ignorant. All these trifling attentions, which degenerate into a kind of study, are unbecoming a rational being, who, would keep his body in moderate exercise, or relieve his mind by amusing himself in a walk with his friends. Flowers were made to delight our eyes as we pass along, and not to be so

curiously anatomized. [60] See the queen of them shine in every part of the orchard. It perfumes the air; it ravishes the eyes, and costs neither care nor culture. It is for this reason that florists despise it; nature has made it so lovely, that they cannot add to it any borrowed beauty, and as they cannot plague themselves with cultivating it, they find nothing in it which flatters their fancy. The mistake of your pretenders to taste is, that they are desirous of introducing art in every thing, and are never satisfied unless the art appears; whereas true taste consists in concealing it, especially when it concerns any of the works of nature. To what purpose are those strait gravelled walks which we meet with continually; and those stars which are so far from making a park appear more extensive to the view, as is commonly supposed, that they only contribute awkwardly to discover its boundaries? Do you ever see fine gravel in woods, or is that kind of gravel softer to the feet than moss or down? Does nature constantly make use of the square or rule? Are they afraid lest she be visible in some spot notwithstanding all their care to disfigure her? Upon the whole, it is droll enough to see them affect to walk in a strait line that they may sooner reach the end, as if they were tired of walking, before they have well begun? Would not one imagine, by their taking the shortest cut, that they were going a journey instead of a walk, and that they were in a hurry to get out as soon they come in?

How will a man of taste act, who lives to relish life, who knows how to enjoy himself, who pursues real and simple pleasures, and who is inclined to make a walk before his house? He will make it so convenient and agreeable that he may enjoy it every hour of the day, and yet so natural and simple, that it will seem as if he had done nothing. He will introduce water, and will make the walk verdant, cool, and shady; for nature herself unites these properties. He will bestow no attention on symmetry, which is the bane of nature and variety, and the walks of gardens in general are so like each other, that we always fancy ourselves in the same. He will make the ground smooth, in order to walk more conveniently; but the two sides of

his walks will not be exactly parallel; their direction will not always be recti-lineal, they will be somewhat irregular like the steps of an indolent man, who saunters in his walk: he will not be anxious about opening distant perspectives. The taste for perspective and distant views proceeds from the disposition of men in general, who are never satisfied with the place where they are. They are always desirous of what is distant from them, and the artist who cannot make them contented with the objects around them, flies to this resource to amuse them; but such a man as I speak of, is under no such inquietudes, and when he is agreeably fixed, he does not desire to be elsewhere. Here, for example, we have no prospect, and we are very well satisfied without any. We are willing to think that all the charms of nature are inclosed here, and I should be very much afraid lest a distant view should take off a good deal of the beauty from this walk. [61] Certainly he who would not chuse to pass his days in this simple and pleasant place, is not master of true taste or of a vigorous mind. I confess that one ought not to make a parade of bringing strangers hither; but then we can enjoy it ourselves, without shewing it to any one.

Sir, said I, these rich people who have such fine gardens, have very good reasons for not choosing to walk alone, or to be in company with themselves only; therefore they are in the right to lay them out for the pleasure of others. Besides, I have seen gardens in China, made after your taste, and laid out with so much art that the art was not seen, but in such a costly manner, and kept up at such a vast expense, that that single idea destroyed all the pleasure I had in viewing them. There were rocks, grottos, and artificial cascades in level and sandy places, where there was nothing but spring-water; there were flowers and curious plants of all the climates in China and Tartary, collected and cultivated in the same soil. It is true, there were no fine walks or regular compartments; but you might see curiosities heaped together with profusion, which in nature are only to be found separate and scattered. Nature was there represented under a thousand various forms, and yet the whole taken together was not natural. Here neither earth nor stones are transplanted, you have neither

pumps nor reservoirs, you have no occasion for green-houses or stoves, of bell glasses or straw-beds. A plain spot of ground has been improved by a few simple ornaments. A few common herbs and trees, and a few purling streams which flow without pomp or constraint, have contributed to embellish it. It is an amusement, which has cost little trouble, and the simplicity of it is an additional pleasure to the beholder. I can conceive that this place might be made still more agreeable, and yet be infinitely less pleasing to me. Such, for example, is Lord Cobham's celebrated park at Stow. It consists of places extremely beautiful and picturesque, modelled after the fashion of different countries, and in which every thing appears natural except their conjunction, as in the gardens of China, which I just now mentioned. The proprietor who made this stately solitude, has even erected ruins, temples, old buildings, and different ages as well as different places are collected with more than mortal magnificence. This is the very thing I dislike. I would have the amusements of mankind carry an air of ease with them which does not put one in mind of their weakness, and that while we admire these curiosities our imagination may not be disturbed by reflecting on the vast sums of money and labour they have cost. Are we not destined to trouble enough, without making our amusements a fatigue?

I have but one objection, I added, looking at Eloisa, to make to your elysium, but which you will probably think of some weight, which is, that it is a superfluous amusement. To what purpose was it to make a new walk, when you have such beautiful groves on the other side of the house which you neglect? That's true, said she, somewhat disconcerted, but I like this better. If you had thoroughly reflected on the propriety of your question before you had made it, said Mr. Wolmar, interrupting us, it might be imputed to you as more than an indiscretion. My wife has never set her foot in those groves since she has been married. I know the reason though she has always kept it a secret from me. You who are no stranger to it, learn to respect the spot where you are; it has been planted by the hands of virtue.

I had scarce received this just reprimand, but the little family led by Fanny, came in

as we were going out. These three lovely children threw themselves round Mr. and Mrs. Wolmar's necks. I likewise shared their little caresses. Eloisa and I returned into elysium to take a little turn with them; afterwards we went to join Mr. Wolmar who was talking to some workmen. In our way, she told me, that she no sooner became a mother, than an idea struck into her mind, with respect to that walk, which increased her zeal for embellishing it. I had an eye, said she, to the health and amusement of my children as they grew older. It requires more care than labour to keep up this place; it is more essential to give a certain turn to the branches of the plants, than to dig and cultivate the ground; I intend one day to make gardeners of my little ones: they shall have sufficient exercise to strengthen their constitution, and not enough to enfeeble it. Besides, what is too much for their age, shall be done by others, and they shall confine themselves to such little works as may amuse them. I cannot describe, she added, what pleasure I enjoy in imagining my infants busy in returning those little attentions which I now bestow on them with such satisfaction, and the joy of which their tender hearts will be susceptible, when they see their mother walking with delight under the shades, which have been formed by their own hands. In truth, my friend, said she, with an affecting tone, time thus spent is an emblem of the felicity of the next world, and it was not without reason that, reflecting on these scenes, I christened this place before hand by the name of elysium. My Lord, this incomparable woman is as amiable in the character of a mother as in that of a wife, a friend, a daughter, and to the eternal punishment of my soul, she was thus lovely when my mistress.

Transported with this delightful place, I intreated them in the evening to consent that, during my stay, Fanny should entrust me with her key, and consign to me the office of feeding the birds. Eloisa immediately sent a sack of grain to my chamber, and gave me her own key. I cannot tell for what reason, but I accepted it with a kind of concern, and it seemed as if Mr. Wolmar's would have been more acceptable to me.

In the morning I rose early, and with all the eagerness of a child, went to lock myself in the desert island. What agreeable ideas did I hope to carry with me into that solitary place, where the mild aspect of nature alone was sufficient to banish from my remembrance, all that new-coin'd system which had made me so miserable! All the objects around me will be the work of her whom I adored. In every thing about me, I shall behold her image; I shall see nothing which her hand has not touched; I shall kiss the flowers which have been her carpet; I shall inhale, with the morning dew, the air which she has breathed; the taste she has displayed in her amusements, will bring all her charms present to my imagination, and in every thing she will appear the Eloisa of my soul.

As I entered elysium with this temper of mind, I suddenly recollected the last word which Mr. Wolmar said to me yesterday very near the same spot. The recollection of that single word, instantly changed my whole frame of mind. I thought that I beheld the image of virtue, where I expected to find that of pleasure. That image intruded on my imagination with the charms of Mrs. Wolmar, and for the first time since my return, I saw Eloisa in her absence; not such as she appeared to me formerly and as I still love to represent her, but such as she appears to my eyes every day. My Lord, I imagined that I beheld that amiable, that chaste, that virtuous woman, in the midst of the train which surrounded her yesterday. I saw those three lovely children, those honourable and precious pledges of conjugal union and tender friendship, play about her, and give and receive a thousand affecting embraces. At her side I beheld the grave Wolmar, that husband so beloved, so happy, and so worthy of felicity. I imagined that I could perceive his judicious and penetrating eye pierce to the very bottom of my soul, and make me blush again; I fancied that I heard him utter reproaches which I too well deserved, and repeat lectures to which I had attended in vain. Last in her train I saw Fanny Regnard, a lively instance of the triumph of virtue and humanity over the most ardent passion. Ah! what guilty thought could reach so far as her, through such an impervious guard? With what indignation I suppressed

the shameful transports of a criminal and scarce extinguished passion, and how I should have despised myself had I contaminated such a ravishing scene of honour and innocence, with a single sigh. I recalled to mind the reflections she made as we were going out, then my imagination attending her into that futurity on which she delights to contemplate, I saw that affectionate mother wipe the sweat from her children's foreheads, kiss their ruddy cheeks, and devote that heart, which was formed for love, to the most tender sentiments of nature. There was nothing, even to the very name of elysium, but what contributed to rectify my rambling imagination, and to inspire my soul with a calm far preferable to the agitation of the most seductive passions. The word elysium seemed to me an emblem of the purity of her mind who adopted it; and I concluded that she would never have made choice of that name, had she been tormented with a troubled conscience. Peace, said I, reigns in the utmost recesses of her soul, as in this asylum which she has named.

I proposed to myself an agreeable reverie, and my reflections there were more agreeable, even than I expected. I passed two hours in elysium, which were not inferior to any time I ever spent. In observing with what rapidity and delight they passed away, I perceived that there was a kind of felicity in meditating on honest reflections, which the wicked never know, and which consists in being pleased with one's-self. If we were to reflect on this without prejudice, I don't know any other pleasure which can equal it. I perceive, at least, that one who loves solitude as I do, ought to be extremely cautious not to do any thing which may make it tormenting. Perhaps these principles may lead us to discover the spring of those false judgments of mankind with regard to vice and virtue; for the enjoyment of virtue is all internal, and is only perceived by him who feels it: but all the advantages of vice strike the imagination of others, and only he who has purchased them, knows what they cost.

Se a ciascun l'interno affanno Si legesse in fronte scritto Quanti mai, che Invidia fanno Ci farebbero pieta? [62]

As it grew late before I perceived it, Mr. Wolmar came to join me, and acquaint me that Eloisa and the tea waited for me. It is you yourselves, said I, making an apology, who pre-vented my coming sooner: I was so delighted with the evening I spent yesterday, that I went thither again to enjoy this morning; luckily there is no mischief done, and as you have waited for me, my morning is not lost. That's true, said Mr. Wolmar; it would be better to wait till noon, than lose the pleasure of breakfasting together. Strangers are never admitted into my room in the morning, but breakfast in their own. Breakfast is the repast of intimates, servants are excluded, and impertinents never appear at that time; we then declare all we think, we reveal all our secrets, we disguise none of our sentiments; we can then enjoy the delights of intimacy and confidence, without indiscretion. It is the only time almost in which we are allowed to appear what we really are; why can't it last the day through! Ah, Eloisa! I was ready to say; this is an interesting wish! but I was silent. The first thing I learned to suppress with my love, was flattery. To praise people to their face, is but to tax them with vanity. You know, my Lord, whether Mrs. Wolmar deserves this reproach. No, no; I respect her too much, not to respect her in silence. Is it not a sufficient commendation of her, to listen to her, and observe her conduct?

Letter CXXXI. Mrs. Wolmar to Mrs. Orbe.

It is decreed, my dear friend, that you are on all occasions to be my protectress against myself, and that after having delivered me from the snares which my affections laid for me, you are yet to rescue me from those which reason spreads to entrap me. After so many cruel instances, I have learned to guard against mistakes, as much as against my passions, which are frequently the cause of them. Why had I not the same precaution always! If in time past, I had relied less on the light of my own understanding, I should have had less reason to blush at my sentiments.

Do not be alarmed at this preamble. I should be unworthy your friendship, if I was still under a necessity of consulting you upon dismal subjects. Guilt was always a

stranger to my heart, and I dare believe it to be more distant from me now than ever. Therefore, Clara, attend to me patiently, and believe that I shall never need your advice in difficulties which honour alone can resolve.

During these six years which I have lived with Mr. Wolmar in the most perfect union which can subsist between a married couple, you know that he never talked to me either about his family or himself, and that having received him from a father as solicitous for his daughter's happiness as jealous of the honour of his family, I never expressed any eagerness to know more of his concerns, than he thought proper to communicate. Satisfied with being indebted to him for my honour, my repose, my reason, my children, and all that can render me estimable in my own eyes, besides the life of him who gave me being, I was convinced that the particulars concerning him, to which I was a stranger, would not falsify what I knew of him, and there was no occasion for my knowing more, in order to love, esteem, and honour him as much as possible.

This morning at breakfast he proposed our taking a little walk before the heat came on; then under a pretence of not going through the country in morning dishabille, as he said, he led us into the woods, and exactly into that wood, where all the misfortunes of my life commenced. As I approached that fatal spot, I felt a violent palpitation of heart, and should have refused to have gone in, if shame had not checked me, and if the recollection of a word which dropped the other day in elysium, had not made me dread the interpretations which might have been passed on such a refusal. I do not know whether the philosopher was more composed; but some time after having cast my eyes upon him by chance, I found his countenance pale and altered, and I cannot express to you the uneasiness it gave me.

On entering into the wood I perceived my husband cast a glance towards me and smile. He sat down between us, and after a moment's pause, taking us both by the hand, my dear children, said he, I begin to perceive that my schemes will not be

fruitless, and that we three may be connected by a lasting attachment, capable of promoting our common good, and procuring me some comfort to alleviate the troubles of approaching old age: but I am better acquainted with you two, than you are with me; it is but just to make every thing equal among us, and though I have nothing very interesting to impart, yet as you have no secrets hidden from me, I will have none concealed from you.

He then revealed to us the mystery of his birth, which had hitherto been known to no one but my father. When you are acquainted with it, you will imagine what great temper and moderation a man must be master of, who was able to conceal such a secret from his wife during six years; but it is no pain to him to keep such a secret, and he thinks too slightly of it, to be obliged to exert any vast efforts to conceal it.

I will not detain you, said he, with relating the occurrences of my life. It is of less importance to you to be acquainted with my adventures than with my character. The former are simple in their nature like the latter, and when you know what I am, you will easily imagine what I was capable of doing. My mind is naturally calm, and my affections temperate. I am one of those men, whom people think they reproach when they call them insensible; that is, when they upbraid them with having no passion, which may impel them to swerve from the true direction of human nature. Being but little susceptible of pleasure or grief, I receive but faint impressions from those interesting sentiments of humanity, which make the affections of others our own. If I feel uneasiness when I see the worthy in distress, it is not without reason that my compassion is moved, for when I see the wicked suffer, I have no pity for them. My only active principle is a natural love of order, and the concurrence of the accidents of fortune with the conduct of mankind well combined together, pleases me exactly like beautiful symmetry in a picture, or like a piece well represented on the stage. If I have any ruling passion, it is that of observation: I love to read the hearts of mankind. As my own seldom misleads me, as I make my observations with a disinterested and dispassionate temper, and as I have acquired some sagacity by long

experience, I am seldom deceived in my judgments; this advantage therefore is the only recompense which self-love receives from my constant studies: for I am not fond of acting a part, but only of observing others play theirs. Society is agreeable to me for the sake of contemplation, and not as a member of it. If I could alter the nature of my being and become a living eye, I would willingly make the exchange. Therefore my indifference about mankind does not make me independent of them; without being solicitous to be seen, I want to see them, and though they are not dear, they are necessary, to me.

The two first characters in society which I had an opportunity of observing were courtiers and valets; two orders of men who differ more in appearance than fact, but so little worthy of being attended to, and so easily read, that I was tired of them at first sight. By quitting the court, where every thing is presently seen, I secured myself, without knowing it, from the danger which threatened me, and which I should not have escaped. I changed my name, and having a desire to be acquainted with military men, I solicited admission into the service of a foreign prince; it was there that I had the happiness of being useful to your father, who was impelled by despair for having killed his friend, to expose himself rashly and contrary to his duty. The grateful and susceptible heart of a brave officer began then to give me a better opinion of human nature. He attached himself to me with that zealous friendship which it was impossible for me not to return, and from that time we formed connections which have every day grown stronger. I discovered, in this new state of my mind, that interest is not always, as I had supposed, the sole motive which influences human conduct, and that among the crowd of prejudices which are opposite to virtue, there are some likewise which are favourable to her. I found that the general character of mankind was founded on a kind of self-love indifferent in itself, and either good or bad according to the accidents which modify it, and which depend on customs, laws, rank, fortune, and every circumstance relative to human policy. I therefore indulged my inclination, and despising the vain notions of

worldly condition, I successively threw myself into all the different situations in life, which might enable me to compare them together, and know one by the other. I perceived, as you have observed in one of your letters, said he to St. Preux, that we see nothing if we rest satisfied with looking on, that we ought to act ourselves in order to judge of men's actions, and I made myself an actor to qualify myself for a spectator. We can always lower ourselves with ease; and I stooped to a variety of situations, which no man of my station ever condescended to. I even became a peasant, and when Eloisa made me her gardener, she did not find me such a novice in the business, as she might have expected.

Besides gaining a thorough knowledge of mankind, which indolent philosophy only attains in appearance, I found another advantage which I never expected. This was, the opportunity it afforded me of improving, by an active life, that love of order I derived from nature, and of acquiring a new relish for virtue by the pleasure of contributing towards it. This sentiment made me less speculative, attached me somewhat more to myself, and from a natural consequence of this progress, I perceived that I was alone. Solitude, which was always tiresome to me, became hideous, and I could not hope to escape it long. Though I did not grow less dispassionate, I found the want of some connection; the idea of decay, without any one to comfort me, afflicted me by anticipation, and for the first time in my life, I experienced melancholy and uneasiness. I communicated my troubles to the Baron D'Etange. You must not, said he, grow an old bachelor. I myself, after having lived independent as it were in a state of matrimony, find that I have a desire of returning to the duties of a husband and a father, and I am going to repose myself in the midst of my family. It depends on yourself to make my family your own, and to supply the place of the son whom I have lost. I have an only daughter to marry: she is not destitute of merit; she has a sensibility of mind, and the love of her duty makes her love every thing relative to it. She is neither a beauty, nor a prodigy of understanding; but come and see her, and believe me that if she does not affect you,

no woman will ever make an impression on you. I came, I saw you, Eloisa, and I found that your father had reported modestly of you. Your transports, the tears of joy you shed when you embraced him, gave me the first, or rather the only emotion I ever experienced in my life. If the impression was slight, it was the only one I felt, and our sensations are strong only in proportion to those which oppose them. Three years absence made no change in my inclinations. I was no stranger to the state of yours in my return, and on this occasion I must make you a return for the confession which has cost you so dear." Judge, my dear Clara, with what extraordinary surprize, I learnt that all my secrets had been discovered to him before our marriage and that he had wedded me, knowing me to be the property of another.

This conduct, continued Mr. Wolmar, was unpardonable. I offended against delicacy; I sinned against prudence; I exposed your honour and my own; I should have been apprehensive of plunging you and myself into irretrievable calamities; but I loved you, and I loved nothing but you. Every thing else was indifferent to me. How is it possible to restrain a passion, be it ever so weak, when it has no counterpoise. This is the inconvenience of calm and dispassionate tempers. Every thing goes right while their insensibility secures them from temptations; but if one happens to touch them, they are conquered as soon as they are attacked, and reason, which governs while she sways alone, has no power to resist the slightest effort. I was tempted but once, and I gave way to it. If the intoxication of any other passion had rendered me wavering, I should have fallen, every false step I took; none but spirited souls are able to struggle and conquer. All great efforts, all sublime actions are their province; cool reason never achieved any thing illustrious, and we can only triumph over our passions by opposing one against another. When virtue gains the ascendancy, she reigns alone, and keeps all in due poise; this forms the true philosopher, who is as much exposed to the assaults of passion as another, but who alone is capable of subduing them by their own force, as a pilot steers through adverse winds.

You find that I do not attempt to extenuate my fault; had it been one, I should infallibly have committed it; but I knew you, Eloisa, and was guilty of none when I married you. I perceived that all my prospect of happiness depended on you alone, and that if any one was capable of making you happy, it was myself. I knew that peace and innocence were essential to your mind, that the affection with which it was pre-engaged could not afford them, and that nothing could banish love but the horror of guilt. I saw that your soul laboured under an oppression which it could not shake off but by some new struggle, and that to make you sensible how valuable you still were, was the only way to render you truly estimable.

Your heart was formed for love; I therefore slighted the disproportion of age, which excluded me from a right of pretending to the affection, which he who was the object of it could not enjoy, and which it was impossible to obtain for any other. On the contrary, finding my life half spent, and that I had been susceptible but of a single impression, I concluded that it would be lasting, and I pleased myself with the thoughts of preserving it the rest of my days. In all my tedious searches, I found nothing so estimable as yourself, I thought that what you could not effect, no one in the world could accomplish; I ventured to rely on your virtue, and I married you. The secrecy you observed did not surprize me; I knew the reason, and from your prudent conduct, I guessed how long it would last. From a regard to you, I copied your reserve, and I would not deprive you of the honour of one day making me a confession, which, I plainly perceived, was at your tongue’s end every minute. I have not been deceived in any particular; you have fully answered all I expected from you. When I made choice of a wife, I desired to find in her an amiable, discreet and happy companion. The first two requisites have been obtained. I hope, my dear, that we shall not be disappointed of the third.

At these words, in spite of all my endeavours not to interrupt him but by my tears, I could not forbear throwing myself round his neck, and crying out; O my dear husband! O thou best and most amiable of men! Tell me what is wanting to

compleat my happiness, but to promote your felicity, and to be more deserving... You are as happy as you can be, said he, interrupting me; you deserve to be so; but it is time to enjoy that felicity in peace, which has hitherto cost you such vast pains. If your fidelity had been all I required, that would have been ensured the moment you made me the promise; I wanted moreover to make it easy and agreeable to you, and we have both laboured to this end in concert, without communicating our views to each other. Eloisa, we have succeeded; better than you imagine perhaps. The only fault I find in you is, that you do not resume that confidence which you have a right to repose in yourself, and that you undervalue your own worth. Extreme diffidence is as dangerous as excessive confidence. As that rashness which prompts us to attempts beyond our strength renders our power ineffectual, so that timidity which prevents us from relying on ourselves, renders it useless. True prudence consists in being thoroughly acquainted with the measure of our own power, and acting up to it. You have acquired an increase of strength by changing your condition. You are no longer that unfortunate girl who bewailed the weakness she indulged; you are the most virtuous of women, you are bound by no laws but those of honour and duty, and the only fault that can now be imputed to you, is that you retain too lively a sense of your former indiscretion. Instead of taking reproachful precautions against yourself, learn to depend upon your self, and your confidence will increase your strength. Banish that injurious diffidence, and think yourself happy in having made choice of an honest man at an age which is liable to imposition, and in having entertained a lover formerly, whom you may now enjoy as a friend, even under your husband’s eye. I was no sooner made acquainted with your connections, than I judged of you by each other. I perceived what enthusiastic delusion led you astray; it never operates but on susceptible minds; it sometimes ruins them, but it is by a charm which has power to seduce them alone. I judged that the same turn of mind which formed your attachment would break it as soon as it became criminal, and that vice might find an entrance, but never take root in such hearts as yours.

I conceived moreover that the connection between you ought not to be broken; that there were so many laudable circumstances attending your mutual attachment, that it ought rather to be rectified than destroyed; and that neither of the two could forget the other, without diminishing their own worth. I knew that great struggles only served to inflame strong passions, and that if violent efforts exercised the mind, they occasioned such torments as by their continuance might subdue it. I took advantage of Eloisa's gentleness, to moderate the severity of her reflections. I nourished her friendship for you, said he to St. Preux; I banished all immoderate passion, and I believe that I have preserved you a greater share of her affections, than she would have left you, had I abandoned her entirely to herself.

My success encouraged me, and I determined to attempt your cure as I had accomplished hers; for I had an esteem for you, and notwithstanding the prejudices of vice, I have always observed that every good end is to be obtained from susceptible minds by means of confidence and sincerity. I saw you, you did not deceive me; you will not deceive me; and though you are not yet what you ought to be, I find you more improved than you imagine, and I am better satisfied with you than you are with yourself. I know that my conduct has an extravagant appearance, and is repugnant to the common received principles. But maxims become less general, in proportion as we are better acquainted with the human heart: and Eloisa's husband ought not to act like men in common. My dear children, said he, with a tone the more affecting as it came from a dispassionate man; remain what you are, and we shall all be happy. Danger consists chiefly in opinion; be not afraid of yourselves, and you will have nothing to apprehend; only think on the present, and I will answer for the future. I cannot communicate any thing farther to day, but if my schemes succeed, and my hopes do not betray me, our destiny will be better fulfilled, and you two will be much happier than if you had enjoyed each other.

As we rose, he embraced us, and would have us likewise embrace each other, on that spot. On that very spot where formerly... Clara, O my dear Clara, how dearly have

you ever loved me! I made no resistance. Alas! How indiscreet would it have been to have made any! This kiss was nothing like that which rendered the grove terrible to me. I silently congratulated myself, and I found that my heart was more changed than I had hitherto ventured to imagine.

As we were walking towards home, my husband, taking me by the hand, stopt me, and shewing me the wood we had just left, he said to me smiling; Eloisa, be no longer afraid of this asylum; it has not been lately profaned. You will not believe me, cousin, but I swear that he has some supernatural gift of reading one's inmost thoughts: may heaven continue it to him! Having such reason to despise myself, it is certainly to this art that I am indebted for his indulgence.

You do not see yet any occasion I have for your advice; patience, my angel! I am coming to that point; but the conversation which I have related, was necessary to clear up what follows.

On our return, my husband, who has long been expected at Etange, told me that he proposed going thither to-morrow, that he should see you in his way, and that he should stay there five or six days. Without saying all I thought concerning such an ill-timed journey, I told him that I imagined the necessity was not so indispensable as to oblige Mr. Wolmar to leave his guest, whom he had himself invited to his house. Would you have me, he replied, use ceremony with him to remind him that he is not at home? I am like the Valaisians for hospitality. I hope he will find their sincerity here, and allow us to use their freedom. Perceiving that he would not understand me, I took another method, and endeavoured to persuade our guest to take the journey with him. You will find a spot, said I, which has its beauties, and such as you are fond of; you will visit my patrimony and that of my ancestors; the interest you take in every thing which concerns me, will not allow me to suppose that such a sight can be indifferent to you. My mouth was open to add that the castle was like that of Lord B——, who...but luckily I had time to bite my tongue. He

answered me coolly that I was in the right, and that he would do as I pleased. But Mr. Wolmar, who seemed determined to drive me to an extremity, replied that he should do what was most agreeable to himself. Which do you like best, to go or to stay? To stay, said he, without hesitating. Well, stay then, rejoined my husband, taking him by the hand: you are a sincere and honest man, and I am well pleased with that declaration. There was no room for much altercation between my husband and me, in the hearing of this third person. I was silent, but could not conceal my uneasiness so well, but my husband perceived it. What! said he, with an air of discontent, St. Preux being at a little distance from us, shall I have pleaded your cause against yourself in vain, and will Mrs. Wolmar remain satisfied with a virtue which depends on opportunity? For my part, I am more nice; I will be indebted for the fidelity of my wife, to her affection, not to chance; and it is not enough that she is constant, it wounds my delicacy to think that she should doubt her constancy.

At length, he took us into his closet, where I was extremely surprized to see him take from a drawer, along with the copies of some of our friend's correspondences which I delivered to him, the very original letters which I thought I had seen burned by B——in my mother's room. Here, said he to me, shewing them to us, are the pledges of my security; if they deceive me, it would be a folly to depend on any thing which concerns human nature. I consign my wife and my honour in charge to her, who, when single and seduced, preferred an act of benevolence, to a secure and private rendezvous. I trust Eloisa, now that she is a wife and a mother, to him who, when he had it in his power to gratify his desires, yet knew how to respect Eloisa when single and a fond girl. If either of you think so meanly of yourselves, as to suppose that I am in the wrong, say so, and I retract this instant. Cousin, do you think that one could easily venture to make answer to such a speech?

I nevertheless sought an opportunity in the afternoon of speaking with my husband in private, and without entering into reasons which I was not at liberty to urge, I only intreated him to put off his journey for two days. My request was granted

immediately; and I employ the time, in sending you this express and waiting for your answer, to know how I am to act.

I know that I need but desire my husband not to go at all, and he who never denied me any thing, will not refuse me so slight a favour. But I perceive, my dear, that he takes a pleasure in the confidence he reposes in me, and I am afraid of forfeiting some share of his esteem, if he should suppose that I have occasion for more reserve than he allows me. I know likewise, that I need but speak a word to St. Preux, and that he will accompany my husband without hesitation; but what will my husband think of the change, and can I take such a step without preserving an air of authority over St. Preux, which might seem to entitle him to some privileges in his turn? Besides, I am afraid, lest he should conclude from this precaution that I find it absolutely necessary, and this step which at first sight appears most easy, is the most dangerous perhaps at the bottom. Upon the whole however I am not ignorant that no consideration should be put in competition with a real danger, but does this danger exist in fact? This is the very doubt which you must resolve for me.

The more I examine the present state of my mind, the more I find to encourage me. My heart is spotless, my conscience calm, I have no symptoms of fear or uneasiness and with respect to every thing which passes within me, my sincerity before my husband costs me no trouble. Not but that certain involuntary recollections sometimes occasion tender emotions from which I had rather be exempt; but these recollections are so far from being produced by the sight of him who was the original cause of them, that they seem to be less frequent since his return, and however agreeable it is to me to see him, yet, I know not from what strange humour, it is more agreeable to me to think of him. In a word, I find that I do not even require the aid of virtue in order to be composed in his presence, and, exclusive of the horror of guilt, it would be very difficult to revive those sentiments which virtue has extinguished.

But is it sufficient, my dear, that my heart encourages me, when reason ought to alarm me? I have forfeited the right of depending on my own strength. Who will answer that my confidence, even now, is not an illusion of vice? How shall I rely on those sentiments which have so often deceived me? Does not guilt always spring from that pride which prompts us to despise temptation; and when we defy those dangers which have occasioned our fall, does it not shew a disposition to yield again to temptation?

Weigh all these circumstances, my dear Clara, you will find that though they may be trifling in themselves, they are of sufficient importance to merit attention, when you consider the object they concern. Deliver me from the uncertainty into which they have thrown me. Shew me how I must behave in this critical conjuncture; for my past errors have affected my judgment, and rendered me diffident in deciding upon any thing. Whatever you may think of yourself, your mind, I am certain, is tranquil and composed; objects present themselves to you such as they are; but in mine, which is agitated like a troubled sea, they are confounded and disfigured. I no longer dare to depend upon any thing I see, or any thing I feel, and notwithstanding so many years repentance, I perceive, with concern, that the weight of past failings is a burthen we must bear to the end of our lives.

Letter CXXXII. Answer.

Poor Eloisa! With so much reason to live at ease, what torments you continually create! All thy misfortunes come from thyself, O Israel! If you adhered to your own maxims; if, in point of sentiment, you only hearkened to the voice within you, and your heart did but silence your reason, you would then without scruple trust to that security it inspires, and you would not constrain yourself against the testimony of your own heart, to dread a danger which can arise only from thence.

I understand you, I perfectly understand you, Eloisa; being more secure in yourself than you pretend to be, you have a mind to humble yourself on account of your past

failings, under a pretence of preventing new ones; and your scruples are not so much precautions against the future, as a penance you impose upon yourself to atone for the indiscretion which ruined you formerly. You compare the times; do you consider? Compare situations likewise, and remember that I then reproved you for your confidence, as I now reprove you for your diffidence.

You are mistaken, my dear; but nature does not alter so soon. If we can forget our situation for want of reflection, we see it in its true light when we take pains to consider of it, and we can no more conceal our virtues than our vices from ourselves. Your gentleness and devotion have given you a turn for humility. Mistrust that dangerous virtue which only excites self-love by making it centre in one point, and be assured that the noble sincerity of an upright mind, is greatly preferable to the pride of humility. If moderation is necessary in wisdom, it is requisite likewise in those precautions it suggests, lest a solicitude which is reproachful to virtue should debase the mind, and, by keeping us in constant alarm, render a chimerical danger a real one. Don’t you perceive that after we have had a fall, we should hold ourselves upright, and that by leaning too much towards the side opposite to that on which we fell, we are in danger of falling again? Cousin, you loved like Eloisa. Now, like her, you are an extravagant devotee; he even said that you may be more successful in the latter than you were in the former! In truth, if I was less acquainted with your natural timidity, your apprehensions would be sufficient to terrify me in my turn, and if I was so scrupulous, I might, from being alarmed for you, begin to tremble for myself.

Consider farther, my dear friend; you whose system of morality is as easy and natural as it is pure and honest, do not make constructions which are harsh and foreign to your character, with respect to your maxims concerning the separation of the sexes. I agree with you that they ought not to live together, nor after the same manner; but consider whether this important rule does not admit of many distinctions in point of practice; examine whether it ought to be applied indiscriminately, and without exception to married as well as to single women, to

society in general as well as to particular connections, to business as well as to amusements, and whether that honour and decency which inspire these maxims, ought not sometimes to regulate them? In well governed countries, where the natural relations of things are attended to in matrimony, you would admit of assemblies where young persons of both sexes, might see, be acquainted, and associate with each other; but you prohibit them, with good reason, from holding any private intercourse. But is not the case quite different with regard to married women and the mothers of families, who can have no interest, that is justifiable, in exhibiting themselves in public; who are confined within doors by their domestic concerns, and who should not be refused to do any thing at home which is becoming the mistress of a family? I should not like to see you in the cellars presenting the wine for the merchants to taste, nor to see you leave your children to settle accounts with a banker; but if an honest man should come to visit your husband, or to transact some business with him, will you refuse to entertain his guest in his absence; and to do him the honours of the house for fear of being left tete a tete with him? Trace this principle to its source, and it will explain all your maxims. Why do we suppose that women ought to live retired and apart from the men? Shall we do such injustice to our sex as to account for it upon principles drawn from our weakness, and that it is only to avoid the danger of temptations? No, my dear, these unworthy apprehensions do not become an honest woman, and the mother of a family who is continually surrounded with objects which nourish in her the sentiments of honour, and who is devoted to the most respectable duties of human nature. It is nature herself that divides us from the men, by prescribing to us different occupations; it is that amiable and timorous modesty, which, without being immediately attentive to chastity, is nevertheless its surest guardian; it is that cautious and affecting reserve, which at one and the same time cherishing both desire and respect in the hearts of men, serves as a kind of coquetry to virtue. This is the reason why even husbands themselves are not excepted out of this rule. This is the reason why the most discreet women

generally maintain the greatest ascendancy over their husbands; because, by the help of this prudent and discreet reserve, without shewing any caprice or non-compliance, they know, even in the embraces of the most tender union, how to keep them at a distance, and prevent their being cloyed with them. You will agree with me that your maxims are too general not to admit of exceptions, and that not being founded on any rigorous duty, the same principle of decorum which established them, may sometimes justify our dispensing with them.

The circumspection which you ground on your past failings, is injurious to your present condition; I will never pardon this unnecessary caution which your heart dictates, and I can scarce forgive it in your reason. How was it possible that the rampart which protects your person, could not secure you from such an ignominious apprehension? How could my cousin, my sister, my friend, my Eloisa, confound the indiscretions of a girl of too much sensibility, with the infidelity of a guilty wife? Look around you, you will see nothing but what contributes to raise and support your mind. Your husband who has such confidence in you, and whose esteem it becomes you to justify; your children whom you would train to virtue, and who will one day deem it an honour that you was their mother; your venerable father who is so dear to you, who enjoys your felicity, and who derives more lustre from you than from his ancestors; your friend whose fate depends on yours, and to whom you must be accountable for a reformation to which she has contributed; her daughter, to whom you ought to set an example of those virtues which you would excite in her; your philosopher, who is a hundred times fonder of your virtues, than of your person, and who respects you still more than you apprehend; lastly, yourself, who are sensible what painful efforts your discretion has cost you, and who will surely never forfeit the fruit of so much trouble in a single moment; how many motives capable of inspiring you with courage, conspire to make you ashamed of having ventured to mistrust yourself! But in order to answer for my Eloisa, what occasion have I to consider what she is? It is enough that I know what she was, during the

indiscretions which she bewails. Ah! if your heart had ever been capable of infidelity, I would allow you to be continually apprehensive: but at the very time when you imagined that you viewed it at a distance, you may conceive the horror its real existence would have occasioned you, by what you felt at that time, when but to imagine it, had been to have committed it.

I recollect with what astonishment we learnt that there was a nation where the wellness of a fond maid is considered as an inexpiable crime, though the adultery of a married woman is there softened by the gentle term of gallantry, and where married women publicly make themselves amends for the short-lived restraint they undergo while single. I know what maxims, in this respect, prevail in high life, where virtue passes for nothing, where every thing is empty appearance, where crimes are effaced by the difficulty of proving them, or where the proof itself becomes ridiculous against custom. But you, Eloisa, you who glowed with a pure and constant passion, who was guilty only in the eyes of men, and between heaven and earth was open to no reproach! You, who made yourself respected in the midst of your indiscretions; you, who being abandoned to fruitless regret, obliged us even to adore those virtues which you had forfeited; you, who disdained to endure self-contempt, when every thing seemed to plead in your excuse, can you be apprehensive of guilt, after having paid so dearly for your weakness? Will you dare to be afraid that you have less power now, than you had in those days which cost you so many tears? No, my dear, so far from being alarmed at your former indiscretions, they ought to inspire you with courage; so severe a repentance does not lead to remorse, and whoever is so susceptible of shame, will never bid defiance to infamy.

If ever a weak mind had supports against its weakness, they are such as uphold you; if ever a vigorous mind was capable of supporting itself, what prop can yours require? Tell me, what reasonable grounds there can be for your apprehensions? All your life has been a continual struggle, in which, even after your defeat, honour and

duty never ceased opposition, and at length came off victorious. Ah! Eloisa! shall I believe that, after so much pain and torment, after twelve years passed in tears, and six spent gloriously, that you still dread a trial of eight days? In few words, deal sincerely with yourself; if there really is any danger, save your person, and blush at the condition of your heart; if there is no danger, it is an offence to your reason, it is a dishonour to your virtue to be apprehensive of perils which can never affect it. Do you not know that there are some scandalous temptations which never approach noble minds; that it is even shameful to be under a necessity of subduing them, and that to take precautions against them, is not so much to humble, as to debase ourselves?

I do not presume to give you my arguments as unanswerable, but only to convince you that yours may be controverted, and that is sufficient to warrant my advice. Do not depend on yourself, for you do not know how to do yourself justice, nor on me; who even in your indiscretions never considered any thing but your heart and always adored you; but refer to your husband who sees you such as you are, and judges of you, exactly according to your real worth. Being, like all people of sensibility, ready to judge ill of those who appear insensible, I mistrusted his power of penetration into the secrets of susceptible minds, but since the arrival of our traveller, I find by his letters that he reads yours perfectly well, and that there is not a single emotion which escapes his observation. I find his remarks so just and acute, that I have almost changed my opinion to the other extreme; and I shall readily believe that your dispassionate people, who consult their eyes more than their hearts, judge better of other men’s passions, than your impetuous lively and vain persons like myself, who always begin by supposing themselves in another’s place, and can never see any thing but what they feel. However it be, Mr. Wolmar is thoroughly acquainted with you, he esteems you, he loves you, and his destiny is blended with yours. What does he require, but that you would leave to him the entire direction of your conduct, with which you are afraid to trust yourself? Perhaps finding old age coming on, he is

desirous, by some trials on which he may depend, to prevent those uneasy jealousies, which an old husband generally feels who is married to a young wife; perhaps the design he has in view requires that you should live in a state of familiarity with your friend, without alarming either your husband or yourself; perhaps he only means to give you a testimony of confidence and esteem, worthy of that which he entertains for you. You should never oppose such sentiments, as if the weight of them was too much for you to endure; and for my part, I think, that you cannot act more agreeably to the dictates of prudence and modesty, than by relying entirely on his tenderness and understanding.

Could you, without offending Mr. Wolmar, punish yourself for a vanity you never had, and prevent a danger which no longer exists? Remain alone with the philosopher, use all the superfluous precautions against him, which would formerly have been of such service to you; maintain the same reserve as if you still mistrusted your own heart and his, as well as your own virtue. Avoid all pathetic conversation, all tender recollection of time past; break off or prevent long tete a tete interviews; be constantly surrounded by your children; do not stay long with him in a room, in elysium, or in the grove notwithstanding the profanation. Above all things, use these precautions in so natural a manner, that they may seem to be the effect of chance, and that he may never once suspect that you are afraid of him. You love to go upon the water; but you deprive yourself of the pleasure on account of your husband who is afraid of that element, and of your children whom you do not chuse to venture there. Take the advantage of this absence, to entertain yourself with this recreation, and leave your children to the care of Fanny. By this means you may securely devote yourself to the sweet familiarity of friendship, and quietly enjoy a long tete a tete under the protection of the watermen, who see without understanding, and from whom we cannot go far without thinking what we are about.

A thought strikes me which many people would laugh at, but which will be agreeable to you, I am sure; that is to keep an exact journal in your husband’s

absence, to shew him on his return, and to think on this journal, with regard to every circumstance which is to be set down in it. In truth, I do not believe that such an expedient would be of service to many women; but a sincere mind, incapable of deceit, has many resources against vice, which others stand in need of. We ought to despise nothing which tends to preserve a purity of manners, and it is by means of trifling precautions, that great virtues are secured.

Upon the whole, as your husband is to see me in his way, he will tell me, I hope, the true reasons of his journey, and if I do not find them substantial, I will persuade him from proceeding any farther, or at all events, I will do what he has refused to do: upon this you may depend. In the mean time, I think I have said enough to fortify you against a trial of eight days. Go, Eloisa, I know you too well not to answer for you as much, nay more than I could for myself. You will always be what you ought to be, and what you desire to be. If you do but rely on the integrity of your own mind, you will run no risk whatever; for I have no faith in these unforeseen defects; it is in vain to disguise voluntary failings by the idle appellation of weaknesses; no woman was ever yet overcome who had not an inclination to surrender; and if I thought that such a fate could attend you, believe me, trust to the tenderness of my friendship, rely on all the sentiments which would arise in the heart of your poor Clara, I should be too sensibly interested in your protection, to abandon you entirely to yourself.

As to what Mr. Wolmar declared to you concerning the intelligence he received before your marriage, I am not much surprized at it; you know I always suspected it; and I will tell you, moreover, that my suspicions are not confined to the indiscretions of B——. I could never suppose that a man of truth and integrity like your father, and who had some suspicions at least himself, would resolve to impose upon his son-in-law and his friend. If he engaged you so strictly to secrecy, it was because the mode of discovery would come from him in a very different manner to what it would have proceeded from you, and because he was willing no doubt to give it a

turn less likely to disgust Mr. Wolmar, than that which he very well knew you would not fail to give it yourself. But I must dismiss your messenger, we will chat about there matters more at our leisure about a month hence.

Farewell, my dearest cousin, I have preached long enough to the preacher; resume your old occupation.——I find myself quite uneasy that I cannot be with you yet. I disorder all my affairs, by hurrying to dispatch them, and I scarce know what to do. Ah Chaillot, Chaillot... If I was less giddy...but I always hope that I shall——

P. S. A propos; I forgot to make my compliments to your highness. Tell me, I beseech you, is the gentleman your husband Atteman, Knes, or Boyard? [63] O poor child! You, who have so often lamented being born a gentlewoman, are in high luck to become the wife of a prince! Between ourselves nevertheless you discover apprehensions which are somewhat vulgar for a woman of such high quality. Do not you know, that little scruples belong to mean people; and that a child of a good family, who should pretend to be his father’s son, would be laughed at.

Letter CXXXIII. Mr. Wolmar to Mrs. Orbe.

I am going to Etange, my sweet cousin, and I proposed to call upon you in my way; but a delay of which you are the cause obliges me to make more haste, and I had rather lie at Lausanne as I come back, that I may pass a few hours the more with you. Besides I want to consult you with regard to many particulars, which it is proper to communicate before hand that you may have time to consider of them before you give me your opinion.

I would not explain my scheme to you in relation to the young man, till his presence had confirmed the good opinion I had conceived of him. I think I may now depend upon him sufficiently to acquaint you, between ourselves, that my design is to entrust him with the education of my children. I am not ignorant that those important concerns are the principal duty of a parent; but when it will be time to exert them, I shall be too old to discharge them, and being naturally calm and speculative by

constitution, I should never have been sufficiently active to govern the spirit of youth. Besides for a reason you know, [64] Eloisa would be concerned to see me assume an office, in which I should never acquit myself to her liking. I have a thousand reasons besides; your sex is not equal to these duties; their mother shall confine herself to the education of her Henrietta; to your share I allot the management of the houshold upon the plan already established, and of which you approve; and it shall be my business to behold three worthy people concurring to promote the happiness of the family, and to enjoy that repose in my old age, for which I shall be indebted to their labours.

I have always found, that my wife was extremely averse from trusting her children to the care of mercenaries, and I could not discommend her scruples. The respectable capacity of a preceptor requires so many talents which are not to be paid for, so many virtues which have no piece set upon them, that it is in vain to think of procuring one by means of money. It is from a man of genius only that we can expect the talents of a preceptor; it is from the heart of an affectionate friend alone that we can hope to meet with the zeal of a parent; and genius is not to be sold any more than attachment.

All the requisite qualities seem to be united in your friend; and if I am well acquainted with his disposition, I do not think he would desire greater happiness, than to make those beloved children contribute to their mother’s felicity. The only obstacle I can foresee is his affection for Lord B——, which will not allow him to disengage himself from so dear a friend, to whom he has such great obligations, at least if his Lordship does not require it himself. We expect to see this extraordinary man very soon; and as you have a great ascendancy over him, if he answers the idea you have given me of him, I may commit the business, so far as it relates to him, to your management.

You have now, my dear cousin, the clue of my whole conduct, which, without this

explanation, must have appeared very extraordinary, and which, I hope, will hereafter meet with Eloisa's approbation and yours. The advantage of having such a wife as I have, made me try many expedients which would have been impracticable with another. Though I leave her, in full confidence, with her old lover, under no other guard than her own virtue, it would be madness to establish that lover in my family, before I was certain that he ceased to be such; and how could I be assured of it, if I had a wife on whom I had less dependence?

I have often observed you smile at my remarks on love; but now I think I can mortify you. I have made a discovery which neither you nor any other woman, with all the subtlety they attribute to your sex, would ever have made; the proof of which you will nevertheless perceive at first sight, and you will allow it to be equal to demonstration, when I explain to you the principles on which I ground it. Was I to tell you that my young couple are more fond than ever, this undoubtedly would not appear wonderful to you. Was I to assure you on the contrary, that they are perfectly cured; you know the power of reason and virtue, and therefore you would not look upon that neither as a vast miracle: but if I tell you, that both these opposites are true at the same time; that they love each other with more ardor than ever, and that nothing subsists between them but a virtuous, attachment; that they are always lovers, and yet never more than friends: this, I imagine is what you would least expect, what you will have more difficulty to conceive, and what nevertheless precisely corresponds with truth.

This is the riddle, which makes those frequent contradictions, which you must have observed in them, both in their conversation and in their letters. What you wrote to Eloisa concerning the picture, has served more than any thing to explain the mystery, and I find that they are always sincere, even in contradicting themselves continually. When I say they, I speak particularly of the young man; for as to your friend, one can only speak of her by conjecture. A veil of wisdom and honour makes so many folds about her heart, that it is impenetrable to human eyes, even to her

own. The only circumstance which leads me to imagine that she has still some distrust to overcome is, that she is continually considering with herself what she should do if she was perfectly cured; and she examines herself with so much accuracy, that if she was really cured, she would not do it so well.

As to your friend, who, though virtuously inclined, is less apprehensive of his present feelings, I find that he still retains all the affections of his youth; but I perceive them without having any reason to be offended at them. It is not Eloisa Wolmar he is fond of, but Eloisa Etange; he does not hate me as the possessor of the object I love, but as the ravisher of her whom he doated on. His friend's wife is not his mistress, the mother of two children is not her who was formerly his scholar. It is true she is very like that person, and often puts him in mind of her. He loves her in the time past. This is the true explanation of the riddle. Deprive him of his memory, and you destroy his love.

This is not an idle subtlety, my pretty cousin, but a solid observation, which, if extended to other affections, may admit of a more general application, than one would imagine. I even think that, it would not be difficult to explain it by your own ideas. The time, when you parted the two lovers, was when their passion was at the highest degree of impetuosity. Perhaps, if they had continued much longer together, they would gradually have grown cool; but their imagination, being strongly affected, constantly presented each to the other in the light in which they appeared at the time of their separation. The young man, not perceiving those alterations which the progress of time made in his mistress, loved her such as he had seen her formerly, not such as she was then. [65] To compleat his happiness, it would not have been enough to have given him possession of her, unless she could have been given to him at the same age; and under the same circumstances she was in, when their loves commenced. The least alteration in these particulars would have lessened so much of the felicity he proposed to himself; she is grown handsomer, but she is altered, her improvement, in that sense, turns to her prejudice; for it is of his former

mistress, not of any other, that he is enamoured.

What deceives him, is, that he confounds the times, and often reproaches himself on account of a passion which he thinks present, and which in fact is nothing more than the effect of too tender a recollection; but I do not know, whether it will not be better to accomplish his cure, than to undeceive him. Perhaps, in this respect, we may reap more advantage from his mistake, than from his better judgment. To discover to him the true state of his affections, would be to apprize him of the death of the object he loved; this might be an affliction dangerous to him, inasmuch as a state of melancholy is always favourable to love.

Freed from the scruples which restrain him, he would probably be more inclined to indulge recollections which he ought to stifle; he would converse with less reserve, and the traces of Eloisa are not so effaced in Mrs. Wolmar, but upon examination he might find them again. I have thought, that instead of undeceiving him with respect to his opinion of the progress he has made, and which encourages him to pursue it to the end, we should rather endeavour to banish the remembrance of those times which he ought to forget, by skilfully substituting other ideas in the room of those he is so fond of. You, who contributed to give them birth, may contribute more than any one to efface them: but I shall wait till we are all together, that I may tell you in your ear what you shall do for this purpose; a charge, which if I am not mistaken, will not be very burthensome to me. In the mean time, I endeavour to make the objects of his dread familiar to him, by presenting them to him in such a manner, that he may no longer think them dangerous. He is impetuous, but tractable and easily managed. I avail myself of this advantage to give a turn to his imagination. In the room of his mistress, I compel him always to look at the wife of his friend, and the mother of my children; I efface one picture by another, and hide the past with the present. We always ride a startish horse up to the object which frights him, that he may not be frightened at it again. We should act in the same manner with those young people, whose imaginations are on fire even after their affections are grown

cold, and whose fancy presents monsters at a distance, which disappear as they draw nearer.

I think I am well acquainted with the strength of both, and I do not expose them to a trial which they cannot support: for wisdom does not consist in using all kinds of precautions indiscriminately, but in choosing those which are really useful, and in neglecting such as are superfluous. The eight days, during which I leave them together, will perhaps be sufficient for them to discover the true state of their minds, and to know in what relation they really stand to each other. The oftener they perceive themselves in private with each other, the sooner they will find out their mistake, by comparing their present sensations with those they felt formerly, when they were in the same situation. Besides, it is of importance that they should use themselves to endure, without danger, that state of familiarity, in which they must necessarily live together, if my schemes take place. I find by Eloisa's conduct, that you have given her advice, which she could not refuse taking, without wronging herself. What pleasure I should take in giving her this proof that I am sensible of her real worth, if she was a woman with whom a husband might make a merit of such confidence! But if she gains nothing over her affections, her virtue will still be the same; it will cost her dearer, and she will not triumph the less. Whereas if she is still in danger of feeling any inward uneasiness, it can arise only from some moving conversation, which she must be too sensible before hand will awaken recollection, and which she will therefore always avoid. Thus, you see, you must not in this instance judge of my conduct by common maxims, but from the motives which actuate me, and from the singular disposition of her towards whom I shall regulate my behaviour.

Farewell, my dear cousin, till my return. Though I have not entered into these explanations with Eloisa, I do not desire you to keep them secret from her. It is a maxim with me, never to make secrets among my friends; therefore I commit these to your discretion; make that use of them which your prudence and friendship will

direct. I know you will do nothing, but what is best and most proper.

Letter CXXIV. To Lord B——.

Mr. Wolmar set out yesterday for Etange, and you can scarce conceive in what a melancholy state his departure has left me. I think the absence of his wife would not have affected me so much as his. I find myself under greater restraint, than even when he is present; a mournful silence takes possession of my heart; its murmurs are stifled by a secret dread; and, being less tormented with desires than apprehensions, I experience all the horrors of guilt, without being exposed to the temptations of it.

Can you imagine, my Lord, where my mind gains confidence, and loses these unworthy dreads? In the presence of Mrs. Wolmar. As soon as I approach her, the sight of her pacifies my inquietude; her looks purify my heart. Such is the ascendency of hers, that it always seems to inspire others with a sense of her innocence, and to confer that composure which is the effect of it. Unluckily for me, her system of life does not allow her to devote the whole day to the society of her friends; and in those moments which I am obliged to pass out of her company, I should suffer less, if I was farther distant from her.

What contributes to feed the melancholy which oppresses me, is a reflection which she made yesterday after her husband’s departure. Though till that moment she kept up her spirits tolerably, yet for a long time her eyes followed him with an air of tenderness, which I then imagined was only occasioned by the departure of that happy husband; but I found by her conversation, that the emotion was to be imputed to another cause, which was a secret to me. You see, said she, in what manner we live together, and you may judge whether he is dear to me. Do not imagine; however, that the sentiment which attaches me to him, though as tender and as powerful as that of love, is likewise susceptible of its weakness. If an interruption of the agreeable habit of living together is painful to us, we are consoled by the firm hope of resuming the same habit again. A fate of such permanence admits few

vicissitudes which we have reason to dread; and in an absence of a few days, the pain of so short an interval does not affect me so strongly, as the pleasure of seeing an end to it. The affliction, which you read in my eyes, proceeds from a more weighty cause, and though it is relative to Mr. Wolmar, it is not occasioned by his departure.

My dear friend, she continued, with an affecting tone, there is no true happiness on earth. My husband is one of the most worthy and affectionate of men; the duty which incites us is cemented by mutual inclination; he has no desires but mine; I have children which give, and promise pleasure hereafter to their mother; there cannot be a more affectionate, virtuous, and amiable friend, than her whom my heart doats on, and with whom I shall pass my days; you yourself contribute to my felicity, by having so well justified my esteem and affection for you; a long and expensive law-suit, which is nearly finished, will soon bring the best of fathers to my arms; every thing prospers with us; peace and order reign throughout the family; our servants are zealous and faithful; our neighbours express every kind of attachment to us; we enjoy the good will of the public. Blest with every thing which heaven, fortune, and men can bestow, all things conspire to my happiness. A secret uneasiness, one trouble only, poisons all, and I am not happy. She uttered these last words with a sigh, which pierced my soul, and which I had no share in raising. She is not happy, said I, sighing in my turn, and I am no longer an obstacle to her felicity!

That melancholy thought disordered my ideas in a moment, and disturbed the repose which I began to taste. Unable to endure the intolerable state of doubt into which her conversation had thrown me, I importuned her so eagerly to disclose her whole mind to me, that at length she deposited the fatal secret with me, and allows me to communicate it to you. But this is the hour of recreation, Mrs. Wolmar is come out of the nursery to walk with her children, she has just told me as much. I attend her, my Lord; I leave you for the present; and I shall resume, in my next, the subject I am

now obliged to quit.

Letter CXXXV. Mrs. Wolmar to her Husband.

I expect you next Tuesday according to your appointment, and you will find every thing disposed agreeable to your desire. Call on Mrs. Orbe in your way back; she will tell you what has passed during your absence; I had rather you should learn it from her than from me.

I thought, Mr. Wolmar, I had deserved your esteem; but your conduct is not the more prudent, and you sport most cruelly with your wife's virtue.

Letter CXXXVI. To Lord B——.

I must give you an account, my Lord, of a danger we have incurred within these few days, and from whence we are happily delivered at the expense of a little terror and fatigue. This relation very well deserves a letter by itself; when you read it, you will perceive the motives which engage me to write.

You know that Mrs. Wolmar's house is not far from the lake, and that she is fond of the water. It is three days since her husband's absence has left us without employment; and the pleasantness of the evening made us form a scheme for one of these parties the next day. Soon as the sun was up, we went to the river's side; we took a boat with nets for fishing, three rowers, and a servant, and we embarked with some provisions for dinner. I took a fowling-piece to knock down some besolets, [66] but was ashamed to kill birds out of wantonness, and only for the pleasure of doing mischief. I amused myself therefore in observing the siflets, the crenets, [67] and I fired but once at a grebe, at a great distance, which I missed.

We passed an hour or two in fishing within 500 paces of the shore. We had good success, but Eloisa had them all thrown into the water again, except a trout which had received a blow from the oar. The animals, said she, are in pain; let us deliver them; let us enjoy the pleasure they will feel on escaping from danger. This

operation, however, was performed slowly, and against the grain, not without some representations against it; and I found that our gentry would have had a much better relish for the fish they had catched, than for the moral which saved their lives.

We then launched farther into the lake; soon after, with all the vivacity of a young man, which it is time for me to check, undertaking to manage the master oar, I rowed the boat into the middle of the lake, so that we were soon above a league from shore. Then I explained to Eloisa every part of that superb horizon which environed us. I shewed her at a distance the mouth of the Rhone, whose impetuous current stops on a sudden within a quarter of a league, as if it was afraid to sully the chrystal azure of the lake with its muddy waters. I made her observe the redans of the mountains, whose correspondent angles, running parallel, formed a bed in the space between, fit to receive the river which occupied it. As we got farther from shore, I had great pleasure in making her take notice of the rich and delightful banks of the Pays de Vaud, where the vast number of towns, the prodigious throng of people, with the beautiful and verdant hills all around, formed a most ravishing landscape: where every spot of ground, being cultivated and equally fertile, supplies the husbandman, the shepherd, and the vinedresser with the certain fruits of their labours, which are not devoured by the greedy publican. Afterwards I pointed out Chablais, a country not less favoured by nature, and which nevertheless affords nothing but a spectacle of wretchedness; I made her perceive the manifest distinction between the different effects of the two governments, with respect to the riches, number and happiness, of the inhabitants. It is thus, said I, that the earth expands her fruitful bosom, and lavishes treasures among those happy people who cultivate it for themselves. She seems to smile and be enlivened, at the sweet aspect of liberty; she loves to nourish mankind. On the contrary, the mournful ruins, the heath and brambles which cover a half desert country, proclaim from afar that it is under the dominion of an absent proprietor, and that it yields with reluctance a scanty produce to slaves who reap no advantage from it.

While we were agreeably amusing ourselves with viewing the neighbouring coasts, a gale arising, which drove us aslant towards the opposite shore, began to blow very high, and when we thought to tack about, the resistance was so strong that it was impossible for our slight boat to overcome it. The waves soon began to grow dreadful; we endeavoured to make for the coast of Savoy, and tried to land at the village of Meillerie which was over against us, and the only place almost where the shore affords a convenient landing. But the wind, changing and blowing stronger, rendered all the endeavours of the watermen ineffectual, and discovered to us a range of steep rocks somewhat lower, where there was no shelter.

We all tugged at our oars, and at that instant I had the mortification to perceive Eloisa grow sick, and see her weak and fainting at the bottom of the boat. Happily she had been used to the water, and her sickness did not last long. In the mean time, our efforts increased with our danger; the heat of the sun, the fatigue, and profuse sweating, took away our breaths, and made us excessively faint. Then summoning all her courage, Eloisa revived our spirits by her compassionate kindness; she wiped the sweat from off each of our faces; and mixing some wine and water, for fear of intoxication, she presented it alternately to those who were most exhausted. No, your lovely friend never appeared with such lustre as at that moment, when the heat and the agitation of her spirits gave an additional glow to her complexion; and what greatly improved her charms, was that you might plainly perceive, by the tenderness of her behaviour, that her solicitude proceeded less from apprehensions for herself than compassion for us. At one time, two planks having started by a shock which dipt us all, she concluded that the boat was split, and in the exclamation of that affectionate mother, I heard these words distinctly: O my children, must I never see you more! As for my self, whose imagination always exceeds the danger, though I knew the utmost of our perilous condition, yet I expected every minute to see the boat swallowed up, that delicate beauty struggling in the midst of the waves, and the roses upon her cheeks chilled by the cold hand of death.

At length, by dint of labour, we reached Meillerie; and after having struggled above an hour within ten paces of the shore, we at last compassed our landing. When we had landed, all our fatigues were forgotten. Eloisa took upon herself to recompense the trouble which every one had taken; and as in the height of danger her concern was for us, she seemed now on shore to imagine that we had saved nobody but her.

We dined with that appetite, which is the gift of hard labour. The trout was served up: Eloisa, who was extremely fond of it, eat but little; and I perceived, that to make the watermen amends for the regret which the late sacrifice cost them, she did not chuse that I should eat much myself. My Lord, you have observed a thousand times that her amiable disposition is to be seen in trifles as well as in matters of consequence.

After dinner, the water being still rough, and the boat wanting to be refitted, I proposed taking a walk. Eloisa objected to the wind and sun, and took notice of my being fatigued. I had my views, and I obviated all her objections. I have been accustomed, said I, to violent exercise from my infancy: far from hurting my health, they strengthen my constitution; and my late voyage has still made me more robust. As to the sun and wind, you have your straw hat, and we will get under the wind and in the woods; we need only climb among the rocks, and you who are not fond of a flat, will willingly bear the fatigue. She consented, and we set out while our people were at dinner.

You know, that when I was banished from Valais, I came, about ten years ago, to Meillerie, to wait for leave to return. It was there I passed those melancholy but pleasing days, solely intent upon her; and it was from thence I wrote her that letter, with which she was so strongly affected. I always wished to re-visit that lovely retreat, which served me as an asylum in the midst of ice, and where my heart loved to converse, in idea, with the object of all others most dear to its affections. An opportunity of visiting this beloved spot in a more agreeable season, and in company

with her whose image formerly dwelt there with me, was the secret motive of my walk. I took a pleasure in pointing out to her those old memorials of such a constant and unfortunate passion.

We got thither after an hour's walk through cool and winding paths, which ascending insensibly, between the trees and the rocks, were no otherwise inconvenient than by being tedious. As we drew near, and I recollected former tokens, I found myself a little disordered; but I overcame it, I concealed my uneasiness, and we reached the place. This solitary spot formed a wild and desert nook, but full of those sorts of beauties, which are only agreeable to susceptible minds, and appear horrible to others. A torrent, occasioned by the melting of the snow, rolled in a muddy stream within twenty paces of us, and carried dirt, sand, and stones along with it, not without considerable noise. Behind us, a chain of inaccessible rocks divided the place where we stood from that part of the Alps which they call the Ice-houses, because from the beginning of the world, they have been covered with vast mountains of ice, which are continually increasing. [68] Forests of gloomy fir-trees afforded us a melancholy shade on the right. On the left was a large wood of oak beyond which the torrent issued, and beneath that vast body of water, which the lake forms in the bay of the Alps, parted us from the rich coast of the Pays de Vaud, crowning the whole landscape with the top of the majestic Jura.

In the midst of these noble and superb objects, the little spot where we were, displayed all the charms of an agreeable and rural retreat; small floods of water filtered through the rocks, and flowed along the verdure in chrystal streams. Some wild fruit trees leaned their heads over ours; the cool and moist earth was covered with grass and flowers. Comparing this agreeable retreat with the objects which surrounded us, one would have thought that this desert spot was designed as an asylum for two lovers, who alone had escaped the general wreck of nature.

When we had reached this corner, and I had attentively examined it for some time,

Now, said I to Eloisa, looking at her with eyes swimming in tears, is your heart perfectly still in this place, and do you feel no secret emotion at the sight of a spot which is full of you? Immediately, without waiting for her answer, I led her towards the rock, and shewed her where her cypher was engraved in a thousand places, with several verses in Petrarch and Tasso relative to the state I was in when I engraved them. On seeing them again at such a distance of time, I found how powerfully the review of these objects renewed my former violent sensations. I addressed her with some degree of impetuosity: O Eloisa, the everlasting delight of my soul! This is the spot, where the most constant lover in the world formerly sighed for thee. This is the retreat, where thy beloved image made all the scene of his felicity, and prepared him for that happiness which you yourself afterwards dispensed. No fruit or shade were then to be found here: these compartments were not then furnished with verdure or flowers; the course of these streams did not then make these separations, these birds did not chirp then, the voracious sparhawk, the dismal crow, and the dreadful eagle alone made these caverns echo with their cries; huge lumps of ice hung from these rocks; festoons of snow were all the ornaments which bedecked these trees; every thing here bore marks of the rigour of winter and hoary frost; the ardor of my affection alone made this place supportable, and I spent whole days here wrapt in thought of thee. Here is the stone where I used to sit, to reflect on your happy abode at a distance; on this I penned that letter which moved your heart; these sharp flints served me as graving tools to cut out your name; here I crossed that frozen torrent to regain one of your letters which the wind carried off; there I came to review and give a thousand kisses to the last you ever wrote to me; this is the brink where, with a gloomy and greedy eye, I measured the depth of this abyss: in short, it was here that, before my sad departure, I came to bewail you as dead, and swore never to survive you. O thou lovely fair one, too constantly adored, thou for whom alone I was born! Must I revisit this spot with you by my side, and must I regret the time I spent here in bewailing your absence?... I was proceeding further; but Eloisa

perceiving me draw near the brink, was affrighted, and seizing my hand pressed it without speaking, a word, looked tenderly upon me, and could scarce suppress a rising sigh; soon after turning from me and taking me by the arm, Let us be gone, my friend, said she, with a tone of emotion, the air of this place is not good for me. I went with her sighing, but without making her any answer; and I quitted that melancholy spot for ever, with as much regret, as I would have taken leave of Eloisa herself.

We came back gently to the harbour after some few deviations, and parted. She chose to be alone, and I continued walking without knowing whither I went. At my return, the boat not being yet ready, nor the water smooth, we made a melancholy supper, with down-cast eyes; and pensive looks, eating little and talking still less. After supper, we sat on the strand, waiting an opportunity to go off. The moon shone on a sudden, the water became smoother, and Eloisa proposed our departure. I handed her into the boat, and when I sat down by her, I never thought of quitting her hand. We kept a profound silence. The equal and measured sound of the oars threw me into a reverie. The lively chirping of the snipes, [69] recalling to my mind the pleasures of a past period, made me dull. By degrees I found the melancholy which oppressed me increase. A serene sky, the mild reflection of the moon, the silver froth of the water which sparkled around us, the concurrence of agreeable sensations; even the presence of the beloved object herself, could not banish bitter reflections from my mind.

I began with recollecting a walk of the same kind which we took together, during the rapture of our early loves. All the pleasing sensations which then affected me, were present to my mind, to torment me the more; all the adventures of our youth, our studies, our entertainments, our letters, our assignations, our pleasures,

E tanta fede, e si dolci memorie, E si lungo costume!

This crowd of little objects, which recalled the image of my past happiness, all

pressed upon me and rushed into my memory, to increase my present wretchedness. It is past, said I to myself, those times, those happy times will be no more; they are gone for ever! Alas! they will never return; and yet we live, and we are together, and our hearts are still united! I seemed as if I could have endured her death or her absence with more patience; and thought that I had suffered less all the time I was parted from her. When I bewailed her at a distance, the hope of seeing her again was comfort to my soul; I flattered myself that the sight of her would banish all my sorrows in an instant, at least I could conceive it possible to be in a more cruel situation than my own. But to be by her side; to see her, to touch her, to talk to her, to love her, to adore her, and, whilst I almost enjoyed her again, to find her lost to me for ever; this is what threw me into such fits of fury and rage, as by degrees agitated me even to despair. My mind soon began to conceive deadly projects, and in a transport, which I yet tremble to think of, I was violently tempted to throw her with myself into the waves, and to end my days and tedious torments in her arms. This horrid temptation grew so strong at last, that I was obliged suddenly to quit her hand and walk to the other end of the boat.

There my lively emotions began to take another turn; a more gentle sensation by degrees stole upon my mind, and tenderness overcame despair; I began to shed floods of tears, and that condition, compared to the state I had just been in, was not unattended with pleasure. I wept heartily for a long time, and found myself easier. When I was tolerably composed, I returned to Eloisa, and took her by the hand again. She held her handkerchief in her hand, which I found wet. Ah! said I to her softly, I find that our hearts have not ceased to sympathize! True, said she, in a broken accent, but may it be the last time they ever correspond in this manner! We then began to talk about indifferent matters, and after an hour’s rowing, we arrived without any other accident. When we came in, I perceived that her eyes were red and much swelled; and she must have discovered that mine were not in a better condition. After the fatigue of this day, she stood in great need of rest: she withdrew,

and I went to bed.

Such, my friend, is the journal of the day, in which, without exception, I experienced the most lively emotions I ever felt. I hope they will prove a crisis, which will entirely restore me to myself. Moreover I must tell you that this adventure has convinced me more than all the power of argument, of the free-will of man, and the merit of virtue. How many people yield to weak temptations? As for Eloisa, my eyes beheld, and my heart felt her emotions: she underwent the most violent struggle that day that ever human nature sustained; nevertheless she conquered. O my Lord, when, seduced by your mistress, you had power at once to triumph over her desires and your own, was you not more than man? But for your example I had, perhaps, been lost. The recollection of your virtue, renewed my own a hundred times in that perilous day.

Letter CXXXV. [70] From Lord B——.

Awake, my friend, and emerge from childhood. Let not your reason slumber to the end of your life. The hours glide imperceptibly away, and ’tis now high time for you to grow wise. At thirty years of age surely a man should begin to reflect. Reflect, therefore, and be a man, at least once before you die.

Your heart, my dear friend, has long imposed on your understanding. You strove to philosophize before you were capable of it, mistaking your feelings for reason, and judging of things by the impressions they made on you, which has always kept you ignorant of their real state. A good heart, I will own, is indispensably necessary to the knowledge of truth: he who feels nothing can learn nothing; he may float from error to error in a sea of scepticism, but his discoveries will be vain, and his information fruitless, being ignorant of the relation of things to man, on which all true science depends. It were to stop half-way, however, in our pursuits after knowledge, not to enquire also into the relation of things to each other, in order to be better able to judge of their connection with ourselves. To know the nature and

operation of our passions is to know little, if we know not, at the same time, how to judge of and estimate their objects. This latter knowledge is to be acquired only in the tranquility of studious retirement. The youth of the philosopher is the time for experiment, his passions being the instrument of his inquiries; but after having applied himself long enough to the perception of external objects, he retires within himself to consider, to compare, to know them. To this task you ought to apply yourself sooner than any other person in the world. All the pleasures and pains, of which a susceptible mind is capable, you have felt; all that a man can see, you have seen. In the space of twelve years you have exhausted all those sensations, which might have served you during a long life, and have acquired even in youth the extensive experience of age. The first observations you were led to make, were on simple, unpolished villagers, on persons almost such as they came out of the hand of nature; just as if they had been presented to you for the ground-work of your piece, or as proper objects by which to compare every other. Banished next to the metropolis of one of the most celebrated people in the universe, you leaped, as one may say, from one extremity to the other, your genius supplying all the intermediate degrees. Then visiting the only nation of men, which remains among the various herds that are scattered over the face of the earth, you had an opportunity of seeing a well governed society, or at least a society under a good government; you had there an opportunity of observing how far the public voice is the foundation of liberty. You have travelled thro' all climates, and have visited all countries beneath the sun. Add to this a sight still more worthy admiration, that which you enjoy in the presence of a sublime and refined soul, triumphant over its passion, and ruling over itself. The first object of your affections is that which is now daily before you, your admiration of which is but the better founded for your having seen and contemplated so many others. There is now nothing more worth your attention or concern. The only object of your future contemplation should be yourself, that of your future enjoyment the fruits of your knowledge. You have lived enough for this life; think

now of living for that which is to come, and which will last for ever.

Your passions, by which you were so long enslaved, did not deprive you of your virtue. This is all your boast, and doubtless you have reason to glory in it; yet be not too proud. Your very fortitude is the effect of your weakness. Do you know how it came that you grew enamoured of virtue? It was because virtue always appeared to your imagination in the amiable form of that lovely woman, by whom she is so truly represented, and whose image you will always adore. But will you never love her for her own sake? Will you never, like Eloisa, court virtue of your own accord? Vain and indolent enthusiast! Will you content yourself with barely admiring her virtues, without attempting to imitate them? You speak, in rapture, of the manner in which she discharges the important duties of wife and mother; but when will you discharge those of a man and a friend, by her example? Shall a woman be able to triumph over herself, and a philosopher find it so difficult to conquer his passions? Will you continue to be always a mere prater, like the rest of them, and be content to write good books, instead of doing good actions? [71] Take care, my friend; I still perceive an air of softness and effeminacy in your writing, which displeases me, as I think it rather the effect of an unextinguished passion than peculiar to your character. I hate imbecility in any one, and cannot bear the thoughts of it in my friend. There is no such thing as virtue without fortitude, for pusillanimity is the certain attendant on vice. How dare you rely on your own strength, who have no courage? Believe me, were Eloisa as weak as you, the very first opportunity would debase you into an infamous adulterer. While you remain alone with her, therefore, learn to know her worth, and blush at your own demerit.

I hope soon to be able to see you at Clarens: you know the motives of my desiring to see Italy again. Twelve years of mistakes and troubles have rendered me suspicious of myself; to resist my inclinations, however, my own abilities might suffice; but to give the preference of one to the other, to know which I should indulge, requires the assistance of a friend: nor shall I take less pleasure in being obliged to him on this

occasion, than I have done in obliging him in others. Between friends, their obligations, as well as their affections, should be reciprocal. Do not deceive yourself, however; before I put any confidence in you, I shall enquire whether you are worthy of it, and if you deserve to return me the services you have formerly received. Your heart I know, and am satisfied with its integrity; but this is not all: it is your judgment I shall have occasion for, to direct me in making a choice which should be governed entirely by reason, and in which mine may be partial. I am not apprehensive of danger from those passions, which, making open war upon us, give us warning to put ourselves upon our defence; and, whatever be their effect, leave us still conscious of our errors. We cannot so properly be said to be overcome by these, as to give way to them. I am more fearful of delusion than constraint, and of being involuntarily induced to do what my reason condemns. We have no need of foreign assistance to suppress our inclinations; but the assistance of a friend may be necessary to point out which it is most prudent to indulge: in this case it is that the friendship of a wise man may be useful, by his viewing, in a different light, those objects with which it is our interest to be intimately acquainted. Examine yourself, therefore, and tell me whether, vainly repining at your fate, you will continue for ever useless to yourself and others, or if, resuming the command over yourself, you will at last become capable of advising and assisting your friend.

My affairs will not detain me in London more than a fortnight longer, when I shall set out for our army in Flanders, where I intend to stay about the same time; so that you must not expect to see me before the end of next month or the beginning of October. In the mean time, write no more to me at London, but direct your letters to the army, agreeable to the inclosed address. When you write, proceed also in your descriptions; for, notwithstanding the censure I pass on your letters, they both affect and instruct me; giving me, at the same time, the most flattering ideas of a life of peace and retirement, agreeable to my temper and age. In particular, I charge you to ease my mind of the disquietude you have excited concerning Mrs. Wolmar. If she

be dissatisfied, who on earth can hope for happiness? After the relation you have given me, I cannot conceive what can be wanting to compleat her felicity.

Letter CXXXVI. To Lord B——.

Yes, my Lord, I can with transport assure you, the affair of Meillerie was the crisis of my folly and misfortunes. My conversation with Mr. Wolmar, made me perfectly acquainted with the true state of my heart. That heart, too weak I confess, is nevertheless cured of its passion as much as it possibly can be; and I prefer my present state of silent regret to that of being perpetually fearful of falling into guilt. Since the return of this worthy friend, I no longer hesitate to give him that title which you have rendered so valuable. It is the least I can bestow on every one who assists me in returning to the paths of virtue. My heart is now become as peaceful as the mansion I inhabit. I begin to be at ease in my residence; to live as if I was at home; and, if I do not take upon me altogether the tone and authority of master, I feel yet a greater pleasure in supposing myself a brother of the family. There is something so delightful in the simplicity and equality, which reign in this retirement, that I cannot help being affected with tenderness and respect. Thus I spend my days in tranquillity, amidst practical philosophy and susceptible virtue. In company with this happy couple, their situation insensibly affects me, and raises my heart by degrees into unison with theirs.

What a delightful retreat! What a charming habitation! A continuance in this place renders it even yet more delightful; and though it appear not very striking at first sight, it is impossible not to be pleased with it, when it is once known. The pleasure Mrs. Wolmar takes in discharging the noblest duties, in making all who approach her virtuous and happy, communicates itself to all those who are the objects of her care, to her husband, her children, her guests, her domestics. No tumultuous scenes of noisy mirth, no loud peals of laughter, are heard in this peaceful mansion; but, in their stead, you always meet with contented hearts and chearful countenances. If at

any time you see a tear, it is the tear of susceptibility and joy. Troubles, cares and sorrow intrude not here, any more than vice and remorse, of which they are the fruits.

As to Eloisa, it is certain that, excepting the secret cause of uneasiness, with which I acquainted you in my last, [72] every thing conspires to make her happy. And yet, with so many reasons to be so, a thousand other women would think themselves miserable in the same situation. Her uniform and retired manner of living would be to them insupportable; they would think the noise of children insufferable; they would be fatigued to death with the care of their family; they would not be able to bear the country; the esteem and prudence of a husband, not over tender, would hardly recompense them for his indifference and age; his presence, and even his regard for them, would be burthensome. They would either find means to send him abroad, that they might live more at their liberty; or would leave him to himself; despising the peaceful pleasures of their situation, and seeking more dangerous ones elsewhere, they would never be at ease in their own house, unless when they came as visitors. It requires a sound mind to be able to enjoy the pleasures of retirement; the virtuous only being capable of amusing themselves with their family concerns, and of voluntarily secluding themselves from the world: if there be on earth any such thing as happiness, they undoubtedly enjoy it in such a state. But the means of happiness are nothing to those who know not how to make use of them; and we never know in what true happiness consists, till we have acquired a taste for its enjoyment.

If I were desired to speak with precision, as to the reason why the inhabitants of this place are happy, I should think I could not answer with greater propriety than to say, it is because they here know how to live; not in the sense in which these words would be taken in France, where it would be understood that they had adopted certain customs and manners in vogue: No; but they have adopted such manners as are most agreeable to human life, and the purposes for which man came into the

world; to that life you mention, of which you have set me an example, which extends beyond itself, and is not given up for lost even in the hour of death.

Eloisa has a father who is anxious for the honour and interests of his family: she has children for whose subsistence it is necessary to provide. This ought to be the chief care of man in a state of society; and was therefore the first in which Eloisa and her husband united. When they began house-keeping, they examined into the state of their fortunes; not considering so much whether they were proportioned to their rank, as to their wants; and seeing they were sufficient for the provision of an honourable family, they had not so bad an opinion of their children, as to be fearful, lest the patrimony they had to leave would not content them. They applied themselves therefore rather to improve their present, than acquire a larger fortune: they placed their money rather safely than profitably; and, instead of purchasing new estates, set about increasing the value of that which they already had; leaving their own example in this point, as the only treasure by which they would desire to see the inheritance of their offspring increased.

It is true, that an estate which is not augmented, is liable to many accidents by which it will naturally diminish: but if this were a sufficient motive to begin increasing, when would it cease to be a pretext for a constant augmentation? Must it be divided among several children? Be it so; must they be all idle? Will not the industry of each be a supplement to his share? and ought it not to be considered in the partition? It is thus that insatiable avarice makes its way under the mask of prudence, and leads to vice under the cloak of its own security. It is in vain, says Mr. Wolmar, to attempt to give to human affairs that stability, which is not in their nature. Prudence itself requires that we should leave many things to chance; and, if our lives and fortunes depend so much on accident, what a folly is it to make ourselves really unhappy, in order to prevent doubtful evils, or avoid inevitable dangers? The only precaution he took was, to live one whole year on his principal, in order to have so much before hand to receive of the interest, so that he had always the yearly product of his estate

at command. He chose rather to diminish his capital than to be perpetually under the necessity of dunning for his rents; the consequence of which has been in the end advantageous to him, as it prevented him from borrowing and other ruinous expedients, to which many people are obliged to have recourse on every unforeseen accident. Thus good management supplies the place of parsimony, and he is in fact a gainer by what he has spent.

The master of this house possesses but a moderate fortune, according to the estimation of the world; but in reality I hardly know any body more opulent. There is indeed no such thing as absolute wealth: that term signifying only the relation between the wants and possessions of those who are rich. One man is rich, though possessing only an acre of land; another is a beggar in the midst of heaps of gold. Luxury and caprice have no bounds, and make more persons poor than real wants. But the proportion, between their wants and their abilities of supplying them, is here established on a sure foundation, namely, the perfect harmony subsisting between the husband and wife: the former taking upon him the charge of collecting the rents and profits of his estate, and the latter, that of regulating their expenses; and on this harmony depends their wealth.

I was at first struck with a peculiarity in the economy of this house, where there appeared so much ease, freedom and gaiety, in the midst of order and diligence; the great fault of well regulated houses being that they always wear an air of gloominess and restraint. The extreme solicitude also of the heads of the family looks too much like avarice. Every thing about them seems constrained, and there appears something servile in their punctuality, which renders it intolerable. The domestics do their duty indeed, but then they do it with an air of discontent and mistrust The guests, it is true, are well-received; but they dare not make use of a freedom cautiously bestowed, and are always afraid of doing something that will be reckoned a breach of regularity. Such slavish fathers of families cannot be said to live for themselves, but for their children; without considering that they are not only fathers

but men, and that they ought to set their children an example how to live prudent and happy. More judicious maxims are adopted here. Mr. Wolmar thinks one of the principal duties of a father of a family is to make his house, in the first place, agreeable, that his children may delight in their home, and that seeing their father happy, they may be tempted to tread in his footsteps. Another of his maxims, and which he often repeats, is that the gloomy and sordid lives of fathers and mothers are almost always the first cause of the ill-conduct of children.

As to Eloisa, who never had any other guide, and who needed no better, than her own heart, she obeys, without scruple, its dictates; being then certain of doing right. Can a mind so susceptible as hers be insensible to pleasure? On the contrary she delights in every amusement, nor refuses to join in any diversion that promises to be agreeable; but her pleasures are the pleasures of Eloisa. She neglects neither her own convenience nor the satisfaction of those who are dear to her. She esteems nothing superfluous that may contribute to the happiness of a sensible mind; but censures every thing as such that serves only to make a figure in the eyes of others; so that you will find in this house all the gratifications which luxury and pleasure can bestow, without refinement or effeminacy. With respect to magnificence and pomp, you will see no more of it than she was obliged to submit to, in order to please her father; her own taste, however, prevails even here, which consists in giving to every thing less brilliancy and shew, than grace and elegance. When I talk to her of the methods which are daily invented at Paris and London, to hang the coaches easier; she does not disapprove of that; but, when I tell her of the great expense they are at in the varnishing of them, she can hardly believe or comprehend me; she asks me, if such fine varnish makes the coaches more commodious. Indeed she scruples not to say, that I exaggerate a good deal on the scandalous paintings with which they now adorn their equipages, instead of the coats of arms formerly used; as if it were more eligible to be known to the world for a man of licentious manners, than as a man of family. But she was particularly shocked when I told her that the ladies had

introduced, and kept up, this custom, and that their chariots were distinguishable from those of the gentlemen only, by paintings more lascivious and immodest. I was obliged to recount to her an expression of your noble friend's, on this subject, which she could hardly digest. I was with him one day to look at a vis-a-vis, which happened to be in this taste. But he no sooner cast his eye on the panels than he turned away from it, telling the owner that he should offer carriages of that kind to wanton women of quality; for that no modest man could make use of them.

As the first step to virtue is to forbear doing ill, so the first step to happiness is to be free from pain. These two maxims, which, well understood, would render precepts of morality in a great degree useless, are favourite ones with Mrs. Wolmar. She is extremely affected by the misfortunes of others; and it would be as difficult for her to be happy with wretched objects about her, as it would be for an innocent man to preserve his virtue and live in the midst of vice. She has none of that barbarous pity, which is satisfied with turning away its eye from the miserable objects it might relieve. On the contrary, she makes it her business to seek out such objects: it is the existence, and not the presence, of the unhappy which gives her affliction. It is not sufficient for her to be ignorant that there are any such; it is necessary to her quiet that she should be assured there are none miserable; at least within her sphere of charity: for it would be unreasonable to extend her concern beyond her own neighbourhood, and to make her happiness depend upon the welfare of all mankind. She takes care to inform herself of the necessities of all that live near her, and interests herself in their relief as if their wants were her own. She knows every one personally, includes them all, as it were, in her family, and spares no pains to banish, or alleviate, those misfortunes and afflictions to which human life is subject.

I am desirous, my Lord, of profiting by your instructions; but you must forgive me a piece of enthusiasm, of which I am no longer ashamed, and with which you yourself are affected. There will never be another Eloisa in the world. Providence takes a particular interest in every thing that regards her, nor leaves any thing to the

consequence of accident. Heaven seems to have sent her upon earth, to serve at once as an example of that excellence of which human nature is capable, and of that happiness it may enjoy in the obscurity of private life, without having recourse either to those public virtues which sometimes raise humanity above itself, or to those honours with which the breath of popular applause rewards them. Her fault, if love be a fault, has served only to display her fortitude and virtue. Her relations, her friends, her servants, all happily situated, were formed to respect her and be respected by her. Her country is the only one upon earth where she ought to have been born; to be happy herself, it was necessary for her to live among a happy people. If, to her misfortune, she had been born among those unhappy wretches, who groan beneath the load of oppression, and struggle in vain against the iron hand of cruelty, every complaint of the oppressed had poisoned the sweets of her life; the common ruin had been hers, and her benevolent heart had made her feel incessantly those evils she could not have redressed.

Instead of that, every thing here animates and supports the native goodness of her disposition. She has no public calamities to afflict her. She sees not around her the frightful pictures of indigence and despair. The villagers in easy circumstances, have more need of her advice than her bounty. [73] But, if there be found among them an orphan, too young to earn his subsistence; an obscure widow who pines in secret indigence; a childless father, whose arms, enfeebled by age, cannot supply him with the means of life; she is not afraid that her bounty will increase the public charge, by encouraging idleness or knavery. The happiness she herself feels, multiplies and extends itself all around her. Every house she enters soon becomes a copy of her own: nor are convenience and order only copied from her example, but harmony and goodness become equally the objects of domestic management. When she goes abroad, she sees none but agreeable objects about her; and when she returns home she is saluted by others still more engaging. Her heart is delighted by every prospect that meets her eyes; and little susceptible as it is of self-love, it is led to love itself in

the effects of its own benevolence. No, my Lord, I repeat it again; nothing that regards Eloisa can be indifferent to the cause of virtue. Her charms, her talents, her taste, her errors, her afflictions, her abode, her friends, her family, her pains, her pleasures, every thing, in short, that compleats her destiny, compose a life without example; such as few women would chuse to imitate, and yet such as all, in spite of themselves, must admire.

What pleases me most, in the solicitude which prevails here regarding the happiness of others is, that their benevolence is always exerted with prudence, and is never abused. We do not always succeed in our benevolent intentions; but, on the contrary, some people imagine they are doing great services, who are, in reality, doing great injuries; and, with a view to a little manifest good, are guilty of much unforeseen evil. Mrs. Wolmar indeed possesses, in an eminent degree, a qualification very rare, even among women of the best character; I mean an exquisite discernment in the distribution of her favours, and that as well in the choice of means to render them really useful, as of the persons on whom they are bestowed. For her conduct in this point, she has laid down certain rules to which she invariably adheres. She knows how to grant, or refuse, every thing that is asked of her, without betraying the least weakness in her compliance, or caprice in her denial. Whoever hath committed one infamous or wicked action, hath nothing to hope for from her but justice, and her pardon, if he has offended her; but never that favour and protection, which she can bestow on a worthier object. I heard her once refuse a favour, which depended on herself only, to a man of this stamp. “I wish you happy,” said she to him coldly, “but I shall not contribute any thing to make you so, lest I should put it in your power to injure others. There are too many honest people in the world, who require relief, for me to think of assisting you.” It is true this piece of just severity cost her dear, and it is but seldom she has occasion to exercise it. Her maxim is, to look upon all those as deserving people, of whose demerits she is not fully convinced; and there are few persons weak and wicked enough not to evade the full proofs of their guilt. She has

none of that indolent charity of the wealthy, who give money to the miserable, to be excused from attending to their distress; and know how to answer their petitions only by giving alms. Her purse is not inexhaustible, and since she is become the mother of a family, she regulates it with more economy. Of all the kinds of relief we may afford to the unhappy, the giving alms is certainly that which costs us least trouble; but it is also the most transitory and least serviceable to the object relieved: Eloisa does not seek to get rid of such objects, but to be useful to them.

Neither does she grant her recommendation, or exert her good offices, without first knowing whether the use intended to be made of her interest be just and reasonable. Her protection is never refused to any one, who really stands in need of, and deserves to obtain it: but for those who desire to raise themselves through fickleness or ambition only, she can very seldom be prevailed upon to give herself any trouble. The natural business of man is to cultivate the earth, and subsist on its produce. The peaceful inhabitant of the country needs only to know in what happiness consists, to be happy. All the real pleasures of humanity are within his reach; he feels only those pains which are inseparable from it, those pains which whoever seeks to remove will only change for others more severe. [74] His situation is the only necessary, the only useful one in life. He is never unhappy, but when others tyrannize over him, or seduce him by their vices. In agriculture and husbandry consists the real prosperity of a country, the greatness and strength which a people derive from themselves, that which depends, not on other nations, which is not obliged to attack others for its own preservation, but is productive of the surest means of its own defence. In making an estimate of the strength of a nation, a superficial observer would visit the court, the prince, his posts, his troops, his magazines and his fortified towns; but the true politician would take a survey of the country, and visit the cottages of the husbandmen. The former would only see what is already executed, but the latter what was capable of being put into execution.

On this principle they proceed here, and yet more so at Etange: they contribute as

much as possible to make the peasants happy in their condition, without ever assisting them to change it. The better, as well as the poorer, sort of people are equally desirous of sending their children to the cities, the one that they may study and become gentlemen, the others that they may find employment, and so ease their parents of the charge of maintaining them. The young people, on their part, have curiosity, and are generally fond of roving: the girls aspire to the dress and finery of the citizens; and the boys, most of them go into foreign service, thinking it better to return with the haughty and mean air of mercenaries, and a ridiculous contempt of their former condition, than with that love for their country and liberty which honourably distinguished their progenitors. It is the care of this benevolent family to remonstrate against these mistaken prejudices, to represent to the peasants the danger of their children's principles; the ill consequences of sending them from home, and the continual risks they run of losing their life, fortune and morals, where a thousand are ruined for one who does well. If after all they continue obstinate, they are left at their own indiscretion, to run into vice and misery; and the care, which was thrown away on them is turned upon those who have listened to reason. This is exerted in teaching them to honour their native condition, by seeming to honour it ourselves: we do not converse with peasants, indeed, in the stile of courts; but we treat them with a grave and distant familiarity, which, without raising any one out of his station, teaches them to respect ours. There is not one honest labourer in the village, who does not rise greatly in his own estimation, when an opportunity offers of our shewing the difference of our behaviour to him, and to such petty visitants, who come home to make a figure, for a day or two, and to obscure their relations. Mr. Wolmar and the Baron, when he is here, seldom fail of being present at the exercises and reviews of the militia of the village and parts adjacent: their presence has a great effect on the youth of the country, who are naturally of a martial and spirited temper, and are extremely delighted to see themselves honoured with the presence of veteran officers. They are still prouder of their own merit, when they see

soldiers retired from foreign service less expert than themselves: yet this they often do; for, do what you will, five pence a day, and the fear of being caned, will never produce that emulation which may be excited in a free man under arms, by the presence of his relations, his neighbours, his friends, his mistress, and the honour of his country.

Mrs. Wolmar's great maxim is, therefore, never to encourage any one to change his condition, but to contribute all in her power to make every one happy in his present station; being particularly solicitous to present the happiest of all situations, that of a peasant in a free state, from being despised in favour of other employments.

I remember, I one day made an objection on this subject founded on the different talents which nature seems to have bestowed on mankind, in order to fit them for different occupations, without any regard to their birth. This she obviated, however, by observing that there were two more material things to be consulted, before talents: these were virtue and happiness. Man, said she, is too noble a being to be made a mere tool of for the use of others: he ought not to be employed in what he is fit for, without consulting how far such employment is fit for him; for we are not made for our stations, but our stations for us. In the right distribution of things therefore, we should not adapt men to circumstances, but circumstances to men; we should not seek that employment for which a man is best adapted, but that which is best adapted to make him virtuous and happy. For it can never be right to destroy one human soul for the temporal advantage of others, nor to make any man a villain for the use of honest people. Now, out of a thousand persons, who leave their native villages, there are not ten of them but what are spoiled by going to town, and become even more profligate than those who initiate them into vice. Those, who succeed and make their fortunes, frequently compass it by base and dishonest means; while the unsuccessful, instead of returning to their former occupation, rather chuse to turn beggars and thieves. But, supposing that one out of the thousand resist the contagion of example, and perseveres in the sentiments of honesty, do you

think that upon the whole, his life is as happy as it might have been in the tranquil obscurity of his first condition.

It is no easy matter to discover the talents with which nature hath severally endowed us. On the contrary, it is very difficult to distinguish those of young persons the best educated and most attentively observed: how then shall a peasant, meanly bred, presume to judge of his own? There is nothing so equivocal as the genius frequently attributed to youth; the spirit of imitation has often a greater share in it than natural ability, and very often it depends more on accident than a determined inclination; nor does even inclination itself always determine the capacity. Real talents, or true genius, are attended with a certain simplicity of disposition makes it less restless and enterprising, less ready to thrust itself forward than a superficial and false one; which is nevertheless generally mistaken for the true, and consists only in a vain desire of making a figure without talents to support it. One of these geniuses hears the drum beat, and is immediately in idea a general; another sees a palace building, and directly commences architect. Thus Gustin, my gardener, from seeing some of my works, must needs learn to draw. I sent him to Lausanne to a master, and he imagines himself already a fine painter. The opportunity, and the desire of preferment, generally determine mens' profession. But it is not enough to be sensible of the bent of our genius, unless we are willing to pursue it. Will a prince turn coachman, because he is expert at driving a set of horses? Will a duke turn cook, because he is ingenious at inventing ragouts? Our talents all tend to preferment; no one pretends to those which would fit him for an inferior station: do you think this is agreeable to the order of nature? Suppose every one sensible of his own talents, and as willing to employ them, how is it possible? How could they surmount so many obstacles? How could they overcome so many unworthy competitors? He, who finds in himself the want of abilities, would call in subtilty and intrigue to his aid; and thereby frequently becomes an overmatch for others of greater capacity and sincerity. Have you not told me yourself a hundred times, that

the many establishments in favour of the arts have only been of prejudice to them? In multiplying indiscreetly the number of professors and academicians, true merit is lost in the crowd; and the honours, due to the most ingenious, are always bestowed on the most intriguing. Did there exist, indeed, a society, wherein the rank and employment of its respective members were exactly calculated to their talents and personal merit, every one might there aspire to the place he should be most fit for; but it is necessary to conduct ourselves by other rules, and give up that of abilities, in societies where the vilest of all talents is the only one that leads to fortune.

I will add further, continued she, that I cannot be persuaded of the utility of having so many different talents displayed. It seems necessary, the number of persons so qualified should be exactly proportioned to the wants of society; now if those only were appointed to cultivate the earth, who should have eminent talents for agriculture; or if all those were taken from that employment, who might be found more proper for some other, there would not remain a sufficient number of labourers to furnish the common necessaries of life. I am apt to think, therefore, that great talents in men are like great virtues in drugs, which nature has provided to cure our maladies, though its intention certainly was that we should never stand in need of them. In the vegetable creation there are plants which are poisonous: in the brutal animals that would tear us to pieces; and among mankind there are those who possess talents no less destructive to their species. Besides, if every thing were to be put to that use for which its qualities seem best adapted, it might be productive of more harm than good in the world. There are thousands of simple honest people, who have no occasion for a diversity of great talents; supporting themselves better by their simplicity, than others with all their ingenuity. But, in proportion as their morals are corrupted, their talents are displayed, as if to serve as a supplement to the virtues they have lost, and to oblige the vicious to be useful, in spite of themselves.

Another subject, on which we differed, was the relieving of beggars. As we live near a public road, great numbers are constantly passing by; and it is the custom of the

house to give to every one that asks. I represented to her, that this practice was not only throwing that money away, which might be charitably bestowed on persons in real want; but that it tended to multiply beggars and vagabonds, who take pleasure in that idle life, and, by rendering themselves a burthen to society, deprive it of their labour.

I see very well, says she, you have imbibed prejudices, by living in great cities, and some of those maxims by which your complaisant reasoners love to flatter the hard-heartedness of the wealthy: you make use of their very expressions. Do you think to degrade a poor wretch below a human being, by giving him the contemptuous name of beggar? Compassionate as you really are, how could you prevail on yourself to make use of it? Repeat it no more, my friend, it does not come well from your lips: believe me, it is more dishonourable for the cruel man by whom it is used, than for the unhappy wretch who bears it. I will not pretend to decide whether those, who thus inveigh against the giving alms, are right or wrong; but this I know, that Mr. Wolmar, whose good sense is not inferior to that of your philosophers, and who has frequently told me of the arguments they use to suppress their natural compassion and sensibility, has always appeared to despise them, and has never disapproved of my conduct. His own argument is simple. We permit, says he, and even support at a great expense, a multitude of useless professions; many of which serve only to spoil and corrupt our manners. Now, to look upon the profession of a beggar as a trade, so far are we from having any reason to fear the like corruption of manners from the exercise of it, that, on the contrary, it serves to excite in us those sentiments of humanity, which ought to unite all mankind. Again, if we look upon begging as a talent, why should I not reward the eloquence of a beggar, who has art enough to excite my compassion, and induce me to relieve him, as well as I do a comedian, who on the stage makes me shed a few fruitless tears? If the one makes me admire the good actions of others, the other induces me to do a good action myself: all, that we feel at the representation of a tragedy, goes off as soon as

we come out of the playhouse; but the remembrance of the unhappy object we have relieved gives continual pleasure. A great number of beggars may be burthensome to a state: but of how many professions, which are tolerated and encouraged, may we not say the fame? It belongs to the legislature and administration to take care there should be no beggars; but, in order to make them lay down their trade, [75] is it necessary to make all other ranks of people inhuman and unnatural? For my part, continued Eloisa, without knowing what the poor may be to the state, I know they are all my brethren, and that I cannot, without thinking myself inexcusable, refuse them the small relief they ask of me. The greater part of them, I own, are vagabonds; but I know too much of life, to be ignorant how many misfortunes may reduce an honest man to such a situation; and how can I be sure, that an unhappy stranger, who comes, in the name of God, to implore my assistance, and to beg a poor morsel of bread, is not such an honest man, ready to perish for want, and whom my refusal may drive to despair? The alms I distribute at the door are of no great value. A half-penny and a piece of bread are refused to nobody; and twice the proportion is always given to such as are maimed or otherwise evidently incapable of labour. Should they meet with the same relief at every house, which can afford it, it would be sufficient to support them on their journey; and that is all a needy traveller has a right to expect. But, supposing this was not enough to yield them any real help, it is at least a proof that we take some part in their distress; a sort of salutation that softens the rigour of refusing them more. A half-penny and a morsel of bread cost little more, and are a more civil answer, than a mere God help you; which is too often the only thing bestowed, as if the gifts of providence were not placed in the hands of men, or that heaven had any other store on earth than what is laid up in the coffers of the rich. In short, whatever we ought to think of such unfortunate wretches, and though nothing should in justice be given to common beggars, we ought at least, out of respect to ourselves, to take some notice of suffering humanity, and not harden our hearts at the sight of the miserable.

This is my behaviour to those, who, without any other subterfuge or pretext, come openly a begging. With respect to such as pretend to be workmen, and complain for want of employment, we have here tools of almost every kind for them, and we set them to work. By this means we assist them and put their industry to the proof; a circumstance which is now so well known that the lazy cheat never comes again to the gate.

It is thus, my Lord, this angelic creature always deduces something from her own virtues, to combat those vain subtilties, by which people of cruel dispositions palliate their vices. The solicitude and pains she takes to relieve the poor, are also ranked among her amusements, and take up great part of the time she can spare from her most important duties. After having performed her duty to others, she then thinks of herself; and the means she takes to render life agreeable may be reckoned among her virtues: so commendable are her constant motives of action, that moderation and good sense are always mixed with her pleasures! She is ambitious to please her husband, who always delights in seeing her chearful and gay: she is desirous of instilling into her children a taste for innocent pleasures, wherein moderation order and simplicity prevail, and secure the heart from the violence of impetuous passions. She amuses herself, therefore, to divert them, as the dove softens the grain to nourish the young ones.

Eloisa’s mind and body are equally sensible. The same delicacy prevails as well in her senses as her sentiments. She was formed to know and taste every pleasure. Virtue having been long esteemed by her as the most refined of all delights, in the peaceful enjoyment of that supreme pleasure, she debars herself of none that are consistent with it; but then her method of enjoyment resembles the austerity of self-denial: not indeed of that afflicting and painful self-denial, which is hurtful to nature, and which its author rejects as ridiculous homage; but of that slight and moderate restraint, by which the empire of reason is preserved; and which serves as a whet to pleasure by preventing disgust. She will have it, that every thing which

pleases the sense, and is not necessary to life, changes its nature, whenever it becomes habitual; that it ceases to be pleasant in becoming needful; that we thus by habit lay ourselves at once under a needless restraint and deprive ourselves of a real pleasure; and that the art of satisfying our desires lies not in indulging, but in suppressing, them. The method she takes to enhance the pleasures of the least amusement, is to deny herself the use of it twenty times for once that she enjoys it. Thus her mind preserves its first vigour; her taste is not spoiled by use; she has no need to excite it by excess; and I have often seen her take exquisite delight in a childish diversion, which would have been insipid to any other person on earth.

A still nobler object, which she proposes to herself from the exercise of this virtue, is that of remaining always mistress of herself, and thereby to accustom her passions to obedience, and to subject her inclinations to rule. This is a new way to be happy; for it is certain that we enjoy nothing with so little inquietude, as what we can part from without pain; and if the philosopher be happy, it is because he is the man from whom fortune can take the least.

But what appears to me the most singular in her moderation, is that she pursues it for the very same reasons which hurry the voluptuous into excess. Life is indeed short, says she, which is a reason for enjoying it to the end, and managing its duration in such a manner as to make the most of it. If one day’s indulgence and satiety deprives us of a whole year’s taste for enjoyment, it is bad philosophy to pursue our desires so far as they may be ready to lead us, without considering whether we may not out-live our faculties, and our hearts be exhausted before our time. I see that your common epicures, in order to let slip no opportunity of enjoyment, lose all; and, perpetually anxious in the midst of pleasures, can find no enjoyment in any. They lavish away the time of which they think they are economists, and ruin themselves, like misers, by not knowing how to give any thing away. For my part, I hold the opposite maxim; and should prefer, in this case, rather too much severity than relaxation. It sometimes happens that I break up a party of pleasure, for no other

reason than that it is too agreeable; and, by repeating it another time, have the satisfaction of enjoying it twice.

Upon such principles are the sweets of life, and the pleasures of mere amusement, regulated here. Amidst her various application to the several branches of her domestic employment, Eloisa takes particular care that the kitchen is not neglected. Her table is spread with abundance; but it is not the destructive abundance of fantastic luxury: all the viands are common, but excellent, in their kind; the cookery is simple, but exquisite. All that consists in appearance only, whose nicety depends on the fashion, all your delicate and far-fetched dishes, whose scarcity is their only value, are banished from the table of Eloisa. Among the most delicious also of those which are admitted, they daily abstain from some; which they reserve in order to give an air of festivity to those meals for which they were intended, and which are thereby rendered more agreeable, without being more costly. But of what kind, think you, are these dishes which are so carefully husbanded? Choice game? Sea-fish? Foreign produce? No. Something better than all that. They are perhaps a particular choice salad of the country; fine greens of our own gardens; fish of the lake, dressed in a peculiar manner; cheese from the mountains; a German party, or game caught by some of the domestics. The table is served in a modest and rural but agreeable manner, chearfulness and gratitude crowning the whole. Your gilt covers, round which the guests sit starving with hunger; your pompous glasses, stuck out with flowers for the desert, are never introduced here, to take up the place intended for victuals; we are entirely ignorant of the art of satisfying hunger by the eye. But then no where do they so well know how to add welcome to good chear, to eat a good deal without eating too much, to drink chearfully without intoxication, to sit so long at table without being tired, and to rise from it without disgust. On the first floor there is a little dining room, different from that in which we usually dine, which is on the ground floor. This room is built in the corner of the house, and has windows in two aspects: those on one side over-look the garden, beyond which we have a

prospect of the lake between the trees: on the other side, we have a fine view of a spacious vineyard, that begins to display the golden harvest which we shall reap in about two months. This room is small, but ornamented with every thing that can render it pleasant and agreeable. It is here Eloisa gives her little entertainments to her father, to her husband, to her cousin, to me, to herself, and sometimes to her children. When she orders the table to be spread there, we know immediately the design; and Mr. Wolmar has given it the name of the Saloon of Apollo: but this Saloon differs no less from that of Lucullus, in the choice of the persons entertained, than in that of the entertainment. Common guests are not admitted into it; we never dine there, when there are any strangers: it is the inviolable asylum of mutual confidence, friendship and liberty. The society of hearts is there joined to the social bond of the table; the entrance into it is a kind of initiation into the mysteries of a cordial intimacy; nor do any persons ever meet there but such as wish never to be separated. We wait impatiently for you, my Lord, who are to dine the very first day in the Apollo.

For my part, I was not at first admitted to that honour, which was reserved for me till after my return from Mrs. Orbe’s. Not that I imagined they could add any thing to the obliging reception I met with on my arrival; but the supper, made for me there, gave me other ideas. It is impossible to describe the delightful mixture of familiarity, chearfulness, and social ease, which I then experienced, and had never before tasted in my whole life. I found myself more at liberty without being told to assume it, and we seemed even to understand one another much better than before. The absence of the domestics, who were dismissed from their attendance, removed that reserve which I still felt at heart; and it was then that I first, at the instance of Eloisa, resumed the custom I had laid aside for many years, of drinking wine after meals.

I was enraptured at this repast, and wished that all our meals might have been made in the same manner. I knew nothing of this delightful room, said I to Mrs. Wolmar; why don’t you always eat here? See, replied she, how pretty it is! Would it not be a

pity to spoil it? This answer seemed too much out of character for me not to suspect she had some farther meaning. But why, added I, have you not the same conveniences below, that the servants might be sent away, and leave us to talk more at liberty? That, replied she, would be too agreeable, and the trouble of being always at ease is the greatest in the world. I immediately comprehended her system by this, and concluded that her art of managing her pleasures consisted in being sparing of them.

I think she dresses herself with more care than formerly; the only piece of vanity I ever reproached her for, being that of neglecting her dress. The haughty fair one had her reasons, and left me no pretext to disown her power. But, do all she could, my enchantment was too strong for me to think it natural; I was too obstinate in attributing her negligence to art. Not that the power of her charms is diminished; but she now disdains to exert it; and I should be apt to say, she affected a greater neatness in her dress that she might appear only a pretty woman, had I not discovered the reason for her present solicitude in this point. During the first two or three days I was mistaken; for, not reflecting that she was dressed in the same manner at my arrival, which was unexpected, I thought she had done it out of respect to me. I was undeceived, however, in the absence of Mr. Wolmar. For the next day she was not attired with that elegance, which so eminently distinguished her the preceding evening, nor with that affecting and voluptuous simplicity which formerly enchanted me; but with a certain modesty that speaks through the eyes to the heart, that inspires respect only, and to which beauty itself but gives additional authority. The dignity of wife and mother appeared in all her charms; the timid and affectionate looks she cast on me, were now mixed with an air of gravity and grandeur, which seemed to cast a veil over her features. In the mean time, she betrayed not the least alteration in her behaviour; her equality of temper, her candor knew nothing of affectation. She practiced only a talent natural to her sex, to change sometimes our sentiments and ideas of them, by a different dress, by a cap of this

form, or a gown of that colour. The day on which she expected her husband's return, she again found the art of adorning her natural charms without hiding them; she came from her toilet indeed a dazzling beauty, and I saw she was not less capable to outshine the most splendid dress, than to adorn the most simple. I could not help being vexed, when I reflected on the cause of her preparation.

This taste for ornament extends itself, from the mistress of the house, through all the family. The master, the children, the servants, the equipage, the building, the garden, the furniture, are all set off and kept in such order as shews what they are capable of, though magnificence is despised:——I do not mean true magnificence, and which consists less in the expense, than in the good order and noble disposition of things. [76]

For my own part, I must confess it appears to me a more grand and noble sight, to see a small number of people happy in themselves and in each other, in a plain modest family, than to see the most splendid palace filled with tumult and discord, and every one of its inhabitants taking advantage of the general disorder, and building up their own fortunes and happiness on the ruin of another. A well-governed private family forms a single object, agreeable and delightful to contemplate; whereas, in a riotous palace, we see only a confused assemblage of various objects, whose connection and dependence are merely apparent. At first sight, indeed, they seem operating to one end; but in examining them nearer, we are soon undeceived.

To consult only our most natural impressions, it should seem that, to despise luxury and parade, we need less of moderation than of taste. Symmetry and regularity are pleasing to every one. The picture of ease and happiness must affect every heart; but a vain pomp, which relates neither to regularity nor happiness, and has only the desire of making a figure in the eyes of others for its object, however favourable an idea it may excite in us of the person who displays it, can give little pleasure to the

spectator. But what is taste? Does not a hundred times more taste appear in the order and construction of plain and simple things, than in those which are over-loaded with finery? What is convenience? Is any thing in the world more inconvenient than pomp and pageantry? [77] What is grandeur? It is precisely the contrary. When I see the intention of an architect to build a large palace, I immediately ask myself why it is not larger? Why does not the man, who keeps fifty servants, if he aims at grandeur, keep an hundred? That fine silver plate, why is it not gold? The man who gilds his chariot, why does he not also gild the ceiling of his apartment? If his ceilings are gilt, why does not gild the roof too? He, who was desirous of building an high tower, was right in his intention to raise it up to heaven; otherwise it was to no purpose to build, as the point where he might at last stop, would only serve to shew, at the greater distance, his want of ability. O man! vain and feeble creature! Shew me thy power, and I will shew thee thy misery!

A regularity in the disposal of things, every one of which is of real use, and all confined to the necessaries of life, not only presents an agreeable prospect but as it pleases the eye, at the same time gives content to the heart. For a man views them always in a pleasing light, as relating to and sufficient for himself. The picture of his own wants or weakness does not appear, nor does the chearful prospect affect him with sorrowful reflections. I defy any sensible man to contemplate, for an hour, the palace of a prince, and the pomp which reigns there, without falling into melancholy reflections, and bemoaning the lot of humanity. On the contrary, the prospect of this house, with the uniform and simple life of its inhabitants, diffuse over the mind of the spectator a secret pleasure, which is perpetually increasing. A small number of good-natured people, united by their mutual wants and reciprocal benevolence, concur by their different employments in promoting the same end; every one, finding in his situation all that is requisite to contentment, and not desiring to change it, applies himself as if he thought to stay here all his life; the only ambition among them being that of properly discharging their respective duties. There is so much

moderation in those who command, and so much zeal in those who obey, that equals might agree to distribute the same employments among them, without any one having reason to complain of his lot. No one envies that of another; no one thinks of augmenting his fortune, but by adding to the common good: the master and mistress estimating their own happiness by that of their domestics and the people about them. One finds here nothing to add or diminish, because here is nothing, but what is useful, and that indeed is all that is to be found; insomuch that nothing is wanted which may not be had, and of that there is always a sufficiency. Suppose, now, to all this were added, lace, pictures, lustres, gilding; in a moment you would impoverish the scene. In seeing so much abundance in things necessary, and no mark of superfluity, one is now apt to think, that if those things were the objects of choice, which are not here, they would be had in the same abundance. In seeing also so plentiful a provision made for the poor, one is led to say, This house cannot contain its wealth. This seems to me to be true magnificence.

Such marks of opulence, however, surprized me, when I first heard what fortune must support it. You are ruining yourselves, said I to Mr. and Mrs. Wolmar; it is impossible so moderate a revenue can supply so much expense. They laughed at me, and soon convinced me, that, without retrenching any of their family expenses, they could, if they pleased, lay up money and increase their estate, instead of diminishing it. Our grand secret, to grow rich, said they, is to have as little to do with money as possible, and to avoid, as much as may be, those intermediate exchanges, which are made between the harvest and the consumption. None of those exchanges are made without some loss; and such losses, if multiplied, would reduce a very good estate to little or nothing, as by means of brokerage a valuable gold box may fetch in a sale the price only of a trifling toy. The expense of transporting our produce is avoided, by making use of some part on the spot, and that of exchange, by using others in their natural state. And as for the indispensable necessity of converting those in which we abound for such as we want, instead of making pecuniary bargains, we

endeavour to make real exchanges, in which the convenience of both parties supplies the place of profit.

I conceive, answered I, the advantages of this method; but it does not appear to me without inconvenience. For, besides the trouble to which it must subject you, the profit must be rather apparent than real, and what you lose in the management of your own estate, probably over-balances the profits the farmers would make of you. The peasants are better economists, both in the expenses of cultivation, and in gathering their produce, than you can be. That, replied, Mr. Wolmar, is a mistake; the peasant thinks less of augmenting the produce than of sparing his expenses, because the cost is more difficult for him to raise than the profits are useful. The tenant's view is not so much to increase the value of the land, as to lay out but little on it; and if he depends on any certain gain, it is less by improving the soil, than exhausting it. The best that can happen, is, that instead of exhausting, he quite neglects it. Thus, for the sake of a little ready money, gathered in with ease, an indolent proprietor prepares for himself, or his children, great losses, much trouble, and sometimes the ruin of his patrimony.

I do not deny, continued Mr. Wolmar, that I am at a much greater expense in the cultivation of my land, than a farmer would be; but then I myself reap the profit of his labour, and the culture being much better than his, my crop is proportionably larger: so that, though I am at a greater expense, I am still, upon the whole, a gainer. Besides, this excess of expense is only apparent, and is, in reality, productive of great economy; for, were we to let out our lands for others to cultivate, we should be ourselves idle: we must live in town, where the necessaries of life are dear; we must have amusements, that would cost us much more than those we take here. The business, which you call a trouble, is at once our duty and our delight; and, thanks to the regulation it is under, is never troublesome: on the contrary, it serves to employ us, instead of those destructive schemes of pleasure, which people in town run into, and which a country life prevents, whilst that which contributes to our happiness

becomes our amusement.

Look round you, continued he, and you will see nothing but what is useful; yet all these things cost little, and save a world of unnecessary expense. Our table is furnished with nothing but viands of our own growth; our dress and furniture are almost all composed of the manufactures of the country: nothing is despised with us because it is common, nor held in esteem because it is scarce. As every thing, that comes from abroad, is liable to be disguised and adulterated, we confine ourselves, as well through nicety as moderation, to the choice of the best home commodities, the quality of which is less dubious. Our viands are plain, but choice; and nothing is wanting to make ours a sumptuous table, but the transporting it a hundred leagues off; in which case every thing would be delicate, every thing would be rare, and even our trouts of the lake would be thought infinitely better, were they to be eaten at Paris.

We observe the same rule in the choice of our apparel, which you see is not neglected; but its elegance is the only thing we study, and not its cost, and much less its fashion. There is a wide difference between the price of opinion and real value. The latter, however, is all that Eloisa regards; in choosing a gown, she enquires not so much whether the pattern be old or new, as whether the stuff be good and becoming. The novelty of it is even sometimes the cause of her rejecting it, especially when it enhances the price, by giving it an imaginary value.

You should further consider, that the effect of every thing here arises less from itself than from its use, and its dependencies; insomuch that out of parts of little value, Eloisa has compounded a whole of great value. Taste delights in creating and stamping upon things a value of its own: as the laws of fashion are inconstant and destructive, hers is economical and lasting.

What true taste once approves must be always good, and though it be seldom in the mode, it is, on the other hand, never improper. Thus, in her modest simplicity, she

deduces, from the use and fitness of things, such sure and unalterable rules, as will stand their ground when the vanity of fashions is no more. The abundance of mere necessaries can never degenerate into abuse; for what is necessary has its natural bounds, and our real wants know no excess. One may lay out the price of twenty suits of cloaths in buying one, and eat up at a meal the income of a whole year; but we cannot wear two suits at one time, nor dine twice the same day. Thus the caprice of opinion is boundless, whereas nature confines us on all sides; and he, who, with a moderate fortune, contents himself with living well, will run no risk of ruin.

Hence, you see, continued the prudent Wolmar, in what manner a little economy and industry may lift us out of the reach of fortune. It depends only on ourselves to increase ours, without changing our manner of living; for we advance nothing but with a view of profit, and whatever we expend puts us soon in a condition to expend much more.

And yet, my Lord, nothing of all this appears at first sight: the general air of affluence, and profusion, hides that order and regularity to which it is owing. One must be here some time to perceive those sumptuary laws, which are productive of so much ease and pleasure; and it is with difficulty that one at first comprehends how they enjoy what they spare. On reflection, however, one's satisfaction increases, because it is plain that the source is inexhaustible, and that the art of enjoying life serves at the same time to prolong it. How can any one be weary of a state so conformable to that of nature? How can he waste his inheritance by improving it every day? How ruin his fortune, by spending only his income? When one year provides for the next, what can disturb the peace of the present? The fruits of their past labour support their present abundance, and those of their present labour provide a future plenty: they enjoy at once what is expended and what is received, and both past and future times unite in the security of the present.

I have looked into all the particulars of domestic management, and find the same

spirit extend itself throughout the whole. All their lace and embroidery are worked in the house; all their cloth is spun at home, or by poor women supported by their charity. Their wool is sent to the manufactories of the country, from whence they receive cloth, in exchange, for cloathing the servants. Their wine, oil, and bread, are all made at home; and they have woods, of which they cut down regularly what is necessary for firing. The butcher is paid in cattle, the grocer in corn, for the nourishment of his family; the wages of the workmen and the servants are paid out of the produce of the lands they cultivate; the rent of their houses in town serves to furnish those they inhabit in the country; the interest of their money in the public funds furnishes a subsistence for the masters, and also the little plate they have occasion for. The sale of the corn and wine, which remain, furnishes a fund for extraordinary expenses; a fund which Eloisa's prudence will never permit to be exhausted, and which her charity will not suffer to increase. She allows for matters of mere amusement the profits, only, of the labour done in the house, of the grubbing up uncultivated land, of planting trees, &c. Thus the produce and the labour always compensating each other, the balance cannot be disturbed; and it is impossible, from the nature of things, it should be destroyed.

Add to this, that the abstinence, which Eloisa imposes on herself, through that voluptuous temperance I have mentioned, is at once productive of new means of pleasure, and new resources of economy. For example, she is very fond of coffee, and, when her mother was living, drank it every day. But she has left off that practice, in order to heighten her taste for it, now drinking it only when she has company, or in her favourite dining room, in order to give her entertainments the air of a treat. This is a little indulgence which is the more agreeable, as it costs her little, and at the same time restrains and regulates her appetite. On the contrary, she studies to discover and gratify the taste of her father and husband with an unwearied attention; a charming prodigality which makes them like every thing so much the more, for the pleasure they see she takes in providing it. They both love to sit a little

after meals, in the manner of the Swiss; on which occasions, particularly after supper, she never fails to treat them with a bottle of wine more old and delicate than common. I was at first deceived by the fine names she gave to her wines, which, in sac, I found to be extremely good; and, drinking them as wines of the growth of the countries whose names they bore, I took Eloisa to task for so manifest a breach of her own maxims; but she laughed at me and put me in mind of a passage in Plutarch, where Flaminius compares the Asiatic troops of Antiochus, distinguished by a thousand barbarous names, to the several ragouts under which a friend of his had disguised one and the same kind of meat. It is just so, said she, with these foreign wines. The Lisbon, the Sherry, the Malaga, the Champagne, the Syracuse, which you have drank here with so much pleasure, are all, in fact, no other than wines of this country, and you see from hence the vineyard that produced them. If they are inferior in quality to the celebrated wines, whose names they bear, they are also without their inconveniences; and as one is certain of the materials of which they are composed, they may be drank with less danger. I have reason to believe, continued she, that my father and husband like them as well as more scarce and costly wines. Eloisa's wines, indeed, says Mr. Wolmar to me, have a taste which pleases us better than any others, and that arises from the pleasure she takes in preparing them. Ah! returned she, then they will be always exquisite.

You will judge whether, amidst such a variety of business, that indolence and want of employment, which make company, visitings, and such formal society necessary, can find any place here. We visit our neighbours, indeed, just enough to keep up an agreeable acquaintance, but too little to be slaves to each other's company. Our guests are always welcome, but are never invited or intreated. The rule here is to see just so much company as to prevent the losing a taste for retirement; rural occupation supplying the place of amusements: and to him, who finds an agreeable and peaceful society in his own family, all other company is insipid. The manner, however, in which we pass our time, is too simple and uniform to tempt many

people, but it is the disposition of those, who have adopted it, that makes it delightful. How can persons of a sound mind be wearied with discharging the most endearing and pleasing duties of humanity, and with rendering each other's lives mutually happy? Satisfied every night with the transactions of the day, Eloisa wishes for nothing different on the morrow. Her constant morning prayer is, that the present day may prove like the past. She is engaged perpetually in the same round of business, because no alteration would give her more pleasure. Thus, without doubt, she enjoys all the happiness of which human life is capable: for is not our being pleased with the continuation of our lot a certain sign that we are happy? One seldom sees in this place those knots of idle people, which are usually called good company; but then one beholds those who interest our affections infinitely more, such as peaceable peasants, without art, and without politeness; but honest, simple, and contented in their station: old officers retired from the service; merchants wearied with application to business, and tired of growing rich; prudent mothers of families, who bring their children to the school of modesty and good manners: such is the company Eloisa assembles about her. To these her husband sometimes adds some of those adventurers, reformed by age and experience, who, having purchased wisdom at their own cost, return, without reluctance, to cultivate their paternal soil, which they wish they had never left. When any one relates at table the occurrences of their lives, they consist not of the marvellous adventures of the wealthy Sindbad, recounting, in the midst of eastern pomp and effeminacy, how he acquired his vast wealth. Their tales are the simple narratives of men of sense, who, from the caprice of fortune, and the injustice of mankind, are disgusted with the vain pursuit of imaginary happiness, and have acquired a taste for the objects of true felicity.

Would you believe that even the conversation of peasants hath its charms for these elevated minds, of whom the philosopher himself might be glad to profit in wisdom? The judicious Wolmar discovers in their rural simplicity more characteristical distinction, more men that think for themselves, than under the uniform mask worn

in great cities, where every one appears what other people are, rather than what he is himself. The affectionate Eloisa finds their hearts susceptible of the smallest offers of kindness, and that they esteem themselves happy in the interest she takes in their happiness. Neither their hearts nor understandings are formed by art; they have not learned to model themselves after the fashion, and are less the creatures of men than those of nature.

Mr. Wolmar often picks up, in his rounds, some honest old peasant, whose experience and understanding give him great pleasure. He brings him home to Eloisa, by whom he is received in a manner which denotes, not her politeness, or the dignity of her station, but the benevolence and humanity of her character. The good man is kept to dinner; Eloisa placing him next herself, obligingly helping him, and asking kindly after his family and affairs. She smiles not at his embarrassment, nor takes notice of the rusticity of his manners; but by the ease of her own behaviour frees him from all restraint, maintaining throughout that tender and affectionate respect, which is due to an infirm old age, honoured by an irreproachable life. The venerable old man is enraptured, and, in the fullness of heart, seems to experience again the vivacity of youth. In drinking healths to a young and beautiful lady, his half-frozen blood grows warm; and he begins to talk of former times, the days of his youth, his amours, the campaigns he has made, the battles he has been in, of the magnanimity and feats of his fellow soldiers, of his return to his native country, of his wife, his children, his rural employments, the inconveniencies he has remarked, and the remedies he thinks may be applied to remove them: during which long detail, he often lets fall some excellent, moral, or useful lesson in agriculture, the dictates of age and experience; but be there even nothing in what he says, so long as he takes a pleasure in saying it, Eloisa would take pleasure in hearing.

After dinner she retires into her own apartment, to fetch some little present for the wife or daughter of the good old man. This is presented to him by the children, who in return receive some trifle of him, with which she had secretly provided him for

that purpose. Thus she initiates them betimes, to that intimate and pleasing benevolence, which knits the bond of society between persons of different conditions. The children are accordingly accustomed to respect old age, to esteem simplicity of manners, and to distinguish merit in all ranks of people. The young peasants, on the other hand, seeing their fathers thus entertained at a gentleman's house, and admitted to the master's table, take no offence at being themselves excluded; they think such exclusion not owing to their rank, but their age; they don't say, We are too poor, but, we are too young to be thus treated. Thus the honour done to their aged parents, and their hope of one day enjoying the same distinction, make them amends for being debarred from it at present, and excite them to become worthy of it. At his return home to his cottage, their delighted guest impatiently produces the presents he has brought his wife and children, who are over-joyed at the honour done them; the good old man, at the same time, eagerly relating to them the reception he met with, the dainties he has eaten, the wines he has tasted, the obliging discourse and conversation, the affability of the gentlefolks, and the assiduity of the servants; in the recital of all which, he enjoys it a second time, and the whole family partake of the honour done to their head. They join in concert to bless that illustrious house, which affords at once an example to the rich and an asylum for the poor, and whose generous inhabitants disdain not the indigent, but do honour to grey hairs. Such is the incense that is pleasing to benevolent minds; and, if there be any prayers to which heaven lends a gracious ear, they are certainly, not those which are offered up by meanness and flattery, in the hearing of the person prayed for, but such as the grateful and simple heart dictates in secret, beneath its own roof.

It is thus, that agreeable and affectionate sentiments give charms to a life, insipid to indifferent minds: it is thus, that business, labour, and retirement, become amusing by the art of managing them. A sound mind knows how to take delight in vulgar employments, as a healthful body relishes the most simple aliments. All those

indolent people, who are diverted with so much difficulty, owe their disgust to their vices, and lose their taste for pleasure only with that of their duty. As to Eloisa, it is directly contrary; the employment, which a certain languor of mind made her formerly neglect, becomes now interesting from the motive that excites to it: One must be totally insensible to be always without vivacity. She formerly sought solitude and retirement, in order to indulge her reflections on the object of her passion; at present she has acquired new activity, by having formed new and different connections. She is not one of those indolent mothers of a family, who are contented to study their duty when they should discharge it, and lose their time in inquiring after the business of others, which they should employ in dispatching their own. Eloisa practises at present what she learnt long ago. Her time for reading and study has given place to that of action. As she rises an hour later than her husband, so she goes an hour later to bed. This hour is the only time she employs in study; for the day is not too long for the various business in which she is engaged.

This, my Lord, is what I had to say to you concerning the economy of this house and of the retired life of those who govern it. Contented in their station, they peaceably enjoy its conveniences; satisfied with their fortune, they seek not to augment it for their children; but to leave them, with the inheritance they themselves received, an estate in good condition, affectionate servants, a taste for employment, order, moderation, and for every thing that can render delightful and agreeable to men of sense the enjoyment of a moderate fortune, as prudently preserved as honestly acquired.

Letter CXXXVII. To Lord B——.

We have had visitors for some days past. They left us yesterday, and we renewed that agreeable society subsisting between us three, which is by so much the more delightful, as there is nothing, even in the bottom of our hearts, that we desire to hide from each other. What a pleasure do I take, in resuming a new being, which

renders me worthy of your confidence. At every mark of esteem which I receive from Eloisa and her husband, I say to myself, with an air of self-sufficiency, At length I may venture to appear before Lord B——. It is with your assistance, it is under your eyes, that I hope to do honour to my present situation by my past follies. If an extinguished passion casts the mind into a state of dejection, a passion subdued adds to the consciousness of victory, a new elevation of sentiment, a more lively attachment to all that is sublime and beautiful. Shall I lose the fruit of a sacrifice, which hath cost me so dear? No, my Lord; I feel that, animated by your example, my heart is going to profit by all those arduous sentiments it has conquered. I feel, that it was necessary for me to be what I was, in order for me to become what I am.

After having thrown away six days, in frivolous conversation with persons indifferent to us, we passed yesterday morning, after the manner of the English, in company and silence; tasting at once the pleasure of being together and the sweetness of self-recollection. How small a part of mankind know any thing of the pleasures of this situation! I never saw a person in France who had the least idea of it. The conversation of friends, say they, can never be exhausted. It is true, the tongue may easily find words for common attachments: but friendship, my Lord, friendship! thou animating celestial sentiment! what language is worthy of thee? What tongue presumes to be thy interpreter? Can any thing spoken to a friend equal what is felt in his company? Good God I how many things are conveyed by a squeeze of the hand, by an animating look, by an eager embrace, by a sigh that rises from the bottom of the heart! And how cold in comparison is the first word which is spoken after that! I shall never forget the evenings I passed at Besancon, those delightful moments sacred to silence and friendship. Never, Oh B——! Thou noblest of men! sublimest of friends! No, never have I undervalued what you then did for me; never have my lips presumed to mention it. It is certain, that this state of contemplation affords the greatest delight to susceptible minds. But I have always observed, that impertinent visitors prevent one from enjoying it, and that friends

ought to be by themselves, to be at liberty to say nothing. At such a time one should be, if one may use the expression, collected in each other; the least avocation is destructive, the least constraint is insupportable. It is then so sweet to pronounce the dictates of the heart without restraint. It seems as if one dared to think freely only of what one can as freely speak; it seems as if the presence of a stranger restrained the sentiment, and compressed those hearts, which could so fully dictate themselves alone.

Two hours passed away in this silent extasy, more delightful, a thousand times, than the frigid repose of the deities of Epicurus. After breakfast, the children came, as usual, into the apartment of Eloisa; who, instead of retiring and shutting herself up with them in the work-room, according to custom, kept them with her, as if to make them some amends for the time they had lost without seeing us:——and we none of us parted till dinner. Harriot, who begins to know how to handle her needle, sat at work before Fanny, who was weaving lace, and rested her cushion on the back of her little chair. The two boys were busy at a table turning over the leaves of a book of prints, the subject of which the eldest explained to the younger; Harriot, who knew the whole by heart, being attentive to, and correcting him when wrong: and sometimes, pretending to be ignorant what figures they were at, she made it a pretence to rise, and go backwards and forwards from the chair to the table. During these little lessons, which were given and taken with little pains and less restraint, the younger boy was playing with some counters which he had secreted under the book. Mrs. Wolmar was at work on some embroidery near the window opposite the children, and her husband and I were still sitting at the tea-table, reading the Gazette, to which she gave but little attention. But when we came to the article, which mentions the illness of the king of France, and the singular attachment of his people, unequalled by any thing but that of the Romans for Germanicus, she made some reflections on the disposition of that affectionate and benevolent nation, whom all the world hate, whilst they have no hatred to any one; adding, that she envied only a

sovereign the power of making himself beloved. To this her husband replied, You have no need to envy a sovereign, who have so long had us all for your subjects. On which she turned her head, and cast a look on him so affecting and tender, that it struck me prodigiously. She said nothing indeed; for what could she say equal to such a look? Our eyes met: and I could perceive, by the manner in which her husband pressed my hand, that the same emotion had affected us all three, and that the delightful influence of her expansive heart diffused itself around, and triumphed over insensibility itself.

We were thus disposed when that silent scene began, of which I just now spoke: you may judge, that it was not the consequence of coldness or chagrin. It was first interrupted by the little management of the children; who, nevertheless, as soon as we left off speaking, moderated their prattle, as if afraid of disturbing the general silence. The little teacher was the first that lowered her voice, made signs to the others, and ran about on tip toe, while their play became the more diverting by this light constraint. This scene, which seemed to present itself in order to prolong our tenderness, produced its natural effect.

Ammutiscon le lingue, e parlan l’alme.

How many things may be said without opening one’s lips! How warm the sentiments that may be communicated, without the cold interposition of speech! Eloisa insensibly permitted her attention to be engaged by the same object. Her eyes were fixed on the three children; and her heart, ravished with the most enchanting extasy, animated her charming features with all the affecting sweetness of maternal tenderness.

Thus given up to this double contemplation, Wolmar and I were indulging our reveries, when the children put an end to them. The eldest, who was diverting himself with the prints, seeing the counters prevented his brother from being attentive, took an opportunity, when he had piled them up, to give them a knock and

throw them down on the floor. Marcellin fell a crying; and Eloisa, without troubling herself to quiet him, bid Fanny pick up the counters. The child was immediately hushed; the counters were nevertheless not brought him, nor did he begin to cry again as I expected. This circumstance, which however was nothing in itself, recalled to my mind a great many others, to which I had given no attention; and when I think of them, I don't remember ever to have seen children, with so little speaking to, give so little trouble. They hardly ever are out of their mother's sight, and yet one can hardly perceive they are in company. They are lively and playful, as children of their age should be, but never clamorous or teizing; they are already discreet, before they know what discretion is. But what surprizes me most, is, that all this appears to be brought about of itself; and that, with such an affectionate tenderness for her children, Eloisa seems to give herself so little concern about them. In fact, one never sees her very earnest to make them speak or hold their tongues, to make them do this or let that alone. She never disputes with them; she never contradicts them in their amusements: so that one would be apt to think she contented herself with seeing and loving them; and that when they have passed the day with her, she had discharged the whole duty of a mother towards them.

But, though this peaceable tranquility appears more agreeable in contemplation than the restless solicitude of other mothers, yet I was not a little surprized at an apparent indolence, so little agreeable to her character. I would have had her even a little discontented, amidst so many reasons to the contrary; so well doth a superfluous activity become maternal affection! I would willingly have attributed the goodness of the children to the care of the mother; and should have been glad to have observed more faults in them, that I might have seen her more solicitous to correct them.

Having busied myself with these reflections a long time in silence, I at last determined to communicate them to her. I see, said I, one day, that heaven rewards virtuous mothers, in the good disposition of their children; but the best disposition

must be cultivated. Their education ought to begin from the time of their birth. Can there be a time more proper to form their minds, than when they have received no impression that need to be effaced? If you give them up to themselves in their infancy, at what age do you expect them to be docile? While you have nothing else to teach them, you ought to teach them obedience. Why, returned she, do my children disobey me? That were difficult, said I, as you lay no commands upon them. On this she looked at her husband and laughed; then, taking me by the hand, she led me into the closet, that we might converse without being heard by the children.

Here, explaining her maxims at leisure, she discovered to me, under that air of negligence, the most vigilant attention of maternal tenderness. I was a long time, said she, of your opinion with regard to the premature instruction of children; and while I expected my first child, was anxious concerning the obligations I should soon have to discharge. I used often to speak to Mr. Wolmar on that subject. What better guide could I take than so sensible an observer, in whom the interest of a father was united to the indifference of a philosopher? He fulfilled, and indeed surpassed my expectations. He soon made me sensible, that the first and most important part of education, precisely that which all the world neglects, [78] is that of preparing a child to receive instruction.

The common error of parents, who pique themselves on their own knowledge, is to suppose their children capable of reasoning as soon as they are born, and to talk to them as if they were grown persons before they can speak. Reason is the instrument they use, whereas every other means ought first to be used in order to form that reason; for it is certain, that, of all the knowledge which men acquire, or are capable of acquiring, the art of reasoning is the last and most difficult to learn. By talking to them, at so early an age, in a language they do not understand, they learn to be satisfied with mere words; to talk to others in the same manner; to contradict every thing that is said to them; to think themselves as wise as their teachers: and all that

one thinks to obtain by reasonable motives, is in fact acquired only by those of fear or vanity.

The most consummate patience would be wearied out, by endeavouring to educate a child in this manner: and thus it is that, fatigued and disgusted with the perpetual importunity of their children, their parents, unable to support the noise and disorder they themselves have given rise to, are obliged to part with them, and to deliver them over to the care of a master; as if one could expect in a preceptor more patience and good-nature than in a father.

Nature, continued Eloisa, would have children be children before they are men. If we attempt to pervert that order, we produce only forward fruit, which has neither maturity nor flavour, and will soon decay; we raise young professors and old children. Infancy has a manner of perceiving, thinking and feeling, peculiar to itself. Nothing is more absurd than to think of substituting ours in its stead; and I would as soon expect a child of mine to be five foot high, as to have a mature judgment, at ten years old.

The understanding does not begin to form itself till after some years, and when the corporeal organs have acquired a certain confidence. The design of nature is therefore evidently to strengthen the body, before the mind is exercised. Children are always in motion; rest and reflection is inconsistent with their age; a studious and sedentary life would prevent their growth and injure their health; neither their body nor mind can support restraint. Shut up perpetually in a room with their books, they lose their vigour, become delicate, feeble, sickly, rather stupid than reasonable; and their minds suffer, during their whole lives, for the weakness of their bodies.

But, supposing such premature instruction were as profitable as it is really hurtful to their understandings, a very great inconvenience would attend the application of it to all indiscriminately, without regard to the particular genius of each. For, besides the constitution common to its species, every child at its birth possesses a peculiar

temperament, which determines its genius and character; and which it is improper either to pervert or restrain; the business of education being only to model and bring it to perfection. All these characters are, according to Mr. Wolmar, good in themselves: for nature, says he, makes no mistakes. [79] All the vices imputed to malignity of disposition are only the effect of the bad form it hath received. According to him, there is not a villain upon earth, whose natural propensity, well directed, might not have been productive of great virtues; nor is there a wrong-head in being, that might not have been of use to himself and society, had his natural talents taken a certain bias; just as deformed and monstrous images are rendered beautiful and proportionable, by placing them in a proper point of view. Every thing, says he, tends to the common good in the universal system of nature. Every man has his place assigned in the best order and arrangement of things; the business is to find out that place, and not to disturb such order. What must be the consequence then of an education begun in the cradle, and carried on always in the same manner, without regard to the vast diversity of temperaments and genius in mankind? Useless or hurtful instructions would be given to the greater part, while at the same time they are deprived of such as would be most useful and convenient; nature would be confined on every side, and the greatest qualities of the mind defaced, in order to substitute in their place mean and little ones, of no utility. By using indiscriminately the same means with different talents, the one serves to deface the other, and all are confounded together. Thus, after a great deal of pains thrown away in spoiling the natural endowments of children, we presently see those transitory and frivolous ones of education decay and vanish, while those of nature, being totally obscured, appear no more: and thus we lose at once what we have pulled down, and what we have raised up. In a word, in return for so much pains indiscreetly taken, all these little prodigies become wits without sense, and men, without merit, remarkable only for their weakness and insignificancy.

I understand your maxims, said I to Eloisa; but I know not how to reconcile them

with your own opinion on the little advantage arising from the display of the genius and natural talents of individuals, either respecting their own happiness or the real interests of society. Would it not be infinitely better to form a perfect model of a man of sense and virtue, and then to form every child by education after such a model, by animating one, retraining another, by regulating its passions, improving its understanding, and thus correcting nature?——Correcting nature! says Mr. Wolmar, interrupting me, that is a very fine expression; but before you make use of it, pray reply to what Eloisa has already advanced.

The most significant reply, as I thought, was to deny the principle on which her arguments were founded; which I accordingly did. You suppose, said I, that the diversity of temperament and genius, which distinguish individuals, is the immediate work of nature; whereas nothing is less evident. For, if our minds are naturally different, they must be unequal; and if nature has made them unequal, it must be by endowing some, in preference to others, with a more refined perception, a greater memory, or a greater capacity of attention. Now, as to perception and memory, it is proved by experience, that their different degrees of extent or perfection are not the standard of genius and abilities; and as to a capacity of attention, it depends solely on the force of the passions by which we are animated; and it is also proved that all mankind are by nature susceptible of passions, strong enough to excite in them that degree of attention necessary to a superiority of genius.

If a diversity of genius, therefore, instead of being derived from nature, be the effect of education; that is to say, of the different ideas and sentiments, which objects excite in us during our infancy, of the various circumstances in which we are engaged, and of all the impressions we receive; so far should we be from waiting to know the character of a child before we give it education, that we should, on the contrary, be in haste to form its character by giving it a proper education.

To this he replied, that it was not his way to deny the existence of any thing, because

he could not explain it. Look, says he, upon those two dogs in the court-yard. They are of the same litter; they have been fed and trained together; have never been parted; and yet one of them is a brisk, lively, good-natured, docible cur; while the other is lumpish, heavy, cross-grained, and incapable of learning any thing. Now their difference of temperament, only, can have produced in them that of character, as the difference of our interior organization produces in us that of our minds: in every other circumstance they have been alike.——Alike! interrupted I; what a vast difference may there not have been, though unobserved by you? How many minute objects may not have acted on the one, and not on the other! How many little circumstances may not have differently affected them, which you have not perceived! Very pretty indeed, says he; so, I find you reason like the astrologers; who, when two men are mentioned of different fortune yet born under the same aspect, deny the identity of circumstances. On the contrary, they maintain, that, on account of the rapidity of the heavenly motions, there must have been an immense distance between the themes, in the horoscope, of the one and the other; and that, if the precise moment of their births had been carefully noted, the objection had been converted into a proof.

But, pray, let us leave these subtilties, and confine ourselves to observation. This may teach us, indeed, that there are characters which are known almost at the birth, and children that may be studied at the breast of their nurses: but these are of a particular class, and receive their education in beginning to live. As for others, who are later known, to attempt to form their genius before their characters are distinguished, is to run a risk of spoiling what is good in their natural dispositions, and substituting what is worse in its place. Did not your master Plato maintain, that all the art of man, that all philosophy could not extract from the human mind what nature had not implanted there; as all the operations in chemistry are incapable of extracting from any mixture more gold than is already contained in it? This is not true of our sentiments or our ideas; but it is true of our disposition or capacity of

acquiring them. To change the genius, one must be able to change the interior organization of the body; to change a character, one must be capable of changing the temperament on which it depends. Have you ever heard of a passionate man's becoming patient and temperate, or of a frigid methodical genius having acquired a spirited imagination? For my own part, I think it would be just as easy to make a fair man brown, or a blockhead a man of sense. 'Tis in vain then to attempt to model different minds by one common standard. One may restrain, but we can never change them: one may hinder men from appearing what they are, but can never make them really otherwise; and, though they disguise their sentiments in the ordinary commerce of life, you will see them reassume their real characters on every important occasion. Besides, our business is not to change the character, and alter the natural disposition of the mind, but, on the contrary, to improve and prevent its degenerating; for by these means it is, that a man becomes what he is capable of being, and that the work of nature is compleatd by education. Now, before any character can be cultivated, it is necessary that it should be studied; that we should patiently wait its opening; that we should furnish occasions for it to display itself; and that we should forbear doing any thing, rather than doing wrong. To one genius it is necessary to give wings, and to another shackles; one should be spurred forward, another reined in; one should be encouraged, another intimidated; sometimes it should be checked, and at others assisted. One man is formed to extend human knowledge to the highest degree; to another it is even dangerous to learn to read. Let us wait for the opening of reason; it is that which displays the character, and gives it its true form: it is by that also it is cultivated, and there is no such thing as education before the understanding is ripe for instruction.

As to the maxims of Eloisa, which you think opposite to this doctrine, I see nothing in them contradictory to it: on the contrary, I find them, for my own part, perfectly compatible. Every man at his birth brings into the world with him, a genius, talents and character peculiar to himself. Those, who are destined to live a life of simplicity

in the country, have no need to display their talents in order to be happy: their unexerted faculties are like the gold mines of the Valais, which the public good will not permit to be opened. But in a more polished society, where the head is of more use than the hands, it is necessary that all the talents nature hath bestowed on men should be exerted; that they should be directed to that quarter, in which they can proceed the furthest; and above all, that their natural propensity should be encouraged by every thing which can make it useful. In the first case, the good of the species only is consulted; every one acts in the same manner; example is their only rule of action; habit their only talent; and no one exerts any other genius than that which is common to all: Whereas in the second case we consult the interest and capacity of individuals; if one man possess any talent superior to another, it is cultivated and pursued as far as it will reach; and if a man be possessed of adequate abilities, he may become the greatest of his species. These maxims are so little contradictory, that they have been put in practice in all ages. Instruct not therefore the children of the peasant, nor of the citizen, for you know not as yet what instruction is proper for them. In every case let the body be formed, till the judgment begins to appear: then is the time for cultivation.

All this would seem very well, said I, if I did not see one inconvenience, very prejudicial to the advantages you promise yourself from this method; and this is, that children, thus left to themselves, will get many bad habits, which can be prevented only by teaching them good ones. You may see such children readily contract all the bad practices they perceive in others, because such examples are easily followed, and never imitate the good ones, which would cost them more trouble. Accustomed to have every thing, and to do as they please on every occasion, they become mutinous, obstinate and intractable.——But, interrupted Mr. Wolmar, it appears to me that you have remarked the contrary in ours, and that this remark has given rise to this conversation. I must confess, answered I, this is the very thing which surprizes me. What can she have done to make them so tractable? What method hath

she taken to bring it about? What has she substituted instead of the yoke of discipline? A yoke much more inflexible, returned he immediately, that of necessity: but, in giving you an account of her conduct, you will be better able to comprehend her views. He then engaged Eloisa to explain her method of education; which, after a short pause, she did in the following manner.

“Happy, my dear friend, are those who are well-born! I lay not so great a stress as Mr. Wolmar does on my own endeavours. I doubt much, notwithstanding his maxims, that a good man can ever be made out of a child of a bad disposition and character. Convinced, nevertheless, of the excellence of his method, I endeavoured to regulate my conduct, in the government of my family, in every respect agreeable to him. My first hope is, that I shall never have a child of a vicious disposition; my second, that I shall be able to educate those God has given me, under the direction of their father, in such a manner, that they may one day have the happiness of possessing his virtues. To this end I have endeavoured to adopt his rules by giving them a principle less philosophical, and more agreeable to maternal affection; namely to make my children happy. This was the first prayer of my heart after I was a mother, and all the business of my life is to effect it. From the first time I held my eldest son in my arms, I have reflected that the state of infancy is almost a fourth part of the longest life; that men seldom pass through the other three fourths; and that it is a piece of cruel prudence to make that first part uneasy, in order to secure the happiness of the rest, which may never come. I reflected, that during the weakness of infancy, nature had oppressed children in so many different ways, that it would be barbarous to add to that oppression the empire of our caprices, by depriving them of a liberty so very much confined, and which they were so little capable of abusing. I resolved, therefore, to lay mine under as little constraint as possible; to leave them to the free exertion of all their little powers; and to suppress in them none of the emotions of nature. By these means I have already gained two great advantages; the one, that of preventing their opening minds from knowing any

thing of falsehood, vanity, anger, envy, and in a word of all those vices which are the consequences of subjection, and which one is obliged to have recourse to, when we would have children do what nature does not teach: the other is, that they are more at liberty to grow and gather strength, by the continual exercise which instinct directs them to. Accustomed, like the children of peasants, to expose themselves to the heat and cold, they grow as hardy; are equally capable of bearing the inclemencies of the weather; and become more robust as living more at their ease. This is the way to provide against the age of maturity, and the accidents of humanity. I have already told you, that I dislike that destructive pusillanimity, which, by dint of solicitude and care, enervates a child, torments it by constant restraint, confines it by a thousand vain precautions, and, in short, exposes it during its whole life to those inevitable dangers it is thus protected from but for a moment; and thus, in order to avoid catching a few colds while children, men lay up for themselves consumptions, pleurisies, and a world of other diseases.

What makes children, left thus to themselves, acquire the ill habits you speak of, is that, not contented with their own liberty, they endeavour to command others; which is owing to the absurd indulgence of too many fond mothers, who are to be pleased only by indulging all the fantastical desires of their children. I flatter myself, my friend, that you have seen in mine nothing like the desire of command and authority, even over the lowest domestic; and that you have seen me countenance as little the false complaisance and ceremony used to them. It is in this point, that I think I have taken a new and more certain method to make my children at once free, easy, obliging and tractable and that on a principle the most simple in the world, which is, by convincing them they are but children.

To consider the state of infancy in itself, is there a being in the universe more helpless or miserable; that lies more at the mercy of every thing about it; that has more need of pity and protection, than an infant? Does it not seem, that, on this account, the first noise which nature directs it to make is that of crying and

complaint? Does it not seem, that nature gives it an affecting and tender appearance, in order to engage every one who approaches it, to assist its weakness, and relieve its wants? What, therefore, can be more offensive, or contrary to order, than to see a child pert and imperious, commanding every one about him, and assuming impudently the tone of a master over those who, should they abandon him, would leave him to perish? Or can any thing be more absurd than to see parents approve such behaviour, and encourage their children to tyrannise over their nurses, till they are big enough to tyrannise over the parents themselves?

As to my part, I have spared no pains to prevent my son's acquiring the dangerous idea of command and servitude, and have never given him room to think himself attended more out of duty than pity. This point is, perhaps, the most difficult and important in education; nor can I well explain it, without entering into all those precautions which I have been obliged to take, to suppress in him that instinctive knowledge, which is so ready to distinguish the mercenary service of domestics from the tenderness of maternal solicitude.

One of my principal methods has been, as I have just observed, to convince him of the impossibility of his subsisting at his age, without our assistance. After which I had no great difficulty to shew him, that, in receiving assistance from others, we lay ourselves under obligations to them, and are in a state of dependence; and that the servants have a real superiority over him, because he cannot do without them, while he, on the contrary, can do them no service: so that instead of being vain of their attendance, he looks upon it with a sort of humiliation, as a mark of his weakness, and ardently wishes for the time, when he shall be big and strong enough to have the honour of serving himself."

These notions, I said, would be difficult to establish in families, where the father and mother themselves are waited on like children; but in this, where every person has some employment allotted him, even from the master and mistress to the lowest

domestic; where the intercourse between them apparently consists only of reciprocal services, I do not think it impossible: but I am at a loss to conceive how children, accustomed to have their real wants so readily satisfied, can be prevented from expecting the same gratification of their imaginary wants or humours; or how it is that they do not sometimes suffer from the humour of a servant, who may treat their real wants as imaginary ones.

“Oh, my friend, replied Mrs. Wolmar, an ignorant woman may frighten herself at any thing, or nothing. But the real wants of children, as well as grown persons, are very few; we ought rather to regard the duration of our ease than the gratifications of a single moment. Do you think, that a child, who lies under no restraint, can suffer so much from the humour of a governess, under the eye of its mother, as to hurt it? You imagine inconveniencies, which arise from vices already contracted, without reflecting that my care has been to prevent such vices from being contracted at all. Women naturally love children; and no misunderstanding would arise between them, except from the desire of one to subject the other to their caprices. Now that cannot happen here, neither on the part of the child, of whom nothing is required, nor on that of the governess, whom the child has no notion of commanding. I have in this acted directly contrary to other mothers, who in appearance would have their children obey the domestics, and in reality require the servants to obey the children: here neither of them command nor obey; but the child never meets with more complaisance, from any person, than he shews for them. Hence, perceiving that he has no authority over the people about him, he becomes tractable and obliging; in seeking to gain the esteem of others, he contracts an affection for them in turn: this is the infallible effect of self-love; and from this reciprocal affection, arising from the notion of equality, naturally result those virtues, which are constantly preached to children, without any effect.

I have thought, that the most essential part in the education of children, and which is seldom regarded in the best families, is to make them sensible of their inability,

weakness and dependence, and, as my husband called it, the heavy yoke of that necessity which nature has imposed on our species; and that, not only in order to shew them how much is done to alleviate the burthen of that yoke, but especially to instruct them betimes in what rank providence has placed them, that they may not presume too far above themselves, or be ignorant of the reciprocal duties of humanity.

Young people, who from their cradle have been brought up in ease and effeminacy, who have been caressed by every one, indulged in all their caprices, and have been used to obtain easily every thing they desired; enter upon the world with many impertinent prejudices, of which they are generally cured by frequent mortifications, affronts and chagrin. Now I would willingly spare my children this second kind of education, by giving them, at first, a just notion of things. I had indeed once-resolved to indulge my eldest son in every thing he wanted, from a persuasion that the first impulses of nature must be good and salutary: but I was not long in discovering, that children, conceiving from such treatment that they have a right to be obeyed, depart from a state of nature almost as soon as born; contracting our vices from our example, and theirs by our indiscretion. I saw, that if I indulged him in all his humours, they would only increase by such indulgence; that it was necessary to stop at some point, and that contradiction would be but the more mortifying, as he should be less accustomed to it: but that it might be less painful to him, I began to use him to it by degrees; and in order to prevent his tears and lamentations, I made every denial irrecoverable. It is true, I contradict him as little as possible, and never without due consideration. Whatever is given or permitted him, is done unconditionally and at the first instance; and in this we are indulgent enough: but he never gets any thing by importunity, neither his tears nor intreaties being of any effect. Of this he is now so well convinced, that he makes no use of them; he goes his way on the first word, and frets himself no more at seeing a box of sweetmeats taken away from him, than at seeing a bird fly away, which he would be

glad to catch; there appearing to him the same impossibility of having the one as the other; and so far from beating the chairs and tables, that he dares not lift his hand against those who oppose him. In every thing that displeases him, he feels the weight of necessity, the effect of his own weakness, but never——excuse me a moment, says she, seeing I was going to reply; I foresee your objection and am coming to it immediately.

The great cause of the ill humour of children is the care which is taken either to quiet or to aggravate them. They will sometimes cry for an hour, for no other reason in the world than because they perceive we would not have them. So long as we take notice of their crying, so long have they a reason for continuing to cry; but they will soon give over of themselves, when they see no notice is taken of them: for, old or young, nobody loves to throw away his trouble. This is exactly the case with my eldest boy, who was once the most peeviest little bawler, stunning the whole house with his cries; whereas now you can hardly hear there is a child in the house. He cries, indeed, when he is in pain; but then it is the voice of nature, which should never be restrained; and he is again hushed as soon as ever the pain is over. For this reason I pay great attention to his tears, as I am certain he never sheds them for nothing: and hence I have gained the advantage of being certain when he is in pain and when not; when he is well and when sick; an advantage which is lost with those who cry out of mere humour, and only in order to be appeased. I must confess, however, that this management is not to be expected from nurses and governesses: for, as nothing is more tiresome than to hear a child cry, and as these good women think of nothing but the time present, they do not foresee, that by quieting it to day, it will cry the more tomorrow. But what is still worse, this indulgence produces an obstinacy which is of more consequence as the child grows up. The very cause that makes it a squawler at three years of age, will make it stubborn and refractory at twelve, quarrelsome at twenty, imperious and insolent at thirty, and insupportable all its life.

I come now to your objection, added she, smiling. In every indulgence granted to children, they can easily see our desire to please them, and therefore they should be taught to suppose we have reason for refusing or complying with their requests. This is another advantage gained by making use of authority, rather than persuasion, on every necessary occasion. For, as it is impossible they can always be blind to our motives, it is natural for them to imagine that we have some reason for contradicting them, of which they are ignorant. On the contrary, when we have once submitted to their judgment, they will pretend to judge of every thing; and thus become cunning, deceitful, fruitful in shifts and chicanery, endeavouring to silence those who are weak enough to argue with them: for, when one is obliged to give them an account of things above their comprehension, they attribute the most prudent conduct to caprice, because they are incapable of understanding it. In a word, the only way to render children docile and capable of reasoning, is not to reason with them at all; but to convince them, that it is above their childish capacities; for they will always suppose the argument in their favour, unless you can give them good cause to think otherwise. They know very well that we are unwilling to displease them, when they are certain of our affection; and children are seldom mistaken in this particular: therefore, if I deny any thing to my children, I never reason with them; I never tell them why I do so or so; but I endeavour, as much as possible, that they should find it out; and that even after the affair is over. By these means they are accustomed to think that I never deny them any thing without a sufficient reason, though they cannot always see it.

On the same principle it is, that I never suffer my children to join in the conversation of grown persons, or foolishly imagine themselves upon an equality with them, because they are permitted to prattle. I would have them give a short and modest answer, when they are spoke to, but never to speak of their own head, or ask impertinent questions of persons so much older than themselves, to whom they ought to shew more respect.”

These, interrupted I, are very rigid rules, for so indulgent a mother as Eloisa. Pythagoras himself was not more severe with his disciples. You are not only afraid to treat them like men, but seem to be fearful lest they should too soon cease to be children. By what means can they acquire knowledge more certain and agreeably, than by asking questions of those who know better than themselves? What would the Parisian ladies think of your maxims, whose children are never thought to prattle too much or too long: they judge of their future understanding, by the nonsense and impertinence they utter when young? That may not be amiss, Mr. Wolmar will tell me, in a country where the merit of the people lies in chattering, and a man has no business to think, if he can but talk. But I cannot understand how Eloisa, who is so desirous of making the lives of her children happy, can reconcile that happiness with so much restraint; nor amidst so much confinement, what becomes of the liberty with which she pretends to indulge them.

“What, says she, with impatience, do we restrain their liberty, by preventing them from trespassing on ours? And cannot they be happy, truly, without a whole company’s sitting silent to admire their puerilities? To prevent the growth of their vanity is a surer means to effect their happiness: for the vanity of mankind is the source of their greatest misfortunes, and there is no person so great or so admired, whose vanity has not given him much more pain than pleasure. [80]

What can a child think of himself, when he sees a circle of sensible people listening to, admiring, and waiting impatiently for, his wit, and breaking out in raptures at every impertinent expression? Such false applause is enough to turn the heart of a grown person; judge then what effect it must have upon that of a child. It is with the prattle of children, as with the predictions in the Almanac. It would be strange, if amidst such a number of idle words, chance did not now and then jumble some of them into sense. Imagine the effect which such flattering exclamations must have on a simple mother, already too much flattered by her own heart. Think not, however that I am proof against this error, because I expose it. No, I see the fault, and yet am

guilty of it. But, if I sometimes admire the repartees of my son, I do it at least in secret. He will not learn to become a vain prater, by hearing me applaud him; nor will flatterers have the pleasure, in making me repeat them, of laughing at any weakness.

I remember one day, having company, I went out to give some necessary orders, and on my return found four or five great blockheads busy at play with my boy; they came immediately to tell me, with great rapture, the many pretty things he had been saying to them, and with which they seemed quite charmed. Gentlemen, said I, coldly, I doubt not but you know how to make puppets say very fine things; but I hope my children will one day be men, when they will be able to act and talk of themselves; I shall then be always glad to hear what they have said and done well. Seeing this manner of paying their court did not take, they since play with my children, but not as with Punchinello; and to say the truth, they are evidently better, since they have been less admired.

As to their asking questions, I do not prohibit it indiscriminately. I am the first to tell them to ask, softly, of their father or me, what they desire to know. But I do not permit them to break in upon a serious conversation, to trouble every body with the first piece of impertinence that comes into their heads. The art of asking questions is not quite so easy as may be imagined. It is rather that of a master, than of a scholar. The wise know and enquire, says the Indian proverb, but the ignorant know not even what to enquire after. For want of such previous instruction, children, when at liberty to ask questions as they please, never ask any but such as are frivolous and answer no purpose, or such difficult ones whose solution is beyond their comprehension. Thus, generally speaking, they learn more by the questions which are asked of them, than from those which they ask of others.

But were this method, of permitting them to ask questions, as useful as it is pretended to be, is not the first and most important science to them, that of being

modest and discreet? and is there any other that should be preferred to this? Of what use then is an unlimited freedom of speech to children, before the age at which it is proper for them to speak? Or the right of impertinently obliging persons to answer their childish questions? These little chattering querists ask questions, not so much for the sake of instruction, as to engage one's notice. This indulgence, therefore, is not so much the way to instruct them, as to render them conceited and vain; an inconvenience much greater, in my opinion, than the advantage they gain by it: for ignorance will by degrees diminish, but vanity will always increase.

The worst that can happen from too long a reserve, will be, that my son, when he comes to years of discretion, will be less fluent in speech, and may want that volubility of tongue, and multiplicity of words, which he might otherwise have acquired: but when we consider how much the custom of passing away life in idle prattle, impoverishes the understanding, this happy sterility of words appears rather an advantage than otherwise. Shall the organ of truth, the most worthy organ of man, the only one whose use distinguishes him from the brutes, shall this be prostituted to no better purposes than those, which are answered as well by the inarticulate sounds of other animals? He degrades himself even below them, when he speaks and says nothing; a man should preserve his dignity, as such, even in his lightest amusements. If it be thought polite to stun the company with idle prate, I think it a much greater instance of true politeness to let others speak before us; to pay a greater deference to what is said, than to what we say ourselves; and to let them see we respect them too much, to think they can be entertained by our nonsense. The good opinion of the world, that which makes us courted and caressed by others, is not obtained so much by displaying our own talents, as by giving others an opportunity of displaying theirs, and by placing our own modesty as a foil to their vanity. You need not be afraid that a man of sense, who is silent only from reserve and discretion, should ever be taken for a fool. It is impossible in any country whatever, that a man should be characterised by what he has not said, or that he should be despised for being

silent.

On the contrary, it may be generally observed, that people of few words impose silence on others who pay an extraordinary attention to what they say, which gives them every advantage of conversation. It is so difficult for the most sensible man to retain his presence of mind, during the hurry of a long discourse; so seldom that something does not escape him, that he afterwards repents of, that it is no wonder if he chuses to suppress what is pertinent, to avoid the risk of talking nonsense.

But there is a great difference between six years of age and twenty; my son will not be always a child, and in proportion as his understanding ripens, his father designs it shall be exercised. As to my part, my task does not extend so far. I may nurse children, but I have not the presumption to think of making them men. I hope, says she, looking at her husband, this will be the employment of more able heads. I am a woman and a mother, and know my place and my duty; and hence, I say again, it is not my duty to educate my sons, but to prepare them for being educated.

Nor do I any thing more in this than pursue the system of Mr. Wolmar, in every particular; which, the farther I proceed, the more reason I find to pronounce excellent and just. Observe my children, particularly the eldest; have you ever seen children more happy, more chearful, or less troublesome? You see them jump, and laugh, and run about all day, without incommoding any one. What pleasure, what independence, is their age capable of, which they do not enjoy, or which they abuse? They are under as little restraint in my presence, as when I am absent. On the contrary, they seem always at more liberty under the eye of their mother, than elsewhere; and, though I am the author of all the severity they undergo, they find me always more indulgent than any body else: for I cannot support the thought of their not loving me better than any other person in the world. The only rules imposed on them in our company, are those of liberty itself, viz they must lay the company under no greater restraint, than they themselves are under; they must not cry louder

than we talk; and as they are not obliged to concern themselves with us, they are not to expect our notice. Now, if ever they trespass against such equitable rules as these, all their punishment is, to be immediately sent away; and I make this a punishment, by contriving to render every other place disagreeable to them. Setting this restriction aside, they are, in a manner, quite unrestrained; we never oblige them to learn any thing; never tire them with fruitless corrections; never reprimand them for trifles; the only lessons which are given them being those of practice. Every person in the house, having my directions, is so discreet and careful in this business, that they leave me nothing to wish for; and, if any defect should arise, my own assiduity would easily repair it.

Yesterday, for example, the eldest boy, having taken a drum from his brother, set him a crying. Fanny said nothing to him, at the time; but about an hour after, when she saw him in the height of his amusement, she in her turn took it from him, which set him a crying also. What, said she, do you cry for? You took it just now, by force, from your brother, and now I take it from you; what have you to complain of? Am not I stronger than you? She then began to beat the drum, as if she took pleasure in it. So far all went well, till sometime after, she was going to give the drum to the younger, but I prevented her, as this was not acting naturally, and might create envy between the brothers. In losing the drum, the youngest submitted to the hard law of necessity; the elder, in having it taken from him, was sensible of his injustice: both knew their own weakness, and were in a moment reconciled."

A plan, so new, and so contrary to received opinions, at first surprized me. By dint of explanation, however, they at length represented it in an admirable light, and I was made sensible that the path of nature is the best. The only inconvenience, which I find in this method, and which appeared to me very great, was to neglect the only faculty which children possess in perfection, and which is only debilitated by their growing into years. Methinks, according to their own system of education, that the weaker the understanding, the more one ought to exercise and strengthen the

memory, which is then so proper to be exercised. It is that, said I, which ought to supply the place of reason; it is enriched by judgment. [81] The mind becomes heavy and dull by inaction. The seed takes no root in a soil badly prepared, and it is a strange manner of preparing children to become reasonable, by beginning to make them stupid. How! stupid! cried Mrs. Wolmar immediately. Do you confound two qualities so different, and almost contrary, as memory and judgment? As if an ill-digested and unconnected lumber of things, in a weak head, did not do more harm than good to the understanding. I confess, that, of all the faculties of the human mind, the memory is the first which opens itself, and is the most convenient to be cultivated in children: but which, in your opinion, should be preferred, that which is most easy for them to learn, or that which is most important for them to know? Consider the use which is generally made of this aptitude, the eternal constraint to which they are subject in order to display their memory, and then compare its utility to what they are made to suffer. Why should a child be compelled to study languages he will never talk, and that even before he has learnt his own tongue? Why should he be forced incessantly to make and repeat verses he does not understand, and whose harmony all lies at the end of his fingers; or be perplexed to death with circles and triangles, of which he has no idea; or why burthened with an infinity of names of towns and rivers, which he constantly mistakes, and learns anew every day? Is this to cultivate the memory to the improvement of the understanding, or is all such frivolous acquisition worth one of those many tears it costs him? Were all this, however, merely useless, I should not so much complain of it; but is it not pernicious to accustom a child to be satisfied with mere words? Must not such a heap of crude and indigested terms and notions be injurious to the formation of those primary ideas with which the human understanding ought first to be furnished? And would it not be better to have no memory at all, than to have it stuffed with such a heap of literary lumber, to the exclusion of necessary knowledge!

If nature has given to the brain of children that softness of texture, which renders it

proper to receive every impression, it is not fit for us to imprint the names of sovereigns, dates, terms of art, and other insignificant words of no meaning to them while young, nor of any use to them as they grow old: but it is our duty to trace out betimes all those ideas which are relative to the state and condition of humanity, those which relate to their duty and happiness, that they may serve to conduct them through life in a manner agreeable to their being and faculties. The memory of a child may be exercised, without poring over books. Every thing he sees, every thing he hears, catches his attention, and is stored up in his memory: he keeps a journal of the actions and conversation of men, and from every scene that presents itself, deduces something to enrich his memory. It is in the choice of objects, in the care to shew him such only as he ought to know, and to hide from him those of which he ought to be ignorant, that the true art of cultivating the memory consists.

You must not think, however, continued Eloisa, that we entirely neglect that care on which you think so much depends. A mother, if she is the least vigilant, holds in her hands the reins over the passions of her children. There are ways and means to excite in them a desire of instruction; and so far as they are compatible with the freedom of the child, and tend not to sow in him the seeds of vice, I readily employ them, without being chagrined if they are not attended with success: for there is always time enough for knowledge, but not a moment should be lost in forming the disposition. Mr. Wolmar lays, indeed, so great a stress on the first dawnings of reason, that he maintains, though his son should be totally ignorant at twelve years old, he might know not a whit the less at fifteen; without considering that nothing is less necessary than for a man to be a scholar, and nothing more so than for him to be just and prudent. You know that our eldest reads already tolerably well. I will tell you how he became fond of it; I had formed a design to repeat to him, from time to time, some fable out of la Fontaine, and had already begun, when he asked me one day, seriously, if ravens could talk. I saw immediately the difficulty of making him sensible of the difference between fable and falsehood, and laying aside la Fontaine,

got off as well as I could, being from that moment convinced that fables were only proper for grown persons, and that simple truth only should be repeated to children. In the room of la Fontaine, therefore, I substituted a collection of little interesting and instructive histories, taken mostly from the bible; and, finding he grew attentive to these tales, I composed others as entertaining as possible, and applicable to present circumstances. These I wrote out fair, in a fine book ornamented with prints, which I kept locked up, except at the times of reading. I read also but seldom, and never long at a time, repeating often the same story, and commenting a little, before I passed on to another. When I observed him particularly intent, I pretended to recollect some orders necessary to be given, and left the story unfinished just in the most interesting part, laying the book down negligently, and leaving it behind me. I was no sooner gone than he would take it up, and go to his Fanny or somebody else, begging them to read the remainder of the tale; but as nobody was at his command, and every one had his instructions, he was frequently refused. One would give him a flat denial, another had something else to do, a third muttered it out very low and badly, and a fourth would leave it in the middle, just as I had done before. When we saw him heartily wearied out with so much dependence, somebody intimated to him, to learn to read himself, and then he need not ask any body, but might turn it over at pleasure. He was greatly delighted with the scheme; but, where should he find any one obliging enough to instruct him? This was a new difficulty, which we took care, however, not to make too great. In spite of this precaution, he was tired out three or four times; but of this I took no other notice, than to endeavour to make my little histories the more amusing, which brought him again to the charge with so much ardour, that though it is not six months since he began to learn, he will be very soon able to read the whole collection, without any assistance.

It is in this manner I endeavour to excite his zeal and inclination, to attain such knowledge as requires application and patience; but though he learns to read, he gets no such knowledge from books, for there is no such in the books he reads, nor is the

application to it proper for children. I am desirous also of furnishing their heads with ideas, and not with words; for which reason I never set them to get any thing by heart.

Never! said I, interrupting her, that is saying a great deal. Surely you have taught him his prayers and his catechism! There you are mistaken, she replied. As to the article of prayers, I say mine, every morning and evening, aloud in the nursery, which is sufficient to teach them, without obliging them to learn. As to their catechism, they know not what it is. What! Eloisa! your children never learn their catechism! No, my friend, my children do not learn their catechism. Indeed! said I, quite surprized, so pious a mother!——I really do not comprehend you. Pray what is the reason they do not learn it? The reason is, said she, that I would have them some time or other believe it: I would have them be Christians. I understand you, I replied; you would not have their faith consist in mere words; you would have them believe, as well as know, the articles of their religion; and you judge very prudently that it is impossible for a man to believe what he does not understand. You are very difficult, said Mr. Wolmar, smiling; pray, were you a Christian by chance? I endeavour to be one, answered I, resolutely. I believe all that I understand of the Christian religion, and respect the rest, without rejecting it. Eloisa made me a sign of approbation, and we resumed the former subject of conversation; when, after explaining herself on several other subjects, and convincing me of her active and indefatigable maternal zeal, she concluded by observing, that her method exactly answered the two objects she proposed, namely, the permitting the natural disposition and character of her children to discover themselves, and empowering herself to study and examine it.

My children, continued she, lie under no manner of restraint, and yet cannot abuse their liberty. Their disposition can neither be depraved nor perverted; their bodies are left to grow, and their judgments to ripen at ease and leisure: subjection debases not their minds nor does flattery excite their self-love; they think themselves neither powerful men nor enslaved animals, but children happy and free. To guard them

from vices, not in their nature, they have in my opinion, a better preservative than lectures which they would not understand, or of which they would soon be tired. This consists in the good behaviour of those about them; in the good conversation they hear, which is so natural to them all, that they stand in no need of instruction; it consists in the peace and unity of which they are witnesses; in the harmony which is constantly observed, and in the conduct and conversation of every one around them. Nursed hitherto in natural simplicity, whence should they derive those vices, of which they have never seen the example? Whence those passions they have no opportunity to feel, those prejudices which nothing they observe can impress? You see they betray no bad inclination; they have adopted no erroneous notions. Their ignorance is not opinionated, their desires are not obstinate; their propensity to evil is prevented, nature is justified, and every thing serves to convince me, that the faults we accuse her of, are not those of nature but our own.

It is thus that, given up to the indulgence of their own inclinations, without disguise or alteration, our children do not take an external and artificial form, but preserve exactly that of their original character. It is thus that character daily unfolds itself to observation, and gives us an opportunity to study the workings of nature, even to her most secret principles. Sure of never being reprimanded or punished, they are ignorant of lying or concealing any thing from us; and in whatever they say, whether before us or among themselves, they discover, without restraint, whatever lies at the bottom of their hearts. Being left at full liberty to prattle all day long to each other, they are under no restraint before me. I never check them, enjoin them to silence, or indeed pretend to take notice of what they say, while they talk sometimes very blameably, though I seem to know nothing of the matter. At the same time, however, I listen to them with attention, and keep an exact account of all they say and do; for these are the natural productions of the soil which we are to cultivate. A naughty word in their mouths is a plant or seed foreign to the soil, sown by the vagrant wind: should I cut it off by a reprimand, it would not fail ere long to shoot forth again.

Instead of that, therefore, I look carefully to find its root, and pluck it up. I am only, said she, smiling, the servant of the gardener; I only weed the garden, by taking away the vicious plants: it is for him to cultivate the good ones.

It must be confessed also that with all the pains I may take, I ought to be well seconded to succeed, and that such success depends on a concurrence of circumstances, which is perhaps to be met with no where but here. The knowledge and discretion of a sensible father are required, to distinguish and point out in the midst of established prejudices, the true art of governing children from the time of their birth; his patience is required to carry it into execution, without ever contradicting his precepts by his practice; it is necessary that one's children should be happy in their birth, and that nature should have made them amiable; it is necessary to have none but sensible and well disposed servants about one, who will not fail to enter into the design of their matter. One brutal or servile domestic would be enough to spoil all. In short, when one thinks how many adventitious circumstances may injure the best designs, and spoil the best-concerted projects, one ought to be thankful to Providence for every thing that succeeds, and to confess that wisdom depends greatly on good fortune. Say rather, I replied, that good fortune depends on prudence. Don't you see that the concurrence of circumstances, on which you felicitate yourself, is your own doing, and that every one who approaches you is, in a manner, compelled to resemble you? O ye mothers of families! when you complain that your views, your endeavours, are not seconded, how little do you know your own power! Be but what you ought, and you will surmount all obstacles; you will oblige every one about you to discharge their duty, if you but discharge yours. Are not your rights those of nature? In spite of the maxims or practice of vice, these will be always respected by the human heart. Do you but aspire to be women and mothers, and the most gentle empire on earth will be also the most respectable.

In the close of our conversation Eloisa remarked that her task was become much easier since the arrival of Harriot. It is certain, said she, I should have had less

trouble if I would have excited a spirit of emulation between the brothers. But this step appeared to me too dangerous; I chose, therefore, rather to take more pains, and to run less risk. Harriot has made up for this; for, being of a different sex, their elder, fondly beloved by both, and very sensible for her age, I make a kind of governess of her, and with the more success, as her lessons are less suspected to be such.

As to herself, her education falls under my care; but the principles on which I proceed are so different, as to deserve particular explanation. Thus much, at least, I can say of her already, that it will be difficult to improve on the talents nature has given her, and that her merit is equal to her mother's, if her mother could possible have an equal.

We now, my Lord, expect you every day here, so that this should be my last letter. But I understand the reason of your stay with the army, and tremble for the consequence. Eloisa is no less uneasy, and desires you will oftener let her hear from you; conjuring you, at the same time, to think how much you endanger the peace of your friends, by exposing your person. For my part, I have nothing to say to you on this subject. Discharge your duty; the advice of pusillanimity is as foreign from my heart as from yours. I know too well, my dear B——, the only catastrophe worthy of you, is, to lose your life in the service and for the honour of your country; but ought you not to give some account of your days to him, who has preserved his only for your sake?

Volume IV

Letter CXL. From Lord B—— to Mrs. Orbe.

I find, by your two last letters, that a former one is missing, apparently the first you wrote me from the army, and in which you accounted for Mrs. Wolmar's secret uneasiness. Not having received that letter, I imagine it was in the mail of one of our

couriers, who was taken; you will, therefore, my friend, be pleased to re-communicate its contents. I am at a loss to conjecture what they were, and am uneasy about them. For again, I say, if happiness and peace dwell not in Eloisa's mind, I know not where they will find an asylum on earth. You may make her easy, as to the dangers she imagines we are here exposed to; we have to do with an enemy too expert to suffer us to pursue him. With a handful of men, he baffles our attempts, and deprives us of all opportunity to attack him. As we are very sanguine, however; we may probably raise difficulties which the best generals would not be able to surmount, and at length oblige the French to fight us. I foresee our first success will cost us dear, and that the victory we gained at Dettingen will make us lose one in Flanders. We make head against a very able commander. Nor is this all; he possesses the love and confidence of his troops, and the French soldiers, when they have a good opinion of their leader, are invincible. [82] On the contrary, they are good for so little when they are commanded by courtiers they despise, that frequently their enemies need only to watch the intrigues of the cabinet, and seize a proper opportunity, to vanquish with certainty the bravest people on the continent: this they very well know. The duke of Marlborough, taking notice of the good look and martial air of a French soldier, taken prisoner at the battle of Blenheim, told him, if the French army had been composed of fifty thousand such men as he, it would not have been so easily beaten; Zounds sir, replied the grenadier, there are men enough in it like me, but it wants such a man as you; now such a man at present commands the French troops, and is on our side wanting; but we have courage, and trouble ourselves little about that. At all events, however, I intend to see their operations for the remainder of the campaign, and am resolved not to leave the army till it goes into winter-quarters. We shall all be gainers by such a delay, the season being too far advanced for us to think of crossing the mountains this year. I shall spend the winter with you, and not go to Italy till the beginning of the spring. Tell Mr. and Mrs. Wolmar I have thus changed my design, that I may have more time to

contemplate that affecting picture you so pathetically describe, and that I may have also the opportunity to see Mrs. Orbe settled with them. Continue, my dear sir, to write with your usual punctuality, and you will do me a greater pleasure than ever: my equipage having been taken by the enemy, I have no books; but amuse myself in reading over your letters.

Letter CXLI. To Lord B——.

What pleasure does your lordship give me in acquainting me with your design of passing the winter with us at Clarens! but how dearly you make me pay for it by prolonging your stay at the army! what displeases me most, however, is to perceive that your resolution of making a campaign was fixed before we parted, though you mentioned nothing of it to me. I see, my lord, your reason for keeping it a secret, and cannot be pleased with you for it. Did you despise me so much as to think me unfit to accompany you? or have you ever known me mean enough to be attached to any thing I should prefer to the honour of dying with my friend? But if it was improper for me to follow you to the army, you should at least have left me in London; that would have displeased me less than your sending me hither.

By your last letter I am convinced that one of mine is indeed missing; the loss of which must have rendered the two succeeding ones in many respects obscure; but the necessary explanations to make them intelligible, shall be soon transmitted you. What is at present more particularly needful, is to remove your uneasiness concerning that of Mrs. Wolmar.

I shall not take upon me to give you a regular continuation of the discourse we had together after the departure of her husband. Many things have since intervened that make me forget great part of it, and it was resumed at so many different times during his absence, that I shall content myself, to avoid repetition, with giving you a summary of the whole.

In the first place she told me, that Mr. Wolmar, who neglected nothing in his power

to make her happy, was nevertheless the sole author of all her disquietude; and that the more sincere their mutual attachment grew, the greater was her affliction. Would you think it, my lord? This gentleman so prudent, so reasonable, so little addicted to any kind of vice, so little subject to the tyranny of human passions, knows nothing of that faith which gives virtue all its merit; and in the innocence of an irreproachable life, feels only at the bottom of his heart, the dreadful tranquillity of the unbeliever. The reflection which arises from this contrast, in principle and morals, but aggravates Eloisa's grief; she would think him even less culpable in disregarding the author of his Being, had he more reason to dread his anger, or presumption to brave his power. That the guilty should be led to appease their consciences at the expence of truth; that the pride of thinking differently from the vulgar may induce others to embrace error, she can readily conceive; but, continued she sighing, how a man so virtuous, and so little vain of his understanding, should be an infidel, surpasses my conception!

But before I proceed farther, it will be necessary to inform you of the peculiar character of this married couple. You are to conceive them as living solely for each other, and constantly taken up with their family; it being necessary to know the strictness of the union subsisting between them, to comprehend how their difference of sentiments, in this one article, is capable of disturbing it. Mr. Wolmar, educated in the customs of the Greek church, was not one of those who could support the absurdity of such ridiculous worship. His understanding, superior to the feeble yoke imposed on it, soon shook it off with contempt; rejecting, at the same time, every thing offered to his belief on such doubtful authority; thus forced in a manner into impiety, he degenerates into Atheism.

Having resided ever since in Roman-catholic countries, he has never been induced to a better opinion of Christianity, by what he found professed there. Their religion, he saw, tended only to the interest of their priests; that it consisted entirely of ridiculous grimaces, and a jargon of words without meaning. He perceived that men

of sense and probity were unanimously of his opinion, and that they did not scruple to say so; nay, that the clergy themselves, under the rose, ridiculed in private what they inculcated and taught in public; hence he has often assured me that, after having taken much time and pains in the search, he never met with above three priests in his life that believed a God. [83]

By endeavouring to set himself to rights in there matters, he afterwards bewildered himself in metaphysical enquiries; and, seeing only doubts and contradictions offer themselves on every side, advanced so far that, when he returned to the doctrines of Christianity, he came too late, and incapable of either belief or conviction, the best arguments appeared to him inconclusive. He finished his career, therefore, by equally opposing all religious tenets whatever; and was converted from Atheism only to become a Sceptic.

Such is the husband which heaven has destined to Eloisa; to her whose true faith and sincere piety cannot have escaped your observations; but to know how much her gentle soul is naturally inclined to devotion, requires that long intimacy with her, in which her cousin and I have lived. It might be said, no terrestrial object being equal to her tenderness, her excess of sensibility is reduced to ascend to its source: not like a saint Theresa, whose amorous heart only changes its object: hers is a heart truly inexhaustible, which neither love nor friendship can drain; but whose affections are still raised to the only Being, worthy her ardent love. [84] Her love to God does not detach her from his creatures; it gives her neither severity nor spleen. But all her affections, proceeding from the same cause, and tempering each other become more sweet and attracting; she would, I believe, be less devout, if her love toward her husband, her children, her cousin, and me were less than it is. What is very singular, also, is that she knows but little of her own heart; and even complains that she finds in herself, a soul barren of tenderness and incapable of love to the sublimest object.——“Do what you will, she often says, the heart is affected only by the interposition of the senses, or the assistance of the imagination; and how shall we

see or imagine the immensity of the Supreme Being? [85] When I would raise myself up to the deity, I know no longer where I am; perceiving no relation between us, I know not how to reach him, I neither see nor feel anything, I drop into a kind of annihilation; and, if I may venture to judge of others by myself, I should apprehend the ecstasies of the mystics are no less owing to the fulness of the heart than the emptiness of the head."

"What must I do then, added she, to get rid of these delusions of a wandering mind? I substitute a less refined worship, but within the reach of my comprehension, in the room of those sublime contemplations, which surpass my mental faculties. With regret I debase the majesty of the divinity, and interpose perceptible objects between the deity and my feeble senses; not being able to contemplate his essence, I contemplate at least his works, and admire his goodness; but whatever method I take, instead of that pure love and affection he demands, it is only an interested gratitude I have to offer him."

Thus, every thing is productive of sentiment in a susceptible mind; the whole universe presenting to Eloisa, nothing but what is a subject for love and gratitude. On every side she sees and adores the benevolent hand of providence; her children are pledges committed by it to her care; she receives its gifts, in the produce of the earth; she sees her table covered by its bounty; she sleeps under its protection; she awakes in peace under its care; she is instructed by its chastisements, is made happy by its favours: all the benefits she reaps, all the blessings she enjoys, are so many different subjects for adoration and praise. If the attributes of the divinity are beyond her feeble sight, she feels in every part of the creation, the common father of mankind. To honour thus the supreme benevolence, is it not to serve as much as possible an infinite Being?

Think, my lord, what pain it must give a woman of such a disposition, to spend a life of retirement with a man who, while he forms a part of her existence, cannot

partake, of that hope which makes her existence dear; not to be able to join him in praise and gratitude to the deity, nor to converge with him on the blessed futurity we have to hope from his goodness! to see him insensible, in doing good, to every thing which should make virtue agreeable to us; and, with the strangest absurdity, thinking like an infidel and acting as a Christian. Imagine her walking abroad with her husband; the one admiring, in the beautiful verdure of spring, or golden fruits of autumn, the power and beneficence of the great Creator of all things; the other seeing in them nothing but a fortuitous combination of atoms, united only by chance. Imagine to yourself the situation of a married couple, having a sincere regard for each other, who, for fear of giving offence, dare not indulge themselves in such sentiments or reflections as the object around them inspire; but who are bound in duty, even from their reciprocal affections, to lay themselves under continual restraint. Eloisa and I hardly ever walk out together, but some striking or picturesque object puts her in mind of this disagreeable circumstance. Alas! said she with great emotion to me, one day, this beautiful prospect before us, so lively, so animating in our eyes, is a dead and lifeless scene in those of the unfortunate Wolmar. In all that harmony of created beings which nature displays, in vain do they unite to speak their Maker’s praise: Mr. Wolmar perceives only a profound and eternal silence.

You who know Eloisa, who know what delight her communicative mind takes in imparting its sentiments; think what she must suffer by such constraint, even though it were attended with no other inconvenience, than that unsocial reserve which is peculiarly disagreeable between two persons so intimately connected. But Eloisa has much greater cause of uneasiness. In vain does she oppose those involuntary terrors, those dreadful ideas that rush upon her mind. They return with redoubled force, and disturb every moment of her life. How horrid must it be for such an affectionate wife to think the supreme Being is the avenger of his offended attributes! to think the happiness of him on whom her own depends must end with his life; and to behold a reprobate of God in the father of her children! all her sweetness of disposition can

hardly preserve her from falling into despair at this horrible idea; her religion only, which imbitters the infidelity of her husband, yielding her strength to support it. If heaven, says she sometimes, refuses me the conversion of this honest man, I have but one blessing to ask; which is that I may die before him.

Such, my lord, is the too just cause of Eloisa's chagrin; such is the secret affliction which preys on her mind, and is aggravated by the care she takes to conceal it. Atheism, which stalks abroad undisguised among the Papists, is obliged to hide its head in every country, where reason, giving a sanction to religion, deprives infidels of all excuse. Its principles are naturally destructive; and, though they find partisans among the rich and great, who promote them, they are held in the utmost horror by an oppress'd and miserable people; who, seeing their tyrants thus freed from the only curb to restrain their insolence, comfort themselves with the hope of another life, their only consolation in this. Mrs. Wolmar, foreseeing the ill-consequences of her husband's scepticism, and being desirous to preserve her children from the bad effects of so dangerous an example, prevailed on him to keep his principles a secret; to which she found no great trouble to persuade a man who, though honest and sincere, is yet discreet, unaffected, without vanity, and far from wishing to deprive others of a blessing which he himself cannot enjoy. In consequence of this, he keeps his tenets to himself; he goes to church with us; conforms himself to custom; and without making a verbal confession of what he does not believe, avoids giving scandal, and pays all that respect to the established religion of the country which the state has a right to demand of its citizens.

They have been married now almost eight years, during which time Mrs. Orbe only has been in the secret; nor probably would she of herself ever have discovered it. Such care indeed is taken to save appearances, and with so little affectation, that, after having spent six weeks together in the greatest intimacy, I had not the least suspicion; and should perhaps never have known Mr. Wolmar's sentiments on religious matters, if Eloisa herself had not apprized me of them.

Several motives determined her to that confidence: In the first place, a too great reserve would have been incompatible with the friendship that subsists between us. Again, it would be only aggravating her uneasiness at her own cost, to deny herself the consolation of sharing it with a friend. She was, besides, unwilling that my presence would be long an obstacle to the conversation they frequently held together on a subject she had so much at heart. In short, knowing you intended soon to join us here, she was desirous, with the consent of her husband, that you should be previously made acquainted with his sentiments; as she hopes to find from your prudence and abilities, a supplement to our hitherto fruitless efforts, worthy of your character.

The opportunity she laid hold of to place this confidence in me, made me suspect also another reason, which however she herself never insinuated. Her husband has just left us; we lived formerly together; our hearts had been enamoured of each other; they still remembered their former transports; had they now forgot themselves but for a moment, we had been plunged into guilt and infamy. I saw plainly she was fearful of our private conversations, and sought to prevent the consequences she feared; and I was myself too well convinced, by the remembrance of what happened at Meillerie, that they who consider least in themselves are the safest to be trusted.

Under these groundless apprehensions, which her natural timidity inspired, she conceived she could take no better precaution than always to have a witness to our conversation, whose presence could not fail of being respected; and to call in, as a third person, the awful and upright judge, who searches the heart, and is privy to the most secret actions of men. Thus, committing herself to the immediate protection of the divinity, I found the deity always between us. What criminal desire could ever assail such a safeguard? my heart grew refined by her zeal, and I partook of her virtue.

Thus, the gravest topics of discourse took up almost all our private conferences in

the absence of her husband; and since his return, we have resumed them frequently in his presence. He attends to our conversation, as if he was not at all concerned; and, without despising our endeavours, sometimes advises us in our method of argument. It is this which makes me despair of success; for had he less sincerity, one might attack that vicious faculty of the mind that nourishes his infidelity; but, if we are to convince him by dint of reasoning, where shall we find information that has escaped his knowledge, or arguments that have eluded his sagacity? For my part, when I have undertaken to dispute with him, I have found that all mine had been before exhausted to no purpose by Eloisa; and that my reasoning fell far short of that pathetic eloquence which dictated by the heart, flowed in persuasive accents from her tongue. I fear, my lord, we shall never make a convert of this man. He is too frigid, not immoral; his passions are not to be moved; sensibility, that innate proof of the truth of religion, is wanting; and the want of this alone is enough to invalidate all others.

Notwithstanding Eloisa's care to disguise her uneasiness from him, he knows and partakes of it; his discernment will not permit him to be imposed on. His own chagrin therefore, on account of hers, is but too apparent. Hence he has been tempted several times, she told me, to affect a change of sentiments; and, for the sake of Eloisa's peace, to adopt tenets he could not in fact believe: but his soul was above the meanness of hypocrisy. This dissimulation, instead of imposing on Eloisa, would only have afforded a new cause of sorrow. That sincerity, that frankness, that union of hearts, which now comfort them under their afflictions, would then have no more subsisted between them. Was it by making himself less worthy her esteem that he could hope to calm her fears? No, instead therefore of deceiving her, he tells her sincerely his thoughts; but this he does in a manner so simple and unaffected, so little disdainful of received opinions, so unlike that ironical, contemptuous behaviour of free-thinkers, that such melancholy confessions are extremely afflicting. As she cannot, however, inspire her husband with that faith and hope,

with which she herself is animated, she studies with the more assiduity to indulge him, in all those transient pleasures to which his happiness is confined. Alas! says she weeping, if the poor unfortunate has his heaven in this life, let us make it, at, least, as agreeable to him as possible! [86]

That veil of sorrow, which this difference in opinion throws over their union, gives a farther proof of the irresistible ascendant of Eloisa, in the consolation with which that affliction is tempered, and which perhaps no other person in the world would be able to apply. All their altercations, all their disputes, on this important point, so far from giving rise to ill nature, contempt, or anger, generally end in some affecting scene which the more endears them to each other.

Our conversation falling yesterday upon the same subject, as it frequently does when we three are by ourselves, we were led into a dispute concerning the origin of evil; in which I endeavoured to prove, that no absolute or general evil existed in the system of nature; but that even particular and relative evils were much less in reality, than in appearance; and that, on the whole, they were more than recompensed by our particular and relative good. As an example of this, I appealed to Mr. Wolmar himself, and, penetrated with a sense of the happiness of his situation, I described it so justly, and in such agreeable colours, that he seemed himself affected with the description. “Such,” says he, interrupting me, “are the delusive arguments of Eloisa: she always substitutes sentiment in the place of reason, and argues so affectingly, that I cannot help embracing her at every reply: Was it not her philosophical preceptor,” added he, smiling, “that taught her this manner of reasoning?” Two months before, this piece of pleasantry would have cruelly disconcerted me; but my first embarrassment was now over, and I joined in the laugh: nor did Eloisa, tho’ she blush’d a little, appear any more embarrassed than myself. We continued the dispute. Wolmar, not contending about the quantity of evil, contented himself with observing that whether little or much, evil still existed; and thence inferred the want either of power, wisdom, or goodness, in the first cause. I, on my part, stove to

deduce the origin of physical evil from the properties of matter, and of moral evil from the free agency of man. I advanced, that nothing was impossible to the deity, except the creation of substances as perfect and exempt from evil as himself. We were in the heat of our dispute when I perceived Eloisa had left us. “Can you guess whither she is gone?” said her husband, seeing me look around for her. “I suppose,” said I, “to give some orders in her family.” “No,” replied he, “she would not have left us at this time for that. Business of that kind is, I know not how, transacted without my ever seeing her interfere.” “Then she is gone to the nursery?” “No; her children are not more at her heart, than my conversion.” “Well then,” said I, “I know not what she is gone about; but I am well assured she is employed in some useful concern.” “Still less,” said he coldly; “come, come along; you shall see if I guess right.”

He then stept softly along the room, and I followed him in the same manner: when, coming to the door of Eloisa’s closet, and finding it shut, he threw it suddenly open. Oh! my lord! what a sight did this present us! Eloisa on her knees, her hands lifted up to heaven, and her face bathed in tears! She rose up precipitately, wiping her eyes, hiding her face, and trying to escape us: never did I see so affecting a confusion. Her husband did not give her time to get away; but ran to her, in a kind of transport. “Ah, my dear!” said he, embracing her, “even the fervency of your prayers betrays the weakness of your cause: what prevents their efficacy? if your desires were heard, they would presently be granted.” “I doubt not,” said she, with a devout confidence, “but they will be granted; how soon or late, I leave to heaven. Could I obtain it, at the expense of my life, I should lay it down with pleasure, and think the last the best employed of all my days.”

Come, my lord, leave those scenes of destruction you are now engaged in, and act a nobler part. Can a philosopher prefer the honour of destroying mankind, to the virtue of endeavouring to save them? [87]

Letter CXLII. To Lord B——.

What! my lord, after being absent a whole campaign, must you take a journey to Paris? Have you then entirely forgotten Clarens, and its inhabitants? Are we less dear to you than my lord H——? or, are you more necessary to that friend, than to those who expect you here? you oblige us to oppose our wishes to yours, and make me in particular lament, that I have not interest enough at the court of France, to prevent your obtaining the passports you wait for. But, no matter; go, visit your worthy countryman. In spite of you both, we will be revenged of you for the preference given him; for, whatever pleasure you may enjoy in his company, I know that, when you come to be with us, you will regret the time you staid away.

On receiving your letter, I at first suspected you were charged with some secret commission. If peace were in view, where could be found a more worthy mediator? But when do kings put their confidence in men of worth? Dare they listen to the truth? do they know how to respect true merit? No, my dear Lord B——, you are not made for a minister of state; and I think too well of you to imagine, if you had not been born a peer, you would ever have risen to that dignity. Come, come, my friend, you will be better at Clarens, than at court. What an agreeable winter shall we pass together, if the hope of seeing you here does not deceive me! our happiness is every day preparing, by the arrival of one or other of those privileged minds, who are so dear to each other, so worthy of each other's esteem, and who seem only to wait for you to be able to live without all the rest of the world. On hearing what a lucky accident brought hither the baron's adversary, you foresaw the consequences of that rencounter; it has really fallen out as you foretold. That old litigant, tho' almost as obstinate and inflexible as his opponent, could not resist the ascendant we got over him. After seeing and conversing with Eloisa, he began to be ashamed of contending with her father; and on leaving her, set out for Bern, in so favourable a disposition, that we hear an accommodation is far advanced, and from the baron's last letter expect his return home in a few days. This you will already have been told

by Mr. Wolmar: but probably you do not yet know that Mrs. Orbe, having settled her affairs, arrived here on Thursday last, and resides entirely at the house of her friend. As I knew beforehand the day of her arrival, I set out to meet her, unknown to Mrs. Wolmar, whom she had a mind to surprize: we met on this side Lutry and returned together.

I think I never saw her so sprightly and agreeable; but unequal, absent, giving little attention to any thing, and seldom replying; talking by fits and starts; in a word, given up entirely to that restlessness which is natural to us, when just on the point of obtaining what we have long ardently desired. One would have thought, every minute, that she was afraid of being obliged to return. Her journey, tho' so long deferred, was undertaken so precipitately, that it almost turned the heads of both mistress and domestics. A whimsical disorder appeared throughout the whole of her little baggage. If her woman imagined, as she did every now and then, that she had left something behind, Clara as constantly assured her she had put it into the seat of the coach where, upon farther enquiry, it was not to be found.

As she was unwilling Eloisa should hear the rattling of her coach, she got out in the avenue before we came to the gate; and, skudding across the courtyard like a sylph, ran upstairs with so much precipitation that she was obliged to stop and take breath on the first landing place, before she could get up the next flight. Mr. Wolmar came out to meet her, but she was in too much hurry to speak to him. On opening the door of Eloisa's apartment, I saw her sitting near the window, with the little Harriot on her knee. Clara had prepared for her a fine compliment, in her way, a compound of affection and pleasantry; but, on setting her foot over the threshold, compliment and pleasantry were all forgotten; she flew forward to embrace her friend with a transport impossible to be described, crying out ah! my dear, dear cousin! Harriot, seeing her mother, fled to meet her, and crying out Mamma, Mamma, ran with so much force against her, that the poor child fell backwards on the floor. The effect of the sudden appearance of Clara, the fall of Harriot, the joy, the apprehensions, that

seized upon Eloisa at that instant, made her give a violent shriek, and faint away. Clara was going to lift up the child when she saw her friend turn pale, which made her hesitate whom to assist; till, seeing me take up Harriot, she flew to the relief of Eloisa; but, in endeavouring to recover her, sunk down likewise in a swoon by the side of her friend.

The child, seeing them both without motion, made such loud lamentations as soon brought the little Frenchwoman into the room; the one clung about her mother, the other ran to her mistress. For my part, I was so struck, so affected, that I stalked about the room without knowing what I did: venting broken exclamations, and making involuntary motions to no purpose. Wolmar himself, the unsusceptible Wolmar, seemed affected. But where is the heart of iron whom such a scene of sensibility would not affect? where is the unfortunate mortal from whom such a scene of tenderness would not have extorted tears? Instead of running to Eloisa, this fortunate husband threw himself on a settee, to enjoy the delightful scene. “Be not afraid,” says he, seeing our uneasiness. “In these accidents nature only is exhausted for a moment, to recover itself with new vigour; they are never dangerous. Let me prevail on you not to interrupt the pleasure I take in this transporting sight, but partake it with me. How ravishingly delightful must it be to you? I never tasted any thing like it, and am yet the most unhappy of all here.”

You may judge, my lord, by the first moment of their meeting, the consequences of the reunion of these charming friends. It has excited throughout the whole house a sound of gladness, a tumultuous joy, that has not yet subsided. Eloisa was in such an agitation as I never saw her in before; it was impossible for her to think of any thing all that day, but to gaze on her new visitor, and load her with fresh caresses. No body even thought of the saloon of Apollo; there was no occasion for thinking of it when every place gave equal pleasure. We were hardly, even the next day, composed enough to think of making an entertainment on the occasion. Had it not been for Wolmar, every thing would have gone wrong. In the mean time, every one

was dressed in the best manner. No other care was admitted, than what tended to amusement. The entertainment was not grand, but extremely joyous; throughout the whole there reigned a pleasing confusion and disorder, which was its greatest embellishment.

The morning was spent in putting Mrs. Orbe in possession of her employment of intendant or housekeeper, and she betrayed the same eagerness to enter into her office, as a child does after a new plaything; at which we were highly diverted. In entering the saloon at dinner, both cousins were agreeably surprized to see on every side, their names in cypher, artificially formed with flowers. Eloisa guessed in an instant to whom she was obliged for that piece of ingenuity, and embraced me in a transport of joy. Clara, contrary to former custom, hesitated to follow her example; till Wolmar reprimanding her, she blushed, and embraced me. Her sweet confusion, which I observed but too plainly, had an effect on me which I cannot describe; but I could not feel myself in her arms without emotion.

After dinner, a fine collation was set out in the gynaeceum, or women's apartment; where for once Mr. Wolmar and I were admitted, and were entertained agreeably. In the evening all the house, now increased by three persons, assembled to dance. Clara seemed ornamented by the hands of the Graces, never having appeared to so much advantage as on that day. She danced, she chatted, she laugh'd, she gave orders, she was capable of every thing. Having protested she would tire me out, she danced down five or six country dances in a breath; and then reproached me for footing it with the gravity of a philosopher. I, on the other hand, told her she danc'd like a fairy; that she was full as mischievous, and that she would not let me rest night nor day. You shall see to the contrary, says she, here's that will set you to sleep presently: with that she started up, and led down another dance.

She was really indefatigable; but it was otherwise with Eloisa: she could hardly support herself; her knees trembled, as she danced; she was too much affected, to be

chearful. One might observe a tear of joy every now and then trickle from her eyes; she regarded her cousin with a kind of delicious transport; took a pleasure in conceiving herself the guest for whom the entertainment was made, and looked fondly upon Clara as the mistress of the house who entertained her.

After supper, I play'd off the fireworks I brought from China, which had a pretty effect. We sat up great part of the night. At length it became time to break up: Mrs. Orbe was tired, or had danced enough to be so; and Eloisa was desirous she should not sit up too late.

After this we became insensibly tranquil, and good order took place. Clara, giddy and inconsiderate as she seems, knows how to check her sallies, and put on an air of authority, when she pleases. She has, besides great good sense, an exquisite discernment, the penetration of Wolmar, and the goodness of Eloisa; and tho' extremely liberal, has a good deal of discretion in her generosity: for, tho' left so young a widow, and charged with the care of a daughter, the fortunes of both increase in her hands; so that there is no reason to apprehend the house will, under her direction, be less prudently governed than before. In the mean time, Eloisa has the satisfaction of devoting herself entirely to an occupation more agreeable to her taste; that is, the education of her children: and I doubt not but Harriot will profit greatly by one of her mothers having relieved the other. I say her mothers, because by the manner in which they both behave to her, it is difficult to distinguish which is really so; so that some strangers, who arrived here to day, are still, or appear to be, in doubt about it. In fact, they both call her Harriot, or my child, indifferently. She calls the one her Mamma, and the other her little Mamma: she has the same love for both, and pays them equal obedience. If the ladies are asked whose child it is, each answers it is hers: if Harriot be questioned, she says that she has two mothers; so that it is no wonder that people are puzzled. The most discerning, however, think her the child of Eloisa; Harriot, whose father was of a fair complexion, being fair like her, and something resembling her in features. A greater maternal tenderness

appears also in the soft regards of Eloisa, than in the sprightlier looks of Clara. The child puts on also a more respectful air, and is more reserved in her behaviour before the former. She places herself involuntarily oftener on the side of Eloisa, because she most frequently talks to her. It must be confessed all appearances are in favour of our little mamma; and I perceive the deception is so agreeable to the two cousins, that it may be sometimes perhaps intended.

In a fortnight, my lord, nothing will be wanting here but your presence; and when you are arrived, I shall have a very bad opinion of that man, who should be tempted to ransack the world for a virtue, or a pleasure, which may not be found in this house.

Letter CXLIII. To Lord B——.

For these three days past I have attempted every evening successively to write to you; but found myself, through the fatigue of the day, too sleepy to effect my purpose at night, and in the morning I am again called upon early to my employment. A pleasing tranquillity, more intoxicating than wine, takes possession of my senses; and I cannot without regret bear a moment’s avocation from the new and agreeable amusements I find here.

I cannot indeed conceive that any place would be disagreeable to me in such company; but do you know why Clarens in itself is agreeable? it is that here I find myself actually in the country, which I could hardly ever say before. The inhabitants of cities know not how to enjoy the country; they know not what it is to be there; and, even when they are there, know not what to do with themselves. They are ignorant of all rustic business and amusements; they despise them; they seem at home as if they were in a foreign country, and I am not at all surprized that they are displeased with it. Among the country people, we should live as they do, or not associate with them at all.

The Parisians, who imagine they go into the country, mistake the thing; they carry

Paris along with them. They are attended with their singers, their wits, their authors, and their parasites. Cards, music, and plays, engross all their attention; [88] their tables are spread in the same manner as at Paris; they sit down to their meals at the same hours; are served with the same dishes, and in the same pomp: in a word, they do just the same things in the country as they did in town, where, for that reason, it had been better they had stayed; for, however opulent they are, or careful to omit nothing they are accustomed to, they always find something wanting, and perceive the impossibility of carrying Paris altogether along with them. Thus, that variety they are so fond of eludes their search; they are acquainted only with one manner of living, and are therefore a continual burthen to themselves. To me every rural employment affords something agreeable; nor is there any so painful and laborious as to excite our compassion for the labourer. As the object of both public and private utility, husbandry is peculiarly interesting; and, as it was the first employment of man in his state of innocence, it fills the mind with the most pleasing sensations, and affects us with the agreeable ideas of the golden age. The imagination cannot help being warmed by the prospects of seedtime and harvest: If we look around us, and see the fields covered with hay makers, and with flocks of sheep scattered at a distance, one is sensibly affected with a pleasure arising one knows not how. The voice of nature thus sometimes softens our savage hearts, and, though its dictates are too often fruitless, it is so agreeable that we never hear it without pleasure.

I must confess, that the misery which appears on the face of some countries, where the taxes devour the produce of the earth, the eager avarice of a greedy collector, the inflexible rigour of an inhuman master, take away much of the beauty of the prospect. To see the poor jaded cattle ready to expire under the whip; to see the unhappy peasants themselves emaciated with fasting, clothed in rags, groaning with fatigue, and hardly secured from the inclemencies of the weather by their wretched huts; these are deplorable sights, and it makes one almost blush to be a man when one thinks how the very vitals of such poor objects are drained to satisfy their cruel

masters. But what pleasure is it, on the other hand, to see the prudent and humane proprietors, in milder governments, make the cultivation of their lands the instrument of their benevolence, their recreation, their pleasures! to see them with open hands distribute the bounties of providence! to see their servants, their cattle, and every creature about them, fatten on the abundance that flows from their barns, their cellars and granaries! to see them surrounded with peace and plenty, and make, of the employment that enriches them, a continual entertainment! How is it possible for one to be inattentive to the agreeable illusions which such objects present? we forget the age we live in, and the vices of our cotemporaries, and are transported in imagination to the time of the patriarchs; we are desirous to set one's own hands to work; to join in the rustic employment, and partake of the happiness annexed to it. Oh! how delightful were the days of love and innocence, when the women were affectionate and modest, the men simple and content! such were the days when a lover did not regret fourteen years of servitude to obtain his mistress. Fair daughter of Laban! keeper of thy father's flocks, how amiable must thou have been! how irresistible thy charms! No, never doth beauty exert its power so much as when in the midst of rural scenes and rustic simplicity. Here is the real seat of its empire; here she sits on her throne, surrounded by the graces; adorned by whose lands, she captivates all beholders. Excuse this rhapsody, my lord; I return now to my subject.

For this month past the autumnal heats have been preparing a favourable vintage, which the first has already induced us to begin; [89] the parched leaves falling off the vines, and exposing to view the clustered grapes, whose juicy ripeness invites the hands of the gatherers. Vines loaded with this salutary fruit, which heaven bestows on the unfortunate as a cure for all their woes; the sound of the casks, tubs, and tons, which they are hooping anew on every side, the songs of the gatherers with which the vintage re-echoes; the continual trotting backwards and forwards of those who carry the grapes to the press, the harsh sound of the rustic instruments that animate the people to work; the agreeable and affecting picture of a general good

humour, which seems to be extended at that time over the face of the whole earth; add to these the fog, which the sun exhales in a morning and draws up like the curtain of theatre, to display so delightful a scene; all conspire to give it the air of an entertainment; and that an entertainment which is the more pleasing on reflection, that it is the only one in which mankind have art enough to join utility with delight.

Mr. Wolmar, who has one of the best vineyards in the country, has made all the necessary preparations for his vintage. His backs, his winepress, his cellar, his casks, are all ready for that delicious liquor for which they are designed. Mrs. Wolmar herself takes charge of the crop; the choice of the labourers, and the order and distribution of the several parts of the work falling to her share. Mrs. Orbe takes care of all entertainments, and of the payment of the day-labourers agreeable to the police established here; the laws of which are never infringed or broken. As to my part, I am set to inspect the press and enforce the directions of Eloisa, who cannot bear the steam of the backs; and Clara did not fail to recommend me to this employ, as it was so well adapted to a toper. Thus every one having an allotted task, we are all up early in the morning, and are assembled to go to the vineyard. Mrs. Orbe, who never thinks herself sufficiently employed, undertaking further to observe and rate those that are idle; in doing which I can safely say, with respect to me at least, that she acquits herself with a malicious assiduity. As to the old baron, while we are all employed, he walks out with his gun, and comes, every now and then, to take me from my work, to go with him a thrush-shooting; and I am taxed by my companions with being secretly engaged to him. So that by degrees I lose my old name of philosopher and get that of an idler; appellations which in reality are not so very different. You see, by what I have told you of the baron, that we are quite reconciled, and that Wolmar has reason to be content with his second experiment. [90] Shall I hate the father of my friend? no, were I his son, I could not respect him more than I do. In fact, I know not any man more sincere, more open, more generous, or more honourable in every respect than this old gentleman. But the

extravagance of his notions and prejudices is odd enough. Since he is certain I cannot be united to his family, he is extremely civil; and, provided I be not his son-in-law, he will readily give up every thing, and allow me a superiority to himself. The only thing I cannot forgive him, is, that when we are alone, he will some time rally the pretended philosopher on his former lectures. His pleasantry on this head hurts me, and I am always vexed at it; but he turns my resentment into ridicule, and says, Come along, let us go bring down a thrush or two; we have carried this argument far enough. And then he calls out, as we go out of doors; here, Clara, Clara! provide a good supper for your master; I am going to get him an appetite. Notwithstanding his age, also, I can assure you, he brushes among the vines with his gun, with as much activity as myself, and is incomparably a better marksman. I have some satisfaction, however, in that he dares not drop a word before his daughter; the little scholar prescribing no less to her father than to her preceptor. But to return to our vintage.

It is now a week since we have been employed in this agreeable occupation, yet we have hardly done half our work. Besides the wines intended for sale and for common use, which are only simply tho’ carefully made, our benevolent fairy makes others of a more exquisite flavour for us drinkers; I myself assisting in the magical operations.

We make wines of all countries from the grapes of one vineyard: to make one sort, she orders the stalks of the bunches to be twisted when the grape is ripe, and lets them dry by the heat of the sun upon the stock; for another, she has the grapes picked and stoned before they are put into the press; Again, for a third sort, she has the red grapes gathered before sunrising, and carefully conveyed to the press, fresh with their bloom and covered with the morning dew, to make white wine. She makes a sweet wine, by putting into the casks must, reduced to a syrup by evaporation; a dry wine, by checking its fermentation; a bitter cordial by steeping wormwood; [91] and a muscadel wine, with the help of simples. All those different wines have their

peculiar methods of preparation; every one of which is simple and wholesome. And thus an industrious economy makes up for a diversity of soils, and unites twenty climates in one. You cannot conceive with what assiduity, with what alacrity, all our business is done. We sing and laugh all day long, without the least interruption to our work. We live altogether in the greatest familiarity; are all treated on a footing, and yet no one forgets himself. The ladies put on none of their airs, the countrywomen are decent, the men droll, but never rude. Those are the most caressed who sing the best songs, tell the best stories, or hit off the best joke. Our good understanding even gives rise to pleasant bickerings between us, and our mutual raillery is exerted only to shew how far we can bear with good temper each others severity. There is no returning home to play the gentle folks; we stay all the day long in the vineyard; Eloisa having caused a lodge to be built there, whither we retreat to warm ourselves when cold, or to shelter us from the rain. We dine with the peasants, and at their hour, as well as work with them. We eat their soup, a little coarse indeed, but very good, and seasoned with excellent herbs. We laugh not at their downright behaviour and rustic compliments; but, in order to free them from constraint, give into their own ways without affectation. This complacence on our side, also, is not lost upon them; they are sensible of it; and, seeing that we are so ready to go out of our way for them, are more willing to go on in their own for us. At dinner the children are brought from the house, and pass the rest of the day in the vineyard. How rejoiced are the peasants to see them! then, taking them up in their sturdy arms, they bless them, and wish heaven may prolong their days to resemble their parents, and make them in like manner a blessing to their country. When I think that the most of these men have born arms, and understand the use of the sword and musket, as well as the management of the hoe and pruning-knife, in seeing Eloisa so loved and respected by them, and herself and children received with such affecting acclamations, I cannot help calling to mind the virtuous and illustrious Agrippina, shewing her son to the troops of Germanicus. Incomparable

Eloisa! who exercises in the simplicity of private life, the despotic power of wisdom and beneficence; your person a dear and sacred trust deposited in the hands of your country-men, every one of whom would defend and protect you at the hazard of his own life; it is yours to live more securely, more honourably, in the midst of a whole people who love you, than monarchs surrounded with guards.

In the evening, we all return home chearfully together; the workpeople being lodged and boarded with us all the time of the vintage; and even on Sundays after the evening service, we assemble and dance together till supper time. On the other days of the week, also, we remain altogether, after we are returned home, except the baron, who, eating no suppers, goes to bed early, and Eloisa, who with her children stays with him till his bedtime. Thus, from the time we take upon ourselves the business of the vintage till we quit it, we never once mix the city and country life together. These Saturnalia are much more agreeable and discreet than those of the Romans. The constraint they affected was too preposterous to improve either the master or the slave; but the peaceful equality which prevails here, re-establishes the order of nature, is productive of instruction to some, of consolation to others, and of a friendly connection between all. [92] Our assembly room is an old hall with a great chimney and a good fire in it. On the mantlepiece are lighted up three lamps, made by Mr. Wolmar’s orders, of tin, just to catch the smoke and reflect the light. To prevent giving rise to envy, every thing is carefully avoided that might in the eyes of these poor people, appear more costly than what they meet with at home; no other mark of opulence being displayed than the choice of the best of common things, and a little more profusion in their distribution. Supper is served upon two long tables; where the pomp and luxury of entertainments is amply supplied by good humour and plenty. Every one sits down to table, master, labourers, and servants; every one without distinction gets up to help himself, without exception or preference; the whole repast ending in gratitude and festivity. All drink at their discretion, subject to no other rules than those of decency and sobriety. The presence of superiors, whom

they so truly respect, keeps the workpeople within bounds; yet lays no restraint on their ease and chearfulness. And should any one happen to forget himself and give offence, the company is not disturbed by reprimands, the offender being dismissed the next day, without farther notice.

Thus, do I take advantage of the pleasures of the country and the season. I resume the freedom of living after the manner of the country, and to drink pure wine pretty often; but I drink none that is not poured out by the hands of one or other of the two cousins; who take upon them to measure my thirst by the strength of my head, and to manage my reason as they think proper; nor does any one know better how to manage it, or has like them the art to give or take it away from me at pleasure. When the fatigue of the day, or the length and festivity of the repast, add to the strength of the liquor, I indulge myself without restraint in the sallies it inspires. They are no longer such as I need suppress, even in the presence of the sagacious Wolmar. I am no longer afraid his penetrating eye should see into the bottom of my heart; and, when a tender idea arises in my memory, one look from Clara dissipates it; one look of Eloisa makes me blush for my weakness.

After supper, we sit up an hour or two to peel hemp; every one singing a song in turn. Sometimes the women sing all together, or one sings alone, and the rest join in chorus to the burthen of the song. Most of their songs are old tales, set to no very agreeable tunes. There is, not withstanding something antique and affecting, which on the whole is very pleasing. The words are generally very simple, unaffected, and often very sorrowful: they are, nevertheless, diverting. Clara cannot forbear smiling, Eloisa blushing, and myself from giving a sigh, when the same turns and expressions are repeated in these songs, which have heretofore been made use of between us. On those occasions, as I look upon them, the remembrance of times past rushes upon my mind: I am seized with a trembling, an insupportable burthen oppresses my heart, and leaves so deep an impression of sorrow that I can hardly shake it off. I find, nevertheless, in these evenings a sort of pleasure which I cannot

describe, and which is nevertheless very great.

The union of people of different conditions, the simplicity of their occupation, the idea of ease, concord and tranquillity, the peaceful sensation it awakes in the soul; these altogether have something affecting that disposes every one to make choice of the most interesting songs. The concert of female voices is also not without its charms. For my part, I am convinced, that of all kinds of harmony there is none so agreeable as singing in unison; and that we only require a variety of concords, because our taste is depraved. Does not harmony in fact exist in every single note? What then can we add to it, without changing the proportions which nature has established in the relation of harmonious sounds.

Nature has done every thing in the best manner, but we would do better, and so spoil all.

There is as great an emulation among us about the work of the evening, as about that of the day; and a piece of roguery I was guilty of yesterday, brought me into a little disgrace. As I am not the most expert at hemp-peeling, and am sometimes absent in thought, I begun to be tired with always being pointed at for doing the least work. I shovelled the stalks with my feet therefore from my next neighbours, to enlarge my own heap; but that inexorable Mrs. Orbe, perceiving it; made a sign to Eloisa, who, detecting me in the fact, reprimanded me severely. Come, come, says she, aloud, I'll have no injustice done here, though in jest; it is thus, people accustom themselves to cheating, and prove rogues in good earnest, and then, what is worse, make a jest of it.

In this manner we pass our evenings. When it is near bedtime, Mrs. Wolmar stands up, and says, Come, now let us to our fireworks. On which, every one takes up his bundle of hemp-stalks, the honourable proofs of his labour, which are carried in triumph into the middle of the courtyard, and there laid as trophies in a heap, and set on fire. Everyone, however, has not indiscriminately this honour; but those to whom

Eloisa adjudges it, by giving the torch to him or her, who has done most work that evening; and when this happens to be herself, she does it with her own hands, without more to do. This ceremony is accompanied with acclamations and clapping of hands. The stalks soon burn up in a blaze, which ascends to the clouds; a real bonfire, about which we laugh and sing, till it is out. After this, the whole company are served with liquor, and every one drinks to the health of the conqueror, and goes to bed, content with a day past in labour, chearfulness and innocence, which he would willingly begin again the next day, the next after that, and every day, to the last of his life.

Letter CXLIV. To Mr. WOLMAR.

Enjoy, my dear Wolmar, the fruits of your labour. Receive the acknowledgements of a heart, which you have taken so much pains to render worthy of being offered to your acceptance. Never did any man undertake so arduous a task; never did any one attempt what you have executed; nor did ever a susceptible and grateful mind, feel more than that with which you have inspired me. Mine had lost its force, its vigour, its very being; but you have restored them all; I was dead to virtue, to happiness, and owe to you that moral life, to which you have raised me. O my benefactor! my father! in giving myself up entirely to you, I can only offer, as to the deity, the gifts I have received at your hands.

Must I confess to you my weakness and my fears? Hitherto I have always distrusted myself. It is not a week ago that I blushed for the weakness of my heart, and thought all our pains had been lost. That cruel and discouraging moment, however, thanks to heaven and you, is past, never to return. I do not think myself cured, only because you tell me so, but because I feel it: I stand no longer in need of your answering for me, who have put me in a state to answer for myself. It was necessary for me to be absent from you and Eloisa, to know what I should be without your support. It is at a distance from her abode, that I learn not to be afraid to approach her.

As I write the particulars of our journey to Mrs. Orbe, I shall not repeat them here; I am not unwilling you should know my foibles; but I have not the courage to tell you of them. It is, my dear Wolmar, my last fault. I feel myself so far already from being liable to commit the like again, that I cannot think of it without disdain; and yet it is so little a while since, that I cannot acknowledge it without shame. You, who can so readily forgive my errors, will doubtless forgive the shame which attends my repentance.

Nothing is now wanting to compleat my happiness. My Lord B—— has told me all. Shall I then, my dear friend, be devoted entirely to you? shall I educate your children? shall the eldest of the three be preceptor to the rest? with what ardour have I not desired it? The hope of being thought worthy of such employment has redoubled my assiduity to second your paternal care and instructions.

How often have I not expressed my earnestness, in this particular, to Eloisa! with what pleasure have I not interpreted the discourse of both of you, in my favour! but although she was convinced of my zeal for your service, and seemed to approve of its object, she never entered so explicitly into my designs as to encourage me to speak more openly. I was sensible I ought rather to merit that honour than ask for it. I expected of you and her that proof of your confidence and esteem. I have not been deceived in my expectation, nor shall you, my dear friends, believe me, be deceived in yours.

You know that, in the course of our conversation on the education of your children, I have thrown together upon paper some of those sentiments which such conversation furnished me with, and which you approved. Since my departure, some new reflections have suggested themselves on the same subject: I have reduced the whole into a kind of system, which, when I have properly digested, I shall communicate to you for your examination. I do not think, however, I shall be able to make it fit for your inspection till after our arrival at Rome. My system begins, or finishes, that of

Eloisa; or rather, it is nothing more than a connection and illustration of hers; for it consists only in rules to prevent the natural disposition from being spoiled, in subjecting it to the laws and customs of society.

I have recovered my reason by your care: my heart is again sound and at liberty: I see myself beloved by all whose love I could wish to possess: futurity presents me with an agreeable prospect. With all this, my situation should surely be delightful; but it is decreed, my soul shalt never enjoy tranquillity. As the end of our journey approaches, I see the crisis of the fate of my illustrious friend: it is I, who, so to speak, ought to decide it. Cannot I at least do that once for him which he has so often done for me? cannot I nobly discharge the greatest and most important duty of my life? My dear Wolmar, I retain all your lessons in my heart; but, to make them useful, why don't I possess your sagacity? Ah could I but one day see Lord B—— happy! could I, agreeable to your projects, see us but all assembled together, never to part again! could I entertain a wish for any thing on earth besides! Yes one, the accomplishment of which depends not on you, nor me, nor on any other person in the world; but on him who has a reward in store for the virtues of Eloisa, and, keeps a secret register of your good actions.

Letter CXLV. To Mrs. Orbe.

Where are you, my charming cousin? where is the amiable confident of that feeble heart, which is, on so many accounts, yours; and which you have so often comforted in despair? come, and let me lay open to you the confession of its last error. Is it not always your province to purify it by confession and pardon? is there a fault which it can reproach itself with after it hath confessed it to you? No, it is no longer the same; and its regeneration is owing to you: you have given me a new heart, which now offers you its first services: but I shall not think myself quite free from that which I quit, till I have deposited it in your hands.

The moment of my life in which I had most reason to be contented with myself was

that in which I left you. Recovered of my errors, I looked upon that instant as the tardy era of my return to my duty. I begun it therefore, by paying off part of that immense debt I owed to friendship, in leaving so delightful an abode to follow a benefactor, a philosopher, who, pretending to stand in need of my services, put the success of his to the proof. The more disagreeable my departure, the more I piqued myself, on making so great a sacrifice. After having spent half my time in nourishing an unhappy passion, I consecrated the other half to justify it, and to render, by my virtues a more worthy homage to her, who so long received that of my heart. I proudly contemplated the first of my days in which I had neither given occasion for my own blushes, for yours, for hers, nor for those of any one who was dear to me. My Lord B——, being apprehensive of a sorrowful parting, was for our setting out early, without taking a formal leave; but, though hardly any body was stirring in the house, we could not elude your friendly vigilance. Your door half open and your woman on the watch; your coming out to meet us, and our going in and finding a table set out and tea made ready, all these circumstances brought to my mind those of former times; and, comparing my present departure with that which came to my remembrance, I found myself so very differently disposed to what I was on the former occasion, that I rejoiced to think, Lord B——, was a witness of that difference, and hoped to make him forget at Milan the shameful scene of Besancon. I never found myself so resolute before; I prided myself in displaying my temper before you, behaving with more fortitude than you had ever seen in me; and gloried, in parting, to think I had appeared before you such as I was going ever afterwards to be. This idea added to my courage; I supported my spirits by your esteem; and perhaps should have left you without weeping, if a tear, trickling down your cheek, had not drawn a sympathetic drop from my eyes.

I left you with a heart fully sensible of its obligations, and particularly penetrated with such as your friendship has laid me under; resolved to employ the rest of my life in deserving them. My Lord B——, taking me to task for my past follies, laid

before me no very agreeable picture; and I knew by the just severity with which he censured my foibles, that he was little afraid of imitating them. He pretended, nevertheless, to be apprehensive of it; and spoke to me with some uneasiness of his journey to Rome, and the unworthy attachments which, in spite of himself, led him thither: but I saw plainly that he exaggerated his own dangers, to engage my attention the more to him, and draw it off from those to which I was myself exposed. Just as we got into Velleneuve, one of our servants, who was but badly mounted, was thrown off his horse, and got a small contusion on his head: on which his master had him bled, and determined to stay there that night. We accordingly dined early, and afterwards took horses and went to Bex, to see the silt manufactury; where, at my lord's desire, who had some particular reason for requesting it, I took a sketch of the building and works, so that we did not return to Velleneuve till night. After supper we chatted a good while over our punch, and went to bed pretty late. It was in this conversation he informed me of the charge intended to be committed to my care, and what measures had been taken to bring it about. You may judge of the effect this piece of information had upon me; a conversation of this nature did not incline me to sleep. It was at length, however, time to retire.

As I entered the chamber appointed for me, I immediately recollected it to be the same in which I had formerly slept, on my journey to Sion. The view of it made an impression on me, which would be very difficult for me to describe. I was struck with such lively ideas of what I then was, that I imagined myself again in the same situation, though ten years of my life had passed away in the interval, and all my troubles had been forgotten. But alas! that reflection was but of a short duration, and the next moment oppressed me with the weight of my former afflictions. How mortifying were the recollections that succeeded to my first reverie! what dreadful comparisons suggested themselves to my mind! ye pleasures of early youth; ye exquisite delights of a first passion, O why, said I, doth your remembrance wound a heart already too much oppressed with griefs? thrice happy were those days! days

now no more, in which I loved and was beloved again; in which I gave myself up in peaceful innocence, to the transports of a mutual passion; in which I drank its intoxicating draughts, and all my faculties were lost in the rapture, the extasy, the delirium of love. On the rocks of Meillerie, in the midst of frost and snow, with the frightful precipices before my eyes, was there a being in the creation so happy as I? and yet I then wept! I then thought myself unfortunate! sorrow even then ventured to approach my heart! what therefore should I be now, when I have possessed all that my soul held dear, and lost it for ever? I deserve my misfortune, for having been so little sensible of my happiness!——did I weep then?——didst thou weep? unfortunate wretch!——thou shall weep no more——thou hast no right to weep.——Why is she not dead? said I, in a transport of rage, yes, I should then be less unhappy; I could then indulge myself in my griefs: I should embrace her cold tomb with pleasure: my affliction should be worthy of her: I might then say, She hears my cries, she sees my tears, she is moved by my groans, she approves and accepts of my homage.——I should then, at least, have cherished the hope of being united to her again.——But she lives and is happy in the possession of another.——She lives, and her life is my death; her happiness is my torment; and heaven, having taken her from me, deprives me even of the mournful pleasure of regretting her loss——she lives, but not for me: she lives for my despair, who am an hundred times farther from her than if she were no more.

I went to bed under those tormenting reflections; they accompanied me in my sleep and disturbed it with terrible apprehensions. The most poignant afflictions, sorrow, and death composed my dreams; and all the evils I ever felt, represented themselves to my imagination in a thousand new forms, to torment me over again. One vision in particular, and that the most cruel of all, still pursued me; and though the confused apparitions of various phantoms, several times appeared and vanished, they all ended in the following.

Methought I saw the departed mother of your friend on her deathbed, and her

daughter on her knees before her, bathed in tears, kissing her hands and receiving her last breath. This scene, which you once described to me, and which will never be effaced from my memory, was represented in striking colours before me. O my dear mother, said Eloisa, in accents that chilled my very soul, she who is indebted to you for her life, deprives you of yours! Alas! take back what you gave me; for without you it will be only a life of sorrow. My child, answered her languishing mother, God is just, and his will must be obeyed——you will be a mother in your turn, and——she could say no more——On this methought, I went forward to look upon her; but she was vanished, and Eloisa lay in her place; I saw her plainly and perfectly knew her, though her face was covered with a veil. I gave a shriek, and ran to take off the veil; but, methought after many attempts to lay hold of it I could not reach it, but tormented myself with vain endeavours to grasp what, though it covered her face, appeared to be impalpable. Upon which, methought, she addressed me in a faint voice, and said, Friend, be composed, the awful veil that is spread over me, is too sacred to be removed. At these words I struggled, made a new effort, and awoke; when I found myself in my bed, harassed with fright and fatigue, my face covered with big drops of sweat, and drowned in tears.

My fears being a little dissipated, I went to sleep again; again the same dream put me into the same agitations: I awoke again and went to sleep the third time, when the same mournful scene still presented itself, the same appearance of death, and always the same impenetrable veil, eluding my grasp, and hiding from me the dying object which it covered.

On waking from this last dream, my terror was so great, that I could not overcome it, though quite awake. I threw myself out of bed, without well knowing what I did, and wandered up and down my chamber, like a child in the dark, imagining myself beset with phantoms, and still fancying in my ears, the sound of that voice, whose plaintive notes I never heard without emotion. The dawn of day beginning to cast some light upon the objects in my chamber, served only to transform them,

agreeable to my troubled imagination. My fright increased, and at length entirely deprived me of reason. Having with some difficulty found the door, I ran out of my room, bolted into that of Lord B—— and, drawing open his curtains, threw myself down upon his bed almost breathless, crying out, She is gone——she is gone——I shall never see her more.——His lordship started out of his sleep, and flew to his sword, imagining himself attacked by robbers. But he presently perceived who it was; and I soon after recollected myself: this was the second time of my life that I had appeared before him in such confusion.

He made me sit down and compose myself; and as soon as he had learnt the cause of my fright, endeavoured to turn it into ridicule; but, seeing me too deeply affected with it, and that the impression it had made was not to be easily effaced, he changed his tune. For shame, says he with an air of severity, you neither deserve my friendship nor esteem: had I taken a quarter of the pains with one of my footmen which I have done with you, I had made a man of him: but you are fit for nothing. It is indeed, my lord, answered I, too true. I had nothing good in me but what came from her, whom now I shall see no more; and am therefore good for nothing. At this he smiled, and embraced me. Come, come, says he, endeavour to compose yourself; tomorrow you will be a reasonable creature. He then changed the conversation and proposed to set out. The horses were accordingly ordered to be put to. In getting into the chaise, my lord whispered something to the postilion, who immediately drove off.

We travelled for some time without speaking. I was so taken up with my last night’s dream, that I heard and saw nothing; not even observing that the lake, which, the day before, was on my right hand, was now on my left. The rattling of the chaise upon the pavement, however, at length awoke me out of my lethargy; I looked up, and to my great surprise, found we were returned to Clarens. About a furlong from the gate, my lord ordered us to be set down; and, taking me aside, you see, my design, said he; it has no need of further explanation: go thou visionary mortal, continued

he, pressing my hand between his, go and see her again. Happy is exposing your follies only to your friends, make haste, and I will wait for you here; but be sure you do not return, till you have removed that fatal veil which is woven in your brain.

What could I say? I left him without making any answer, and, trembling as I advanced, slowly approached the house. What a part, said I to myself, am I going to act here? how dare I shew myself? what pretext have I for this unexpected return? with what face can I plead my ridiculous terrors, and support the contemptuous looks of the generous Wolmar? In short, the nearer I drew to the house, the more childish my fears seemed to me, aid the more contemptible my extravagant behaviour: my mind, however, still misgave me, and I went on, tho' every step more slowly, till I came just to the court-yard; when I heard the door of the elysium just open and shut again. Seeing nobody come out, I made a tour round the aviary keeping as close to it as possible; I then listened, and could hear you conversing together; but, tho' I could not distinguish a word you said, I thought I perceived something in the sound of your voice so languishing and tender, that I could not hear it without emotion; and in Eloisa's a sweet and affectionate accent, not only such as is usual to her, but so mild and peaceful as to convince me all was well.

This restored me to my senses at once, and woke me in good earnest from my dream. I perceived myself immediately so altered that I laughed at my ridiculous fears; and, while I reflected that only a hedge and a few shrubs prevented me from seeing her alive and in good health, whom I imagined I should never see again, I renounced for ever my fearful and chimerical apprehensions; and determined, without more ado; to return without even seeing her. You may believe me, Clara, when I protest to you that I not only did not see her, but went back, proud of not having been so weak as to push my credulity to the end, and of having at least done so much credit to myself, as not to have it said of a friend of Lord B——'s, that he could not get the better of a dream.

This, my dear cousin, is what I had to tell you, and is the last confession I have to make. The other particulars of our journey are not at all interesting; let it suffice, therefore, to assure you, that not only his lordship has been very well satisfied with me since, but that I am still more so with myself, who am more sensible of my cure than he can be. For fear of giving him any needless distrust, I concealed from him my not having actually seen you. When he asked me if the veil was drawn aside, I answered without hesitation in the affirmative; and we have not mentioned it since. Yes, cousin, the veil is drawn aside for ever; that veil which has so long hoodwinked my reason. All my unruly passions are extinguished. I see and respect my duty. You are both dearer to me than ever, but my heart knows no difference between you; nor feels the least inclination to separate the inseparables.

We arrived the day before yesterday at Milan, and the day after tomorrow we shall leave it. In about a week we hope to be at Rome, and expect to find letters from you on our arrival. How tedious will seem the time before I shall see those two surprising persons who have so long troubled the repose of the greatest of minds! O Eloisa! O Clara! no woman that is not equal to you, is worthy of such a man!

Letter CXLVI. From Mrs. Orbe.

We all waited impatiently to hear from you, so that you will easily guess how much pleasure your letters gave our little community; but what you will hardly imagine is, that they should give me less than any other person in the house. They all were pleased that you had happily passed the Alps; for my part, I had no pleasure in reflecting that the Alps were between us.

With respect to the particulars of your return, we have said nothing of them to the baron; besides I skipped over some of your soliloquies, in reading your letter before every body. Mr. Wolmar is so ingenuous, as only to laugh at you; but Eloisa could not recollect the last moments of her dying mother, without shedding fresh tears. Your letter had no other effect upon her than reviving her affliction.

As to myself, I will confess to you, my dear preceptor, that I am no longer surprized to see you in continual astonishment at yourself; always committing some new folly, and always repenting of it: you have long passed your life in self-reproach over night, and in applauding yourself in the morning.

I will freely acknowledge to you, also, that the great effort of your courage, in turning back when so near us, just as wise as you came, does not appear to me so extraordinary as it may to you. There seems to me more vanity in it, than prudence; and, I believe, upon the whole, I should have liked a little less fortitude with more discretion. From such a manner of running away, may not one ask, to what purpose you came? you were ashamed to shew your self, and it is of your being afraid to shew your self that you ought in fact to be ashamed. As if the pleasure of seeing your friends were not an ample recompense for the petty chagrin their raillery might give you. Ought you not to have thought yourself happy in the opportunity of diverting us with your bewildered looks? as I could not laugh at you then, however, I will laugh at you now; tho' I lose half the pleasure in not seeing your confusion.

Unhappily there is something worse than all this; which is, that I have caught your fears, without having your means of dispelling them. That dream of yours has something in it so horrible, that I am at once terrified and afflicted with it, in spite of all I can do. In reading your letter I am apt to blame your agitation; after I have read it, I blame your security. It is impossible to see a sufficient reason for your being so much affected, and at the same time for your becoming tranquil. It is very strange, that your fearful apprehensions should prevail till the very moment in which you might have been satisfied, and that you should stop there. Another step, a motion, a word had done the business. You were alarmed without reason, and composed again without cause: but you have infected me with a terror which you no longer feel; and it appears, that, if you have given an instance once in your life of your fortitude, it has been at my expense. Since the receipt of your fatal letter, my heart is constantly oppressed. I cannot approach Eloisa, without trembling at the thoughts of losing her.

I think every now and then I see a deadly paleness over-spread her countenance; and this morning, as I embraced her, tears burst involuntarily from me, and poured down my cheeks. O, that veil! that veil! There is something so prophetic in it, that it troubles me every time I think of it. No, I cannot forgive you for not removing it, when you had it in your power, and fear I shall never have a moment's peace of mind till I see you again in company with her. You must own, that, after having talked so long of philosophy, you have here given a very unreasonable proof of yours. Dream again, and come and see your friends; it were better for you to do this and be a visionary mortal, than to run away from them and be a philosopher.

It appears by a letter of Lord B——'s to Mr. Wolmar, that he thinks seriously of coming to settle with us. As soon as he is determined, and his heart has made its choice, may you both return steadfast and happy! This is the constant prayer of our little community, and above all that of your friend,

Clara Orbe.

P. S. If you really heard nothing of our conversation in the elysium, it is perhaps so much the better for you; for you know me to be vigilant enough to see some people without their seeing me, and severe enough to verify the proverb, that listeners seldom, hear any good of themselves.

Letter CXLVII. From Mr. Wolmar.

As I write to Lord B——, and explain myself so fully with respect to you, I have hardly any thing more to say at present than to refer you to his letter. Yours would perhaps require of me a return of civilities; but these I had rather make in actions than in words. To make you one of my family, to treat you as my brother, my friend; to make her you loved your sister; to put into your hands a paternal authority over my children; to invest you with my privileges, after having robbed you of yours; these are the compliments I have to make you. If, on your part, you justify my conduct, it will be sufficient praise. I have endeavoured to honour you with my

esteem; it is yours to honour me by your merit. Let no other encomiums pass between us.

So far am I from being surprized at seeing you affected with a dream, that I see no very good reason for your reproaching yourself for being so. One dream more or less seems to be of no importance in such systematical gentlemen as yourself, whose very principles are visionary.

What I reproach you for, is less the effect of your dream, than the species of it; and that for a reason very different, perhaps, from what you may imagine. A certain tyrant once condemned a man to death for dreaming that he had stabbed him. Recollect the reason he gave for that sentence, and make the application. What! you are going to determine the fate of your friend, and you are thinking of your old amours! Had it not been for the conversation of the preceding evening, I should never forgive you that dream. Think in the daytime of what you are going to do at Rome, and you will dream less at night of what is doing at Vevey.

The little Frenchwoman is sick, which keeps Mrs. Wolmar so constantly employed that she has not time to write to you. Some body, however, will willingly take upon themselves that agreeable talk. Happy youth! to whose happiness every thing conspires! the rewards of virtue all await your merit. As to that of my good will, trouble no one with it; it is from you only I expect it.

Letter CXLVIII. To Mr. Wolmar.

Let this letter be kept to ourselves. Let the errors of the best of men be for ever buried in profound secrecy. In what a dangerous task have I engaged! O my sensible and generous friend! why do I not retain your counsel in my memory, as I do your benevolence at my heart! never did I before stand in more need of your prudence, nor did ever the apprehensions of falling short of it so much embarrass the little I have. Ah! what is become of your paternal advice, your instruction, your knowledge? what will become of me without you? Yes, I would give up every

flattering prospect in life to have you here, in this critical moment, though but for one week.

I have been deceived in all my conjectures: I have as yet done nothing but blunder. I was afraid only of the marchioness. After having seen her and been struck with admiration at her beauty and address, I applied myself, with all my might, to wean the affections of her noble lover from so attracting an object. Charmed with the thoughts of bringing him over to the side where I thought there was no danger, I launched out in the praise of Laura, and spoke of her with the esteem and admiration with which she had inspired me: in weakening his stronger attachment for her rival, I hoped, by degrees, entirely to destroy both. My lord easily gave in to my design; and, exceeding even the bounds of complaisance, perhaps to punish my importunities, by alarming me on the other side, affected a much greater warmth of passion for Laura than he really felt. But what shall I say to him now? the ardour of his passion remains without any affectation. His heart, exhausted by so many trials, was left in a state of weakness of which she has taken the advantage. It would be difficult indeed for any man long to affect a passion for her, which he did not feel. In fact, it is impossible to look upon this lovely unfortunate, without being struck by her air and figure; a certain cast of languor and depression, which constantly shades her charming features, in damping the vivacity of her looks, renders them but the more affecting; and as the sun darts its rays through the passing clouds, so do her eyes cast the more piercing looks through the clouds of grief that obscure their lustre. Her very dejection has all the grace of modesty; in seeing, one pities her; in hearing, one respects her. In short, I can avow, in justification of my friend, that I know only two men in the world, who could see and converse with her without danger.

Oh Wolmar! he is lost to reason. I see, and feel it; I own it to you with bitterness of heart. I tremble to think how far his extravagant passion may make him forget himself and his duty. I tremble lest that intrepid love of virtue, which makes him

despise the opinion of the world, should hurry him into the other extreme, and lead him to trespass even the sacred laws of decorum and decency. Shall my Lord B—— contract such a marriage? can you think it——under the eve of his friend too! who sees, who suffers it! and who lies under infinite obligations to him! no, he shall rip open my breast, and tear out my heart with his own hand, ere he shall thus abuse it.

But what shall I do! how shall I behave myself? you know his impetuosity of temper. Argument will avail nothing; and his discourse of late, has only increased my apprehensions for him. At first, I affected not to understand him, and reasoned indirectly in general maxims; he in turn affected not to understand me. If I endeavour to touch him a little more to the quick, he answers sententiously, and imagines he has refuted me. If I reply and enforce my argument, he flies into a passion, and talks in a manner so unfriendly, that a real friend knows not how to answer him. You may believe that, on this occasion, I am neither timid nor bashful; when we are doing our duty, we are too apt to be proud and tenacious; but pride has nothing to do here; it is necessary I should succeed; and unsuccessful attempts will only prejudice better means. I hardly dare enter with him into any argument, for I every day experience the truth of what you told me, that he is a better reasoner than I, and that the way to win him to my party is not to irritate him by dispute.

Besides, he looks, a little cold upon me at present. Appearances would make one apt to think he is uneasy at my importunity. How this weakness debases a man in so many respects superior to the rest of mankind! the great, the sublime Lord B——, stands in awe of his friend, his creature, his pupil! it even seems by some words he has let fall concerning the choice of his residence if he does not marry, that he has a mind to try my fidelity by opposing it to my interest. He well knows I ought not, neither can I leave him. No, I will do my duty and follow my benefactor. If I were base and mean, what should I gain by my perfidy? Eloisa and her generous husband would not trust the education of their children to one who hath betrayed his friend. You have often told me, that the inferior passions are not easily converted from their

pursuit; but that the superior ones may be armed against themselves. I imagined, I might be able to make use of that maxim in the present case. In fact, the motives of compassion, of a contempt for the prejudices of the world, of habit, of every thing that determines my Lord B—— on this occasion, are of that inferior nature and elude all my attacks: whereas true love is inseparable from generosity, and by that one always has some hold of him. I have attempted that indirect method, and despair not of success. It may seem cruel; and, to say truth, I have not done it without some repugnance: all circumstances, however considered, I conceive I am doing service even to Laura herself. What would she do in the rank to which she might be raised by marriage, but expose her former ignominy? but, how great may she not be in remaining what she is! If I know any thing of that extraordinary young lady, she is better formed to enjoy the sacrifice she has made, than the rank she ought to refuse. If this resource fails me, there remains one more in the magistracy, on the account of their difference of religion; but this method shall not be taken, till I am reduced to the last extremity, and have tried every other in vain. Whatever may happen, I shall spare nothing to prevent so unworthy and disgraceful an alliance. Believe me, my dear Wolmar, I shall be tenacious of your esteem to the latest hour of my life, and whatever my lord may write to you, whatever you may have said, depend on it, cost what it will, while this heart beats within my breast, Lauretta Pisana shall not be Lady B——.

If you approve of my measures, this letter needs no answer; if you think me in any wise mistaken, oblige me with your instructions. But be expeditious, for there is not a moment to lose. I shall have my letter directed by a strange hand: do the same by your answer. After having read what I have written, please, also, to burn my letter, and be silent as to its contents. This is the first, and the only secret I ever desired you to conceal from my two cousins: and if I had dared to consider more in my own judgement, you yourself should have known nothing of it. [93]

Letter CXLIX. Mrs. Wolmar to Mrs. Orbe

The courier from Italy seemed only to wait for your departure, for his own arrival; as if to punish you for having staid only for him. Not that I myself made the pretty discovery of the cause of your loitering: it was my husband who observed, that after the horses had been put to at eight o'clock, you deferred your departure till eleven; not out of regard to us, but for a reason easy to be guessed at; from your asking twenty times, if it was ten o'clock, because the post generally goes by at that time.

Yes, my dear cousin, you are caught; you cannot deny it. In spite of the prophetic Chaillot, her Clara, so wild, or rather so discreet, has not been so to the end. You are caught in the same toils from which you took so much pains to extricate your friend, and have not been able to preserve that liberty yourself, to which you restored me. It is my turn to laugh now. Ah my dear friend, one ought to have your talents to know how to laugh like you, and give even to raillery the affecting turn and appearance of kindness. Besides, what a difference in our situation! with what face can I divert myself with an evil, of which I am the cause, and from which you have taken upon yourself, to free me. There is not a sentiment in your breast that does not awake a sense of gratitude in mine, even your weakness being in you the effect of virtue. It is this which consoles and diverts me. My errors are to be lamented; but one may laugh at the false modesty which makes you blush at a passion as innocent as yourself.

But to return to your Italian courier, and leave moralizing for a while. This courier then, who has been so long in coming, you will ask what he has brought us. Nothing but good news of our friends, and a letter as big as a packet for you. O ho! I see you smile and take breath now. As the letter is sent you, however, you will doubtless wait patiently to know what it contains. It may yet nevertheless be of some estimation, even though it did not come when expected; for it breathes such a——but I will only write news to you, and I dare say what I was going to say is none.

With that letter is come another from Lord B——, to my husband, with a great many compliments also for us. This contains some real news, which is so much the more unexpected, as the first was silent on the subject. Our friends at Rome were to set out the next day for Naples, where Lord B—— has some business; and from whence they are to go to see mount Vesuvius.——Can you conceive, my dear, that such a sight can be entertaining? but on their return to Rome, think, Clara, guess what may happen.——Lord B—— is on the point of being married——not, I thank heaven, to that unworthy marchioness, who he tells us on the contrary, is much indisposed. To whom then?——To Laura, the amiable Laura, who——yet, what a marriage! Our friend says not a word about it. Immediately after the marriage, they will all three set out and come thither, to take their future measures. What they are to be, my husband has not told me; but he expects that St. Preux will stay with us.

I must confess to you his silence gives me some little uneasiness; I cannot see clearly through it. I think I see an odd peculiarity of circumstances and contest of human passions absolutely unintelligible. I cannot see how so good a man should contract so lasting an affection for so bad a woman as the marchioness, or indeed, how a woman of such a violent and cruel temper could entertain so ardent a love, if one may so call her guilty passion for a man of so different a disposition. Neither can I imagine, how a young creature, so generous, affectionate and disinterested as Laura, could be able to support her first dissoluteness of manners; how that flattering and deceitful tenderness of heart, which misleads our sex, should recover her; how love, which is the ruin of so many modest women, should make her chaste.

Will Lady B——then come hither? hither, my dear Clara! what do you think of it? after all, what a prodigy must that astonishing woman be, who, ruined by a dissolute and abandoned education, was reclaimed by her tenderness of heart, and whom love hath conducted to virtue! ought any one to admire her more than I, who have acted quite contrary; who was led astray by inclination, when every thing else conspired to conduct me in the paths of virtue. I sunk not so low it is true; but have I raised

myself like her? have I avoided so many snares, and made such sacrifices as she has made? from the lowest ignominy she has risen to the highest degree of honour, and is a thousand times more respectable than if she had never fallen. She has sense and virtue: what needs she more to resemble us? if it be impossible for a woman to repair the errors of her youth, what right have I to more indulgence than she? with whom can I hope to stand excused, and to what respect can I pretend, if I refuse to respect her.

And yet, though my reason tells me this, my heart speaks against it; and, without being able to tell why, I cannot think it right that Lord B—— should contract such a marriage, and that his friend should be concerned in the affair. Such is the force of prejudice! so difficult is it to shake off the yoke of public opinion! which, nevertheless, generally induces us to be unjust: the past good is effaced by the present evil; but, is the past evil ever effaced by any present good?

I hinted to my husband my uneasiness, as to the conduct of St. Preux in this affair. He seems, said I, to be ashamed to speak of it to my cousin: I know he is incapable of baseness, but he is too easy, and may have too much indulgence for the foibles of a friend. No, answered he, he has done what he ought, and I know will continue to do so; this is all I am at liberty to tell you at present of the matter; but St. Preux is honest, and I will engage for him, you will be satisfied with his conduct.——It is impossible, Clara, that Wolmar can deceive me, or St. Preux him. So positive an assurance therefore fully satisfied me; and made me suspect my scruples to be the effect of a fallen delicacy, and that if I was less vain and more equitable, I should find Laura more deserving the rank of Lady B——.

But to take leave of her for the present, and return to ourselves. Don’t you perceive too well, in reading this letter, that our friends are likely to return sooner than we expected? and is not your heart a little affected by it? does it not flutter, and beat quicker than ordinary? that heart too susceptible, and too nearly akin to mine? is it

not apprehensive of the danger of living familiarly with a beloved object? to see him every day? to sleep under the same roof? and if my errors did not lessen me in your esteem, does not my example give you reason to fear for yourself? In your younger years, how many apprehensions for my safety did not your good sense and friendship suggest, which a blind passion made me despise! It is now, my dear friend, my turn to be apprehensive for you, and I have the better claim to your regard; as what I have to offer is founded on sad experience. Attend to me then, ere it be too late; lest, having past half your life in lamenting my errors, you should pass the other in lamenting your own. Above all things, place not too great a confidence in your gaiety of temper, which, though it may be a security to those who have nothing to fear, generally betrays those who are in real danger. You, my dear Clara, once laughed at love, but that was because you were a stranger to the passion, and not having felt its power, you thought yourself above its attacks. Love is avenged, and laughs in its turn at you. Learn to distrust its deceitful mirth, lest it should one day cost you an equal portion of grief. It is time, my dear friend, to lay you open to yourself; for hitherto you have not taken that interesting view: you are mistaken in your own character, and know not how to set a just value upon yourself. You consider in the opinion of Chaillot; who, because of your vivacity of disposition; judged you to be little susceptible of heart; but a heart like yours was beyond her talents to penetrate. Chaillot was incapable of knowing you, nor does any person in the world know you truly but myself. I have left you in your mistake so long as it could be of service to you, but at present it may be hurtful, and therefore it is necessary to undeceive you.

You are lively, and imagine yourself to have but little sensibility. How much, alas! are you deceived: your vivacity itself proves evidently the contrary. Is it not always exerted on sentimental subjects? does not even your pleasantry come from the heart? your raillery is a greater proof of your affection than the compliments of others; you smile, but your smiles penetrate our hearts; you laugh, but your laughter draws from

us the tears of affection; and I have remarked, that among those who are indifferent to you, you are always serious.

If you really were no other than you pretend to be, tell me, what motive could have so forcibly united us? where had been those bonds of unparalleled friendship that now subsists between us? By what miracle should such an attachment give the preference to a heart so little capable of it? can she who lived but for her friend, be incapable of love? she who would have left father, husband, relations, and country to have followed her? what have I done in comparison of this! I, who have confessedly a susceptible heart, and permitted myself to love; yet, with all my sensibility, have hardly been able to return your friendship! these contradictions have instilled into your head as whimsical an idea of your own character as such a giddy brain can conceive; which is, to conceit yourself at once the warmest friend and the coldest lover. Incapable of disowning these gentle ties with which you perceived you were bound, you thought yourself incapable of being fettered by any other. You thought nothing in the world could affect you but Eloisa; as if those hearts which are by nature susceptible, could be affected but by one object, and as if, because you loved no other than me, I could be the proper object of your affection. You pleasantly asked me once, if souls were of a different sex. No, my dear, the soul is of no sex; but its affections make that distinction, and you begin to be too sensible of it. Because the first lover that offered himself did not affect you, you immediately concluded no other could; because you was not in love with your suitor, you concluded you could never be in love with any one. When he became your husband, however, you loved him, and that with so ardent an affection, that it injured even the intimacy with your friend: that heart, so little susceptible, as you pretend, could annex to love as tender a supplement to satisfy the fond desires of a worthy man.

Ah my poor cousin! it is your task for the future to resolve your own doubts, and if it be true,

Ch’un freddo amante è mal sicuro amica.

I am greatly afraid I have at present one reason more than ever I had to rely upon you. But to go on with what I had to say to you on this subject.

I suspect that you were in love much sooner than you perhaps imagine; or at least, that the same inclination which ruined me would have reduced you, had I not been first caught in the snare. Can you conceive a sentiment so natural and agreeable, could be so tardy in its birth? can you conceive that at our age, we could either of us live in a familiarity with an amiable young man without danger, or that the conformity so general in our taste and inclination, should not extend to this particular? No, my dear, you, I am certain, would have loved him, if I had not loved him first. Less weak, though not less susceptible, you might have been more prudent than I, without being more happy. But what inclination could have prevailed in your generous mind, over the horror you would have felt at the infidelity of betraying your friend! it was our friendship that saved you from the snares of love: you respected my lover with the same friendship, and thus redeemed your heart at the expense of mine.

These conjectures are not so void of foundation as you may imagine; and had I a mind to recollect those times which I could wish to forget, it would not be difficult for me to trace even in the care you imagined you took only in my concerns, a farther care, still more interesting, in those of the object of my affection. Not daring to love him yourself, you encouraged me to do it; you thought each of us necessary to the happiness of the other, and therefore, that heart, which has not its equal in the world, loved us both the more tenderly. Be assured, that had it not been for your own weakness, you would not have been so indulgent to me; but you would have reproached yourself for a just severity towards me, with an imputation of jealousy. You were conscious of having no right to contend with a passion in me, which ought nevertheless to have been subdued; and, being more fearful of betraying your friend

than of not acting discreetly, you thought, in offering up your own happiness to ours, you had made a sufficient sacrifice to virtue.

This, my dear Clara, is your history; thus hath your despotic friendship laid me under the necessity of being obliged to you for my shame, and of thanking you for my errors. Think not, however, that I would imitate you in this. I am no more disposed to follow your example than you mine; and as you have no reason to fear falling into my errors, I have no longer, thank heaven! the same reasons for granting you indulgence. What better use can I make of that virtue to which you restored me, than to make it instrumental in the preservation of yours?

Let me therefore give you my farther advice on the present occasion. The long absence of our preceptor has not softened your regard for him. Your being left again at liberty, and his return, have given rise to opportunity, which love hath been ingenious enough to improve. It is not a new sentiment produced in your heart; it is only one which, long concealed there, has at length seized this occasion to discover itself. Proud enough to avow it to yourself, you are perhaps impatient to confess it to me. That confession might seem to you almost necessary to make it quite innocent; in becoming a crime in your friend it ceased to be one in you, and perhaps you only gave yourself up to the passion you so many years contended with the more effectually to cure your friend.

I was sensible, my dear, of all this; and was little alarmed at a passion which I saw would be my own protection, and on account of which you have nothing to reproach yourself. The winter we passed together in peace and friendship, gave me yet more hopes of you; for I saw that so far from losing your vivacity, you seemed to have improved it. I frequently observed you affectionate, earnest, attentive; but frank in your professions, ingenuous even in your raillery, unreserved and open, and in your liveliest sallies, the picture of innocence.

Since our conversation in the elysium, I have not so much reason to be satisfied with

you. I find you frequently sad and pensive. You take as much pleasure in being alone as with your friend: you have not changed your language, but your accent; you are more cautious in your pleasantry; you don't mention him so often; one would think you were in constant fear lest he should overhear you; and it is easy to see by your uneasiness that you wanted to hear from him, much oftener than you confessed.

I tremble, my good cousin, lest you should not be sensible of the worst of your disorder, and that the shaft has pierced deeper than you seem to be aware of. Probe your heart, my dear, to the bottom; and then tell me, again I repeat it, tell me if the most prudent woman does not run a risk by being long in the company of a beloved object; tell me if the confidence which ruined me can be entirely harmless to you; you are both at liberty; this is the very circumstance that makes opportunity dangerous. In a mind truly virtuous, there is no weakness will get the better of conscience, and I agree with you, that one has always fortitude enough to avoid committing a wilful crime: but alas! what is a constant protection against human weakness? Reflect however, on consequences; think on the effects of shame. We must pay a due respect to ourselves, if we expect to receive it from others; for how can we flatter ourselves, that others will pay to us what we have not for ourselves? or where can we think she will stop in the career of vice, who sets out without fear? These arguments I should use even to women, who pay no regard to religion and morality, and have no rule of conduct but the opinion of others: but with you, whose principles are those of virtue and Christianity, who are sensible of, and respect, your duty, who know and follow other rules than those of public opinion, your first honour is to stand excused by your own conscience, and that is the most important.

Would you know where you are wrong in this whole affair? It is, I say again, in being ashamed of entertaining a sentiment which you have only to declare, to render it perfectly innocent: but, with all your vivacity, no creature in the world is more timid. You affect pleasantry only to shew your courage, your poor heart trembling all the while for fear. In pretending to ridicule your passion, you do exactly like the

children, who sing in the dark because they are afraid. O my dear friend, reflect on what you yourself have often said; it is a false shame which leads to real disgrace, and virtue never blushes at any thing but what is criminal. Is love in itself a crime? does it not, on the contrary, consist of the most refined as well as the most pleasing of all inclinations? is not its end laudable and virtuous? does it ever enter into base and vulgar minds? does it not animate only the great and noble? does it not ennoble their sentiments? does it not raise them even above themselves? alas! if to be prudent and virtuous we must be insensible to love, among whom could virtue find its votaries on earth? among the refuse of nature and the dregs of mankind.

Why then do you reproach yourself? have you not made choice of a worthy man? is he not disengaged? are not you so too? does he not deserve all your esteem? has he not the greatest regard for you? will you not be even too happy in conferring happiness on a friend so worthy of that name; paying, with your hand and heart, the debts long ago contracted by your friend; and in doing him honour by raising him to yourself, as a reward to unsuccessful, to persecuted merit.

I see what petty scruples still lie in your way. The receding from a declared resolution, by taking a second husband; the exposing your weakness to the world; the marrying a needy adventurer; for low minds, always lavish of scandal, will doubtless so call him. These are the reasons which make you rather ashamed of your passion than willing to justify it; that make you desirous of stifling it in your bosom, rather than render it legitimate. But pray does the shame lie in marrying the man one loves, or in loving without marrying him? between these lies your choice. The regard you owe to the deceased requires you should respect his widow so much, as rather to give her a husband than a gallant: and, if your youth obliges you to make choice of one to supply his place, is it not paying a further regard to his memory, to fix that choice upon the man he most often esteemed when living.

As to his inferiority in point of fortune, I shall perhaps only offend you in replying

to so frivolous an objection, when it is opposed to good sense and virtue. I know of no debasing inequality, but that which arises either from character or education. To whatever rank a man of a mean disposition and low principle may rise, an alliance with him will always be scandalous. But a man educated in the sentiments of virtue and honour is equal to any other in the world, and may take place in whatever rank he pleases. You know what were the sentiments of your father, when your friend was proposed for me. His family is reputable, tho' obscure. He is every where deservedly esteemed. With all this, was he the lowest of mankind, he would deserve your consideration: for it is surely better to derogate from nobility than virtue; and the wife of a mechanic is more reputable than the mistress of a prince.

I have a glimpse of another kind of embarrassment, in the necessity you lie under of making the first declaration: for, before he presumes to aspire to you, it is necessary you should give him permission; this is one of the circumstances justly attending an inequality of rank, which often obliges the superior to make the most mortifying advances.

As to this difficulty, I can easily forgive you, and even confess it would appear to me of real consequence, if I could not find out a method to remove it. I hope you depend so far on me as to believe this may be brought about without your being seen in it; and on my part, I depend so much on my measures, that I shall undertake it with assurance of success: for notwithstanding what you both formerly told me of the difficulty of converting a friend into a lover, if I can read that heart which I too long studied, I don't believe that on this occasion any great art will be necessary. I propose, therefore, to charge myself with this negotiation, to the end that you may indulge yourself in the pleasure of his return, without reserve, regret, danger, or scandal. Ah my dear cousin! how delighted shall I be to unite for ever two hearts so well formed for each other, and which have been long united in mine. May they still (if possible) be more closely united! may we have but one heart amongst us! Yes, Clara, you will serve your friend by indulging your love, and I shall be more certain

of my own sentiments, when I shall no longer make a distinction between him and you.

But, if notwithstanding what I have alledged, you will not give into this project, my advice is, at all events, to banish this dangerous man; always to be dreaded by one or the other: for, be it as it may, the education of our children is still less important to us than the virtue of their mothers. I leave you to reflect, during your journey, on what I have written. We will talk further about it on your return.

I send this letter directly to Geneva; lest, as you were to lie but one night at Lausanne, it should not find you there. Pray bring me a good account of that little republic. From the agreeable description, I should think you happy in the opportunity of seeing it; if I could set any store by pleasures, purchased with the absence of my friends. I never loved grandeur, and at present I hate it, for having deprived me so many years of your company. Neither you nor I, my dear, went to buy our wedding cloaths at Geneva; and yet, however deserving your brother may be, I much doubt whether your sister-in-law will be more happy, with her Flanders lace and India silks, than we in our native simplicity. I charge you, however, notwithstanding my ill-natured reflections, to engage them to celebrate their nuptials at Clarens. My father hath written to yours, and my husband to the bride’s mother, to invite them hither. Their letters you will find inclosed: please to deliver them, and enforce their invitations with your interest. This is all I could do, in order to be present at the ceremony; for I declare to you, I would not upon any account leave my family. Adieu. Let me have a line from you, at least to let me know when I am to expect you here. It is now the second day since you left me, and I know not how I shall support two days more without you.

P. S. While I was writing this letter, Miss Harriot truly must give herself the air of writing to her mamma too. As I always like children should write their own thoughts, and not those which are dictated to them, I indulged her curiosity; and let

her write just what she pleased, without altering a word. This makes the third letter inclosed. I doubt, however, whether this is what you will look for in casting your eye over the contents of the packet. But, for the other letter, you need not look long, as you will not find it. It is directed to you, at Clarens; and at Clarens only it ought to be read: so, take your measures accordingly.

Letter CL. Harriot to her Mother.

Where are you then, mamma? They say at Geneva; which is such a long, long way off that one must ride two days, all day long, to reach you: surely, mamma, you don't intend to go round the world? my little pappa is set out this morning for Etange; my little grand pappa is gone a hunting; my little mamma is gone into her closet to write; and there is nobody with me but Pernette and the Frenchwoman. Indeed, mamma, I don't know how it is; but, since our good friend has left us, we are all scattered about strangely. You began first, mamma; you soon began to be tired, when you had nobody left to tease: but what is much worse since you are gone, is, that my little mamma is not so good humour'd as when you were here. My little boy is very well, but he does not love you; because you did not dance him yesterday as you used to do. As for me, I believe I should love you a little bit still, if you would return quickly, that one might not be so dull. But, if you would make it up with me quite, you must bring my little boy something that would please him. To quiet him indeed, would not be very easy, you would be puzzled to know what to do with him. O that our good friend was but here now! for it is as he said, my fine fan is broke to pieces, my blue skirt is torn all to pieces, my white frock is in tatters; my mittens are no worth a farthing. Fare you well, mamma, I must here end my letter; for my little mamma has finished hers, and is coming out of her closet. I think her eyes are red, but I durst not say so: in reading this, however, she will see I observed it. My good mamma, you are certainly very naughty, to make my little mamma cry.

P. S. Give my love to my grand pappa, to my uncles, to my new aunt and her

mamma, and to every body: tell them I would kiss them all, and you too, mamma; but that you are all so far of, I can't reach you.

Letter CLI. Mrs. Orbe to Mrs. Wolmar.

I cannot leave Lausanne without writing you a line, to acquaint you of my safe arrival here; not however so chearfully disposed as I could wish. I promised myself much pleasure in a journey, which you have been too often tempted to take; but, in refusing to accompany me, you have made it almost disagreeable; and how should it be otherwise? when it is troublesome, I have all the trouble to myself, and when it is tolerably agreeable, I regret your not being with me to partake of the pleasure. I had nothing to say, it is true, against your reasons for staying at home; but you must not think I was therefore satisfied with them. If you do, indeed, my good cousin, you are mistaken; for the very reason why I am dissatisfied is, that I have no right to be so. I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself, to have always the best of the argument, and to prevent your friend from having what she likes, without leaving her one good reason to find fault with you. All had gone to rack and ruin, no doubt, had you left your husband, your family, and your little marmots in the lurch for one week; it had been a wild scheme, to be sure; but I should have liked you a hundred times the better for it: whereas, in aiming to be all perfection, you are good for nothing at all, and are only sit to keep company with angels.

Notwithstanding our past disagreement, I could not help being moved at the sight of my friends and relations; who, on their part, received me with pleasure; or, at least, with a profusion of civilities. I can give you no account of my brother, till I am better acquainted with him. With a tolerable figure, he has a good deal of the formal air of the country he comes from. He is serious, cold, and I think has a surly haughtiness in his disposition, which makes me apprehensive for his wife, that he will not prove so tractable a husband as ours; but will take upon him a good deal of the lord and master.

My father was so delighted to see me, that he even left unfinished the perusal of an account of a great battle which the French, as if to verify the prediction of our friend, have lately gained in Flanders. Thank heaven, he was not there! Can you conceive the intrepid Lord B—— would stand to see his countrymen run away, or that he would have joined them in their flight? No, never; he would sooner have rushed a thousand times on death.

But, a propos of our friend,——our other friend hath not written for some time. Was not yesterday the day for the courier to come from Italy? If you receive any letters, I hope you will not forget I am a party concerned in the news.

Adieu, my dear cousin; I must set out. I shall expect your letters at Geneva; where we hope to arrive tomorrow by dinner time. As for the rest, you may be assured, that, by some means or other, you shall be at the wedding; and that, if you absolutely will not come to Lausanne, I will come with my whole company to plunder Clarens, and drink up all the wine that is to be found in the town.

Letter CLII. Mrs. Orbe to Mrs. Wolmar

Upon my word, my dear, you have read me a charming lecture! you keep it up to a miracle! you seem to depend, however, too much on the salutary effect of your sermons. Without pretending to judge whether they would formerly have lull’d your preceptor to sleep, I can assure you they do not put me to sleep at present; on the contrary, that which you sent me yesterday was so far from affecting me with drowsiness that it kept me awake all night. I bar, however, the remarks of that Argus your husband, if he should see the letter. But I will write in some order, and I protest to you, you had better burn your fingers, than shew it him.

If I should be very methodical, and recapitulate with you article for article, I should usurp your privilege; I had better, therefore, set them down as they come into my head; to affect a little modesty also, and not give you too much fair-play, I will not begin with our travellers, or the courier from Italy. At the worst, if it should so

happen, I shall only have my letter to write over again, and to reverse it, by putting the beginning at the latter end. I am determined however to begin with the supposed Lady B——. I can assure you, I am offended at the very title; nor shall I ever forgive St. Preux for permitting her to take it, Lord B—— for conferring it on her, or you for acknowledging it. Shall Eloisa Wolmar receive Lauretta Pisana into her house! permit her to live with her! think of it, child, again. Would not such a condescension in you be the most cruel mortification to her? can you be ignorant that the air you breathe is fatal to infamy? will the poor unfortunate dare to mix her breath with yours? will she dare to approach you? She would be as much affected by your presence as a creature possessed would be at the sacred relics in the hand of the exorcist: your looks would make her sink into the earth; the very sight of you would kill her.

Not that I despise the unhappy Laura; God forbid! on the contrary, I admire and respect her, the more as her reformation is heroic and extraordinary. But is it sufficient to authorise those mean comparisons by which you debase yourself; as if in the indulgence of the greatest weakness, there was not something in true love that is a constant security to our person, and which made us tenacious of our honour? but I comprehend and excuse you. You have but a confused view of low and distant objects: you look down from your sublime and elevated station upon the earth, and see no inequalities on its surface. Your devout humility knows how to take an advantage even of your virtue.

But what end will all this serve? will our natural sensations make the less impression? will our self-love be less active? in spite of your arguments you feel a repugnance at this match: you tax your sensations with pride; you would strive against them and attribute them to prejudice. But tell me, my dear, how long has the scandal attendant on vice consisted in mere opinion? what friendship do you think can possibly subsist between you and a woman, before whom, one cannot mention chastity, or virtue, without making her burst into tears of shame, without renewing

her sorrows, without even insulting her penitence? believe me, my dear, we may respect Laura, but we ought not to see her; to avoid her is the regard which modest women owe to her merit: it would be cruel to make her suffer in our company.

I will go farther, you say your heart tells you, this marriage ought not to take place. Is not this as much as to tell you it will not. Your friend says nothing about it in his letter! in the letter which he wrote to me! and yet you say that letter is a very long one——and then comes the discourse between you and your husband——that husband of yours is a slyboots, and ye are a couple of cheats thus to trick me out of the news ye have heard. But then your husband's sentiments!——methinks his sentiments were not so necessary; particularly for you who have seen the letter, nor indeed were they for me, who have not seen it: for I am more certain of the conduct of your friend from my own sentiments, than from all the wisdom of philosophy.

See there now!——did I not tell you so? that intruder will be thrusting himself in, no body knows how. For fear he should come again, however, as we are now got into his chapter, let us go through it, that it may be over, and we may have nothing to do with him again.

Let us not bewilder ourselves with conjectures, had you not been Eloisa, had not your friend been your lover, I know not what business he would now have had with you, nor what I should have had to do with him. All I know is, that, if my ill fears had so ordered it that he had first made love to me, it had been all over with his poor head; for, whether I am a fool or not, I should certainly have made him one. But what signifies what I might have been? let us come to what I am. Attached by inclination to you, from our earliest infancy, my heart has been in a manner absorbed by yours; affectionate and susceptible as I was, I of myself was incapable of love or sensibility. All my sentiments came from you; you alone stood in the place of the whole world, and I lived only to be your friend. Chaillot saw all this, and founded on it the judgment she passed on me. In what particular, my dear, have

you found her mistaken?

You know I looked upon your friend as a brother: as the son of my mother was the lover of my friend. Neither was it my reason, but my heart that gave him this preference. I should have been even more susceptible than I am, had I never experienced any other love. I caressed you, in caressing the dearest part of yourself, and the chearfulness which attended my embraces was a proof of their purity. For doth a modest woman ever behave so to the man she loves? did you behave thus to him? no, Eloisa, love in a female heart is cautious and timid; reserve and modesty are all its advances; it discloses by endeavouring to hide itself, and whenever it confers the favour of its caresses, it well knows how to set a value upon them. Friendship is prodigal, but love is avaricious and sparing.

I confess indeed, that too intimate connections at his age and mine, are dangerous; but, with both our hearts engaged by the same object, we were so accustomed to place it between us, that, without annihilating you at least, it was impossible for us to come together. Even that familiarity, so dangerous on every other occasion, was then my security. Our sentiments depend on our ideas, and when these have once taken a certain turn, they are not easily perverted. We had talked together too much in one strain, to begin upon another; we had advanced too far to return back the way we came: love is jealous of its prerogative, and will make its own progress; it does not chuse that friendship should meet it half way. In short, I am still of the same opinion, that criminal caresses never take place between those that have been long used to the endearing embraces of innocence. In aid of my sentiments, came the man destined by heaven to constitute the momentary happiness of my life. You know, cousin, he was young, well made, honest, complaisant and solicitous to please; it is true, he was not so great a master in love as your friend; but it was me that he loved: and, when the heart is free, the passion which is addressed to ourselves, hath always in it something contagious. I returned his affections therefore, with all that remained of mine, and his share was such as left him no room to complain of his choice. With

all this, what had I to apprehend. I will even go so far as to confess that the prerogatives of the husband, joined to the duties of a wife, relaxed for a moment the ties of friendship; and that, after my change of condition, giving myself up to the duties of my new station, I became a more affectionate wife than I was a friend: but, in returning to you, I have brought back two hearts instead of one, and have not since forgot that I alone am charged with that double obligation.

What, my dear friend, shall I say farther? at the return of our old preceptor, I had, as it were, a new acquaintance to cultivate: methought I looked upon him with very different eyes; my heart fluttered as he saluted me, in a manner I had never felt before; and the more pleasure that emotion gave me, the more it made me afraid. I was alarmed at a sentiment which seemed criminal, and which perhaps would not have existed had it not been innocent. I too plainly perceived that he was not, nor could be any longer your lover; I was too sensible that his heart was disengaged, and that mine was so too. You know the rest, my dear cousin; my fears, my scruples were, I see, as well known to you as to myself. My unexperienced heart, was so intimidated by sensations so new to it, that I even reproached myself for the earnest desire I felt to rejoin you; as if that desire had not been the same before the return of our friend. I was uneasy that he should be in the very place where I myself most inclined to be, and believe I should not have been so much displeased to find myself less desirous of it, as at conceiving that it was not entirely on your account. At length, however, I returned to you, and began to recover my confidence. I was less ashamed of my weakness after having confessed it to you. I was even less ashamed of it in your company: I thought myself protected in turn, and ceased to be afraid of myself. I resolved, agreeable to your advice, not to change my conduct towards him. Certainly a greater reserve would have been a kind of declaration, and I was but too likely to let slip involuntary ones, to induce me to make any directly. I continued, therefore, to trifle with him through bashfulness, and to treat him familiarly through modesty: but perhaps all this, not being so natural as formerly, was not attended with

the same propriety, nor exerted to the same degree. From being a trifler, I turned a downright fool; and what perhaps increased my assurance was, I found I could be so with impunity. Whether it was your example that inspired me, or whether it be that Eloisa refines every thing that approaches her, I found myself perfectly tranquil, while nothing remained of my first emotions, but the most pleasing, yet peaceful sensations, which required nothing more than the tranquillity I possessed.

Yes, my dear friend, I am as susceptible and affectionate as you; but I am so in a different manner. Perhaps, with more lively passions, I am less able to govern them; and that very chearfulness, which has been so fatal to the innocence of others has preserved mine. Not that it has been always easy, I confess; any more than it is to remain a widow at my years, and not be sometimes sensible that the daytime constitutes but one half of our lives. Nay, notwithstanding the grave face you put on the matter, I imagine your case does not differ in that greatly from mine. Mirth and pleasantry may then afford no unseasonable relief; and perhaps be a better preservative than graver lessons. How many times, in the stillness of the night, when the heart is all open to itself, have I driven impertinent thoughts out of my mind, by studying tricks for the next day! how many times have I not averted the danger of a private conversation by an extravagant fancy! there is always, my dear, when one is weak, a time wherein gaiety becomes serious; but that time will not come to me.

These are at least my sentiments of the matter, and what I am not ashamed to confess in answer to you. I readily confirm all that I said in the elysium, as to the growing passion I perceived, and the happiness I had enjoyed during the winter. I indulged myself freely in the pleasing reflections of being always in company with the person I loved, while I desired nothing farther; and, if that opportunity had still subsisted, I should have coveted no other. My chearfulness was the effect of contentment, and not of artifice. I turned the pleasure of conversing with him into drollery, and perceived that, in contenting myself with laughing, I was not paving the way for future sorrow.

I could not indeed help thinking sometimes, that my continual playing upon him gave him less real displeasure than he affected. The cunning creature was not angry at being offended, and if he was a long time before he could be brought to temper, it was only, that he might enjoy the pleasure of being intreated. Again, I in my turn have frequently laid hold of such occasions to express a real tenderness for him, appearing all the while to make a jest of him: so that you would have been puzzled to say which was the most of a child. One day, I remember that you was absent, he was playing at chess with your husband, while I and the little Frenchwoman were diverting ourselves at shuttlecock in the same room; I gave her the signal, and kept my eye on our philosopher; who, I found by the boldness of his looks and the readiness of his moves, had the best of the game. As the table was small, the chessboard hung over its edge, I watched my opportunity, therefore, and without seeming to design it, gave the board a knock with a back stroke of my racquet, and overturned the whole game on the floor. You never in your life law a man in such a passion: he was even so enraged that, when I gave him his choice of a kiss, or a box in the ear by way of penance, he sullenly turned away from me as I presented him my cheek. I asked pardon, but to no purpose: he was inflexible, and I doubt not that he would lave left me on my knees, had I condescended to kneel for it. I put an end to his resentment, however, by another offence which made him forget the former, and we were better friends than ever.

I could never have extricated myself so well by any other means; and I once perceived that, if our play had become serious, it might have proved too much so. This was one evening when he played with us that simple and affecting duo of Leo's Vado a morir ben mio. You sung indeed with indifference enough: but I did not; for just as we came to the most pathetic part of the song, he leaned forward, and as my hand lay upon the harpsichord, imprinted on it a kiss, whose impression I felt at my heart. I am not very well acquainted with the ardent kisses of love; but this I can say, that mere friendship, not even ours, ever gave or received any thing like that. After

such moments, what is the consequence of reflecting on them in solitude, and of bearing him constantly in memory? for my part, I was so much affected at the time, that I sung out of tune and put the music out. We went to dancing, I made the philosopher dance; we eat little or nothing; sat up very late; and, though I went to bed weary, I only dosed till morning.

I have therefore very good reason for not laying any restraint on my humour, or changing my manners. The time that will make such an alteration necessary is so near, that it is not worth while to anticipate. The time to be prudish and reserved will come but too soon. While I am in my twenties, therefore, I shall make use of my privilege; for when once turned of thirty, people are no longer wild without being ridiculous; and your find-fault of a husband hath assurance enough to tell me already that I shall be allowed but six months longer to dress a salad with my fingers. Patience! to retort his sarcasm, however, I tell him I will dress it for him in that manner for these six years to come, and if I do, I protest to you he shall eat it;——but to return from my ramble. If we have not the absolute command over our sentiments, we have at least some over our conduct. I could, without doubt, have requested of heaven a heart more at ease; but may I be able to my last hour to plead at its dread tribunal, a life as innocent as that which I passed this winter! in fact, I have nothing in the least to reproach myself with, respecting the only man in whose power it might be to make me criminal. It is not quite the same, my dear, since his departure: being accustomed to think for him in his absence, I think of him every hour in the day, and, to confess the truth, find him more dangerous in idea than in person. When he is absent, I am over head and ears in love; when present, I am only whimsical. Let him return, and I shall be cured of all my fears. The chagrin his absence gives me, however, is not a little aggravated by my uneasiness at his dream. If you have placed all to the account of love, therefore you are mistaken; friendship has had part in my uneasiness. After the departure of our friends your looks were pale and changed; I expected you every moment to fall sick. Not that I am

credulous: I am only fearful. I know very well that a bad dream does not necessarily produce a sinister event; but I am always afraid lest such an event should succeed it. Not one night's rest could I get for that unlucky dream, till I saw you recover your former bloom. Could I have suspected the effects his anxiety would have had on me, without knowing any thing of it, I would certainly have given every thing I had in the world that he should have shewn himself when he came back so much like a fool from Villeneuve.

At length, however, my fears vanished with your suspicious looks. Your health and appetite having a greater effect on me than your pleasantries. The arguments these sustained at table, against my apprehensions, in time dissipated them. To increase our happiness our friend is on his return, and I am in every respect delighted. His return, so far from alarming me, gives me confidence; and as soon as we see him again, I shall fear nothing for your life, nor my repose. In the mean time be careful, dear cousin, of my friend; and be under no apprehensions for yours; she will take care of herself, I will engage for her. And yet I have still a pain at my heart——I feel an oppression which I cannot account for. Ah my dear! to think that we may one day part for ever! that one may survive the other! how unhappy will she be on whom that lot shall fall! She will either remain little worthy to live, or lifeless before her death.

You will ask me, to what purpose is all this vain lamentation? you will say, fie on these ridiculous terrors! instead of talking of death let us chuse a more entertaining topic, and talk about your marriage. Your husband has indeed long entertained such a notion, and perhaps if he had never spoken of it to me, it would never have come into my head. I have since thought of it now and then, but always with disdain. It would be absolutely making an old woman of me; for, if I should have any children by a second marriage, I should certainly conceit myself the grandmother of those of the first. You are certainly very good to take upon yourself so readily to spare the blushes of your friend, and to look upon your taking that trouble as an instance of

your charitable benevolence. For my own part, nevertheless, I can see very well that all the reasons, founded on your obliging solicitude, are not equal to the least of mine against a second marriage.

To be serious, I am not mean-spirited enough to number among those reasons any reluctance I should have to break an engagement rashly made with myself, nor the fear of being censured for doing my duty, nor an inequality in point of fortune in a circumstance where that person reaps the greatest honour to whom the other would be obliged for his: but, without repeating what I have so often told you concerning my case of independency and natural aversion to the marriage yoke, I will abide by only one objection, and this I draw from those sacred dictates which nobody in the world pays a greater regard to than yourself. Remove this obstacle, cousin, and I give up the point. Amidst all those airs of mirth and drollery, which give you so much alarm, my conscience is perfectly easy. The remembrance of my husband excites not a blush; I even take pleasure to think him a witness of my innocence; for why should I be afraid to do that, now he is dead, which I used to do when he was living? but will this be the case, Eloisa, if I should violate those sacred engagements which united us; if I should swear to another that everlasting love, which I have so often swore to him; if my divided heart should rob his memory of what it bestowed on his successor, and be incapable without offending one to discharge the obligations it owes the other? will not that form, now so pleasing to my imagination, fill me with horror and affright? will it not be ever present to poison my delight? and will not his remembrance, which now constitutes the happiness of my life, be my future torment? with what face can you advise me to take a second husband, after having vowed never to do the like yourself, as if the same reasons which you give me were not as applicable to yourself in the same circumstances? they were friends, you say and loved each other. So much the worse. With what indignation will not his shade behold a man who was dear to him, usurp his rights, and seduce his wife from her fidelity? in short, though it were true that I owed no obligation to the

deceased, should I owe none to the dear pledge of his love? and can I believe he would ever have chosen me, had he foreseen that I should ever have exposed his only child to see herself undistinguished among the children of another? another word, and I have done: who told you, pray, that all the obstacles between us arise from me? In answering for him, have you not rather consulted your will than your power? Or, were you certain of his consent, do you make no scruple to offer me a heart exhausted by a former passion? do you think that mine ought to be content with it, and that I might be happy with a man I could not make so? think better of it, my dear cousin. Not requiring a greater return of love than I feel, I should not be satisfied with less, and I am too virtuous a woman to think the pleasing my husband a matter of indifference. What security have you then for the completion of your hopes? Is the pleasure he may take in my company, which may be only the effect of friendship; is that transitory delight, which at his age may arise only from the difference of sex; Is this, I say, a sufficient foundation? If such pleasure had produced any lasting sentiment, is it to be thought he would have been so profoundly silent, not only to me, but to you, and even to your husband; by whom an eclairissement of that nature could not fail of being favourably received.

Has he ever opened his lips on this head to any one? in all the private conversations I have had with him, he talked of no body but you. In those which you have had, did he ever say anything of me? how can I imagine that, if he had concealed a secret of this kind in his breast, I should not have perceived him to be under some constraint, or that it would not, by some indiscretion or other, have escaped him? nay, since his departure, which of us does he most frequently mention in his letters? which of us is the subject of his dreams? I admire that you should think me so tender and susceptible, and should not at the same time suppose my heart would suggest all this. But I see through your device, my sweet friend; it is only to authorise your pretensions to reprisals, that you charge me with having formerly saved my heart at the expense of yours. But I am not so to be made the dupe of your subtlety. And so

here is an end of my confession; which I have made, not to contradict, but to set you right; having nothing farther to say on this head, than to acquaint you with my resolution. You now know my heart as well, if not better, than myself. My honour, my happiness are equally dear to you as to myself; and, in the present tranquillity of your passions, you will be the best able to judge of the means to secure both the one and the other. Take my conduct therefore under your direction. I submit it entirely to you. Let us return to our natural state, and reciprocally change our employment; we shall both do the better for it: do you govern, and you shall find me tractable: let it be your place to direct what I should do, and it shall be mine to follow your directions.

Take my heart, and inclose it up in yours; what business have inseparables for two? but to return to our travellers; though, to say truth, I have already said so much about one, that I hardly dare speak a word about the other, for fear you should remark too great a difference in my stile, and that even my friendship for the generous Englishman should betray too much regard for the amiable Swiss. Besides, what can I say about letters I have not seen? you ought at least to send me that of Lord B——. But you durst not send it without the other. ’Tis very well. You might however have done better. Well, recommend me to your duennas of twenty: they are infinitely more tractable than those of thirty.

I must revenge myself, however, by informing you of the effect of your fine reserve. It has only made me imagine the letter in question, that letter which breathes such a——only a hundred times more tender than it really is. Out of spite, I take pleasure in conceiving it filled with soft expressions which cannot be in it; so that if I am not passionately admired, I shall make you suffer for it. After all, I cannot see with what face you can talk to me of the Italian post. You prove in your letter that I was not in the wrong to wait for it, but for not having waited long enough. Had I stayed but one poor quarter of an hour longer, I should have met the packet, have laid hold of it first, and read it at my ease. It had then been my turn to make a merit of giving it

you. But, since the grapes are too sour, you may keep the letters. I have two others which I would not change for them were they better worth reading than I imagine they are. There is that of Harriot, I can assure you, even exceeds your own; nor have either you or I, in all our lives, ever wrote any thing so pretty. And yet you give yourself airs forsooth of treating this prodigy as a little impertinent. Upon my word I suspect that to arise from mere envy; and, since I have discovered in her this new talent, I purpose, before you spoil her writing as you have done her speech, to establish between her apartment and mine an Italian post, from whence I will have no pilfering of packets.

Farewell, my dear friend, you will find inclosed the answers to your letters, which will give you no mean idea of my interest here. I would write to you something about this country and its inhabitants; but it is high time to put an end to this volume of a letter. You have besides quite perplexed me with your strange fancies. As we have five or six days longer to stay here, and I shall have time to give another look at what I have already seen, you will be no loser by the delay; and you may depend on my transmitting you another volume as big as this, before my departure.

Letter CLIII. Lord B—— to Mr. Wolmar.

No! my dear Wolmar, you were not mistaken: St. Preux is to be depended on; but I am not; and I have paid dear for the experience that hath convinced me of it. Without his assistance I should have been a dupe to the very proof to which I put his fidelity. You know that, to satisfy his notions of gratitude; and divert his mind with new objects, I pretended that my journey to Italy was of greater importance than it really was. To bid a final adieu to the attachments of my youth, and bring back a friend perfectly cured of his, were, the fruits I promised myself from the voyage. I informed you that his dream, at Villeneuve, gave me some uneasiness for him. That dream made me even suspect the motives of his transport, on being told that you had chosen him preceptor for your children, and that he should pass the remainder of his

life with you. ‘The better’ to observe the effusions of his heart, I had at first removed all difficulties, by declaring my intention of settling also in your part of the world; and thus I prevented any of those objections his friendship might have made on account of leaving me. A change in any resolutions, however, made me soon alter my tale.

He had not seen the marchioness thrice, before we were both agreed in our opinion of her. Unfortunate woman! possessed of noble qualities, but without virtue! her ardent, sincere passion, at first affected me, and nourished mine; but her passion was tinged with the blackness of her soul, and inspired me in the end with horror. When he had seen Laura, and knew her disposition; her beauty, her wit and unexampled attachment, I formed a resolution to make use of her to acquire a perfect knowledge of the situation of St. Preux. If I marry Laura, said I to him, it is not my intention to carry her to London, where she may be known; but to a place, where virtue is respected in whomsoever it is found: you will there discharge your duty of preceptor, and we shall still continue to live together. If I do not marry her, it is time for me, however, to think of settling. You know my house in Oxfordshire, and will make your choice, either to take upon you the education of Mr. Wolmar’s children, or to accompany me in my retirement. To this, he made me just such an answer as I expected; but I had a mind to observe his conduct. If, in order to spend his time at Clarens, he had promoted a marriage which he ought to have opposed, or on the contrary, preferred the honour of his friend to his own happiness; in either case, I say, the experiment answered my end, and I knew what to think of the situation of his heart.

On trial, I found him to be such as I wished; firmly resolved against the project I pretended to have formed, and ready with all his arguments to oppose it; but I was continually in her company, and was moved by her tenderness and affliction. My heart, totally disengaged from the marchioness, began to fix itself on her rival, by this constant intercourse. The sentiments of Laura increased the attachment she had

before inspired; and I began to be ashamed of sacrificing to that prejudice I despised, the esteem which I was so well convinced was due to her merit; I began even to be in doubt, whether I had not laid myself under some obligation to do that merit justice, by the hopes I had given her, if not in words, at least by my actions. Though I never promised her any thing, yet to have kept her in suspense and expectation for nothing, would be to deceive her; and I could not help thinking such a deception extremely cruel. In short, annexing a kind of duty to my inclination, and consulting happiness more than reputation, I attempted to reconcile my passion to reason, and resolved to carry my pretended scheme as far as it would go, and even to execute it in reality, if I could not recede without injustice. After some time, however, I began to be more uneasy on account of St. Preux, as he did not appear to act the part he had undertaken with that zeal I expected. Indeed he opposed my professed design of marriage, but took little pains to check my growing inclination; speaking to me of Laura in such a strain of encomium as, at the same time that he appeared to dissuade me from marrying her, added fuel to the flame by increasing my affection. This inconsistency gave me some alarm; I did not think him so steady as before. He seemed shy of directly opposing my sentiments, gave way to my arguments, was fearful of giving offence, and indeed seemed to have lost all that intrepidity in doing his duty, which the true passion for it inspires. Some other observations which I made also, increased my distrust. I found out that he visited Laura unknown to me; and that, by their frequent signs, there was a secret understanding between them. On her part, the prospect of being united to the man she loved seemed to give her no pleasure; I observed in her the same degree of tenderness indeed, but that tenderness was no longer mixed with joy at my approach; a gloomy sadness perpetually clouding her features. Nay, sometimes in the tenderest part of our conversations, I have caught her casting a side glance on St. Preux; on which a tear would often steal silently down her check, which she endeavoured to conceal from me. In short, they carried the matter so far, that I was at last greatly

perplexed. What could I think? it is impossible, said I to myself, that I can all this while have been cherishing a serpent in my bosom? how far have I not reason to extend my suspicions, and return those he formerly entertained of me? weak and unhappy as we are, our misfortunes are generally of our own seeking! Why do we complain that bad men torment us, while the good are so ingenious at tormenting each other! All this operated but to induce me to come to a determination. For, though I was ignorant of the bottom of their intrigue, I saw the heart of Laura was still the same; and that proof of her affection endeared her to me the more. I proposed to come to an explanation with her before I put an end to the affair; but I was desirous of putting it off till the last moment, in order to get all the light I could possibly beforehand. As for St. Preux, I was resolved to convince myself, to convince him, and in short to come at the truth of the matter before I took any step in regard to him; for it was easy to suppose that an infallible rupture must happen, and I was unwilling to place a good disposition and a reputation of twenty years standing, in the balance against mere suspicions.

The marchioness was not ignorant of what passed; having her spies in the convent where Laura resides, who informed her of the report of her marriage. Nothing more was necessary to excite her rage. She wrote me threatening letters; nay; she went farther; but, as it was not the first time she had done so, and we were on our guard, her attempts were fruitless. I had only the pleasure to see that our friend did not spare himself on this occasion nor make any scruple to expose his own life to save that of his friend.

Overcome by the transports of her passion, the marchioness fell sick, and was soon past recovery; putting at once an end to her misfortunes and her guilt. [94] I could not help being afflicted to hear of her illness, and sent doctor Eswin to give her all the assistance in his power, as a physician. St. Preux went also to visit her in my behalf; but she would neither see one nor the other. She would not even bear to hear me named during her illness, and inveighed against me with the most horrid

imprecations every time I was mentioned. I was grieved at heart for her situation, and felt my wounds ready to bleed afresh; reason however supported my spirits and resolution, but I should have been one of the worst of men to think of marriage, while a woman, so dear to me, lay in that extremity. In the mean time our friend, fearing I should not be able to resist the strong inclination I had to see her, proposed a journey to Naples; to which I consented.

The second day after our arrival there, he came into my chamber with a fixed and grave countenance, holding a letter in his hand, which he seemed to have just received. I started up, and cried out, The marchioness is dead! would to God, said he, coldly, she were! it were better not to exist, than to exist only to do evil; but it is not of her I bring you news; tho' what I bring concerns you nearly; be pleased, my lord, to give me an uninterrupted hearing. I was silent, and thus he began.

In honouring me with the sacred name of friend, you taught me how to deserve it. I have acquitted myself of the charge you entrusted with me, and, seeing you ready to forget yourself, have ventured to assist your memory. I saw you unable to break one connection but by entering into another; both equally unworthy of you. Had an unequal marriage been the only point in question, I should only have reminded you, that you was a peer of England, and advised you either to renounce all pretensions to public honour, or to respect public opinion. But a marriage so scandalous! can you? no, my lord, you will not make so unworthy a choice. It is not enough that your wife should be virtuous, her reputation should be unstained. Believe me, a wife for Lord B—— is not easily to be found. Read that, my lord, and see what I have done.

He then gave me a letter. It was from Laura. I opened it with emotion and read as follows.

My Lord,

"Love at length prevailed, and you were willing to marry me: but I am content. Your friend has pointed out my duty, and I perform it without regret. In dishonouring you,

I should have lived unhappy; in leaving your honour unstained, methinks I partake of it. The sacrifice of my felicity to a duty so severe, makes me forget even the shame of my youth. Farewell! from this moment I am no longer in your power or my own. Farewell, my lord, for ever! pursue me not in my retreat, to despair; but: hear my last request. Confer not on any other woman, that honour I could not accept. There was but one heart in the world made for yours, and it was that of"

Laura.

The agitation of mind I was in, on reading this letter, prevented me from speaking. He took the advantage of my silence, to tell me that, after my departure, she had taken the veil in the convent where she boarded; that the court of Rome, being informed she was going to be married to a Lutheran, had given orders to prevent his seeing her; and confessed to me frankly, that he had taken all these measures in concert with herself. I did not oppose your designs, continued he, with all the power I might; fearing your return to the marchioness, and being desirous of combating your old passion by that which you entertained for Laura. In seeing you run greater lengths than I intended, I applied to your understanding: but, having from my own experience but too just reason to distrust the power of argument, I sounded the heart of Laura; and, finding in it all that generosity which is inseparable from true love, I prevailed on her to make this sacrifice. The assurance of being no longer the object of your contempt, inspired her with a fortitude which renders her the more worthy of your esteem. She has done her duty, you must now do yours.

Then eagerly embracing and pressing me to his heart, "I read, says he, in our common destiny, those laws which heaven dictates to both, and requires us to obey. The empire of love is at an end, and that of friendship begins: my heart attends only to its sacred call; it knows no other tie than that which unites me to you. Fix on whatever place of residence you please, Clarens, Oxford, London, Paris, or Rome; it is equal to me, so we but live together. Go whither you will, seek an asylum

wherever you think fit, I will follow you throughout the world: for I solemnly protest, in the face of the living God, that I will never leave you till death."

I was greatly affected at the zeal and affection of this young man; his eyes sparkling with pleasure on this effusion of his heart. I forgot at once both the marchioness and Laura. Is there indeed any thing in the world to be regretted, while one preserves so dear a friend? Indeed, I was now fully convinced, by the part he so readily took on this occasion, that he was entirely cured of his ancient passion; and that the pains you had taken, were not thrown away upon him. In short, I could not doubt, by the solemn engagement he had thus voluntarily made, that his attachment to me was truly sincere; and that his virtue had entirely got the better of his inclinations. I can therefore bring him back with confidence. Yes, my dear Wolmar, he is worthy to educate youth; and what is more, of being received into your house.

A few days after, I received an account of the death of the marchioness; at which I was but little affected, as she had indeed been long dead in respect to me. I had hitherto regarded marriage as a debt, which every man contracts at the time of his birth, with his country and mankind; for which reason, I had resolved to marry, the less out of inclination than duty; but I am now of another opinion. The obligation to marriage, I now conceive, is not so universal; but that it depends on the rank and situation which every man holds in life. Celibacy is, doubtless, wrong in the common people, such as manufacturers, husbandmen, and others, who are really useful and necessary to the state. But for those superior orders of men, who compose the legislature and the magistracy, to which every other aspires, and which are always sufficiently supplied, it is both lawful and expedient. For were the rich all obliged to marry, the increase of number among those subjects which are a dead weight on the state, would only tend to its depopulation. Mankind will always find masters enough, and England will sooner want labourers than peers.

I think myself at full liberty, therefore, in the rank to which I was born, to indulge

my own inclination in this respect. At my age, it is too late to think of repairing the shocks my heart hath sustained from love. I shall devote my future hours therefore to friendship, the pleasures of which I can no where cultivate so well as at Clarens. I accept, therefore, your obliging offers, on such conditions, as my fortune ought to add to yours, that it may not be useless to me. Besides, after the engagement St. Preux hath entered into, I know no other method of detaining him with you, but by residing with you myself; and if ever he grows tired or troublesome, it will be sufficient for me to leave you, to make him follow. The only embarrassment I shall in this case lie under, respects my customary voyages to England; for, tho' I have no longer any interest in the house of peers, yet while I am one of the number, I think it necessary I should continue to do my duty as such. But I have a faithful friend among my brother peers, whom I can empower to answer for me in ordinary cases; and on extraordinary occasions, wherein I think it my duty to go over in person, I can take my pupil along with me; and even he, his pupils with him, when they grow a little bigger and you can prevail on yourself to trust them with us. Such voyages cannot fail of being useful to them, and will not be so very long as to make their absence afflicting to their mother.

I have not shewn this letter to St. Preux, nor, do I desire you should shew every part of it to the ladies: it is proper that my scheme to sound the heart of our friend, should be known only to you and me. I would not have you conceal anything from them, however, that may do honour to this worthy youth, even tho' it should be discovered at my expense: but I must here take my leave.

I have sent the designs and drawings for my pavilion, for you to reform, alter, and amend, as you please; but I would have you to execute them immediately if possible. I would have struck out the music room; for I have now lost almost all pretensions to taste, and am careless of amusement: at the request of St. Preux, however, I have left it, as he proposes now and then to exercise your children there. You will receive also some few books, to add to your library. But what novelty will you find in books?

No, my dear Wolmar, you only want to understand that of nature, to be the wisest of men.

Letter CLIV. Answer.

I was impatient, my dear B——, to come to the end of your adventures. It seemed very strange to me, that, after having so long resisted the force of your inclinations, you had waited only for a friend to assist you to give way to them: tho', to say truth, we find ourselves often more weak when supported by others, than when we rely solely on our own strength. I confess, however, I was greatly alarmed by your last letter, when you told me your marriage with Laura was a thing absolutely determined. Not but that, in spite of this assurance, I still entertained some doubts of the event; and, if my suspicions had been disappointed, I would never have seen St. Preux again. As it is, you have both acted as I flattered myself you would, and have so fully justified the good opinion I had of you, that I shall be delighted whenever you think proper to return, and settle here agreeable to the design we had planned. Come, ye uncommon friends! come to increase and partake of the happiness we here enjoy. However flattering the hopes of those who believe in a future state, for my part, I had rather enjoy the present in their company; nay, I perceive you are both more agreeable to me with the tenets you possess, than you would be if unhappy enough to think as I do.

As to St. Preux, you know what were my sentiments of him at your departure; there was no need to make any experiment on his heart to settle my judgment concerning him. My proof had been before made, and I thought I knew him as well as it was possible for one man to know another. I had, besides, more than one reason to place a confidence in him; and was more secure of him than he was of himself. For tho' he seems to have followed your example in renouncing matrimony, you will perhaps find reason here to prevail on him to change his system. But I will explain myself farther on this head when I see you.

With respect to yourself, I think your sentiments on celibacy quite new and refined. They may, for ought I know, be judicious also, when applied to political institutions, intended to balance and keep in equilibrium the relative powers of states; but I am in doubt, whether they are not more subtle than solid, when applied to dispense with the obligations that individuals lie under to the laws of nature. It seems to me that life is a blessing we receive on condition of transmitting it to our successors; a kind of tenure which ought to pass from generation to generation; and that every one who had a father, is indispensably obliged to become one. Such has been hitherto your opinion also; it was one of your motives for going to Italy: but I know from whence you derive your new system of philosophy; there is an argument in Laura's letter, which your heart knows not how to invalidate.

Our sprightly cousin has been for these eight or ten days past at Geneva, with her relations, on family affairs: but we daily expect her return. I have told my wife as much as was expedient she should know of your letter. We had learnt of Mr. Miol, that your marriage was broken off; but she was ignorant of the part St. Preux had in that event: and you may be assured it will give her great pleasure to be informed of all he has done to merit your beneficence, and justify your esteem. I have shewn her the plan and designs for your pavilion, in which she thinks there is much taste. We propose to make some little alterations, however, as the ground requires; which, as they will make your lodging the more convenient, we doubt not you will approve.

We wait, nevertheless, for the sanction of Clara, before we resolve; for, without her, you know there is nothing to be done here. In the meantime I have set the people to work, and hope to have the masonry pretty forward before winter.

I am obliged to you for your books; but I no longer read those I am master of, and it is too late in life for me to begin to study those I do not understand. I am, however, not quite so ignorant as you would make me. The only volume of nature's works which I read, is the heart of man; of my abilities for comprehending which, my

friendship for you is a sufficient proof.

Letter CLV. Mrs. Orbe to Mrs. Wolmar.

My stay here, my dear cousin, gives me a world of anxieties; the worst of all which is, that the agreeableness of the place would induce me to stay longer. The city is delightful, its inhabitants hospitable, and their manners courteous; while liberty, which I love of all things, seems to have taken refuge amongst them. The more I know of this little state, the more I find an attachment to one's country agreeable; and pity those who, pretending to call themselves of this or that country, have no attachment to any. For my part, I perceive that, if I had been born in this, I should have had truly a Roman soul. As it is, I dare not, however, pretend to say that

Rome is no more at Rome, but where I dwell.

For I am afraid you will be malicious enough, to think the contrary. But why need we talk always about Rome, and Rome? the subject of this letter shall be Geneva. I shall say nothing about the face of the country, it is much like ours, except that it is less mountainous, and more rural. I shall also say nothing about the government: my good father will, doubtless, give you enough of it; as he is employed here all day long, in the fulness of his heart, talking politics with the magistrates; and I find him not a little mortified that the gazette so seldom makes mention of Geneva. You may judge of the tediousness of their conversation, by the length of my letters: for, when I am wearied with their discourse, I leave them, and, in order to divert myself am tiresome to you. All I remember of their long conferences is, that they hold in high esteem the great good sense which prevails in this city. When we regard indeed the mutual action and reaction of all parts of the state, which afford a reciprocal balance to each other, it is not to be doubted that there are greater abilities employed in the government of this little republic than in that of some great kingdoms, where every thing supports itself by its own proper strength; and the reins of administration may be thrown into the hands of a blockhead, without any danger to the constitution. I

can assure you, this is not the case here. I never hear any body talk to my father about the famous ministers of great courts, without thinking of the wretched musician who thundered away upon our great organ at Lausanne, and thought himself a prodigious able hand because he made a great noise. The people here have only a little spinner, but in general they make good harmony, though the instrument be now and then a little out of tune.

Neither shall I say any thing about,——but with telling you what I shall not say, I shall never have done. To begin then with one thing, that I may sooner come to a conclusion. Of all people in the world those of Geneva are the most easily known and characterised. Their manners, and even their vices, are mixed with a certain frankness peculiar to themselves. They are conscious of their natural goodness of heart, and that makes them not afraid to appear such as they are. They have generosity, sense and penetration; but they are apt to love money too well; a fault which I attribute to their situation and circumstances, which make it so necessary; the territory of this state not producing a sufficient nourishment for its inhabitants. Hence it happens that, the natives of Geneva, who are scattered up and down Europe to make their fortunes, copy the airs of foreigners; and, having adopted the vices of the countries where they have lived, bring them home in triumph with their wealth. [95] Thus the luxury of other nations makes them despise the simplicity of their own; its spirit and liberty appear ignoble, and they forge themselves chains of gold, not as marks of slavery, but as ornaments they are proud of.

But what have I to do with these confounded politics? indeed here I am stunned with them, and have them constantly rung in my ears. I hear nothing else talked of; unless when my father is absent, which never happens except when the post arrives. It is ourselves, my dear, nevertheless, that infect every place we go to; for, as to the conversation of the people, it is generally useful and agreeable; indeed there is little to be learned even from books, which may not here be acquired by conversation. The manners of the English have reached even so far as this country; and the men,

living more separate from the women than in ours, contract among themselves a graver turn, and have more solidity in their discourse. This advantage is attended; nevertheless, with an inconvenience that is very soon experienced. They are extremely prolix, formal, proverbial, and argumentative. Instead of writing like Frenchmen, as they speak, they, on the contrary, speak as they write. They declaim instead of talking; and one thinks they are always going to support a thesis. They divide their discourse into chapters and sections, and take the same method in their conversations as they do in their books. They speak as if they were reading, strictly observing etymological distinctions, and pronouncing their words exactly as they are spelt: in short, their conversations consist of harangues; and they prattle as if they were preaching.

But what is the most singular is, that, with this dogmatical and frigid air in their discourse, they are lively, impetuous, and betray strong passions; nay, they would express themselves well enough upon sentimental subjects, if they were not too particular in words, or knew how to address the heart. But their periods and their commas are insupportable; and they describe so composedly the most violent passions, that, when they have done, one looks about one to see who is affected.

In the mean time, I must confess I am bribed a little to think well of their hearts, and to believe they are not altogether void of taste. For you must know, as a secret, that a very pretty gentleman for a husband, and, as they say, very rich, hath honoured me with his regards; and I have more gratitude and politeness than to call in question what he has told me. Had he but come eighteen months sooner, what pleasure should I have taken in having a sovereign for my slave, and in turning the head of a noble lord! but at present, mine is not clear enough to make that sport agreeable.

But to return to that taste for reading which makes the people of Geneva think. It extends to all ranks and degrees amongst them, and is of advantage to all. The French read a great deal; but they read only new books; or rather they run them over,

less for the sake of knowing what they contain, than to have it to say they have read them. On the contrary, the readers at Geneva peruse only books of merit; they read and digest what they read; making it their business to understand, not to criticize upon, them. Criticisms and the choice of books are made at Paris; while choice books are almost the only ones that are read at Geneva. By this means, their reading has less variety and is more profitable. The women, on their part, employ a good deal of their time also in reading; [96] and their conversation is affected by it, but in a different manner. The fine ladies are affected and set up for wits here, as well as with us. Nay, the petty citizens themselves learn from their books a kind of methodical chit-chat, a choice of words which one is surprized to hear from them, as we are sometimes with the prattle of forward children. They must unite all the good sense of the men, all the sprightliness of the women, and all the wit common to both; or the former will appear a little pedantic, and the latter prudish.

As I was looking out of my window yesterday, I overheard two tradesmens daughters, both very pretty, talking together in a manner sprightly enough to attract my attention. I listened, and heard one of them propose to the other, laughing, to write a journal of their transactions. “Yes,” replied the other immediately, “a journal of a morning and a comment at night.” What say you, cousin? I know not if this be the stile of tradesmens daughters; but I know one must be taken up greatly indeed, not to be able, during the whole day, to make more than a comment on what has passed. I fancy this lass had read the Arabian nights entertainments.

Thus, with a stile a little elevated, the women of Geneva are lively and satirical; and one sees here the effect of the nobler passions, as much as in any city in the world. Even in the simplicity of their dress there is taste; they are graceful also in their manners, and agreeable in conversation. As the men are less gallant than affectionate, the women are less coquettish than tender; their susceptibility gives, even to the most virtuous among them, an agreeable and refined turn, which reaches the heart, and thence deduces all its refinement. So long as the ladies of Geneva

preserve their own manners, they will be the most amiable women in Europe; but they are in danger of being soon all Frenchified, and then Frenchwomen will be more agreeable than they.

Thus every thing goes to ruin, when manners grow corrupted. Even taste depends on morals, and disappears with them; giving way to affect and pompous pretensions, that have no other foundation than fashion. True wit also lies nearly under the same circumstances. Is it not the modesty of our sex that obliges us to make use of address to resist the arts of men? and, if they are reduced to make use of artifice to excite our attention, have we less occasion for ingenuity to seem not to understand them? is it not the men who set our tongues and wits at liberty? who make us so keen at repartee, and oblige us to turn their persons and pretensions into ridicule? you may say what you will, but I maintain it that a certain coquettish air and malicious raillery, confounds a gallant much more than silence or contempt. What pleasure have I not taken in seeing a discontented Celadon, blush, stammer and lose himself at every word; while the shafts of ridicule, less flaming but more pointed than those of love, flew about him like hail; in seeing him shot thorough and thorough with icicles, whose coldness added to the smart of the wounds! even you yourself, who never loved to give pain, do you believe your mild and ingenuous behaviour, your timid, gentle looks conceal less roguery and art than my hoydening? Upon my word, my dear, I much doubt, with all your hypocritical airs, if an account were taken of all the lovers you and I have made fools of, whether yours would not be the longer list. I cannot help laughing every time I think of that poor Constans, who came to me in such a passion to reproach you with having too great a regard for him. She is so obliging to me, says he, that I know not what to complain of, and declines my pretensions with so much good sense, that I am ashamed of finding myself so unable to reply to her arguments; in short she is so much my friend, that I find myself incapable of supporting the character of her lover.

But to return to my subject. I believe there is no place in the world where married

people agree better, and are better managers, than in this city: here a domestic life is peaceful and agreeable; the husbands are in general obliging, and the wives almost Eloisas. Here your system really exists. The two sexes employ and amuse themselves so differently that they are never tired with each others customs and company, but meet again with redoubled pleasure. This heightens the enjoyment of the wise; abstinence from what we delight in, is a tenet of your philosophy; it is indeed the epicurism of reason.

But, unhappily, this ancient modesty begins a little to decline. The sexes begin to associate more frequently, they approach in person and their hearts recede. It is here as with us, every thing is a mixture of good and bad, but in different proportions. The virtues of the natives of this country are of its own production; their vices are exotic. They are great travellers, and easily adopt the customs and manners of other nations; they speak other languages with facility, and learn without difficulty their proper accent, nevertheless they have a disagreeable drawling tone in the pronunciation of their own; particularly among the women, who travel but little. More humbled by their insignificance, than proud of their liberty, they seem among foreigners to be ashamed of their country, and are therefore in a hurry, as one may say, to naturalise themselves in that where they happen to reside; and perhaps the character they have of being avaricious and selfish, contributes not a little to this false shame. It would be better, without doubt, to wipe off the stain by a disinterested example, than to scandalize their fellow citizens by being ashamed of their country. But they despise the place of their nativity, even while they render it estimable; and are still more in the wrong not to give their city the honour of their own personal merit.

And yet, however avaricious they may be, they are not accused of amassing fortunes by low and servile means: they seldom attach themselves to the great, or dance attendance at courts; personal slavery being as odious to them as that of the community. Pliant and flexible as Alcibiades, they are equally impatient of

servitude; and, though they adopt the customs of other nations, they imitate the people without being slaves to the prince. They are chiefly employed in trade, because that is the surest road to wealth, consistent with liberty.

And this great object of their wishes makes them often bury the talents with which they are prodigally endowed by nature. This brings me back to the beginning of my letter. They have ingenuity and courage, are lively and penetrating, nor is there any thing virtuous or great which surpasses their comprehension and abilities. But, more passionately fond of money than of honour, in order to live in abundance they die in obscurity, and the only example they leave to their children, is the love of those treasures which for their sakes they have amassed.

I learn all this from the natives themselves; for they speak of their own characters very impartially.

For my part, I know not what they may be abroad, but at home they are an agreeable people: and I know but one way to quit Geneva without regret. Do you know, cousin, what this is? you may affect as much ignorance and humility as you please; if you should say you have not already guessed, you certainly would tell a fib. The day after tomorrow our jovial company will embark in a pretty little ship, fitted out for the occasion: for we chuse to return by water on account of the pleasantness of the season and that we may be all together. We purpose to pass the first night at Morges, to be the next day at Lausanne, on account of the marriage ceremony, and the day following to be at——you know where. When you see at a distance the flags flying, the torches flaming, and hear the cannon roar; I charge you skid about the house like a mad thing, and call the whole family to arms! to arms! the enemy! the enemy is coming!

P. S. Although the distribution of the apartments incontestably belongs to me as housekeeper, I will give it up to you on this occasion; insisting only that my father be placed in those of Lord B—— on account of his charts and maps; with which I

desire it may be compleatly hung from the ceiling to the floor.

Letter CLVI. From Mrs. Wolmar.

How delightful are my sensations in beginning this letter! it is the first time in my life that I ever wrote to you without fear or shame! I am proud of the friendship which now subsists between us, as it is the fruit of an unparallel'd conquest over a fatal passion: a passion which may sometimes be overcome, but is very rarely refined into friendship. To relinquish that which was once dear to us when honour requires it, may be effected by the efforts of ordinary minds; but to have been what we once were to each other, and to become what we now are, this is a triumph indeed. The motive for ceasing to love may possibly be a vicious one; but that which converts the most tender passion into as sincere a friendship cannot be equivocal: it must be virtuous. But should we ever have arrived at this of ourselves? never, never, my good friend; it had been rashness to attempt it. To avoid each other was the first article of our duty, and which nothing should have prevented us from performing. We might without doubt have continued our mutual esteem; but we must have ceased to write, or to converse. All thoughts of each other must have been suppressed, and the greatest regard we could have reciprocally shewn, had been to break off all correspondence.

Instead of that, let us consider our present situation; can there be on earth a more agreeable one, and do we not reap a thousand times a day the reward of our self-denial? to see, to love each other, to be sensible of our bliss, to pass our days together in fraternal intimacy and peaceful innocence; to think of each other without remorse, to speak without blushing; to do honour to that attachment for which we have been so often reproached; this is the point at which we are at last arrived. O my friend! how far in the career of honour have we already run! let us resolve to persevere, and finish our race as we have begun.

To whom are we indebted for such extraordinary happiness? you cannot be ignorant:

you know it well. I have seen your susceptible heart overflow with gratitude at the goodness of the best of men, to whom both you and I have been so greatly obliged: a goodness that does not lay us under fresh obligations, but only renders those more dear which were before sacred. The only way to acknowledge his favours is to merit them; for the only value he sets on them consists in their emolument to us. Let us then reward our benefactor by our virtue; for this is all he requires, and therefore all we owe him. He will be satisfied with us and with himself, in having restored us to our reason.

But permit me to lay before you a picture of your future situation, that you may yourself examine it and see if there be any thing in it to make you apprehensive of danger: Yes, worthy youth, if you respect the cause of virtue, attend with a chaste ear to the counsels of your friend. I tremble to enter upon a subject in which I am sorry to engage; but how shall I be silent without betraying my friend? will it not be too late to warn you of the danger when you are already entangled in the snare? Yes, my friend, I am the only person in the world who is intimate enough with you to present it to your view. Have I not a right to talk to you as a sister, as a mother?

Your career, you tell me, is finished; if so, its end is premature. Though your first passion be extinguished, your sensibility still remains; and your heart is the more to be suspected, as its only cause of restraint no longer exists. A young man, of great ardor and susceptibility resolves to live continent and chaste; he knows, he feels, he has a thousand times said, that fortitude of mind which is productive of every virtue, depends on the purity of sentiment which supports it. As love preserved him from vice in his youth, his good sense must secure him in manhood; however severe may be the duty enjoined him, he knows there is a pleasure arising from it, that will compensate its rigour; and, though it be necessary to enter the conflict when conquest is in view, can he do less now out of piety to God than he did before out of regard to a mistress? such I imagine is your way of reasoning, and such the maxims you adopt for your future conduct: for you have always despised those persons who,

content withoutward appearances, have one doctrine for theory and another for practice, and who lay upon others a burthen of moral duties which they themselves are unwilling to bear.

But what kind of life has such a prudent, virtuous man made choice of, in order to comply with those rules he has prescribed? less a philosopher than a man of probity and a Christian, he has not surely taken his vanity for a guide: he certainly knows that it is much easier to avoid temptations, than to withstand them; does he therefore avoid all dangerous opportunities? does he shun those objects which are most likely to move his passions? has he that humble diffidence of himself which is the best security to virtue? quite the contrary; he does not hesitate rashly to rush on danger. At thirty years of age, he is going to seclude himself from the world, in company with women of his own age; one of which was once too dear to him for him ever to banish the dangerous idea of their former intimacy from his mind; another of whom has lived with him in great familiarity, and a third is attached to him by all those ties which obligations conferred excite in grateful minds. He is going to expose himself to every thing that can renew those passions which are but imperfectly extinguished; he is going to entangle himself in those snares which he ought, of all others, to avoid. There is not one circumstance attending his situation which ought not to make him distrust his own strength, nor one which will not render him for ever contemptible should he be weak enough to be off his guard for a moment. Where then is that great fortitude of mind, in which he presumes to place such confidence? in what instance has it hitherto appeared that he can be answerable for it, for the future? did he acquire it at Paris, in the house of the colonel’s lady? or was he influenced by it last summer at Meillerie? has it been his security during the winter, against the charms of another object, or this spring against the terrifying apprehensions of a dream? by the slender assistance it once afforded him, is there any reason to suppose it will always bring him off victorious? he may know when his duty requires how to combat the passions of a friend; but will he be as capable of

combating his own? Alas! let him learn from the best half of his life to think modestly of the other.

A state of violence and constraint may be supported for a while. Six months, for instance, a year, is nothing; fix any certain time and we may presume to hold out. But when that state is to last as long as we live, where is the fortitude that can support itself under it? who can sustain a constant state of self-denial? O my friend! a life of pleasure is short, but a life of virtue is exceeding long. We must be incessantly on our guard. The instant of enjoyment is soon passed, and never more returns; that of doing evil passes away too; but as constantly returns, and is ever present. Forget ourselves for a moment, and we are undone! is it in such a state of danger and trial, that our days can pass away in happiness and tranquillity, or is it for such as have once escaped the danger to expose themselves again to like hazards? what future occasions may not arise as hazardous as those you have escaped, and what is worse, equally unforeseen? do you think the monuments of danger exist only at Meillerie? they are in every place where we are; we carry them about with us: yes, you know too well that a susceptible mind interests the whole universe in its passion, and that every object here will excite our former ideas and remind us of our former sensations.

I believe, however, I am presumptuous enough to believe, that will never happen to me; and my heart is ready enough to answer for yours. But, though it may be above meanness, is that easy heart of yours above weakness? and am I the only person here it will cost you pains to respect? forget not, St. Preux, that all who are dear to me are intitled to be respected as myself; reflect that you are continually to bear the innocent play of an amiable woman; think of the eternal disgrace you will deservedly fall into, if your heart should go astray for a moment, and you should harbour any designs on her you have so much reason to honour.

I would have your duty, your word and your ancient friendship restrain you; the

obstacles which virtue throws in your way may serve to discourage idle hopes; and, by the help of your reason, you may suppress your fruitless wishes: but would you thence be freed from the influence of sense and the snares of imagination? obliged to respect us both and to forget our sex, you will be liable to temptation from our servants, and might perhaps think yourself justified by the condescension: but would you be in reality less culpable? or can the difference of rank change the nature of a crime? on the contrary, you would debase yourself the more, as the means you might employ would be more ignoble. But is it possible that you should be guilty of such means! no, perish the base man, who would bargain for an heart, and make love a mercenary passion! such men are the cause of all the crimes which are committed by debauchery: for she who is once bought will be ever after to be sold: and amidst the shame into which she is inevitably plunged, who may most properly be said to be the author of her misery, the brutal wretch who insults her in a brothel, or her seducer who shewed her the way thither, by first paying a price for her favours?

I will add another consideration which, if I am not mistaken, will affect you. You have been witness of the pains I have taken to establish order and decency in my family. Tranquility and modesty, happiness and innocence prevail throughout the whole. Think, my friend, of yourself, of me, of what we were, of what we are, and what we ought to be. Shall I have it one day to say, in regretting my lost labour, it is to you I owe the disorder of my house?

Let us, if it be necessary, go farther, and sacrifice even modesty to a true regard for virtue. Man is not made for a life of celibacy, and it is very difficult in a state so contrary to that of nature, not to fall into some public or private irregularity. For how shall a man be always on his guard against an intestine enemy? Look upon the rash votaries of other countries, who enter into a solemn vow, not to be men. To punish them for their presumption, heaven abandons them to their own weakness: they call themselves saints, for entering into engagements which necessarily make them sinners; their continence is only pretended, and, for affecting to set themselves

above the duties of humanity, they debase themselves below it. It is easy to stand upon punctilio, and affect a nice observance of laws which are kept only in appearance; [97] but a truly virtuous man cannot but perceive that his essential duties are sufficient without extending them to works of supererogation.

It is, my dear St. Preux, the true humility of a Christian, always to think his duty too much for his strength; apply this rule, and you will be sensible that a situation which might only alarm another man, ought to make you tremble. The less you are afraid, the more reason you have to fear, and if you are not in some degree deterred by the severity of your duty, you can have little hopes of being able to discharge it.

Such are the perils that threaten you here. I know that you will never deliberately venture to do ill; and the only evils you have cause to apprehend are those which you cannot foresee. I do not however bid you draw your conclusions solely from my reasoning; but recommend it to your mature consideration. If you can answer me in a manner satisfactory to yourself, I shall be satisfied; if you can rely upon yourself, I too shall rely upon you. Tell me that you have overcome all the foibles of humanity, that you are an angel, and I will receive you with open arms.

But is it possible for you, whilst a man, to lead a life of continual self-denial and mortification? to have always the most severe duties to perform! to be constantly on your guard with those whom you so sincerely love! no, no, my amiable friend, happy is he who in this life can make one single sacrifice to virtue. I have one in view, worthy of a man who has struggled and suffered in its cause. If I do not presume too far, the happiness I have ventured to design for you, will repay every obligation of my heart, and be even greater than you would have enjoyed, had providence favoured our first inclinations. As I cannot make you an angel myself, I would unite you to one who would be the guardian of your heart, who will refine it, reanimate it to virtue, and under whose auspices you may securely live with us in this peaceful retreat of angelic innocence. You will not, I conceive, be under much

difficulty to guess who it is I mean, as it is an object which has already got footing in the heart which it will one day entirely possess, if my project succeeds.

I foresee all the difficulties attending it, without being discouraged, as the design is virtuous, I know the influence I have over my fair friend, and think I shall not abuse it by exerting my power in your favour. But you are acquainted with her resolutions, and before I attempt to alter them I ought to be well assured of your sentiments, that while I am endeavouring to prevail on her to permit your addresses, I may be able to answer for your love and gratitude: for if the inequality which fortune has made between you deprives you of the privilege of making such a proposal yourself, it is still more improper that this privilege should be granted before we know how you will receive it. I am not unacquainted with your delicacy, and know that if you have any objections to make, they will respect her rather than yourself. But banish your idle scruples. Do you think you can be more tenacious of my friend's reputation than I am? no, however dear you are to me, you need not be apprehensive lest I should prefer your interest to her honour. But as I value the esteem of people of sense, so I despise the prejudices and inconsiderate censures of the multitude, who are ever led by the false glare of things, and are strangers to real virtue. Were the difference in point of fortune between you a hundred times greater than it is, there is no rank in life to which great talents and good behaviour have not a right to aspire: and what pretensions can a woman have to disdain to make that man her husband, whom she is proud to number among her friends? You know the sentiments of us both in these matters. A false modesty and the fear of censure, lead to more bad actions than good ones; for virtue never blushes at any thing but vice.

As to yourself, that pride which I have some time remarked in you cannot be exerted with greater impropriety than on this occasion; and it would be a kind of ingratitude in you to receive from her, reluctantly, one favour more. Besides, however nice and difficult you may be in this point, you must own it is more agreeable, and has a much better look, for a man to be indebted for his fortune to his wife than to a

friend; as he becomes a protector of the one, and is protected by the other and as nothing can be more true than, that a virtuous man cannot have a better friend than his wife.

If after all, if there remain in the bottom of your heart any repugnance to enter into new love engagements, you cannot too speedily suppress them, both for your own honour and my repose: for I shall never be satisfied with either you or myself till you really become what you ought to be, and take pleasure in what your duty requires. Ah! my friend, ought I not to be less apprehensive of such a repugnance to new engagements, than of inclinations too relative to the old? what have I not done with regard to you, to discharge my duty? I have even exceeded my promises. Do I not even give you an Eloisa? will you not possess the better half of myself, and be still dearer to the other? with what pleasure shall I not indulge myself, after such a connection, in my attachment to you! yes, accomplish to her those vows you made to me, and let your heart fulfil with her all our former engagements. May it, if possible, give to hers all it owes to mine. O St. Preux! to her I transfer that ancient debt. Remember it is not easily to be discharged.

Such, my friend is the scheme I have projected to reunite you to us without danger; in giving you the same place in our family which you already hold in our hearts, attached by the most dear and sacred connections, we shall live together, sisters and brothers; you no longer your own enemy nor ours. The warmest sentiments when legitimate are not dangerous. When we are no longer under the necessity of suppressing them, they cannot excite our apprehensions. So far indeed from endeavouring to suppress sentiments so innocent and delightful, we should make them at once both our pleasure and our duty. We should then love each other with the purest affection, and should enjoy the united charms of friendship, love and innocence. And, if in executing the charge you have taken upon yourself, heaven should recompense the care you take of our children, by blessing you with children of your own, you will then know from experience how to estimate the service you

have done us. Endowed with the greatest blessings of which human nature is capable, you will learn to support with pleasure the agreeable burthen of a life useful to your friends and relations; you will, in short, perceive that to be true which the vain philosophy of the vicious could never believe; that happiness is even in this world the reward of the virtuous.

Reflect at leisure on my proposal, not however to determine whether it suits you; I require not your answer on that point; but whether it is proper for Mrs. Orbe, and whether you can make her as happy as she ought to make you. You know in what manner she has discharged her duty in every station of her sex. Judge by what she is, what she has a right to expect. She is as capable of love as Eloisa, and should be loved in the same degree. If you think you can deserve her, speak; my friendship will try to effect such an union, and from hers, flatters itself with success. But, if my hopes are deceived in you, you are at least a man of honour and probity, and are not unacquainted with her delicacy; you would not covet happiness at the expense of her felicity: let your heart be worthy of her, or let the offer of it never be made.

Once more, I say, consult your own heart; consider well of your answer before you send it. In matters relative to the happiness of one's whole life, common prudence will not permit us to determine without great deliberation: but, in an affair where our whole soul, our happiness both here and hereafter is at stake, even to deliberate lightly would be a crime. Call to your aid, therefore, my good friend, all the dictates of true wisdom; nor will I be ashamed to put you in mind of those which are most essential. You don't want religion: I am afraid however, you do not draw from it all the advantage which your conduct might receive from its precepts; but that your philosophical pride elevates you above true Christian simplicity: in particular, your notions of prayer are by no means consistent with mine. In your opinion, that act of humiliation is of no use to us. God having implanted in every man's conscience all that is necessary to direct him aright, has afterwards left him to himself, a free agent, to act as he pleases. But you well know this is not the doctrine of St. Paul, nor that

which is professed in our church. We are free agents, it is true, but we are by nature ignorant, weak and prone to evil: of whom then shall we acquire strength and knowledge, but of the source of all power and wisdom? and how shall we obtain them if we are not humble enough to ask? take care, my friend, that to the sublime ideas you entertain of the supreme Being, human pride doth not annex the abject notions, which belong only to man. Can you think the deity wants such arts as are necessary to human understanding, or that he lies under the necessity of generalising his ideas to comprehend them the more readily? according to your notions of things, providence would be under an embarrassment to take care of individuals. You seem to be afraid that, constant attention to a diversity of objects must perplex and fatigue infinite wisdom, and to think that it can act better by general than particular laws; doubtless because this seems easier for the Almighty. The deity is highly obliged to such great philosophers for furnishing him with convenient means of action, to ease him of his labour. But why should we ask any thing of him? Say you: is he not acquainted with our wants? Is he not a father that provides for his children? do we know better than he what is needful for us, or are we more desirous of happiness than he is that we should be happy?

This, my dear St. Preux, is all sophistry. The greatest of our wants, even the only one we have no remedy for, is that of being insensible of them; and the first step to relief is the knowledge of our necessities. To be wise we must be humble; in the sensibility of our weakness we become strong. Thus justice is united to clemency, thus grace and liberty triumph together.

Slaves by our weakness, we are set free by prayer: for it depends on us to seek and obtain favour; but the power to do this, depends not on ourselves.

Learn then not always to depend on your own sagacity on difficult occasions; but on that Being whose omnipotence is equal to his wisdom, and who knows how to direct us in every thing aright. The greatest defect in human wisdom, even in that which

has only virtue for its object, is a too great confidence, which makes us judge by the present of the future, and of our whole lives from the experience of a single moment. We perceive ourselves resolute one instant, and therefore conclude we shall always be so. Puffed up with that pride, which is nevertheless mortified by daily experience, we think we are under no danger of falling into a snare which we have once escaped. The modest language of true fortitude is, I had resolution on this or that occasion; but he who boasts of his present security knows not how weak he may prove on the next trial; and, relying on his borrowed strength as if it was his own, deserves to feel the want of it when he stands in most need of assistance. How vain are all our projects, how absurd our reasonings in the eyes of that Being, who is not confined to time or space! man is so weak as to disregard things which are placed at a distance from him: he sees only the objects which immediately surround him; changes his notions of things as the point of sight is changed from whence he views them. We judge of the future from what agrees with us now, without knowing how far that which pleases to day may be disagreeable tomorrow: we depend on ourselves, as if we were always the same, and yet are changing every day. Who can tell if they shall always desire what they now wish for? if they shall be tomorrow what they are to day, if external objects and even a change in the constitution of the body may not vary the modification of their minds, and if we may not be made miserable by the very means we have concerted for our happiness? shew me the fixed and certain rule of human wisdom, and I will take it for my guide. But if the best lesson it can teach us is, to distrust our own strength, let us have recourse to that superior wisdom which cannot deceive us, and follow those dictates which cannot lead us astray. It is that wisdom I implore to enlighten my understanding to advise you; do you implore the same to direct your resolutions? Whatever these be, I well know you will take no step which does not at present appear honourable and just: but this is not enough, it is necessary you should take such as will be always so; and of the means to do this, neither you nor I are of ourselves competent judges.

Letter CLVII. Answer.

From Eloisa! a letter from her after seven years silence! yes it is her writing. I see, I feel it: can my eyes be a stranger to characters which my heart can never forget? and do you still remember my name? do you still know how to write it? does not your hand tremble as your pen forms the letters? Ah Eloisa! whither have you hurried my wandering thoughts? the form, the fold, the seal, the superscription of your letter call to my mind those very different epistles which love used to dictate. In this the heart and hand seem to be in opposition to each other. Ought the same hand writing to be employed in committing to paper sentiments so very different?

You will be apt to judge that my thinking so much of your former letters, too evidently confirms what you have suggested in your last. But you are mistaken. I plainly perceive that I am changed, and that you are no longer the same; and what proves it to me the most is that except your beauty and goodness, every thing I see in you now is a new subject of admiration. This remark may anticipate your assurance. I rely not on my own strength, but on the sentiment which makes it unnecessary. Inspired with every thing which I ought to honour in her whom I have ceased to adore, I know into what degree of respect my former homage ought to be converted. Penetrated with the most lively gratitude, it is true, I love you as much as ever; but I esteem and honour you most for the recovery of my reason.

Ever since the discerning and judicious Wolmar has discovered my real sentiments, I have acquired a better knowledge of myself, and am less alarmed at my weakness. Let it deceive my imagination as it will, the delusion will be still agreeable; it is sufficient that it can no longer offend you, and that my ideal errors serve in the end to preserve me from real danger.

Believe me, Eloisa, there are impressions which neither time, circumstance, nor reason can efface. The wound may heal, but the scar will remain, an honorable mark that preserves the heart from any other wound. Love and inconstancy are

incompatible; when a lover is fickle he ceases to be a lover. For my part, I am no longer a lover; but, in ceasing to adore you as such, I remain under your protection. I am no longer apprehensive of danger from you, but then you prevent my apprehensions from others. No, respectable Eloisa, you shall never see in me any other than a friend to your person and a lover only of your virtues: but our love, our first, our matchless love shall never be rooted out of my heart. The remembrance of the flower of my age shall never be thus tarnished: for, were I to live whole centuries, those happy hours of my youth will never return, nor be banished from my memory. We may, it is true, be no longer the same; but I shall never forget what we have been.

Let us come now to your cousin. I cannot help confessing, my dear friend, that since I have no longer dared to contemplate your charms, I have become more sensible to hers. What eyes could be perpetually straying from beauty to beauty without fixing their admiration on either? mine have lately gazed on hers perhaps with too much pleasure; and I must own that her charms, before imprinted on my heart, have during my absence made a deeper impression. The sanctuary of my heart is shut up; but her image is in the temple. I gradually become to her what I might have been at first, had I never beheld you; and it was in your power only to make me sensible of the difference between what I feel for her and the love I had for you. My senses, released from that terrible passion, embrace the delightful sentiments of friendship. But must love be the result of this union? Ah Eloisa! what difference! where is the enthusiasm? the adoration? where are those divine transports, those distractions, a hundred times more sublime, more delightful, more forcible than reason itself? a slight warmth, a momentary delirium, seize me, affect me a while and then vanish. In your cousin and me I see two friends who have a tender regard for each other and confess it. But have lovers a regard for each other? no, you, and I are two words prohibited in the lover’s language. Two lovers are not two persons, but one.

Is my heart then really at ease? how can it be so? she is charming, she is both your

friend and mine: I am attached to her by gratitude, and think of her in the most delightful moments of reflection. How many obligations are hence conferred on a susceptible mind, and how is it possible to separate the tenderest sentiments from those to which she has such an undoubted right! Alas! it is decreed that between you and her, my heart will never enjoy one peaceful moment!

O women, women! dear and fatal objects! whom nature has made beautiful for our torment, who punish us when we brave your power, who pursue when we dread your charms; whose love and hate are equally destructive; and whom we can neither approach nor fly with impunity! beauty, charm, sympathy! inconceivable Being, or chimera! source of pain and pleasure! beauty more terrible to mortals than the element to which the birth of your Goddess is ascribed: it is you who create those tempests which are so destructive to mankind. How, dearly, Eloisa! how dearly, Clara! do I purchase your cruel friendship!

I have lived in a tempest and it is you who have always raised it: but how different are the agitations which you separately excite! different as the waves of the lake of Geneva from those of the main ocean. The first are short and quick, and by their constant agitation are often fatal to the small barks that ride without making way on their surface: but on the ocean, calm and mild in appearance, we find ourselves mounted aloft and softly borne forward to a vast distance on waves, whose motions are slow and almost imperceptible. We think we scarce move from the place, and arrive at the farthest parts of the earth.

Such is in fact the difference between the effects which your charms and hers have on my heart. That first unequalled passion, which determined the destiny of my life, and which nothing could conquer but itself, had its birth before I was sensible of its generation; it hurried me on before I knew where I was, and involved me in irrevocable ruin before I believed myself led astray. While the wind was fair, my labouring bark was every moment alternately roaring into the clouds and plunging

into the deep: but I am now becalmed and know no longer where I am. On the contrary, I see, I feel too well how much her presence affects me, and conceive my danger greater than it really is. I experience some slight raptures, which are no sooner felt than gone. I am one moment transported with passion and the next peaceful and calm: in vain is the vessel beaten about by the waves, while there is no wind to fill its sails: my heart, contented with her real charms, does not exaggerate them: she appears more beautiful to my eyes than to my imagination; and I am more afraid of her when present than absent. Your charms have, on the contrary, had always a very different effect; but at Clarens I alternately experience both.

Since I left it, indeed, the image of our cousin presents itself sometimes more powerfully to my imagination. Unhappily, however, it never appears alone: it affects me not with love, but with disquietude.

These are in reality my sentiments with regard both to the one and the other. All the rest of your sex are nothing to me; the pangs I have so long suffered have banished them entirely from my remembrance;

E fornito ’l mio tempo a mezzo gli anni.

Adversity has supplied the place of fortitude, to enable me to conquer nature and triumph over temptation. People in distress have few desires, you have taught me to vanquish by resisting them. An unhappy passion is an instrument of wisdom. My heart is become, if I may so express myself, the organ of all my wants, for when that is at ease I want nothing. Let not you or your cousin disturb its tranquillity, and it will for the future be always at ease.

In this situation, what have I to fear from my self? and by what cruel precaution would you rob me of happiness, in order to prevent my being exposed to lose it? how capricious is it to have made me fight and conquer, to rob me afterwards of the reward of my victory? do you not condemn those who brave unnecessary danger? why then did you recall me at so great a hazard, to run so many risks? or, why would

you banish me when I am so worthy to remain? Ought you to have permitted your husband to take the trouble he has done for nothing? why did you not prevent his taking the pains which you were determined to render fruitless? why did you not say to him, leave the poor Wretch at the other end of the world, or I shall certainly transport him again? alas! the more afraid you are of me the sooner you ought to recall me home. It is not in your presence I am in danger, but in your absence; and I dread the power of your charms only where you are not. When the formidable Eloisa pursues me, I fly for refuge to Mrs. Wolmar, and I am secure. Whither shall I fly if you deprive me of the asylum I find in her? all times and places are dangerous while she is absent; for in every place I find either Clara or Eloisa. In reflecting on the time past, in meditating on the present, the one and the other alternately agitate my heart, and thus my restless imagination becomes tranquil only in your presence, and it is with you only I find security against myself. How shall I explain to you the change I perceive in approaching you? you have always exerted the same sovereign power; but its effects are now different from what they were: in suppressing the transports you once inspired, your empire is more noble and sublime; a peaceful serenity has succeeded to the storm of the passions: my heart, modelled by yours, loves in the same manner and becomes tranquil by your example. But in this transitory repose I enjoy only a short truce with the passions; and, though I am exalted to the perfection of angels in your presence, I no sooner forsake you than I fall into my native meanness. Yes, Eloisa, I am apt sometimes to think I have two souls, and that the good one is deposited in your hands. Ah! why do you seek to separate me from it?

But you are fearful of the consequences of youthful desires, extinguished only by trouble and adversity. You are afraid for the young women who are in your house and under your protection. You are afraid of that which the prudent Wolmar was not afraid of. How mortifying to me are such apprehensions! do you then esteem your friend less than the meanest of your servants? I can, however, forgive your thinking ill of me; but never your not paying yourself that respect which is so justly your due.

No, Eloisa, the flame with which I once burnt has purified my heart; and I am no longer actuated like other men. After what I have been, should I so debase myself though but for a moment, I would hide myself in the remotest corner of the earth, and should never think myself too far removed from Eloisa.

What! could I disturb that peaceful order and domestic tranquillity, in which I take so much pleasure? could I sully that sweet retreat of innocence and peace, wherein I have dwelt with so much honour? could I be so base as——no, the most debauched, the most abandoned, of men would be affected with so charming a picture. He could not fail of being enamoured with virtue in this asylum. So far from carrying thither his licentious manners, he would betake himself thither to cast them off. Could I then, Eloisa, be capable of what you insinuate? and that under your own eyes? no, my dear friend, open your doors to me without scruple; your mansion is to me the temple of virtue; its sacred image strikes me in every part of it, and binds me to its service. I am not indeed an angel; but I shall dwell in the habitation of angels, and will imitate their example. Those who would not wish to resemble them, will never seek their company.

You see it is with difficulty I come to the chief object of your last letter; that which I should have first and most maturely considered, and which only should now engage my thoughts, if I could pretend to the happiness proposed to me. O Eloisa, benevolent and incomparable friend! in offering me thus your other half, the most valuable present in the universe next to yourself, you do more for me if possible than ever you have done before. A blind ungovernable passion might have prevailed on you to give me yourself; but to give me your friend is the sincerest proof of your esteem. From this moment I begin to think myself, indeed, a man of real merit, since I am thus distinguished. But how cruel, at the same time, is this proof of it. In accepting your offer I should bely my heart, and to deserve must refuse it. You know me, and may judge.

It is not enough that your charming cousin should engage my affections; I know she should be loved as you are. But will it, can it be? or does it depend on me to do her that justice, in this particular, which is her due? alas! if you intended ever to unite me to her, why did you not leave me a heart to give her; a heart which she might have inspired with new sentiments, and which in turn might have offered her the first fruits of love! I ought to have a heart at ease and at liberty, such as was that of the prudent and worthy Orbe, to love her only as he did. I ought to be as deserving as he was, in order to succeed him: otherwise the comparison between her former and present situation will only serve to render the latter less supportable, the cold and divided love of a second husband, so far from consoling her for the loss of the first, will but make her regret him the more. By her union with me, she will only convert a tender grateful friend into a common husband. What will she gain by such an exchange? She will be doubly a loser by it; her susceptible mind will severely feel its loss; and how shall I support a continual sadness, of which I am the cause, and which I cannot remove? in such a situation alas! her grief would be first fatal to me. No, Eloisa, I can never be happy at the expense of her ease. I love her too well to marry her.

Be happy! no, can I be happy without making her so? can either of the parties be separately happy or miserable in marriage? are not their pleasures and pains, common to both? and does not the chagrin which one gives to the other always rebound on the person who caused it? I should be made miserable by her afflictions, without being made happy by her goodness. Beauty, fortune, merit, love, all might conspire to ensure my felicity! but my heart, my froward heart, would counterwork them all; would poison the source of my delights, and make me miserable in the very midst of happiness.

In my present situation, I take pleasure in her company: but if I attempt to augment that pleasure by a closer union, I shall deprive myself of the most agreeable moments of my life. Her turn for humour and gaiety may give an amorous cast to

her friendship, but this is only whilst there are witnesses to her favours. I may also feel too lively an emotion for her; but it is only when by your presence you have banished every tender sentiment for Eloisa. When she and I are by ourselves, it is you only who render our conversation agreeable. The more our attachment increases, the more we think on the source from which it sprung; the ties of friendship are drawn closer, and we love each other but to talk of you. Hence arise a thousand pleasing reflections, pleasing to Clara and more so to me, all which a closer union would infallibly destroy. Will not such reflections, in that case too delightful, be a kind of infidelity to her? and with what face can I make a beloved and respectable wife the confident of those infidelities of which my heart, in spite of me, would be guilty? this heart could no longer transfuse itself into hers. No longer daring to talk of you, I should soon forbear to speak at all. Honour and duty imposing on me a new reserve, would thus estrange from me the wife of my bosom, and I should have no longer a guide or a counsellor to direct my steps or correct my errors. Is this the homage she has a right to expect from me? is this that tribute of gratitude and tenderness which I ought to pay to her? is it thus that I am to make her and myself happy?

Is it possible that Eloisa, can have forgotten our mutual vows? for my part, I never can forget them. I have lost all, except my sincerity, and that I will preserve inviolate to my last hour. As I could not live for you, I will die unmarried. Nay, had I not already made such a promise to myself, I would do it now. For though it be a duty to marry, it is yet a more indispensable one not to make any person unhappy; and all the sentiments such a contract would now excite in me, would be mixed with the constant regret of that which I once vainly hoped for: a regret which would at once be my torment, and that of her who should be unfortunate enough to be my wife. I should require of her those days of bliss which I expected with you. How should I support the comparison! what woman in the world could bear that? ah, no, I could never endure the thoughts of being at once deprived of you, and destined to be the

husband of another.

Seek not then, my dear friend, to shake those resolutions on which depends the repose of my life: seek not to recall me out of that state of annihilation into which I am fallen; lest, in bringing me back to a sense of my existence, my wounds should bleed afresh, and I should again sink under a load of misfortunes. Since my return I perceived how deeply I became interested in whatever concerned your charming friend; but I was not alarmed at it, as I knew the situation of my heart would never permit me to be too solicitous. Indeed I was not displeased with an emotion, which, while it added softness to the attachment I always had for Clara, would assist in diverting my thoughts from a more dangerous object, and enable me to support your presence with greater confidence. This emotion has something in it of the pleasure of love without any of its pains. The calm delight I take in seeing her is not disturbed by the restless desire of possessing her: contented to pass my whole life in the manner I passed the last winter, I find between you both that peaceful and agreeable situation, [98] which tempers the austerity of virtue and renders its lessons amiable. If a vain transport affects me for a moment, every thing conspires to suppress it; and I have too effectually vanquished those infinitely more impetuous and dangerous emotions to fear any that can assail me now. I honour your friend no less than I love her, and that is saying every thing. But should I consult only my own interest, the rights of the tenderest friendship are too valuable, to risk their loss, by endeavouring to extend them; and I need not even think of the respect which is her due to prevent my ever saying a single word in private conversation which would require interpretation, or which she ought not to understand. She may perhaps have sometimes remarked a little too much solicitude in my behaviour towards her but she has surely never observed in my heart any desire to express it. Such as I was for six months past, such would I be with regard to her, as long as I live. I know none who approach you, so perfect as she is; but were she even more perfect than yourself, I feel that after having been your lover I should never have become hers.

But before I conclude this letter, I must give you my opinion of yours. Yes, Eloisa, with all your prudence and virtue, I can discover in it the scruples of a timorous mind, which thinks it a duty to frighten itself; and conceives its security lies in being afraid. This extreme timidity is as dangerous as excessive confidence. In constantly representing to us imaginary monsters, it wastes our strength in combating chimeras; and by terrifying us without cause, makes us less on our guard against, as well as less capable of discerning, real dangers. Read over again, now and then, the letter which Lord B——, wrote to you last year, on the subject of your husband; you will find in it some good advice that may be of service to you in many respects. I do not discommend your devotion, it is affecting, amiable, and like yourself; it is such as even your husband should be pleased with. But take care lest timidity and precaution lead you to quietism, and lest by representing to yourself danger on every side, you are induced at length to confide in nothing. Don't you know, my dear friend, that a state of virtue is a state of warfare. Let us employ our thoughts less on the dangers which threaten us, than on ourselves; that we may be always prepared to withstand temptation. If to run in the way of temptation is to deserve to fall, to shun it with too much solicitude is often to fly from the opportunities of discharging the noblest duties; it is not good to be always thinking of temptations, even with a view to avoid them. I shall never seek temptation: but, in whatever situation Providence may place me for the future, the eight months I passed at Clarens will be my security; nor shall I be afraid that any one will rob me of the prize you taught me to deserve. I shall never be weaker than I have been, nor shall ever have greater temptations to resist. I have left the bitterness of remorse and I have tasted the sweets of victory, after all which I need not hesitate a moment in making my choice; every circumstance of my past life, even my errors, being a security for my future behaviour.

I shall not pretend to enter with you into any new or profound disquisitions, concerning the order of the universe, and the government of those beings, of which it is composed: it will be sufficient for me to say, that in matters so far above human

comprehension there is no other way of rightly judging of things invisible, but by induction from those which are visible; and that all analogy makes for those general laws which you seem to reject. The most rational ideas we can form of the supreme Being confirm this opinion: for, although omnipotence lies under no necessity of adopting methods to abridge his labour, it is nevertheless worthy of supreme wisdom to prefer the most simple modes of action, that there may be nothing useless either in cause or effect. In the formation of man he endowed him with all the necessary faculties to accomplish what should be required of him, and when we ask of him the power to do good, we ask nothing of him, but what he has already given us. He has given us understanding to know what is good, a heart to love [99] and liberty to make choice of it. Therefore, in these sublime gifts consists divine grace; and as we have all received it, we are all accountable for its effects.

I have heard, in my time, a good deal of arguments against the free agency of man, and despise all its sophistry. A casuist may take what pains he will to prove that I am no free agent, my innate sense of freedom constantly destroys his arguments: for whatever choice I make after deliberation, I feel plainly that it depended only on myself to have made the contrary. Indeed all the scholastic subtilties I have heard on this head are futile and frivolous; because they prove too much, are equally used to oppose truth and falsehood; and, whether man be a free agent or not, serve equally to prove one or the other. With these kind of reasoners, the Deity himself is not a free agent, and the word liberty is in fact a term of no meaning. They triumph, not in having solved the difficulty, but in having substituted a chimera in its room. They begin by supposing that every intelligent being is merely passive, and from that supposition deduce consequences to prove its inactivity: a very convenient method of argumentation truly! if they accuse their adversaries of reasoning in this manner, they do us injustice. We do not suppose ourselves free and active beings; we feel that we are so. It belongs to them to shew not only that this sentiment may deceive us, but that it really does so. [100] The bishop of Cloyne has demonstrated that,

without any diversity in appearances, body or matter may have no absolute existence; but is this enough to induce us to affirm that it absolutely has no existence? In all this, the mere phenomenon would cost more trouble than the reality; and I will always hold by that which appears the most simple.

I don’t believe therefore, that after having provided in every shape for the wants of man in his formation, God interests himself in an extraordinary manner for one person more than another. Those who abuse the common aids of Providence are unworthy such assistance, and those who made good use of them have no occasion for any other. Such a partiality appears to me injurious to divine justice. You will say, this severe and discouraging doctrine may be deduced from the holy scripture. Be it so. Is it not my first duty to honour my Creator? In whatever veneration then I hold the sacred text, I hold its author in a still greater; and I could sooner be induced to believe the bible corrupted or unintelligible, than that God can be malevolent or unjust. St. Paul would not have the vessel say to the potter who formed it, why hast thou framed me thus? this is very well, if the potter should apply it only to such services as he constructed it to perform but if he should censure this vessel as being inadequate to the purpose for which it was constructed; has it not a right to ask, why hast thou made me thus?

But does it follow from hence that prayer is useless? God forbid that I should deprive myself of that resource. Every act of the understanding which raises us to God carries us above ourselves; in imploring his assistance we learn to experience it. It is not his immediate act that operates on us, it is we that improve ourselves by raising our thoughts in prayer to him. [101] All that we ask aright, he bestows; and, as you observe, we acquire strength in confessing our weakness. But if we abuse this ordinance and turn mystics, instead of raising ourselves to God, we are lost in our own wild imaginations; in seeking grace, we renounce reason; in order to obtain of heaven one blessing, we trample under foot another; and in obstinately persisting, that heaven should enlighten our hearts, we extinguish the light of our

understandings. But who are we that should insist on the deity's performing miracles, when we please, in our favour?

You know very well, there is no good thing that may not be carried into a blameable excess; even devotion itself, when it degenerates into the madness of enthusiasm. Yours is too pure ever to arrive at this excess; but you have reason to be on your guard against a less degree of it. I have heard you often censure the ecstasies of the pietists; but do you know from whence they arise? from allotting a longer time to prayer than is consistent with the weakness of human nature. Hence the spirits are exhausted, the imagination takes fire, they see visions, they become inspired and prophetical; nor is it then in the power of the understanding to stop the progress of fanaticism.

Now, you shut yourself frequently in your closet, and are constant in prayer. You do not indeed as yet converse with pietists, [102] but you read their books. Not that I ever censured your taste for the writings of the worthy Fenelon: but what have you to do with those of his disciple? You read Muralt. I indeed read him too: but I make choice of his letters, you of his divine instinct. But remark his end, lament the extravagant errors of that sensible man, and think of yourself. At present a pious, a true Christian, beware Eloisa of becoming a mere devotee.

I receive your counsel, my dear friend, with the docility of a child, and give you mine with the zeal of a father. Since virtue, instead of dissolving our attachments, has rendered them indissoluble, the same lessons may be of use to both, as the same interests connect us. Never shall our hearts speak to each other, never shall our eyes meet without presenting to both a respectable object which shall mutually elevate our sentiments, the perfection of the one reciprocally assisting the other.

But though our deliberations may be common to both, the conclusion is not; it is yours alone to decide. Cease not, then, you who have ever been mistress of my destiny, cease not to be so still. Weigh my arguments, and pronounce sentence:

whatever you order me to do, I will submit to your direction, and will at least deserve the continuance of it. Should you think it improper for me to see you personally again, you will yet be always present to my mind, and preside over my actions. Should you deprive me of the honour of educating your offspring, you will not deprive me of the virtues which you have inspired. These are the offspring of your mind, which mine adopts as its own, and will never bear to have them torn from it.

Speak to me, Eloisa, freely. As I have now been explicit to what I think and feel on this occasion, tell me what I must do. You know how far my destiny is connected with that of my illustrious friend. I have not consulted him on this occasion; I have neither shewn him this letter nor yours. If he should know that you disapprove his project, or rather, that of your husband, he will reject it himself; and I am far from designing to deduce from thence any objection to your scruples; he only ought to be ignorant of them till you have finally determined. In the mean time, I shall find some means or other to delay our departure, in which, though they may surprize him a little, I know he will acquiesce. For my own part, I had rather never see you more, than to see you only just to bid you again adieu: and to live with you as a stranger, would be a state of mortification which I have not deserved.

Letter CLVIII. From Mrs. Wolmar.

How does your headstrong imagination affright and bewilder itself! and at what, pray? truly at the sincerest proofs of my friendship and esteem which you ever experienced: at the peaceful reflections which my solicitude for your real happiness inspired; at the most obliging, the most advantageous, and the most honourable proposal that was ever made you; at my desire, perhaps an indiscreet one, of uniting you by indissoluble ties to our family; at the desire of making a relation, a kinsman of an ingrate, who affects to believe I want to discard him as a friend. To remove your present uneasiness, you need only take what I write in the most natural sense

the words will bear. But you have long delighted in tormenting yourself with false constructions. Your letters are like your life, sublime and mean, masterly and puerile. Ah, my dear philosopher! will you never cease to be a child?

Where, pray, have you learnt that I intended to impose on you new laws, to break with you, and send you back to the farthest part of the world? do you really find this to be the tenor of my letter? in anticipating the pleasure of living with you, I was fearful of those inconveniencies, which I conceived might possibly arise; therefore endeavoured to remove them, by making your fortune more equal to your merit and the regard I had for you. This is my whole crime; is there anything in it at which you have reason to be alarmed?

Indeed, my friend, you are in the wrong; for you are not ignorant how dear you are to me, and how easy it is for you to obtain your wish without seeking occasion to torment others or yourself.

You may be assured that, if your residence here is agreeable to you, it will be equally so to me; and that nothing Mr. Wolmar has done for me gives me greater satisfaction than the care he has taken to establish you in this house. I agree to it with pleasure, and know we shall be useful to each other. More ready to listen to good advice than to suggest it to ourselves, we have both occasion for a guide? who can be more sensible of the danger of going astray than he whose return has cost him so dear? what object can better represent that danger? after having broken through such connections as once subsisted between us, the remembrance of them should influence us to do nothing unworthy of the virtuous motives which induced us to break them. Yes, I shall always think myself obliged to make you the witness of every action of my life, and to communicate to you every sentiment with which my heart is inspired. Ah! my friend! I may be weak before the rest of the world, but I can answer for myself in your company.

It is in this delicacy, which always survives true love, and not in Mr. Wolmar’s

subtle distinctions, that we are to look for the cause of that elevation of soul, that innate fortitude we experience. Such an explication is at least more natural, and does more honour to our hearts, than his, and has a greater tendency to encourage us to virtue, which alone is sufficient to give it the preference. Hence you may be assured, that, so far am I from being in such a whimsical disposition as you imagine, that I am just the reverse. In so much that, if the project of your returning to reside here must be given up, I shall esteem such an event as a great misfortune to you, to me, to my children, and even to my husband; on whose account alone you know I have many reasons for desiring your presence. But to speak only of my own particular inclination: you remember your first arrival. Did I shew less pleasure at seeing you than you felt in seeing me? has it ever appeared to you that your stay at Clarens gave me the least trouble or uneasiness? did you think I betrayed the least pleasure at your departure? must I go farther and speak to you with my usual freedom? I will frankly confess to you then, that the six last months we passed together were the happiest of my life, and that in that short space of time I tasted all the happiness of which my sensibility has furnished me the idea.

Never shall I forget one day, in particular, of the past winter, when, after having been reading the journal of your voyages and that of your friend's adventures, we supped in the Apollo. It was then that, reflecting on the felicity with which Providence had blessed me in this world, I looked round and saw all my friends about me; my father, my husband, my children, my cousin, Lord B——, and you, without counting Fanny, who did not cast the least blemish on the scene. This little saloon, said I to myself, contains all that is dear to my heart, and perhaps all that is desirable in this world. I am here surrounded by everything that interests me. The whole universe to me is in this little spot. I enjoy at once the regard I have for my friends, that which they have for me, and that which they have for each other: their mutual goodwill either comes from or relates to me: I see nothing but what seems to extend my being, and nothing to divide it. I exist in a manner in all those who are

about me: my imagination can extend no farther. I have nothing more to desire: to reflect and to be happy is with me the same thing; I live at once in all that I love, I am replete with happiness and satisfied with life: come death when thou wilt! I no longer dread thy power: the measure of my life is full, and I have nothing new to experience worth enjoyment. The greater pleasure I enjoyed in your company, the more agreeable is it to me to reflect on it, and the more disquietude also hath every thing given me that might disturb it. We will for a moment lay aside that timid morality and pretended devotion, with which you reproach me. You must confess at least that the social pleasures we tasted sprung from that openness of heart, by which every thought, every sentiment, of the one was communicated to the other, and from which every one, conscious of being what he ought, appeared such as he really was. Let us suppose now any secret intrigue, any connection necessary to be concealed, any motive of reserve and secrecy intruding on our harmony; that moment the reciprocal pleasure we felt in seeing each other would vanish. Shyness and restraint would ensue; we should no sooner meet together than we should wish to part; and at length circumspection and decorum would bring on distrust and distaste. It is impossible long to love those of whom we are afraid or suspicious. They soon become troublesome——Eloisa troublesome!——troublesome to her friend! no, no, that cannot be; there can be no evils in nature, but such as it is possible to support.

In thus freely telling you my scruples, I do not pretend, however, to make you change your resolutions; but to induce you to reconsider the motives on which they are founded; lest, in taking a step, all the consequences of which you may not foresee, you might have reason to repent at a time, when you will not dare retract it. As to Mr. Wolmar’s having no fears, it was not his place to fear, but yours. No one is so proper a judge of what is to be feared of you, as yourself. Consider the matter well then; and, if nothing is in reality to be feared, tell me so, and I shall think of it no more: for I know your sincerity, and never can distrust your intentions. Your heart may be capable of an accidental error; but can never be guilty of a

premeditated crime, and this it is that makes the distinction between a weak man and a wicked one.

Besides, though my objections had really more weight than I am inclined to think they have, why must things be viewed in their most disadvantageous light. Surely there can be no necessity for such extreme precautionary measures. It cannot be requisite that you should break through all your projects, and fly from us for ever. Though a child in years, you are possessed of all the experience of age. The tranquillity of mind which succeeds the noble passion, is a sensation which increases by fruition. A susceptible heart may dread a state of repose, to which it has been unaccustomed; but a little time is sufficient to reconcile us to our peaceful situation, and in a little time more we give it the preference. For my part, I foresee the hour of your security to be nearer than you yourself imagine. Extremes, you know, never last long; you have loved too much not to become in time indifferent: the cinder which is cast from the furnace can never be lighted again, but before it becomes such the coal must be totally burnt out. Be vigilant but for a few years more, and you will then have nothing to fear, your acceptance of my proposal would at once have removed all danger; but, independent of that view, such an attachment has charms enough to be desired for its own sake; and if your delicacy prevents you from closing with my proposals, I have no need to be informed how much such a restraint must cost you. At the same time, however, I am afraid that the pretences which impose on your reason, are many of them frivolous: I am afraid, that in piquing yourself on the fulfilling of engagements which no longer exist, you only make a false shew of virtue, in a constancy, for which you are by no means to be commended, and which is at present entirely misplaced. I have already told you, that I think the observance of a rash and criminal vow is an additional crime. If yours were not so at first, it is become so now; and that is sufficient to annul it. The promise which no man ought to break, is that of being always a man of virtue and resolute in the discharge of his duty; to change when that is changed, is not levity,

but constancy. And at all times as virtue requires you to do, and you will never break your word. But if there be among your scruples any solid objection, we will examine it at leisure. In the mean time, I am not very sorry that you did not embrace my scheme with the same avidity as I formed it; that my blunder, if it be one, may give you less pain. I had meditated this project during the absence of my cousin, with whom, however, I have since had some general conversation on the subject of a second marriage, and find her so averse to it, that, in spite of the regard which I know she has for you, I am afraid I must exert a greater authority than becomes me, to overcome her reluctance; for this is a point in which friendship ought to respect the bent of the inclinations.

I will own nevertheless that I still abide by my design; it would be so agreeable to us all, would so honourably extricate you from your present precarious situation in life; would so unite all our interests, and makes so natural an obligation of that friendship which is so delightful to all, that I cannot think of giving it up entirely. No, my friend, you can never be too nearly allied to me; it is not even enough that you might be my cousin; I could wish you were my brother.

Whatever may be the consequence of these notions, do more justice to my sentiments for you. Make use without reserve of my friendship, my confidence and my esteem. Remember I shall not prescribe any rules to you; nor do I think I have any reason to do it. Deny me not however the privilege of giving you advice, but imagine not I lay you under any commands. If you think you can securely reside at Clarens, come hither; stay here: you cannot give me greater pleasure. But, if you think a few years longer absence necessary to cure the suspicious remains of impetuous youth, write to me often in your absence; come and see us as often as you will, and let us cultivate a correspondence founded on the most cordial intimacy.

What pains will not such consolation alleviate? what absence will not be supportable under the pleasing hope of at last closing our days together! I will do yet more; I am

ready to put one of my children under your care; I shall think him safer in your hands than my own; and, when you bring him back, I know not which of you will give me the greater pleasure by your return. On the other hand, if you become entirely reasonable, banish your chimerical notions, and are willing to deserve my cousin, come, pay her your best respects and make her happy. Come then, and surmount every obstacle that opposes your success and make a conquest of her heart: such assistance as my friendship can give shall not on my part be wanting. Come, and make each other happy, and nothing more will be wanting to render me compleatly so. But, whatever resolution you take, after having maturely considered the matter, speak confidently, and affront your friend no more by your groundless suspicions.

Let me not however, in thinking so much of you, forget myself. My turn to be heard must come at last; for you as with your friends in a dispute, as with your adversaries at chess; you defend yourself by attacking them. You excuse your being a philosopher by accusing me of being a devotee. I am then, in your opinion a devotee, or ready to become one: well be it so. Contemptible denominations never change the nature of things. If devotion is commendable, why am I to blame in being devout? But, perhaps that epithet is too low for you. The dignity of the philosopher disdains the worship of the vulgar: it would serve God in a more sublime manner, and raise even to heaven itself its pretensions and its pride. Poor philosophers!——but to return to myself.

I have, from my childhood, respected virtue, and have always cultivated my reason. I endeavoured to regulate my conduct by human understanding and sentiment, and have been ill conducted. Before you deprive me of the guide I have chosen, give me another on which I may depend. I thought myself as wise as other people, and yet a thousand others have lived more prudently than I; they must therefore have had resources which I had not. Why is it that I; knowing myself well born, have had reason to conceal my life and conversation from the world? why did I hate the sin

which I committed even in spite of myself? I thought I knew my own strength, I relied on it, and was deceived. All the resistance which was in my own power, I think, I made; and yet I fell——how must those have done who have escaped? they must have had a better support.

From their example I was induced to seek the same support, and have found in it a peculiar advantage which I did not expect. During the reign of the passions, they themselves contribute to the continuance of the anxieties they at first occasion; they retain hope always by the tide of desire, and hence we are enabled to support the absence of felicity: If our expectations are disappointed, hope supplies its place; and the agreeable delusion lasts as long as the passion which gave it birth. Thus, in a situation of this kind, passion supports itself, and the very solicitude it causes is a chimerical pleasure which is substituted for real enjoyment. Nay more: those who have no desires must be very unhappy; they are deprived, if I may be allowed the expression, of all they possess. We enjoy less that which we obtain than that which we hope for, and are seldom happy but in expectation. In fact, man, made to desire every thing and obtain little, of boundless avarice yet narrow capacity, has received of heaven a consolatory aid, which brings to him in idea every thing he desires, displays it to his imagination, represents it to his view, and in one sense makes it his own; but to render such imaginary property still more flattering and agreeable, it is even modified to his passion. But this shadow vanishes the moment the real object appears; the imagination can no longer magnify that which we actually possess, the charms of illusion cease, where those of enjoyment begin. The world of fancy, therefore, the land of chimeras, is the only world worthy to be inhabited; and such is the inanity of human enjoyments that, except that Being which is self existent; there is nothing delightful but that which has no existence at all.

If this effect does not always follow in the particular objects of our passions, it is infallible in the common sentiment which includes the whole. To live without pain is incompatible with our state of mortality: it would be in fact to die. He who has every

thing in his power, if a creature, must be miserable, as he would be deprived of the pleasure of desiring; than which every other want would be more supportable. [103]

This is indeed what I have in part experienced since my marriage and your return. Every thing around me gives me cause of content, and yet I am not contented. A secret languor steals into the bottom of my heart; I find it puffed up and void, as you formerly said was the case with yours; all my attachments are not sufficient to fill it. This disquietude I confess is strange: but it is nevertheless true. O my friend! I am indeed too happy: my happiness is a burthen to me. Can you think of a remedy for this disgust? for my part, I must own that a sentiment so unreasonable and so involuntary, has in a great measure diminished the value of life, and I cannot imagine what blessings it can bestow which I want, or with which I should be satisfied. Can any woman be more susceptible than I am? can she love her father, her husband, her children, her friends, her relations better than I do? can she be more generally beloved? can she lead a life more agreeable to her taste? or can she be more at liberty to exchange it for any other? can she enjoy better health? can she have more expedients to divert her, or stronger ties to bind her to the world? and yet notwithstanding all this, I am constantly uneasy: my heart yearns for something of which it is entirely ignorant.

Therefore finding nothing on this globe capable of giving it satisfaction, my desiring soul seeks an object in another world; in elevating itself to the source of sentiment and existence, its languor vanishes: it is reanimated, it acquires new strength and new life. It thence obtains a new existence, independent of corporeal passions, or rather it exists no longer in me, but in the immensity of the supreme Being; and, disencumbered for a while from its terrestrial shackles, returns to them again with patience, consoled with the expectation of futurity.

You smile at all this, my good friend; I understand you. I have indeed pronounced my own condemnation, having formerly censured the heart, which I now approve.

To this I have only one word to answer; and that is, I then spoke without experience. I do not pretend to justify it in every shape. I don't pretend to say, this visionary taste is prudent, I only say, it is a delightful supplement to that sense of happiness which in other things exhausts itself by enjoyment. If it be productive of evil, doubtless it ought to be rejected; if it deceives the heart by false pleasure, it ought also on that account to be rejected. But after all, which has the greater incentive to virtue, the philosopher with his sublime maxims, or the Christian with his humble simplicity? who is most happy even in this world, the sage with his profound understanding, or the enthusiast with his rapture of devotion? what business have I to think or imagine, when my faculties are all in a manner alienated? will you say intoxication has its pleasures? be it so, and be mine esteemed such if you will. Either leave me in this agreeable delirium, or shew me a more delightful situation.

I have condemned indeed the ecstasies of the mystics, and condemn them still, when they serve to detach us from our duty; and, by raising in us a disgust against an active life by the charms of contemplation, seduce us into that state of quietism which you imagine me so near; and from which I believe myself nevertheless to be as far distant as yourself. I know very well that to serve God is not to pass our lives on our knees in prayer; that it is to discharge on earth those obligations which our duty requires; it is to do, with a view to please him, every thing which the situation in which he hath placed us demands.

Il cor gradisce; E serve a lui chi'l suo dover compisce.

We ought first to perform the duties of our station, and then pray when we have time. This is the rule I have endeavoured to follow: I don't make that self examination, with which you reproach me, a task, but a recreation. I don't see why, among the pleasures that are within my reach, I should be forbidden the most affecting and the most innocent of all.

I have examined myself with more severity, since the receipt of your letter. I have

enquired into the effects which that pious inclination, that so much displeases you, produces in my mind; and I can safely say, I see nothing that should give me reason to fear, at least so soon as you imagine, the evils of excessive and superfluous devotion.

In the first place, I have not so fervent a longing after this exercise as to give me pain when I am deprived of an opportunity, nor am I out of humour at every avocation from it. It never interrupts my thoughts in the business of the day, nor gives me any disgust or impatience in the discharge of my duty. If retirement be sometimes necessary, it is when I have felt some disagreeable emotion, and am better in my closet than elsewhere. It is there that, entering into the examination of myself, I recover my temper and ease. If any care troubles me, if any pain affects me, it is there I go and lay them down. Every pain, every trouble vanishes before a greater object. In reflecting on all the bounties of providence towards me, I am ashamed to be sensible of such trifling ills, and to forget its greater mercies. I require neither frequent nor long intervals of solitude. When I am affected by involuntary sadness, the shedding a few tears before him who is the comforter of hearts, relieves mine in an instant. My reflections are never bitter nor grievous; even my repentance is free from dread: my errors give me less cause of fear than of shame; I regret that I have committed them, but I feel no remorse, nor dread of their effects. The God I serve is a merciful Being; a Father, whose goodness only affects me, and surpasses all his other attributes. His power astonishes me; his immensity confounds my ideas; his justice——but he has made man weak; and though he be just, he is merciful. An avenging God is the God of the wicked. I can neither fear him on my own account, nor pray for his vengeance to be exerted against any other. It is the God of peace, the God of goodness whom I adore. I know, I feel, I am the work of his hands, and trust to see him at the last day such as he has manifested himself to my heart, during my life.

It is impossible for me to tell you how many pleasing ideas hence render my days

agreeable, and give joy to my heart. In leaving my closet in such a disposition, I feel myself more light and gay. Every care vanishes, every embarrassment is removed; nothing rough or disagreeable appears; but all is smooth and flowing: every thing wears a pleasant countenance; it costs me no pains to be in good humour; I love those better whom I loved before, and am still more agreeable to them; even my husband is more pleased with the disposition which is the effect of such rational devotion. Devotion, he says, is the opium of the soul. When taken in small quantities, it enlivens, it animates, it supports it: a stronger dose lulls it to sleep, enrages or destroys it. I hope I shall never proceed to such extremes.

You see I am not so much offended at the title of devotee, as perhaps you intended; but then I do not value it at the rate you imagine: yet I would not have the term devotion applied to an affected external deportment, and to a sort of employment which dispenses with every other. Thus that Mrs. Guyon you mention, had in my opinion done better to have carefully discharged her duty as mistress of her family, to have educated her children in the Christian faith; and to have governed her servants prudently, than to compose books of devotion, dispute with bishops, and at last be imprisoned in the Bastille for her unintelligible reveries.

I approve just as little of that mystical and metaphorical language, which feeds the heart with chimeras, and in the place of spiritual love, substitutes sentiments too nearly allied to carnal affections, and too apt to excite them. The more susceptible the heart, or lively the imagination, the more we ought to be on our guard against those images by which they may be affected; for how can we see the relations of the mystical object if we do not at the same time see the sensual; and how can a modest woman have the assurance to contemplate those objects in her imagination, which she would blush to look on?

But what sets me most against these devotees by profession, is that affectation of manners which renders them insensible to humanity; that excessive pride which

makes them look down with pity on the rest of mankind. If ever they condescend to stoop from their imaginary elevation to do an act of charity, it is always done in a manner extremely mortifying to the object: their pity is so cruel and insulting, their justice is so rigid, their charity so severe, their zeal so bitter, their contempt so much like hatred, that even the insensibility of the rest of the world is less cruel than their pity. Their love for heaven serves them as an excuse for loving nobody on earth; they have even no affection for one another; nor is there an instance of sincere friendship to be found among people of extreme devotion. The more detached they affect to be from the world, the more they expect from it; and one would think their devotion to God is exerted only that they may have a pretext to exercise his authority over the rest of his creatures.

I have such an aversion for all abuses of this kind as should naturally be my security: if nevertheless I am doomed to fall, it will not be voluntarily, and I hope, from the friendship of those who are about me, that it will not be without warning. I must own, I now think that it was possible for my former inquietude concerning my husband, to have effected such a change. Happily, the prudent letter of my Lord B——, to which you very reasonably refer me, together with his sensible and consolatory conversation, as well as yours, have entirely dissipated my fears and changed my principles. I now see plainly that an intolerant spirit must by degrees become obdurate. For what charity can be long preserved for those who we think must inevitably be damned? to love them would be to hate God for punishing them. To act then on principles of humanity, we must take upon ourselves to condemn actions only, and not men. Let us not assume the horrible function of devils. Let us not so lightly throw open the gates of hell for our fellow creatures. Alas! if all those are destined to be eternally miserable who deceive themselves, where is the mortal who can avoid it?

O my friends! of what a load have you eased my heart? In teaching me that an error in judgment is no crime, you have delivered me from a thousand tormenting

scruples. I leave to others the subtle interpretation of dogmas which I do not comprehend, and content myself with those glaring truths which strike and at once convince me; those practical truths which instruct me in my duty. As to any thing farther, I abide by the rule of your old answer to Mr. Wolmar. A man is not master of his own sentiments to believe or disbelieve what he pleases. Can it be a crime for one not to be a logician? no, it is not the business of conscience to instruct us in the truth of things, but in the maxims of our duty. It does not teach us to reason well, but to act aright. In what can my husband be criminal before God? does he turn his eye from the contemplation of the deity? God himself hath hid his face from his view. He does not shun the truth; the truth avoids him. He is not actuated by pride; he does not seek to convert any one to his own opinion. He is glad they are of a different one. He approves of our sentiments, he wishes he had the same, but cannot. He is deprived of our consolations and our hopes. He acts uprightly without even expecting a recompense: he is in fact more virtuous, more disinterested than we. He is indeed truly to be pitied! but wherefore should he be punished? no: goodness, sincerity, honesty, virtue, these are what heaven requires, and what it will undoubtedly reward: these constitute the true service which the deity requires, and that service Mr. Wolmar most uniformly performs. If God judges of our faith by our words, to be truly virtuous is to believe in him. A true Christian is a virtuous man: the real infidels are the vicious.

Be not surprized, therefore, my dear friend, that I do not dispute with you many particulars of your letter, concerning which we are not of the same opinion. I know too well what you are, to be in pain about what you believe. What do all those idle questions about free agency concern me? whether I myself have the power to do good, or can obtain it by prayer, if in the end I am enabled to do it, does it not amount to the same thing? whether I acquire what is wanting by asking for it, or the deity grants it to my prayers, if it be necessary to ask in order to have it, is not this a sufficient explanation? happy enough to agree about the principal articles of our

faith, why need we enquire farther? ought we to be desirous of penetrating into the bottomless abyss of metaphysics, and, in disputing about the divine essence, throw away the short time which is allotted us here to revere and honour the deity? we are ignorant what he is; but we know that he exists, and that is sufficient: he manifests himself in his works, we feel him constantly within us. We may dispute, but cannot sincerely disbelieve his existence. He has given us that degree of sensibility which enables us to perceive, to embrace him; let us pity those to whom he has not imparted such a portion of susceptibility, without flattering ourselves that we shall be able to make them sensible of what they cannot see. Let us respect his decrees in silence and do our duty: this is the best method to make proselytes.

Do you know any man of better sense or a more enlightened understanding than Mr. Wolmar? do you know any one more sincere, more upright, more just, less subject to the control of his passions; who will be a greater gainer by divine justice or the soul's immortality? Do you know any man more nervous, more sublime, more convincing in a dispute than Lord B——? is there any person by his virtue more worthy of entering on the defence of the cause of God, more certain of his existence, more sincerely penetrated with the idea of divine majesty, more zealous for his glory and more capable of supporting it? yet you have been a witness of what passed during three months at Clarens: you have seen two men, having the highest esteem and respect for each other, and equally disdainful of the pedantry and quirk of scholastic logic, pass a whole winter in prudent and peaceful as well as lively and profound argumentations, with a view to convert each other; you have seen them attack and defend themselves and take every advantage of which human understanding is capable; and that on a subject wherein both, being equally interested, desired nothing so earnestly as to be of one mind.

What was the consequence? their mutual esteem is augmented, and yet both retain their former sentiments: if such an example does not for ever cure a prudent man of the rage of dispute, the love of truth I am sure never will.

For my part, I have thrown aside, and that for ever, such an useless weapon; and am determined never to mention a single word more to my husband about religion, unless it be to give a reason for mine. Not that a notion of divine toleration has rendered me indifferent to his. I must confess that, though I am become tranquil about his future state, I do not find I am the less zealous for his conversion. I would lay down my life to see him once convinced of the truth of divine revelation, if not for the sake of his future happiness, at least for his happiness in this life. For of how many pleasures is he not on this account deprived? what sentiments can give him comfort in his afflictions? what spectator excites him to those good deeds he performs in secret? what reward does he hope for from his virtue? how can he look upon death? no, I hope he will not meet it in this terrible situation. There remains but one expedient more for me to try to prevent it; and to that I consecrate the remainder of my life. This is not to convince, but to affect him; to set him a prevailing example, and to make religion so amiable that he shall not be able to resist her charms. Ah! my friend! what a forcible argument against infidelity is the life of a true Christian? do you believe there is a being on earth proof against it? this is the task I impose on myself for the future; assist me to perform it. Mr. Wolmar is cold, but not insensible. What a picture might we lay open to his heart? his friends, his children, his wife all uniting to his edification! When without preaching about God in our discourses, we shall demonstrate him by those actions which he inspires, by those virtues of which he is the author, by the pleasure we take in his service: when he shall see a sketch of paradise in his own house; when an hundred times a day he shall be compelled to cry out: “human nature is of itself incapable of this; something divine must prevail here.”

If my enterprise pleases you, if you find yourself worthy to concur in it, come and let us pass our days together, and never part more till death. If the project displeases or frightens you, listen to the dictates of your conscience; that will teach you your duty. I have no more to say. Agreeable to what Lord B—— intimates, I shall expect

you both towards the latter end of next month. You will hardly know your apartment again; but in the alteration made in it you will discover the care of a good friend, who took a pleasure in ornamenting it for you. You will find there, also, a small assortment of books, which she bought for you at Geneva, of a better taste than the Adonis; not, but that for the jest's sake you will find that too. You must however be discreet; for, as she would not have you know this is her doing, I hasten to finish my letter before she comes to forbid my speaking of it. Adieu, my dear friend; our party of pleasure to the castle of Chillon will take place tomorrow without you. It will not be the better for that. The bailiff has invited us with our children, which leaves me no excuse: but I know not why, and yet I cannot help wishing we were safe returned.

Letter CLIX. From Fanny Anet.

Oh sir! O my benefactor! what tidings do they order me to write to you! Madam——my poor mistress——good God! methinks I see already how frightened you are! but you cannot see the affliction we are all in here.——But I have not a moment to lose——I must tell you.——I must run——Oh that I had already told you all!——what will become of you, when you know our misfortune! The whole family went out yesterday to dine at Chillon. The baron, who was going into Savoy to spend some days at the castle of Blonay, went away after dinner.

The company attended him a little way, and afterwards walked along the dyke. Mrs. Orbe and the bailiff's lady went before with my master; my mistress followed, having hold by one hand of Harriot and by the other of Marcellin. I came after with the eldest. His honour, the bailiff, who had staid behind to speak to some body, came up; and joining the company, offered my mistress his arm; which, in order to accept of, she sent Marcellin to me. I ran forward to meet him while the child did the same towards me; but, in running, his foot slipped and he fell unhappily into the water. I screamed out, when my mistress, turning her head and seeing the child in the water, flew back in an instant and threw herself in after him.

Unhappy that I am! why did I not throw myself in too! better had I been drowned on the spot! with difficulty I kept the eldest from leaping after its mother; who kept struggling with the other in her arms.——No boat, nor people were at hand, so that some time past before they could be got out of the water——the child soon recovered, but as for the mother——the fright, the fall, the condition she was in——ah none knows better than I the danger of such a fall! She was taken out and remained a good while insensible. The moment she came to herself, she enquired eagerly after the child——heavens! with what transport did she embrace him! I thought she was quite well again; but her spirits lasted her but for a moment: she insisted on being brought home, but fainted away several times during the journey. By some orders she gave me, I saw she believed she should not recover. Her fears were alas! too true! she will never recover. Mrs. Orbe is a good deal more altered than she. They are all distracted; I am the most sensible in the whole house——Why should I be uneasy? ah! my good mistress, if I love you, I shall never have occasion for another.——Oh my dear sir! may heaven enable you to support this trial! adieu! the physician is this moment coming out of the chamber. I must run to meet him——if he gives me hopes, I will let you know it. If I say nothing, you will know too well the cause.

Letter CLX. From Mrs. Orbe.

Imprudent, unfortunate man! unhappy dreamer! you will now indeed never see her more——the veil——Eloisa is no more.——

She has herself written to you, I refer you to her letter: respect, I charge you, her last request. Great and many are the obligations you have to discharge on this side the grave.——

Letter CLXI. From Mr. Wolmar.

I was unwilling to interrupt the first transports of your grief: my writing to you

would but have aggravated your sorrow, as I was no better qualified to relate than you to read our sad tale. At present, possibly, such a relation may not be disagreeable to both. As nothing remains but the remembrance of her, my heart takes a delight in recalling every token of that remembrance to my mind. You will have some consolation in shedding tears to her memory; but of that grand relief of the unfortunate I am constitutionally deprived, and am therefore more unhappy than you.

It is not, however, of her illness, but of herself, I would write. Another might have thrown herself into the water to save her child. Such an accident, her fever, her death are natural; and may be common to other mortals: but the employment of her last moments, her conversation, her sentiments, her fortitude, all these are peculiar to Eloisa. She was no less singular in the hour of death than she had been during the whole course of her life; and as I was the sole witness to many particulars, you can learn them from me alone.

You already know that her fright, her agitation, the fall, and the water she had imbibed, thew her into fainting fits, from which she did not recover till after she was brought home. On being carried into the house, she asked again for the child; the child was brought; and, seeing him walk about and return her caresses, she became apparently easy, and consented to take a little rest. Her sleep was but short, and as the physician was not yet come, she made us sit round on the bed; that is, Fanny, her cousin and me. She talked to us about her children, of the great diligence and care which her plan of education required, and of the danger of a moment’s neglect. Without making her illness of any great importance, she foresaw, she said, that it would prevent her for some time from discharging her part of that duty, and charged us to divide it amongst us.

She enlarged on her own projects, on yours, on the most proper means to carry them into execution; on the observations she had made as to what would promote or injure

them; and, in a word, on every thing which might enable us to supply her place, in the discharge of the duties of a mother, so long as she might be prevented from it herself. I thought so much precaution unnecessary for one who imagined she should be prevented from exercising such employment only for a few days: but what added to my apprehensions was to hear her enter into a long and particular charge respecting Harriot. As to her sons, she contented herself with what concerned their education in the earliest infancy, as if relying on another for the care of their youth.

But in speaking of Harriot, she went farther, extending her remarks even to her coming-of-age; and, being sensible that nothing could supply the place of those reflections which her own experience dictated, she gave us a clear: and methodical abstract of the plan of education she had laid down, recommending it to the mother in the most lively and affecting manner.

All these exhortations, respecting the education of young persons and the duty of mothers, mixt with frequent applications to herself, could not fail to render the conversation extremely interesting: I saw indeed that it affected her too much. In the mean time, her cousin held one of her hands, pressing it every now and then to her lips, and bathing it with tears, at every reply: Fanny was not less moved; and as for Eloisa herself, I observed the big tears swell out of her eyes and steal down her cheeks; but she was afraid to let us see she wept, lest it should alarm us. But I then saw, that she knew her life was drawing towards its final period. My only hope was that her fears might deceive her, and represent the danger greater than it really was. Unhappily, however, I knew her too well to build much upon such a deception. I endeavoured several times to stop her, and at last begged of her not to waste her spirits by talking so much at once on a subject which might be continued at our leisure. Ah! my dear, replied she, don’t you know that nothing hurts a woman so much as silence? and, since I find myself a little feverish, I may as well employ my discourse about useful matters as prattle away the time about trifles.

The arrival of the physician put the whole house into a confusion, which it is impossible to describe. All the domestics were gathered about the door of the chamber, where they waited with their arms folded and anxious looks, to know his opinion of their mistress's situation, as if their own destiny were depending. This sight threw poor Mrs. Orbe into such an agony of grief, that I began to be afraid for her senses. Under different pretences, therefore, I dismissed them, that their presence might no longer affect her. The physician gave us indeed a little hope, but in such vague terms that it served to convince me there was none. Eloisa was also reserved on account of her cousin. When the doctor left the chamber I followed him, which Clara was also going to do; but Eloisa detained her, and gave me a wink which I understood, and therefore immediately told the physician, that if there were any real danger he should as carefully conceal it from Mrs. Orbe as from the patient, lest her despair should render her incapable of attending her friend. He told me the case was indeed dangerous, but that four and twenty hours being hardly elapsed since the accident, it required more time to form a certain judgment; that the succeeding night might determine the fate of the patient; but that he could not positively pronounce any thing till the third day. Fanny alone was by, on his saying this, on whom we prevailed with some difficulty to stifle her emotions, and agreed upon what was proper to tell Mrs. Orbe and the rest of the family.

Toward the evening, Eloisa prevailed with her cousin, who had sat up with her the preceding night, and was desirous of continuing her vigilance, to go to bed for some hours. In the mean time, the patient being informed that she was to be bled in the foot, and that the physician was prescribing for her, she sent for him to her bedside and addressed him thus.

"Mr. Bouffon, when it is necessary to flatter a timid patient as to the danger of his case, the precaution is humane, and I approve of it; but it is a piece of cruelty to lavish equally on all, the disagreeable remedies which to many may be superfluous. Prescribe for me every thing that you think will be really useful, and I will

punctually follow your prescriptions. But as to those of mere experiment, I beg you will excuse me: it is my body and not my mind which is disordered; and I am not afraid to end my days, but to misspend those which remain. The last moments of life are too precious to be thrown away. If you cannot prolong mine, therefore, I beg you will at least not shorten them, by preventing me from employing them as I ought. Either recover me entirely, or leave me; I can die alone." Thus, my friend, did this woman, so mild and timid on ordinary occasions, know how to exert herself in a resolute and serious manner at this important crisis.

The night was cruel and decisive. Suffocation, oppression, fainting, her skin dry and burning. An ardent fever tormented her, during the continuance of which she was heard frequently to call out Marcellin, as if to prevent his running into the water, and to pronounce also another name, formerly repeated on a like occasion. The next day the physician told me plainly, that he did not think she could live three days. I alone was made privy to this afflicting piece of information, and the most terrible hour of my life was that wherein I kept it a secret in my breast, without knowing what use to make of it. I strayed out alone into the garden, musing on the measures I ought to take; not without many afflicting reflections on the misfortune of being reduced in the last stage of life to that solitude, of which I was sufficiently tired, even before I had experienced a more agreeable one.

I had promised Eloisa the night before, to tell her faithfully the opinion of the physician, and she had engaged me by every prevailing argument to keep my word. I felt that engagement on my conscience: but what to do, I was greatly at a loss! Shall I, said I to myself, in order to discharge an useless and chimerical duty, afflict her soul with the news, and lengthen the pangs of death? to tell her the hour of her dissolution, is it not in fact to anticipate the fatal moment? in so short an interval what will become of the desires, the hopes, the elements of life? shall I kill my Eloisa?

Thus meditating on what I should do, I walked on with long and hasty strides, and in an agitation of mind I had never before experienced. It was not in my power to shake off the painful anxiety; it remained an insupportable weight on my spirits. At length I was determined by a sudden thought.

For whose sake, said I, do I deliberate? for hers, or for mine? on whose principles do I reason? is it on her system or my own? What demonstration have I of the truth? In support of her system she also has nothing but opinion; but that opinion carries with it the force of evidence, and is in her eyes a demonstration. What right have I, in a matter which relates chiefly to her, to prefer my opinion, which I acknowledge to be doubtful, to hers which she thinks demonstrated? let us compare the consequences of both. According to hers, her disposition in the last hour of her life will decide her fate to all eternity. According to mine, all that I can do for her will be a matter of indifference in three days. According to my system, she will be then insensible to every thing: but if she be in the right, what a difference will there be! eternal happiness or misery! Perhaps——that word is terrible——wretch! risk thy own soul and not hers.

This was the first doubt I ever had concerning that scepticism you have so often attacked; but it was not the last. This doubt however freed me from the other. I immediately resolved; and for fear my mind should change, ran directly to Eloisa's chamber; where, after dismissing every body from their attendance, I sat down by her bedside. I did not make use of those trifling precautions which are necessary with little minds. I was indeed for some time silent; but she looked at me and seemed to read my thoughts. Then, holding out her hand, do you think, said she, you bring me news? no, my dear friend, I know it already; the cold hand of death is upon me; we must part for ever.

She proceeded, and continued with me a long conversation, of which I may one day give you an account; and during which she engraved her testament on my heart. If I

had indeed been ignorant of her disposition before, her temper of mind at this time would sufficiently have informed me.

She asked me, if her danger was known in the house. I told her, every one was greatly apprehensive; but that they knew nothing for certain; and that the physician had acquainted me only with his opinion. On this she conjured me carefully to keep it a secret for the remainder of the day. Clara, continued she, will not be able to support this stroke, unless it comes from my hand. I shall take upon me that affecting office tonight. It is chiefly for this reason that I desired to have the advice of a physician, that I might not subject her unnecessarily, and merely on my own suggestions to so cruel a trial. Take care that she may know nothing of it before the time, or you will certainly risk the loss of a friend, and your children that of a mother.

She then asked me after her father. I owned that I had sent an express to him: but took care to conceal from her, that the messenger, instead of contenting himself with delivering my letter, as I had ordered him, blundered out a story, from which my old friend, falsely collecting that his daughter was drowned, fell down stairs in a swoon and hurt himself; so that he kept his bed at Blonay. The hopes of seeing her father, affected her very sensibly, and the certainty I had of the vanity of such hope, had no small share in my uneasiness.

The paroxysms of the preceding night had rendered her extremely weak: nor did this long conversation at all increase her strength. In this feeble situation, therefore, she strove to get a little sleep in the day time; nor did I know, till two days after, that she did not sleep the whole time. The family continued in great anxiety; every one waiting in mournful silence for each other to remove their uneasiness, yet, without daring to ask any questions for fear of being told more than they wished to know. If there were any good news, they said to themselves, every one would be eager enough to tell it; and the bad we shall know but too soon. In this terrible suspense

they were satisfied so long as they heard of no alteration for the worse. Amidst this dreadful silence, Mrs. Orbe only was active and talkative. As soon as she came out of Eloisa's chamber, instead of going to rest, she ran up and down the house, asking what the doctor said to the one, and to the other. She had sat up all the preceding night, and could not be ignorant of what she had seen; but she strove even to impose on herself and to distrust the evidence of her senses. Those she interrogated always giving her favourable answers, encouraged her to ask others, which she continued to do with such an air of solicitude and poignant distress, that whoever had known the truth could not have been prevailed upon to tell it her.

In the presence of Eloisa she concealed her anxiety, and indeed the affecting object which she had before her eyes was sufficiently afflicting to suppress her vivacity. She was above all things solicitous to hide her fears from Eloisa; but she could very ill conceal them. Her trouble even appeared in her affectation to hide it. Eloisa, on her part also, spared no pains to deceive her cousin, as to the true state of her case. Without making light of her illness, she affected to speak of it as a thing that was already past, seeming uneasy only at the time necessary to restore her. How greatly did I suffer to see them mutually striving to comfort each other, while I knew that neither of them entertained that hope in their own breasts, with which each endeavoured to inspire the other.

Mrs. Orbe had sat up the two preceding nights and had not been undressed for three days. Eloisa proposed, therefore, that she should retire to her own bed: but she refused. Well, then, said Eloisa, let a little bed be made up for you in my chamber; if, added she, as if she had just thought of it, you will not take part of mine? come, my dear, says she, what say you? I am not worse, and, if you have no objection you shall sleep with me. This proposal was accepted. For my part, they turned me out of the room, and really I stood in need of rest.

I rose early the next morning; and, being anxious for what might have passed in the

night, as soon as I heard them stirring, I went into her chamber. From the situation in which Mrs. Orbe appeared the preceding evening, I expected to find her extremely agitated. In entering the room, however, I saw her sitting on the settee, spiritless and pale, or rather of a livid complexion: her eyes heavy and dead; yet, she appeared calm and tranquil, but spoke little; as for Eloisa, she appeared less feeble than over night; the tone of her voice was strong, and her gesture animated; she seemed indeed to have borrowed the vivacity of her cousin. I could easily perceive, however, that this promising appearance was in a great measure the effect of her fever; but I remarked also in her looks that something had given her a secret joy which contributed to it not a little; but of which I could not discover the cause. The physician confirmed his former opinion, the patient continued also in the same sentiments, and there remained no hope.

Being obliged to leave her for some time, I observed, in coming again into her apartment, that every thing appeared in great order. She had caused flower-pots to be placed on the chimney piece; her curtains were half open and tied back; the air of the room was changed, a grateful odour every where diffusing itself, so that no one would have taken it for the bed chamber of the sick. The same taste and elegance appeared also in her deshabille; all which gave her rather the air of a woman of quality, waiting to receive company, than of a country lady who was preparing for her last moments. She saw my surprise, smiled at it, and guessing my sentiments was going to speak to me, when the children were brought into the room. These now engaged her attention; and you may judge whether, finding herself ready to part from them for ever, her caresses were cold or moderate. I even took notice that she turned oftener, and with more warmth, to him who was the cause of her death, as if he was become more dear to her on that account.

These embraces, sighs and transports were all mysterious to the poor children. They loved her indeed tenderly; but it was with that tenderness peculiar to their age. They comprehended nothing of her condition, of the repetition of her caresses, of her

regret at never seeing them more: as they saw us sorrowful and affected, they wept; but knew nothing more. We may teach children to repeat the word death; but we cannot give them any idea of it: they neither fear it for themselves or others; they fear to suffer pain, but not to die. When the excess of pain drew complaints from their poor mother, they pierced the air with their cries; but when we talked to them of losing her, they seemed stupid and comprehended nothing. Harriot alone, being a little older than the others, and of a sex in which understanding and sentiment appear earlier than in the other, seemed troubled and frightened to see her little mamma in bed, whom she used always to see stirring about with her children. I remember that, on this occasion, Eloisa made a reflection quite in character, on the ridiculous vanity of Vespasian, who kept his bed so long as he was able to do any thing, and rose when he could do no more. [104] I know not, says she, if it be necessary that an emperor should die out of his bed? but this I know that the mother of a family should never take to her bed, unless to die.

After having wept over the children, and taken every one of them apart, particularly Harriot, whom she kept sometime, and who lamented and sobbed grievously. She called them all three together; gave them her blessing, and, pointing to Mrs. Orbe, go, my children, said she, go, and throw yourselves at the feet of your mother: this is she whom Providence has given you, depriving you of nothing in taking me. Immediately they all ran to her, threw themselves on their knees, and, laying hold of her hands, called her their good mamma, their second mother. Clara stooped forward to embrace them, but strove in vain to speak; she could only utter a few broken and imperfect exclamations, amidst sighs and sobs that stifled her voice. Judge if Eloisa was not moved! the scene indeed became too affecting: for which reason I interrupted it.

As soon as it was over, we sat down again round the bed; and, though the vivacity of Eloisa was a little suppressed by the foregoing scene, she preserved the same air of content in her looks; she talked on every subject with all that attention and regard

which bespeaks a mind at ease; nothing escaped her; she was as intent on the conversation as if she had nothing else to think of. She proposed that we should dine in her chamber, that she might have as much of our company as possible for the short time she had to live: you may believe this proposal was not on our part rejected.

The dinner was served up without noise, confusion or disorder, but with as much regularity as if it had been in the Apollo. Fanny and the children dined with us. Eloisa, taking notice that every one wanted an appetite, had the art to prevail on us to eat of almost every thing; one time by pretending to instruct the cook, at another by asking whether she might not venture to taste this or that, and then by recommending it to us to take care of our health, without which we should not be capable of doing her the service her illness required. In short, no mistress of a family, however solicitous to do the honours of her house, could in full health have shewn, even to strangers, more obliging, or more amiable marks of her kindness, than those which dying Eloisa expressed for her family. Nothing of what I expected happened, nothing of what really happened ever entered my head. In short I was lost in astonishment.

After dinner, word was brought up that the clergyman was come. He came as a friend to the family, as he often favoured us with a visit. Though I had not sent for him, as Eloisa did not request it, I must confess to you, I was pleased to hear he was come, and imagine the most zealous believer could not on the same occasion have welcomed him with greater pleasure. His presence indeed promised the removal of many of my doubts, and some relief from my perplexity.

You will recollect the motives for my telling her of her approaching end. By the effect which, according to my notions, such a shocking piece of information should have had on her, how could I conceive that which it really had? how could I imagine that a woman, so devout as not to pass a day, when in health, without meditation,

who made the exercise of prayer her delight and amusement, should at such a time as this, when she had but two days to live; when she was just ready to appear before her awful judge, instead of making peace with God and her conscience, amuse herself in ornamenting her chamber, chatting with her friends, and diverting them at their meals, without ever dropping a word concerning God's grace, or her own salvation? what could I think of her, and her real sentiments? how could I reconcile her conduct with the notions I had entertained of her piety? how could I reconcile the use she made of her last moments to what she had said to the physician, of their great importance? all this appeared to me an inexplicable enigma; for though I did not expect to find her practising all the hypocritical airs of the devotees, it seemed to me, however, high time to think of what she judged of so much importance, and that it should suffer no delay. If one is devout amidst the noise and hurry of life, how can one be otherwise at the moment we are going to quit it, and when there remains no longer time to think of another?

These reflections led me farther than I thought I ever should proceed. I began to be uneasy lest my opinions, indiscreetly maintained, might at length have gained too much upon her belief. I had not adopted hers, and yet I was not willing that she should have renounced them. Had I been sick, I should certainly have died in my own way of thinking, but I was desirous that she should die also in hers. These contradictory notions will appear to you very extravagant; I myself do not find them very reasonable: they were, however, such as really suggested themselves, at that time. I do not undertake to justify, I only relate them.

At length the time drew near, when my doubts were to be cleared up: for it was easy to see that, sooner or later, the minister would turn the conversation on the object of his duty; and though Eloisa had been capable of disguising her sentiments, it would be too difficult for her to do it in such a manner that a person, attentive and prepossessed as I was, should not see through the disguise.

It soon after happened as I expected. To pass over, however, the commonplace compliments with which this worthy clergyman introduced the subject, as well as the affecting manner in which he represented the happiness of crowning a well-spent life by a Christian exit; he added, that he had indeed remembered her to have maintained opinions, on some points, different from those of the church, or such as may be most reasonably deduced from the sacred writings; but that, as she had never persisted in defending them, he hoped she would die, as she had lived, in the communion of the faithful, and acquiesce in all the particulars of their common confession.

As Eloisa's answer removed at once all my doubts, and differed a good deal from the commonplace discourses on such occasions, I shall give it you almost word for word; for I listened to it very attentively, and committed it to paper immediately after.

"Permit me, sir, said she, to begin by thanking you for all the care you have taken to conduct me in the paths of virtue and Christianity, and for that complacency with which you have borne with my errors when I have gone astray. Filled with a due respect for your zeal, as well as gratitude for all your goodness, I declare with pleasure that it is to you I am indebted for all my good resolutions, and that you have always directed me to do what was right, and to believe what was true.

"I have lived and I die in the protestant communion, whose maxims are deduced from scripture and reason; concerning which my heart hath always confirmed what my lips uttered; and though I may not have had always that docility in regard to your precepts which perhaps I ought, it has arisen from my aversion to all kind of hypocrisy: that which I could not believe, I never could profess; I have always sincerely sought what was most conformable to truth, and the glory of my Creator. I may have been deceived in my research; I have not the vanity to think I have always been in the right. I may, indeed, have been constantly in the wrong; but my intention

has been invariably good. This was as much as was in my own power. If God did not vouchsafe to enlighten my understanding farther, he is too merciful and just to demand of me an account of what he has not committed to my care.

“This, sir, is all I think necessary to say on the opinions I profess. As to the rest, let my present situation answer for me. With my head distracted by illness and subjected to the delirium of a fever, is it now a proper time to endeavour to reason better than I did when in health? when my understanding was unimpaired and as sound as I received it from my Maker,——if I was deceived then, am I less subject to be so now? and in my present weakness, does it depend on me to believe otherwise than I did when in full health and strength of body and mind? It is our reason which determines our belief, but mine has lost its best faculties; what dependence then could be made on the opinions I should now adopt without it? what now remains for me to do, is to appeal to what I believed before; for the uprightness of my intention is the same, though I have lost my judgment. If I am in an error, I am sorry for and detest it; and this is sufficient to set my heart at ease as to my belief.

“With respect to my preparation for death; that, sir, is made; badly indeed I own, but it is done in the best manner I could; and at least much better than I can do it now. I endeavoured to discharge that important part of my duty before I became incapable of it. I prayed in health;——when I was strong, I struggled with divine grace for favour; at present, now I am weak, I am resigned, and rely upon it. The best prayers of the sick, are patience and resignation. The preparation of death, is a good life; I know of no other. While I conversed with you, while I meditated by myself, while I endeavoured to discharge the duties which Providence ordained for me; it was then I was preparing myself for death: for meeting my God and judge at my last hour. It was then I adored him with all my faculties and powers; what more can I now do, when I have lost them? is my languid soul in a condition to raise itself to the Almighty? this remnant of a half extinguished life, absorbed in pain, is it worthy of

being offered up to God? no, sir, he leaves it me to employ it for those he taught me to love, and from whom it is his sovereign will that I should now depart: I am going to leave them to go to him, it is therefore with them I should now concern myself; I shall soon have nothing to do but with him alone: the last pleasure I take on earth shall be in doing my last duty; is not that to serve him, and do his will; to discharge all those duties which humanity enjoins me before I throw it off entirely? what have I to do to calm troubles which I have not? my conscience is not troubled: if sometimes it has accused me, it has done it more when I was in health than at present. It tells me now that God is more merciful than I am criminal; and my confidence increases as I find I approach nearer to him. I do not present him with an imperfect, tardy, or forced repentance, which, dictated by fear, can never be truly sincere, and is only a snare by which the false penitent is deceived. I do not present him with the service of the remnant and latter end of my days, full of pain and sorrow, a prey to sickness, grief, anxiety, death; and which I would not dedicate to his service till I could do nothing else. No, I present before him my whole life, full indeed of errors and faults, but exempt from the remorse of the impious, and the crimes of the wicked.

“To what punishment can a just God condemn me? the reprobate, it is said, hate him. Must he not first make me not love him? no, I fear not to be found one of that number. O thou great eternal being! supreme intelligence! source of life and happiness! creator! preserver! father! lord of nature! God powerful and good, of whose existence I never doubted for a moment and under whose eye I have always delighted to live! I know, I rejoice that I am going to appear before thy throne. In a few days my soul, delivered from its earthly tabernacle, shall begin to pay thee more worthily that immortal homage which will constitute my happiness to all eternity. I look upon what I shall be, till that moment comes, as nothing. My body, indeed, still lives; but my intellectual life is at an end. I am at the end of my career, and am already judged from what is past. To suffer, to die, is all that I have now to do: and

this is nature's work. I have endeavoured to live in such a manner as to have no occasion to concern myself at death, and now it approaches, I see it without fear. Those who sleep on the bosom of a father, are in no fear of being awaked."

This discourse, begun in a grave and slow voice, and ending in a more elevated and animated tone, made on everyone present, myself not excepted, an impression the more lively, as the eyes of her who pronounced it seemed to sparkle with a supernatural fire; rays of light seemed to encircle her brow; and, if there be any thing in this world which deserves the name of celestial, it was certainly the face of Eloisa, while she was thus speaking.

The minister himself was transported at what he heard; and, lifting up his hands and eyes to heaven, good God! said he, behold the worship that truly honours thee! deign to render it propitious; for how seldom do mortals offer thee the like! Madam, continued he, turning to Eloisa and approaching her bed, I thought to have instructed you, but have myself been instructed. I have nothing farther to say. You have that true faith, which knows how to love God. Bear with you that precious repose and testimony of a good conscience, and believe me it will not deceive you. I have seen many Christians in your situation, but never before saw any thing like this. What a difference between such a peaceful end, and that of those terrified sinners, who implore heaven with vain and idle prayers unworthy to be heard. Your death, madam, is as exemplary as your life: you have lived to exercise your charity to mankind, and die a martyr to maternal tenderness. Whether it please God to restore you to us, to serve us as an example, or whether he is pleased to call you to himself to crown your virtue with its due reward, may we all so long as we survive, live like you, and in the end follow your example in death; we shall then be certain of happiness in another life.

He offered now to take his leave; but Eloisa prevailed on him to stay. You are one of my friends, said she to him, and one of those I take the greatest pleasure to see; it is

for those my last moments are so precious. We are going to part for too long a time, to part so soon now. He was well pleased to stay, and I went out and left them.

At my return, I found the conversation continued still on the same subject; but in a less interesting manner. The minister complained much of that false notion, which makes religion only of use to persons on their deathbed, and represents its ministers as men of ill omen. We are looked upon, says he, in common rather as the messengers of sorrow and death, than of the glad tidings of life and salvation: and that because, from the convenient opinion of the world that a quarter of an hour's repentance is sufficient to efface fifty years of guilt, we are only welcome at such a time. We must be clothed in a mourning habit and affect a morose air, in short nothing is spared to render us dismal and terrifying. It is yet worse, in other religious professions. A dying roman-catholic is surrounded by objects the most terrifying, and is pestered with ceremonies that in a manner bury him alive. By the pains they take to keep the devils from him, he imagines he sees his chamber full of them; he dies a hundred times with fear before he expires, and it is in this state of horror the church delights to plunge the dying sinner, in order to make the greater advantage of his purse.

Thank God, said Eloisa, that we were not brought up in those venal religions, which murder people to inherit their wealth, and who, selling heaven to the rich, would extend even to the other world that unjust inequality which prevails in this. I do not at all doubt that such mournful ideas encourage infidelity, and create a natural aversion for that species of worship, which adopts them. I hope, continued she, looking steadfastly at me, that he who may educate our children will adopt very different maxims: and that he will not represent religion to them as a mournful exercise, by continually setting before them the prospect of death. If they learn once but to live well, they will of themselves know how to die.

In the continuation of this discourse, which became less affecting and more

interrupted than I shall tell you, I fully comprehended the maxims of Eloisa, and the conduct at which I had been surprized. It appeared that, perceiving her situation quite desperate, she contrived only to remove that useless and mournful appearance which the fear of most persons when dying makes them put on. This she did either to divert our affliction, or to banish from her own view a spectacle so moving, and at the same time unnecessary. Death, said she, is of itself sufficiently painful! why must it be rendered hideous? the care which others throw away in endeavouring to prolong their lives, I will employ to enjoy mine to the last moment. Shall I make an hospital of my apartment, a scene of disgust and trouble, when my last care will be to assemble in it all those who are most dear to me? If I suffer the air to stagnate, I must banish my children or expose their health to danger. If I put on a frightful dress and appearance myself, I shall be known no longer; I shall be no longer the same person you will all remember to have loved, and will be able to bear me no more. I shall, even alive, have the frightful spectacle of horror before me, which I shall be to my friends when I am dead. Instead of this, I have discovered the art to extend my life without prolonging it. I exist, I love, am loved, and live till the last breath forsakes me. The moment of death is nothing: the natural evil is a trifle; and I have overcome all those of opinion.

This and a good deal of similar discourse passed between the patient, the minister, sometimes the doctor, Fanny, and me. Mrs. Orbe was present all the while but never joined in the conversation. Attentive to the wants of her friend, she was very assiduous to serve her, when she wanted any assistance; the rest of the time she remained immoveable and almost inanimate; she kept looking at her without speaking, and without understanding any thing of what was said.

As to myself; fearing that Eloisa would talk too much for her strength, I took the opportunity of the minister and physician’s talking to each other aside, to tell her, in her ear, that she talked a great deal for a sick person, and reasoned very profoundly for one who conceived herself incapable of reasoning. Yes, replied she, very low, I

talk too much for a person that is sick, but not for one that is dying; I shall very soon have nothing more to say. With respect to argument, I reason no more now; I have done with it. I have often reflected on my last illness; I am now to profit by my reflection. I am no longer capable of reflecting nor resolving; I am now only able to talk of what I have before thought of, and to practice what I have formerly resolved.

The remainder of the day passed away in nearly the same tranquillity, and almost in the same manner as if no sick person was in the house. Eloisa, just as in full health, calm and resigned, talked with the same good sense and the same spirit; putting on, now and then, an air of serenity approaching even to sprightliness. In short, I continued to observe a certain appearance of joy in her eyes, which increased my uneasiness, and concerning which I was determined to come to an explanation.

I delayed it no longer than the same evening: when, seeing I had an inclination to be left alone with her, she told me I had prevented her, for that she had something to say to me. It is very well, replied I, but as I intimated my intention first, give me leave first to explain myself.

Then sitting down by her and looking at her attentively, my Eloisa, said I, my dear Eloisa, you have wounded my very soul. Yes, continued I, seeing her look upon me with some surprise, I have penetrated your sentiments; you are glad to die, you rejoice to leave me. Reflect on my behaviour to you since we have lived together: have I ever deserved on your part so cruel a desire? at that instant she clasped both my hands in hers, and with a voice that thrilled my soul, who? I! said she, I glad to leave you! Is it thus you penetrate my sentiments? Have you so soon forgot our conversation of yesterday? at least, interrupted I, you die content——I have seen——I see it. Hold, said she, it is indeed true, I die content; but it is content to die, as I have lived, worthy the name of your wife. Ask of me no more, for I can tell you no more: but here, continued she, taking a folded paper from under her pillow, here is what will unfold to you the mystery. This paper was a letter which I saw was

directed to you. I give it to you open, added she, giving it into my hands, that after having read it you will determine within yourself, either to send or suppress it, according as you think best. I desire, however, you will not read it till I am no more; and I am certain you will grant that request.

This letter, my dear St. Preux, you will find inclosed. She who wrote it I well know is dead; but I can hardly bring myself to believe that she no longer exists.

She questioned me afterwards, expressing great uneasiness, about her father. Is it possible, said she, that he should know his daughter to be in danger and she not hear from him! has any misfortune happened to him? or has he ceased to love me? can it be that my father, so tender a father, should thus abandon his child? that he should let me die without seeing him; without receiving his last blessing; without embracing him in my last moments. Good God! how bitterly will he reproach himself, when he comes to find that he will see me no more!——this reflection so extremely afflicted her, that I judged she would be less affected to know her father was ill than to suspect his indifference. I therefore determined to acquaint her with the truth, and in fact found her more easy than under her first suspicions. The thoughts of never seeing him again, however, much affected her. Alas! said she, what will become of him when I am gone? shall he live to survive his whole family! what a life of solitude will his be? It is impossible he should long survive! at this moment nature resumed its empire, and the horrors of approaching death were extremely perceptible. She sighed, clasped her hands, lifted up her eyes to heaven; and, I saw plainly, endeavoured to pray, with all that difficulty which she before observed, always attended the prayers of the sick.

When it was over, she turned to me, and, complaining that she felt herself very weak; told me, she foresaw this would be the last time we should have an opportunity of conversing together. I conjure you, therefore, continued she, by our sacred union, in the name of those dear infants the pledges of our love, harbour no

longer such unjust suspicions of your wife. Can I rejoice to leave you? you, the business of whose life it has been to instruct and make me happy! you, who, of all the men in the world, were the most capable to make me so; you, with whom only perhaps I could have lived within the bounds of discretion and virtue! no! believe me, if I could set any value upon life, it would be that I might spend it with you.——These words, pronounced with great tenderness, affected me to that degree, that as I pressed her hands frequently with my lips I found them wet with my tears. I never before thought my eyes made for weeping. These tears were the first I ever shed since my birth, and shall be the last till the hour of my death. After having wept the last for Eloisa, there is nothing left on earth that can draw from me a tear.

This was a day of great fatigue for poor Eloisa. Her preparation of Mrs. Orbe in the preceding night, her interview with the children in the morning, that with the minister in the afternoon, together with the above conversation with me in the evening had quite exhausted her. She betook herself to rest, and slept better that night than on the preceding, whether on account of her lassitude, or that in fact her fever and paroxysms were less violent.

Early the next morning, word was brought me that a stranger, very indifferently dressed, desired very earnestly to speak particularly to Eloisa: and though he was informed of her situation, he still continued his importunity, saying, his business related to an act of great charity, that he knew Mrs. Wolmar very well, and that while she had life remaining, she would take pleasure in exerting her benevolence. As Eloisa had established it as an inviolable rule that no person, particularly such as appeared to be in distress, should be turned away, the servants brought me word of the man and his request: on which I ordered him in. His appearance was mean to the greatest degree, being clothed almost in rags, and having in his air and manner all the symptoms of indigence. I did not observe, however, any thing further either in his looks or discourse to make me suspicious of him; though he still persisted in his resolution of telling his business to none but Eloisa. I told him that if it related to any

remedy he might be possessed of, to save her life, I would give him all the recompense he might expect from her, without troubling her in her present extremity. No, sir, replied he, poor as I am, I desire not your money. I demand only what belongs to me, what I esteem beyond all the treasures on earth, what I have lost by my own folly, and what Mrs. Wolmar alone, to whom I owe it, can a second time restore.

This discourse, though unintelligible, determined me, however, what to do. A designing knave might indeed have said as much, but he could never have said it in the same manner. He required that none of the servants should be present, a precaution which seemed mysterious and strange; I indulged him, and introduced him to Eloisa. He had said that he was known to Mrs. Orbe; he passed by her, however, without her taking notice of him, at which I was a little surprized. Eloisa recollected him immediately. Their meeting was extremely affecting. Clara, hearing a noise, came forward, and soon remembered her old acquaintance, nor without some tokens of joy: but these were soon checked by her affliction. One sentiment only engrossed her attention, and her heart was insensible to every thing else.

It is needless, I imagine, to tell you who this person was; a thousand ideas will rise up in your memory and suggest it. But whilst Eloisa was comforting him, however, she was seized with a violent stoppage of her breath, and became so ill that we thought she was going to expire. To prevent any further surprise or distraction, at a time when her relief only was to be thought on, I put the man into the closet, and bid him lock himself in. Fanny was then called up, and after some time Eloisa recovered from her fit; when, looking round and seeing us all in a consternation about her, she said, never mind, children, this is only an essay; it is nothing like so painful as one would think.

All was soon tranquil again; but the alarm was so great that I quite forgot the man in the closet, till Eloisa whispered me to know what was become of him. This was not,

however, till dinner was served up and we were all sat down to table. I would have gone into the closet to speak to him, but he had locked the door on the inside as I had directed him; I was obliged, therefore, to have patience till after dinner.

During our repast, du Boffon, who dined with us, speaking of a young widow who was going to marry again, made some reflections on the misfortunes of widows in general; to which, I replied, the fortune of those was still harder who were widows while their husbands were living. That, indeed, sir, answered Fanny, who saw this discourse was directed to her, is too true, especially if such husbands are beloved. The conversation then turned upon hers; and, as she always spoke of him very affectionately, it was natural for her to do so now, at a time when the loss of her benefactress threatened to make that of her husband still more severe. This indeed she did in the most affecting terms, commending the natural goodness of his disposition, lamenting the bad examples by which he had been reduced, and so sincerely regretting his loss that, being sufficiently disposed before to sorrow, she burst out into a flood of tears. At this instant the closet door flew open, and the poor man, rushing out, threw himself at her feet, embraced her knees and mingled his tears with hers. She was holding a glass in her hand, which immediately fell to the ground; while the poor creature was so affected with joy and surprise that she had fallen into a fit, had not proper care been instantly taken to prevent it.

What followed is easily imagined. It was known in a moment over the whole house that Claud Anet was come. The husband of our good Fanny! what a festival! he was hardly got out of the chamber before he was stripped of his tatters and dressed in a decent manner. Had each of the servants had but two shirts a piece, Anet would soon have had as many as them all. They had indeed so far prevented me that, when I went out with a design to get him equipped, I was obliged to make use of my authority to make them take back the cloaths they had furnished him.

In the mean time Fanny would not leave her mistress. In order, however, to give her

an opportunity of an hour or two's conversation with her husband, we pretended the children wanted to take an airing, and sent them both to take care of them.

This scene did not disturb Eloisa so much as the preceding ones. There was nothing in it disagreeable, and it rather did her good than harm. Clara and I passed the afternoon with her by ourselves, and had two hours of calm uninterrupted conversation, which she rendered the most agreeable and interesting of any we had ever experienced in our lives.

She opened it with some observations on the affecting scene we had just beheld, and which recalled strongly to her mind the times of her early youth. Then, following the order of events, she made a short recapitulation of the incidents of her life, with a view to shew that, taking it for all in all, she had been fortunate and happy; that she had risen, gradually to the highest pinnacle of earthly happiness, and that the accident, which now cut her off in the middle of her days, seemed in all appearance, according to the natural course of things, to mark the point of separation between the good and evil of mortal life.

She expressed her gratitude to heaven in that it had been pleased to give her a susceptible and benevolent heart, a sound understanding and an agreeable person; in that it had been pleased to give her birth in a land of liberty, and not in a country of slaves; that she came of an honourable family and not of an ignoble or criminal race; that she was born to a moderate fortune, and not either to the superfluous riches of the great, which corrupt the mind, or to the indigence of the poor, which debases it. She felicitated herself that she was born of parents, both of them good and virtuous, replete with justice and honour, and who, tempering the faults of each other, had formed her judgment on theirs, without subjecting her to their foibles or prejudices. She boasted the advantages, she had enjoyed, of being educated in a rational and holy religion; which, so far from debasing, elevates and ennobles mankind; which, neither favouring impiety nor fanaticism, permits its professors to make use, at the

same time, both of faith and reason, to be at once both devout and humane.

Then, pressing the hand of Clara, which she constantly held in hers, and looking at her with the most affecting tenderness, all these blessings, said she, I have enjoyed in common with others; but this one——this, heaven reserved for me alone: I am a woman, and yet have known a true friend. Heaven gave us birth at the same time; it gave us a similarity of inclinations which has subsisted to this hour: it formed our hearts one for the other; it united us in the cradle; I have been blest with her friendship during my life, and her kind hand will close my eyes in death. Find another example like this in the world, and I have no longer any thing to boast. What prudent advice hath she not given me? from what perils hath she not saved me? under what afflictions hath she not comforted me? what should I indeed have been without her? what should I not have been, had I listened more attentively to her counsel?

Clara, instead of replying, leaned her head on the breast of her friend, and would have stifled her sighs by her tears: but it was impossible. Eloisa embraced her with the most cordial affection, and for a long time a scene of tearless silence succeeded.

When they recovered themselves, Eloisa continued her discourse. These blessings, said she, were mixed, with their inconveniences; such is the lot of humanity! My heart was made for love; difficult as to personal merit, but indifferent to that of opinion, it was morally impossible that my father’s prejudices should ever agree with my inclinations. My heart required a lover of its own peculiar choice. Such a one offered himself, I made choice of him, or rather heaven so directed my choice, that though a slave to passion, I should not be abandoned to the horrors of my guilt, and that the love of virtue should still keep possession of my heart, even after I was criminal. He made use of the specious insinuating language of virtue, by which a thousand base men daily seduce our sex; but perhaps he only of all mankind, was sincere. Did I then know his heart? ah! no. I then knew no more of him than his

professions, and yet I was seduced. I did that through despair which others have done through wantonness: I even threw myself, as my father reproached me, into his arms; and yet he loved and respected me: by that respect alone I began to know him truly. Every man capable of such behaviour must have a noble soul. Then, I might safely have trusted him; but I had done that before, and afterwards ventured to trust in my own strength, and so was deceived.

She then went on, to lavish encomiums on the merit of this unhappy lover; I will not say she did him more than justice, but the pleasure she took in it was very obvious. She even praised him at her own expense, and by endeavouring to be just to him, was unjust to herself. She went even so far as to maintain that he held adultery in greater horror than she did; forgetting that he himself had disproved any such suggestion.

All the other incidents of her life were related in the same spirit. The behaviour of Lord B——, her husband, her children, your return, our friendship, every thing was set in the most favourable light. She recapitulated even her misfortunes with pleasure, as accidents which had prevented greater misfortunes. She lost her mother at a time when that loss was peculiarly felt; but if heaven had been pleased to spare her, a disturbance, fatal to the peace of her family might have been the consequence. The assistance of her mother, feeble as it was, would have been sufficient to strengthen her resolution to resist the will of her father, whence family discord and scandal would have arisen, perhaps some disaster or dishonour, and perhaps still worse if her brother had lived. She had married a man, against her own inclination, whom she did not love; and yet she maintained, that she could not have been so happy with any other man, not even with the object of her passion. The death of Mr. Orbe had deprived her of a friend in the husband, but had restored to her a more amiable one in the wife. She even went so far as to include her uneasiness, her pains, in the number of blessings, as they had served to prevent her heart from being hardened against the sufferings of others. It is unknown, said she, the delight of

bemoaning our own misfortunes or those of others. A susceptible mind finds a contentment in itself, independent of fortune. How deeply have I not sighed! how bitterly have I not wept! and yet, were I to pass my life again, the evil I have committed would be all that I would wish retrenched; that which I have suffered would be again agreeable. These, St. Preux, were her own words; when you have read her letter, they will perhaps seem more intelligible.

Thus, continued she, you see to what felicity I was arrived. I enjoyed a considerable share of happiness, and had still more in view. The increasing prosperity of my family, the virtuous education of my children, all that I held dear in the world assembled, or ready to be assembled around me. The time present and the future equally flattering, enjoyment and hope united to compleat my happiness. Thus raised to the pinnacle of earthly bliss, I could not but descend; as it came before it was expected, it would have taken its flight while I was delighted in the thoughts of its duration. What could Providence have done to have sustained me on the summit of felicity? a permanent situation is not the lot of mankind? no, when we have acquired every thing, we must lose something, though it were from no other cause than that the pleasure of enjoyment diminishes by possession. My father is already in the decline of life; my children of an age when life is very uncertain: how many losses might not hereafter assist me, without my having it in my power to repair, or console myself under, one! A mother’s affection constantly increases, whilst the tenderness of her offspring diminishes in proportion as they are absent, or reside at a distance from her. Mine, as they grow up, would be taken from me: they would live in the great world, and might neglect me. You intend to send one of them to Russia; how many tears would not his departure and absence cost me! all by degrees would be detached from me, and I should have nothing to supply their loss. How often should I find myself not in the situation in which I now am going to leave you! and after all, I must still die. Die perhaps the last of you all, alone and forsaken! the longer one lives, the more desirous we are of living, even when our enjoyments are

at an end: hence I might survive till life became a burthen, and yet should fear to die; ’tis the ordinary consequence of old age. Instead of that, my last moments are now agreeable, and I have strength to resign myself to death, if death it may be called to leave behind us what we love. No, my friends, my children, think not that I shall leave you; I will remain with you; in leaving you thus united, my heart, my soul, will still reside among you. You will see me continually among you; you will perceive me perpetually near you——the time will also come when we shall be united again; nor shall the virtuous Wolmar himself escape me. My return to God speaks peace to my soul, and sweetens the bitter moment that approaches; it promises me for you also the same felicity. I have been happy, I am still happy, and am going to be so for ever; my happiness is determined, beyond the power of fortune, to all eternity.

Just then the minister entered. Eloisa was truly the object of his respect and esteem; nobody knowing better than he the liveliness and sincerity of her belief. He was but too much affected with the conversation he had held with her the day before, and above all with the serenity and fortitude he had observed in her. He had often seen persons die with ostentation, but never with such calmness. Perhaps also to the interest he took in her situation was added a little curiosity to see whether such her uncommon serenity would last to the end. Eloisa had no occasion to change the subject of discourse to render it more agreeable to the character of our visitor. As her conversation when in health was never on frivolous topics, so now she continued, on her sickbed, to talk over with the same tranquillity, such subjects as she thought most interesting to herself and her friends; speaking indifferently on matters by no means indifferent in themselves.

Thus, following the chain of her ideas relative to her notions of remaining with her friends, the discourse turned on the situation of the soul separated from the body: when she took occasion to admire the simplicity of such persons, who promised on their deathbeds to come back to their friends, and bring them news of the other

world. This, continued she, is just as reasonable, as the stories of ghosts and apparitions, that are said to commit a thousand disorders, and torment credulous good women; as if departed spirits had lungs to scold and hands to fight with. [105] How is it possible for a pure spirit to act upon a soul inclosed in a body, and which, by virtue of its union with such body can perceive nothing but by means of the corporeal organs? this is not to be conceived. I must confess, however, I see nothing absurd in supposing that the soul when delivered from the body, should return, wander about, or perhaps reside near the persons of such as were dear to it in life: not indeed to inform them of its existence; it has no means of communicating such information; neither can it act on us, or perceive what we act, for want of the organs of sense necessary to that end; but methinks it might become acquainted with our thoughts and perceptions, by an immediate communication similar to that by which the Deity is privy to all our thoughts, and by which we reciprocally read the thoughts of each other, in coming face to face: [106] for, added she, turning to the minister, of what use can the senses be when there is nothing for them to do? the supreme Being is neither seen nor understood; he only makes himself felt, he speaks neither to the eyes nor the ears, but only to the heart.

I understood, by the answer of the pastor and from some signs which passed between them, that the resurrection of the body had been one of the points on which they had formerly disputed. I perceived also that I now began to give more attention to the articles of Eloisa’s religion, where her faith seemed to approach the bounds of reason.

She seemed to take so much pleasure in these notions that, had she not been predetermined to abide by her former opinions, it had been cruelty to endeavour to invalidate one that seemed so agreeable to her in her present condition. What an additional pleasure, said she, have I not an hundred times taken, in doing a good action, in the imagination that my good mother was present, and that she knew the heart and approved the intentions of her daughter! there is something so comfortable

in the thoughts of living under the eyes of those who were dear to us, that with respect to ourselves, they can hardly be said to be deceased. You may judge whether Clara's hand was not frequently pressed during this discourse.

The minister had replied hitherto with a good deal of complacency and moderation; he took care, however, not to forget his profession for a moment, but opposed her sentiments on the business of another life. He told her the immensity, glory and other attributes of God, would be the only objects which the souls of the blessed would be employed in contemplating: that such sublime contemplation, would efface every other idea, that we should see nothing, that we should remember nothing, even in heaven, but that after so ravishing a prospect, every thing earthly would be lost in oblivion.

That may well be, returned Eloisa; there is such an immense distance between the lowness of our thoughts and the divine essence, that we cannot judge what effect it may have on us, when we are in a situation to contemplate its beauty. But, as I have hitherto been able to reason only from my ideas, I must confess that I leave some persons so dear to me, that it would grieve me much to think I should never remember them more. One part of my happiness, say I, will consist in the testimony of a good conscience; I shall certainly remember then how I have acted on earth: if I remember this, I cannot forget those persons who were dear to me; who must be still so: to see [107] them no more then will be a pain to me, and pain enters not into the mansions of the blest. But if, after all, I am mistaken, says she, smiling, a mistake for a day or two will be soon at an end. I shall know, sir, in a short time, more on this subject than even yourself. In the mean time, this I am well assured of, that so long as I remember that I have lived on earth, so long shall I esteem those I loved there, among whom my worthy pastor will not have the lowest place.

In this manner passed the conversation all that day, during which Eloisa appeared to have more ease, more hope and assurance than ever, seeming, in the opinion of the

minister, to enjoy a foretaste of that happiness she was going to partake among the blessed. Never did she appear more tender, more amiable, in a word, more herself than at this time; always sensible, sentimental, possessing the fortitude of the philosopher and the mildness of a Christian. Nothing of affectation, nothing assuming or sententious escaped her; her expression always dictated by her sentiments with the greatest simplicity of heart. If sometimes she stifled the complaints which her sufferings might have drawn from her, it was not through affectation of a stoical intrepidity; but to prevent those who were about her from being afflicted; and when the pangs of approaching death triumphed over her strength, she strove not to hide her sufferings, but permitted us to comfort her; and when she recovered from them a little, comforted us in her turn. In the intervals of her pain, she was chearful, but her chearfulness was extremely affecting; a smile sitting frequently on the lip while the eye ran over with tears. To what purpose is that terror which permits us not to enjoy what we are going speedily to lose? Eloisa was even more pleasing, more amiable than when in health; and the last day of her life was the most glorious of all.

Towards the evening she had another fit which, though not so severe as that in the morning, would not permit us to leave the children long with her. She, remarked, however, that Harriot looked changed, and though we accounted for it by saying she wept much and eat little, she said no, her illness was in the blood.

Finding herself better, she would have us sup in her own chamber; the doctor being still with her. Fanny also, whom we always used to send for when we chose she should dine or sup at our table, came up unsent for; which Eloisa perceiving, she smiled and said, yes, child, come, you shall sup with me tonight; you may have your husband longer than you will have your mistress. Then turning to me, she said, I shall have no need to recommend Claud Anet to your protection. No, replied I, whosoever you have honoured with your benevolence needs no other recommendation to me.

Eloisa, finding she could bear the light, had the table brought near the bed, and what is hardly to be conceived of one in her situation, she had an appetite. The physician who saw no danger in gratifying her, offered her a bit of chicken; which she refused, but desired a bit of fish, which she eat with a little bread, and said it was very good. While she was eating, you should have seen the looks of Mrs. Orbe; you should have seen, I say, for it is impossible to describe them. What she eat was so far from doing her harm, that she seemed the better for it during the remainder of the repast. She was even in such good humour as to take upon her to complain that we had been so long without wine. Bring, says she, a bottle of Spanish wine for these gentlemen. By the looks of the physician, she saw he expected to taste some genuine Spanish wine, and casting her eyes at Clara, smiled at the conceit. In the mean time Clara, without giving attention to that circumstance, looked with extreme concern, sometimes at Eloisa, and then on Fanny, of whom her eyes seemed to say, or ask something, which I could not understand.

The wine did not come so soon as was expected; the valet de chambre, who was entrusted with the key of the cellar, having taken it away through mistake. On enquiry, indeed, it was found that the provision intended for one day had lasted five, and that the key was gone without any body's perceiving the want of it, notwithstanding the family had sat up several nights. The physician was amazed, and for my part, at a loss whether I should attribute this forgetfulness to the concern or the sobriety of the servants, I was ashamed to make use of ordinary precautions with such domestics, and therefore ordered the door of the cellar to be broke open, and that for the future every one might drink at their discretion.

At length a bottle was brought us, and the wine proved excellent; when the patient having a mind to taste it, desired some mixed with water; on which the doctor gave her a glass, and ordered her to drink it unmixed. Clara and Fanny now cast their eyes more frequently at each other, but with looks timid and constrained, as if they were fearful of saying too much.

Her fasting, weakness, and ordinary way of living made the wine have a great effect on Eloisa. She perceived it, and said she was intoxicated. After having deferred it so long, said she, it was hardly worth while to begin to make me tipsy now, for a drunken woman is a most odious sight. In fact she began to prattle sensibly however as usual, but with more vivacity than before. It was astonishing, nevertheless, that her colour was not heighten'd: her eyes sparkled only with a fire moderated by the languor of her illness; and excepting her paleness she looked to be in full health. Clara's emotion became now extremely visible. She cast a timid look alternately on Eloisa, on me, on Fanny, and above all on the physician; these were all expressive of so many interrogatories which she was desirous but fearful to make. One would have thought every moment that she was going to speak, but that the fear of a disagreeable reply prevented her: indeed her disquietude appeared at length so great that it seemed oppressive.

Fanny, encouraged by all these signs and willing to relieve her, attempted to speak, but with a trembling voice, faltering out that her mistress seemed to have been in less pain to day——that her last convulsion was not so strong as the preceding——that the evening seemed——and there she stopped. Clara, who trembled like a leaf while Fanny was speaking, now fixed her eyes on the physician, listening with all her attention and hardly venturing to breathe lest she should not perfectly understand what he was going to say.

A man must have been stupid not to have guessed the meaning of all this. Du Boffon got up, felt the pulse of the patient, and said, here is neither intoxication nor fever; the pulse promises well. Clara rose up in a moment, and, addressing the doctor with the utmost impatience, would have interrogated him more particularly, but her speech failed her. How sir! said she——the pulse! the fever! she could say no more; but her eyes sparkled with impatience, and not a muscle in her face but indicated the most disquieting curiosity.

The doctor, however, made no answer, but took up the patient's hand again, examined her eyes and her tongue, and having stood silent a while, said, I understand you, madam; but it is impossible for me to say any thing positively at present, only this, that if the patient is in the same situation at this hour tomorrow morning I will answer for her life. The words had scarce dropt from his lips before Clara, rushing forward quick as lightening, overturned two chairs and almost the table to get at him, when she clung round his neck and kissed him a hundred times, sobbing and bathing his face with her tears. With the same impetuosity she took a ring of value from her finger, and put it forcibly on his, crying out, as well as she could, quite out of breath, O sir! if you do but restore her to us, it is not one life only you will be so happy as to save.

Eloisa saw and heard this, which greatly affected her; looking on her friend, therefore, she thus broke out in a sorrowful and moving tone, cruel Clara! how you make me regret the loss of life! are you resolved to make me die in despair? must you be a second time prepared? these few words were like a clap of thunder; they immediately extinguished her transports, but could not quite stifle her rekindled hopes.

The doctor's reply to Mrs. Orbe was immediately known throughout the house, and the honest domestics already conceited their mistress half restored. They unanimously resolved, therefore, to make the doctor a present, on her recovery, to which each contributed three months wages, and the money was immediately put into the hands of Fanny; some borrowing of the others what they wanted to make up their quota of the sum. This agreement was made with so much eagerness and haste, that Eloisa heard in her bed the noise of their acclamations. Think, my friend, what an effect this must have had on the heart of a woman, who felt herself dying. She made a sign to me to come near, and whispered in my ear; see how they make me drink to the very bottom that bitter yet sweet cup of sensibility!

When it was time to retire, Mrs. Orbe, who still partook of her cousin's bed, called her women, to sit up that night to relieve Fanny: the latter however objected to the proposal, and seemingly with greater earnestness than she would have done, had not her husband been come. Mrs. Orbe persisted notwithstanding in her design, and both of them passed the night together in the closet. I sat up in the next chamber, but the hopes which the domestics entertained had so animated their zeal, that neither persuasions nor threats could prevail on one of them to go to bed that night. Thus the whole house sat up all night under so much impatience, that there was not one of the family who would not have gladly given a whole year of his life to have had it nine o'clock in the morning.

I frequently heard them walking in her chamber, during the night, which did not disturb me; but toward the morning when things seem'd more quiet and still, I was alarmed at a low, indistinct noise that seemed to come from Eloisa's room. I listened and thought I could now distinguish the groans of a person in extremity. I ran into the room, threw open the curtain, and there——O St. Preux! there I saw them both, those amiable friends, motionless, locked in each other's embrace, the one fainted away and the other expiring. I cried out, and hastened to prevent or receive her last sigh; but it was too late; Eloisa was no more.

I can give you no account of what passed for some hours afterwards; being ignorant of what befell myself during that time. As soon as I was a little recovered from my first surprise, I enquired after Mrs. Orbe; and learnt that the servants were obliged to carry her into her own chamber, where at last they were forced to confine her to prevent her returning into that of Eloisa; which she had several times done, throwing herself on the body, embracing, chasing, and kissing it in a kind of phrenzy, and exclaiming aloud in a thousand passionate expressions of fruitless despair.

On entering her apartment, I found her absolutely frantic, neither seeing nor minding any thing, knowing nobody, but running about the room, and wringing her hands,

sometimes muttering in a hollow voice some extravagant words, and at others sending forth such terrible shrieks as to make one shudder with horror. On the feet of the bed sat her woman, frightened out of her wits, not daring to breathe or stir, but seeking to hide herself and trembling every limb. In fact the convulsions, which at this time agitated the unhappy Clara, had something in them most terrifying. I made a sign that her woman should retire; fearing lest a single word of consolation, untimely offered, might have put her into an actual fury.

I did not attempt therefore to speak to her; as she could neither have listened to or understood me; but observing after some time that her strength was quite exhausted with fatigue, I placed her on a settee; then sitting down by her and holding her hands, I ordered the children to be brought in and called them round her. Unhappily the first she took notice of was him that was the innocent cause of her friend's death. The sight of him I could see made her tremble; her countenance changed, she turned away her looks from him in a kind of horror, and struggled to get her hands loose to push him from her. I called him then to me. Unfortunate boy, said I, for having been too dear to the one, you are become hateful to the other: it is plain their hearts were not in every thing alike. She was extremely angry at what I said, and retorted it severely; it had nevertheless its effect in the impression it made on her. For she immediately took the child up in her arms, and attempted to kiss him, but could not, and set him down again immediately. She did not even look upon him with the same pleasure as on the other, and I am very glad it is not this boy which is intended for her daughter.

Ye susceptible minds! what would you have done in my situation? ye would have acted like Mrs. Orbe. After having taken care of the children, and of Clara, and given the necessary orders about the funeral, it was necessary for me to take my horse and be the sorrowful messenger of the heavy tidings to an unhappy father. I found him still in pain from his hurt, as well as greatly uneasy and troubled about the accident which had befallen his daughter. I left him overwhelmed with sorrow:

with the sorrow of the aged, which breaks not out into external appearances, which excites neither transport nor exclamation, but preys inwardly and fatally on the heart. That he will never overcome his grief I am certain, and I can plainly foresee the last stroke that is wanting to compleat the misfortune of his friend. The next day I made all possible haste, in order to be at home early, and pay the last honours to the worthiest of women: but all was not yet over. She must be made to revive, to afflict me with the loss of her a second time.

As I drew near my house, I saw one of my people come running out to meet me, who cried out from as far as he could be heard; sir, sir, make haste, make haste, my mistress is not dead. I could not comprehend what he meant; but made all the haste I could, and found the courtyard full of people, crying for joy and calling out aloud for blessings on Mrs. Wolmar. I asked the reason of all this; every one was transported with joy, but no body could give me a reasonable answer; for as to my own people their heads were absolutely turned. I made the best of my way therefore to Eloisa's apartment, where I found more than twenty persons on their knees round the bed, with their eyes attentively fixed on the corpse, which, to my great surprise, I saw dressed out and lying on the bed: my heart fluttered, and I examined into her situation. But alas! she was dead and cold! This moment of false hope, so soon and so cruelly extinguished, was the most afflicting moment of my whole life. I am not apt to be choleric, but I found myself on this occasion extremely angry, and resolved to come at the bottom of this extravagant scene. But all was so disguised, so altered, so changed; that I had the greatest difficulty in the world to come at the truth. At length, however, I unravelled the mystery, and thus it was. My father-in-law, being alarmed at the accident he had heard, and thinking he could spare his valet de chambre, had sent him over before my arrival to learn the situation of his daughter. This old servant, being fatigued with riding on horseback, had taken a boat, and, crossing the lake in the night, arrived at Clarens the very morning of the day in which I returned. On his arrival he saw the universal consternation the house was in;

and, learning the cause, went sobbing up to Eloisa's apartment; where, throwing himself on his knees by the bedside, he wept and contemplated the features of his departed mistress. Then giving vent to his sorrows, he cried out, ah! my good mistress! ah! why did it not please God to take me instead of you! me, that am old, that have no connections, that can be of no more service on the face of the earth! but to take you, in the flower of youth, the pride of your family, the blessing of your house, the hope of the unfortunate, alas! was I present at your birth, thus to behold you dead!——

In the midst of these and such like exclamations, which flowed from the goodness and sincerity of his heart, the weak old man, who kept his eyes still fixed on the corpse, imagined he saw it move: having once taken this into his head, he imagined farther that Eloisa turned her eyes, looked at him and made a sign to him with her head. Upon this he rose up in great transport and ran up and down the house, crying out his mistress was not dead, that she knew him, and that he was sure she was living and would recover. This was sufficient to call every body together, the servants, the neighbours, and the poor, who before made the air resound with their lamentations, now all as loudly cried out in transport; she is not dead! she lives! she lives! the noise spread and increased; the common people, all fond of the marvellous, readily propagated the news: every one easily believed what he wished might be true, and sought to give others pleasure by countenancing the general credulity. So that, in a short time, the deceased was reported not only to have made a motion with her head, but to have walked about, to have conversed, &c. more than twenty witnesses having had ocular proofs of circumstances that never happened or existed. No sooner were they possessed with the notion of her being alive, but a thousand efforts were made to restore her; they pressed in crowds about her bed, spoke to her, threw spirits in her face, felt for her pulse, and did every thing their foolish apprehensions suggested to recover her; till her women justly offended at seeing the body of her mistress surrounded by a number of men, got every body

turned out of the room and soon convinced themselves how egregiously they had been deceived. Incapable, however, of resolving to put end to so agreeable an error, or perhaps still hoping for some miraculous event, they clothed the body with care, and though her wardrobe was left to them, they did not spare the richest apparel. After which laying her out on the bed, and leaving the curtains open, they returned to their tears amidst the public rejoicings of the multitude.

I arrived in the height of this phrenzy, but when I became acquainted with the cause, found it impossible to bring the crowd to reason; and that if I had shut up my doors and had ordered the immediate burial of the corpse, it might have occasioned some disturbance; or that I should have passed, at least, for a paricide of a husband who had buried his wife alive, and should have been held in detestation by the whole country. I resolved therefore to defer the funeral. After six and thirty hours however, I found by the extreme heat of the weather, the corpse began to change, and, though the face preserved its features and sweetness, there seemed even there some signs of alteration. I mentioned it to Mrs. Orbe, who sat in a continued stupor, at the head of the bed. Not that she was so happy as to be the dupe of so gross a delusion; but she pretended to be so, that she might continue in the chamber, and indulge her sorrows.

She understood my design, and silently withdrew. In a moment after, however, she returned, bringing in her hand that veil of gold tissue embroidered with pearls, which you brought her from the Indies: [108] when, coming up to the bed, she kissed the veil, and spreading it over the face of her deceased friend, she cried out with a shrill voice, “Accursed be that sacrilegious hand which shall presume to lift up this veil! accursed be that impious eye which shall dare to look on this disfigured face!” this action and imprecation had such an effect on the spectators, that, as if by a sudden inspiration, it was repeated by one and all from every quarter. Such an impression indeed did it make on our servants and the people in general, that the deceased being put into the coffin, dressed as she was, and with the greatest caution, was carried away and buried in the same attire, without any person daring to touch

the veil that covered her face. [109]

Those are certainly the most unhappy who, beside the supporting their own sorrows, are under the necessity of consoling others. Yet this is my task with my father-in-law, with Mrs. Orbe, with friends, with relations, with my neighbours, and with my own houshold. I could yet support it well enough with all but my old friend and Mrs. Orbe: but you must be a witness to the affliction of the latter to judge how much it adds to mine. So far from taking my endeavours to comfort her in good part, she even reproaches me for them; my solicitude offends her, and the coldness of my affliction but aggravates hers; she would have my grief be as bitter and extravagant as hers, her barbarous affliction would gladly see the whole world in despair. Every thing she says, every thing she does looks like madness; I am obliged therefore to put up with every thing, and am resolved not to be offended. In serving her who was beloved by Eloisa, I conceive I do a greater honour to her memory than by fruitless tears and lamentations.

You will be able to judge, from one instance, of the rest of her behaviour. I thought I had gained my point, by engaging her to take care of herself, in order to be able to discharge those duties which her dying friend had imposed on her. Reduced very low by convulsions, abstinence and want of rest, she seemed at length resolved to attempt her usual method of living, and to come to table in the dining-room. The first time, however, I ordered the children to dine in the nursery, being unwilling to run the hazard of this essay in their presence: violent passions of every kind, being one of the most dangerous objects that can be shewn to children. For the passions when excessive have always something puerile and diverting to young minds, by which they are seduced to admire what they ought to dread.

On entering the dining-room, she cast her eye on the table and saw covers laid for two persons only; at which she flung herself into the first chair that stood next her, refusing to come to table. I imagined I knew the reason, and ordered a third plate to

be set on the table, at the place where her cousin used generally to sit. She then permitted me to lead her to her seat without reluctance, placing herself with great caution, and disposing her gown as if she was afraid to incommode the empty chair. On putting the first spoonful of soup to her mouth, however, she withdrew it, and asked, with a peevish air, what business that plate had there when no body made use of it? I answered, she was in the right, and had it taken away. She then strove to eat, but could get nothing down; by degrees her stomach swelled, her breath grew short, and all at once she started up and returned to her own chamber, without saying a word, or hearing any thing that I said to her, obstinately refusing every thing but tea all that day.

The next day I had the same task to begin again. I now conceived the best way to bring her to reason was to humour her, and to endeavour to soften her despair by more tender sentiments. You know how much her daughter resembles Mrs. Wolmar; that she took a pleasure in heightening that resemblance, by dressing her in the same manner, having brought several cloaths for her from Geneva, in which she used to dress her like Eloisa. I ordered Harriot therefore to be dressed, as much in imitation of Eloisa as possible, and, after having given her lesson, placed her at table where Eloisa used to sit; three covers being laid as the day before.

Clara immediately comprehended my design, and was affected, giving me a tender and obliging look. This was the first time she seemed sensible of my assiduity, and I promised myself success from the expedient.

Harriot, proud to represent her little mamma, played her part extremely well; so well indeed that I observed the servants in waiting shed tears. She nevertheless always gave the name of mamma to her mother, and addressed her with proper respect. At length, encouraged by success and my approbation, she ventured to put her hand to the soup-spoon and cried, Clara, my dear, do you chuse any of this? the gesture, tone and manner, in which she spoke this, were so exactly like those of Eloisa, that it

made her mother tremble. A moment after, however, she burst into a fit of laughter, and, offering her plate, replied; yes child give me a little, you are a charming creature. She then began to eat with an eagerness that surprized me. Looking at her with some attention, I saw something wild in her eyes, and a greater impatience in her action and manner than usual. I prevented her therefore from eating any more, and ’twas well I did so; for, an hour after she was taken extremely ill with a violent surfeit, which, had she continued to eat more, might have been fatal. From this time I resolved to try no more projects of this kind, as they might affect her imagination too much. Sorrow is more easily cured than madness; I thought it better therefore to let her suffer under the one a little longer, than run the hazard of driving her into the other.

This is the situation, my friend, in which we are at present. Since the baron’s return, indeed, Clara goes up every morning to his apartment, whether I am at home or abroad; where they generally pass an hour or two together. She begins also, to take a little more notice of the children. One of them has been sick; this accident has made her sensible that she has still something to lose, and has animated her zeal to the discharge of her duty. Yet, with all this, she is not yet sufficiently sorrowful; her tears have not yet begun to flow; we wait for you to draw them forth, for you to dry them up again. You cannot but understand me. Think of the last advice of Eloisa: it was indeed first suggested by me, and I now think it more than ever prudent and useful. Come and be reunited to all that remains of Eloisa. Her father, her friend, her husband, her children, all expect you, all desire your company, which cannot fail of being universally useful.

In a word, without farther explanations, come, partake and cure us of our sorrows; I shall perhaps be more obliged to you than to any other man in the world.

Letter CLXII. From Eloisa.

This letter was inclosed in the preceding.

Our projects are at an end. Circumstances, my good friend, are changed: let us bear it without murmuring; it is the will of consummate wisdom. We pleased ourselves with the thoughts of being reunited; such a reunion was not good for us. The goodness of Providence has prevented it, without doubt to prevent our misery.

Long have I indulged myself in the salutary delusion, that my passion was extinguished; the delusion is now vanished, when it can be no longer useful. You imagined me cured of my love; I thought so too. Let us thank heaven that the deception hath lasted as long as it could be of service to us. In vain, alas! I endeavoured to stifle that passion which inspired me with life; it was impossible, it was interwoven with my heart-strings. It now expands itself, when it is no longer to be dreaded; it supports me now my strength fails me; it chears my soul even in death. O my friend! I can now make this confession without fear or shame; this involuntary sentiment has been of no prejudice to my virtue, it has never sullied my innocence; I have done my duty in all things which were in my power. If my heart was yours, it was my punishment, and not my crime. My virtue is unblemished, and my love has left behind it no remorse.

I glory in my past life: but who could have answered for my future years? perhaps were I to live another day I should be culpable! what then might I not have been during whole years spent in your company? what dangers have I not run without knowing it? and to how much greater was I going to be exposed? every trial has indeed been made; but trials may be too often repeated. Have I not lived long enough to be happy and virtuous? in taking me hence, heaven deprives me of nothing which I ought to regret. I go, my friend, at a most favourable moment; satisfied with you and myself, I depart in peace.

I foresee, I feel your affliction; I know too well you will be left to mourn; the thoughts of your sorrow cause my greatest uneasiness: but reflect on the consolation I leave with you. The obligations left you to discharge on the part of her who was so

dear to you, ought to make it your duty to take care of yourself for her sake. You are left in charge with her better half. You will lose no more of Eloisa than you have long been deprived of. Her better part remains with you. Come and join her family, in the midst of whom Eloisa's heart will still be found. Let every one that was dear to her unite to give her a new being. Your business, your pleasures, your friendship shall be her own work. The bonds of your union shall give her new life, nor will she totally expire but with the last of her friends.

Think there remains for you another Eloisa, and forget not what you owe her. You are both going to lose the half of yourselves; unite therefore to preserve the other. The only method that remains for you to survive me, is to supply my place in my family and with my children. Oh that I could but invent still stronger bonds to unite those who are so dear to me! but reflect how much you are indebted to each other, and let that reflection strengthen your mutual attachment. Your former objections, against entering into such an engagement, will now become arguments for it. How can either of you ever speak of me without melting into tenderness? No, Eloisa and Clara shall for the future be so united together in your thoughts, that it shall not be in the power of your heart to separate them. Hers will share in every thing yours has felt for her friend; she will become both the confident and object of your passion. You will be happy in the enjoyment of that Eloisa who survives, without being unfaithful to her you shall have lost; and after so many disappointments and misfortunes, shall, before the age of life and love is past, burn with a lawful flame, and possess the happiness of an innocent passion.

Secured by this chaste union, you will be at liberty to employ your thoughts entirely on the discharge of those duties which I have recommended; after which you need never be at a loss to account for the good you have done on earth. You know there exists also a man worthy of an honour, to which he durst not aspire: you know him to have been your deliverer, as well as the husband of your friend. Left alone, without connections in this life, without expectations from futurity, without joy,

without comfort, without hope, he will soon be the most unfortunate of men. You owe to him the same pains he has taken with you, and you know the way to render them successful. Remember the instructions of my former letter. Pass your days with him. Let no one that loved me forsake him. As he restored your taste for virtue, so shew him the object and the value of it. Be you truly a Christian, to engage him to be one too; the success of the attempt is more probable than perhaps you imagine. He has done his duty, I will do mine, and you must hereafter do yours. God is just and my confidence in him will not deceive me.

I have but a word or two more to say, concerning my children. I know the trouble their education will cost you; but at the same time I know you will not repine. In the most fatiguing moments of such employment, reflect that they are the children of Eloisa, and every thing will be easy. Mr. Wolmar will put into your hands the remarks I have made on your essay and on the character of my two sons. They are however unfinished, and I leave them to you, not as rules for your conduct, but submit them as hints to your judgment. Strive not to make my children scholars, but benevolent and honest men. Speak to them sometimes of their mother——you know how dear they were to her——tell Marcellin, I die willingly as I saved his life. Tell his brother, it was for him I could have wished to live. Tell their——but I find myself fatigued; I must put an end to this letter. In leaving my children with you, I part with you with less regret: for in them I still continue with you.

Farewell, my dear friend! once more farewell. My life ends, alas! as it begun. Perhaps I have said too much at a time when the heart disguises nothing——ah! why should I be afraid to express all I feel? It is no longer I that speak; I am already in the arms of death. Before you read this letter, the worms will be preying on the features of your friend, and will take possession of a heart where your image will be found no more. But can my soul exist without you? without you, what happiness can I enjoy? No, we will not part——I go but to expect you. That virtue, which separated us on earth, will unite us for ever in the mansions of the blessed. I die in

that peaceful hope; too happy to purchase, at the expense of my life, the privilege of loving you without a crime, and of telling you so once more.

Letter CLXIII. From Mrs. Orbe.

I am glad to hear that you begin to be so well recovered, as to give us hopes of seeing you soon here. You must, my friend, endeavour to get the better of your weakness and try to pass the mountains before the winter prevents you. The air of this country, will agree with you; you will see here nothing but sorrow; and perhaps our common affliction will be the means of soothing yours. Mine stands greatly in need of your assistance; for I can neither weep, nor speak, nor make myself understood. Mr. Wolmar indeed, understands me, but he makes me no answer. The affliction of an unfortunate father also is buried within himself; nor can any thing be conceived more cruelly tormenting: he neither hears, sees, nor understands any thing. Age has no vent for its griefs. My children affect me without knowing how to be affected themselves. I am solitary in the midst of company; a mournful silence prevails around me; and in the stupidity of my affliction, I speak to nobody; having but just life enough in me to feel the horrors of death. O come, you who partake of my loss, come and partake of my griefs. Come cherish my heart with your sorrow. This is the only consolation I can hope for; the only pleasure I can taste.

But before you arrive, and inform me of your intentions relative to a project which I know has been mentioned to you, it is proper I should inform you first of mine. I am frank and ingenuous, and therefore will dissemble nothing. That I have loved you I confess: nay, perhaps I love you still, and shall always do so: but this I know not, nor desire to know. I am not ignorant that it is suspected, which I do not concern myself about. But what I have to say, and what you ought to observe, is this: that a man who was beloved by Eloisa, and could resolve to marry another woman, would, in my opinion, be so base and unworthy a creature, that I should think it a dishonour to call such a one my friend. And with respect to myself, I protest to you that the

man, whoever he be, that shall presume to talk of love hereafter to me, shall never have a second opportunity as long as he lives.

Think then only on the employment that awaits you, on the duties imposed on you, and on her to whom you engaged to discharge them. Her children are growing up apace, her father is insensibly wasting, her husband is in continual agitation of mind: in vain he strives to think her annihilated; his heart rebels against his reason. He speaks of her, he speaks to her, and sighs. Methinks I see already the repeated wishes of Eloisa half accomplished, and that you may put a finishing hand to so great a work. What a motive is here to induce both you and Lord B—— to repair hither. It is becoming his noble mind that our misfortunes have not made him change his resolution.

Come then, dear and respectable friends, come and rejoin all that is left of Eloisa. Let us assemble all that was dear to her: let her spirit animate us, let her heart unite ours; let us live continually under her eye. I take a delight in conceiving that her amiable and susceptible spirit will leave its peaceful mansions to revisit ours; that it will take a pleasure in seeing its friends imitate her virtues, in hearing herself honoured by their acknowledgments, in seeing them kiss her tomb, and sigh at the repetition of her name. No, she has not yet forsaken these haunts which she used to make so delightful. They are still full of her. I see her in every object; I perceive her at every step; every hour of the day I hear her well-known voice. It was here she lived, here died, and here repose her ashes——As I go, twice a week, to the church, I cast my eye on the sad, revered spot——O beauty! is such thy last asylum!——sincerity! friendship! virtue! pleasure! innocence! all lie buried in her grave——I feel myself drawn as it were involuntarily to her tomb——I shudder as I approach——I dread to violate the hallowed earth——I imagine that I feel it shake and tremble under my feet——that I hear a plaintive voice call me from the hollow tomb——Clara! [110] where art thou? Clara! why dost thou not come to thy friend?——alas! her grave hath yet but half her ashes——it is impatient for the

remainder of its prey——yet a little while, and it shall be satisfied!

Finis.

[1] See the 7th Plate.——The cuts are daily expected from Paris.

[2] See Vol. II. p. 74.

[3] This regards only the modern English romances.

[4] See the letters to M. d'Alembert sur les spectacles.

[5] Preface to Narcisse——Lettre à M. d'Alembert.

[6] It is plain there is a chasm here, and the reader will find many in the course of this correspondence. Several of the letters are lost, others are suppressed, and some have been curtailed; but there appears to be nothing wanting essential to the story.

[7] The Lady seems to have forgot what she said in the preceding paragraph.

[8] Alluding to a letter which is suppressed.

[9] Unhappy youth! not to perceive, that to suffer himself to be paid in gratitude, what he refused in money, was infinitely more criminal. Under the mask of instruction he corrupted her heart; instead of nourishment he gives her poison, and is thanked by a deluded mother for the ruin of her child. Nevertheless one may perceive in him a sincere love for virtue; but it is so soon dissipated by his passions, that with all his fine preaching, unless his youth may be admitted as an excuse, he is no better than a wicked fellow. The two lovers, however, deserve some compassion; the mother is chiefly in fault.

[10] The sequel will but too well inform the reader, that this assertion of Eloisa's was extremely ill grounded.

[11] This sentiment is a very just one. Disorderly passions lead to bad actions. But pernicious maxims corrupt the understanding, the very source and spring of good, and cut off the possibility of a return to virtue.

[12] Titular grants are not very common in the present age, except those which are

bought or are obtained by placemen, the most honourable appendage to which, that I know of, is the privilege of not being hanged.

[13] In some countries, agreement in rank and fortune is held so far preferable to that of nature and of the heart, that an inequality in the former is judged sufficient to prevent or dissolve the most happy marriages, without any regard to the honour of the unfortunate lovers, who are daily made a sacrifice to such odious prejudices. I heard once a celebrated cause pleaded before the parliament at Paris, wherein the distinction of rank publicly and insolently opposed honesty, justice, and the conjugal vow; the unworthy parent, who gained his cause, disinheriting his son, because he refused to act the part of a villain. The fair sex are, in that polite country, subjected in the greatest degree to the tyranny of the laws. Is it to be wondered at, that they so amply avenge themselves in the looseness of their manners?

[14] It appears by the sequel that these suspicions fell upon Lord B——, and that Clara applies them to herself.

[15] Chimerical distinction of rank! It is an English peer that talks thus. Can there be any reality in all this? Reader, what think you of it?

[16] This it is to entertain unreasonable prejudices in favour of one’s own country. I have never heard of a people, among whom foreigners in general are so ill received, and find so many obstacles to their advancement as among the English. From the peculiar taste of this nation, foreigners are encouraged in nothing; and by the form of government, they are excluded from all emoluments. We must agree in their favour, however, that an Englishman is never obliged to any person for that hospitality he churlishly refuses others. Where, except in London, is there to be seen any of these insolent islanders servilely cringing at court? In what country except their own do they seek to make their fortunes? They are churlish it is true, but their churlishness does not displease me, while it is consistent with justice. I think it very well they should be nothing but Englishmen; since they have no occasion to be men.

[17] In imitation of Eloisa, he calls Clara, his cousin, and Clara, after her example, likewise calls him her friend.

[18] Simple Eloisa! you give no proof here of yours.

[19] The true philosophy of lovers is that of Plato; while the passion lasts they employ no other. A susceptible mind knows not how to quit this philosopher; a cold insensible reader cannot endure him.

[20] Without anticipating the judgment which the reader, or, Eloisa may pass on the following narratives, it may not be improper to observe, that, if I had written them myself, though I might not have made them better, I should have done it in a different manner. I was several times going to cancel them, and substitute others written in my own way in their place; but I have at length ventured to insert them as they are. I bethought myself that a young man of four and twenty ought not to see things in the same light as a man of fifty, whom experience had too well instructed to place them in a proper point of view. I reflected also, that, without having played any great part in life, I was not however, in a situation to speak with absolute impartiality. Let these letters pass then as they were originally written. The common place remarks or trivial observations that may be found in them, are but small faults, and import little. But it is of the greatest importance to a lover of truth, that to the end of his life his passions should never affect the impartiality of his writings.

[21] We ought, perhaps, to overlook this reasoning in a Swiss, who sees his own country well governed without the establishment of either of these professions. How can a state subsist without soldiers for its defence! no, every state must have defenders. But its members ought to be soldiers from principle, and not by profession. The same individuals among the Greeks and Romans were frequently magistrates in the city, and officers in the field; and never were either of those functions better served than before those strange prejudices took place, which now separate and dishonour them.

[22] This reflection, whether true or false, can be extended only to the subalterns, and those who do not reside in Paris; for almost all the great and polite men in the kingdom are in the service, and even the court itself is military. But there is a great difference between the manners learned in a campaign, and those which are contracted by living in garrison.

[23] Ye sweating fires, that in the furnace blaze. A line of sonnet by Marini.

[24] Provided always that no unforeseen object of pleasantry starts up to disturb their gravity; for in that case, it is laid hold of by every one in a moment, and it is impossible to recall their serious attention. I remember that a handful of gingerbread cakes once ludicrously put an end to a dramatic representation at the fair. The actions were indeed quadrupeds; but how many trifling things are there that would prove gingerbread cakes to some sort of men! it is well known whom Fontenelle intended to describe in his history of the Tyrintians.

[25] To be afflicted at the decease of any person, betrays a sense of humanity, and is a sign of a good disposition, but is no instance of virtue; there being no moral obligation to lament even the death of a father. Whoever in such a case, therefore, is not really afflicted, ought not to affect the appearance of it; for it is more necessary always to avoid deceit, than to comply with custom.

[26] Moliere ought not to be ranked here with Racine: the first indeed abounds with maxims and sentential observations, like all the others, especially in his versified pieces: but in Racine all is sentimental; he makes every character speak for the author, and is in this point truly singular among all the dramatic writers of his nation.

[27] I should have but a bad opinion of the reader’s sagacity, who, knowing the character and situation of Eloisa, should think this piece of curiosity hers. It will be seen hereafter that her lover knew to whom to attribute it. If he could have been deceived in this point, he had not deserved the name of a lover.

[28] If the reader approves of this criterion, and makes use of it to judge of this work, I will not appeal from his judgment, whatever it prove.

[29] Freedom, ease, cleverness.

[30] Speak for yourself, my dear philosopher, others may have been more happy. A coquet only, promises to every body, what she should reserve but for one.

[31] Amorous imagination.

[32] Things are changed since that time. By many circumstances one would suppose these letters to have been written above twenty years ago; but by their stile, and the manners they describe, one would conclude them to be of the last century.

[33] I shall not give my opinion of this letter; but I doubt much, whether a judgment which allows them the qualities they despise, and denies them those which they value, will be pleasing to the French ladies.

[34] Obliged by the tyrant to appear on the stage, he lamented his disgrace in some very affecting verses which justly irritated every honest mind against Caesar. After having lived, said he, sixty years with honour, I left my house this morning, a Roman knight, but shall return to it this evening an infamous stage-player. Alas! I have lived a day too long. O fortune! if it was my lot to be thus once disgraced, why did you not force me hither while youth and vigour had left me at least an agreeable person: but now, what a wretched object do I present to the insults of the people of Rome? a feeble voice, a weak body, a mere corpse an animated skeleton, which has nothing left of me but my name. The entire prologue which he spoke on this occasion, the injustice done him by Caesar, who was piqued at the noble freedom with which he avenged his offended honour, the affront he receives at the circus, the meanness of Cicero in upbraiding him, with the ingenious and satirical reply of Laberius, are all preserved by Aulus Gellius, and compose in my opinion the most curious and interesting piece in his whole collection: which is, for the most part, a very insipid one.

[35] They know nothing of this in Italy; the public would not suffer it, and thus the entertainment is subject to less expense: it would cost too much to be ill-served.

[36] Le bucheron.

[37] The light airs of the French music have not been unaptly compared to a cow's courant, or the hobblings of a fat goose attempting to fly.

[38] And why should he not omit it? have the women of these times any thing to do with concerns of this kind? what would become of us and the state? what would become of our celebrated authors, our illustrious academicians, if the ladies should give up the direction of matters of literature and business, and apply themselves only to the affairs of their family?

[39] We find in the fourth part, that this feigned name was St. Preux.

[40] Where did the honest Swiss learn this? women of gaiety have long since assumed more imperious airs. They begin by boldly introducing their lovers into the house, and if they permit their husbands to continue there, it is only while they behave towards them with proper respect. A woman who took pains to conceal a criminal intrigue, would shew that she was ashamed, and would be despised; not one female of spirit would take notice of her.

[41] Mr. Richardson makes a jest of these attachments founded at first sight, and founded on an unaccountable congeniality of nature. It is easy to laugh at these attachments; but as too many of this kind take place, instead of entertaining ourselves with controverting them, would it not be better to teach us how to conquer them.

[42] Admitting the analogy to be chimerical, yet it lasts as long as the illusion, which makes us suppose it real.

[43] Minister of the parish.

[44] See page 170 of the present volume.

[45] See the first Vol. Letter 24.

[46] No association is more common than pride and stinginess. We take from nature, from real pleasures, nay from the stock of necessaries, what we lavish upon opinion. One man adorns his palace at the expense of his kitchen: another prefers a fine service of plate to a good dinner: a third makes a sumptuous entertainment, and starves himself the rest of the year. When I see a side-board richly decorated, I expect that the wine will poison me. How often in the country, when we breathe the fresh morning air, are we tempted by the prospect of a fine garden? we rise early, and by walking gain a keen appetite, which makes us wish for breakfast. Perhaps the domestic is out of the way, or provisions are wanting, or the lady has not given her orders, and you are tired to death with waiting. Sometimes they prevent your desires, and make you a very pompous offer of every thing, upon condition that you accept of nothing. You must last till three o'clock, or breakfast with the tulips. I remember to have walked in a very beautiful park, which belonged to a lady, who tho' extremely fond of coffee, never drank any but when it was at a very low price; yet she very liberally allowed her gardener a salary of a thousand crowns. For my part, I should chuse to have tulips less finely variegated, and to drink coffee whenever my appetite called for it.

[47] A strange letter this, for the discussion of such a subject. Do men argue so coolly on a question of this nature, when they examine it on their own accounts? Is the letter a forgery, or does the author reason only with an intent to be refuted? what makes our opinion in this particular dubious, is the example of Robeck which he cites, and which seems to warrant his own. Robeck deliberated so gravely that he had patience to write a book, a large, voluminous, weighty, and dispassionate book; and when he had concluded, according to his principles, that it was lawful to put an end to our being, he destroyed himself with the same composure that he wrote. Let us beware of the prejudices of the times, and of particular countries. When suicide is out of fashion, we conclude that none but madmen destroy themselves; all the efforts

of courage appear chimerical to dastardly minds; every one judges of others by himself. Nevertheless, how many instances are there, well attested, of men, in every other respect perfectly discreet; who, without remorse, rage, or despair, have quitted life for no other reason than because it was a burthen to them, and have died with more composure than they lived?

[48] No, my lord, we do not put an end to misery by these means, but rather fill the measure of affliction, by burning asunder the last ties which attach us to felicity. When we regret what was dear to us, grief itself still attaches us to the object we lament, which is a state less deplorable, than to be attached to nothing.

[49] Obligations more dear than those of friendship! is it a philosopher who talks thus! But this affected sophist was of an amorous disposition.

[50] I do not rightly understand this: Kensington not being above a mile and a half from London, the noblemen who go to court, do not lie there; yet Lord B—— tells us, he was obliged to stay there I know not how many days.

[51] What great obligation has he to her, who occasioned all the misfortunes of his life? Thou wretched querist! he is indebted to her for the honour, the virtue and peace of his beloved Eloisa: he owes her everything.

[52] At Paris, they pique themselves on rendering society easy and commodious; and this ease is made to consist of a great number of rules, equally important with the above. In good company, every thing is regulated according to form and order. All these ceremonies are in and out of fashion as quick as lightening. The science of polite life consists in being always upon the watch, to seize them as they fly, to affect them, and shew that we are acquainted with the mode of the day.

[53] In my Letter to M. D’Alembert, concerning the theatres, I have transcribed the following passage and some others; but as I was then preparing this edition, I thought it better to wait this publication till I took notice of the quotation.

[54] I have narrowly examined into the management of great families, and I have

found it impossible for a master who has twenty servants, to know whether he has one honest man among them, and not to mistake the greatest rascal perhaps to be that one. This alone would give me an aversion to riches. The rich lose one of the sweetest pleasures of life, the pleasure of confidence and esteem. They purchase all their gold at a dear rate!

[55] Desert islands in the South sea, celebrated in Lord Anson’s voyage.

[56] The mice, owls, hawks, and above all, children.

[57] They were therefore like those fashionable little woods, so ridiculously twisted, that you are obliged to walk in a zig zag manner, and to make a pirouette at every step.

[58] I am persuaded that sometime hence, gardens will be furnished with nothing belonging to the country; neither plants or trees will be suffered to grow in them: we shall see nothing but China flowers, baboons, arbor work, gravel of all colours, and fine vases with nothing in them.

[59] He might have enlarged on the bad taste of lopping trees in such a ridiculous manner, to make them shoot to the clouds, by taking off their fine tops, their umbrage, by draining the sap, and preventing their thriving. This method, it is true, supplies the gardeners with wood, but it robs the kingdom of it, which is not over stocked with it already. One would imagine that nature was different in France, from what it is in any other part of the world, they take so much pains to disfigure her. The parks are planted with nothing but long poles; they are like so many forests of masts, and you walk in the midst of woods without finding any shelter.

[60] The sagacious Wolmar had not sufficiently reflected. Was he, who was so skilful in judging of men, so bad a judge of nature? Did he not know that if the author of nature displays his greatness in great things, he appears still greater in those which are small?

[61] I do not know whether there has ever been an attempt to give a slight curve to

these long walks, that the eye may not be able to reach the end of the walk, and that the opposite extremity may be hid from the spectator. It is true, the beauty of the prospects in perspective would be lost by these means; but proprietors would reap one advantage which they generally prize at a high rate, which is that of making their grounds more extensive in appearance, and in the midst of a starry plot thus bounded, one might think himself in a vast park. I am persuaded that the walk would be less tiresome, though more solitary; for whatever gives play to the imagination, excites ideas, and nourishes the mind; but gardeners are people who have no idea of these things. How often in a rural spot, would the pencil drop from their hands, as it did from Le Nostre's in St. James's park, if they knew like him what gave life to nature, and interested the beholder?

[62] He might have added the conclusion, which is very fine, and as apposite to the subject. Si vedria che I lo nemici Anno in seno, e si reduce Nel parere a noi felici Ogni lor felicita.

[63] Mrs. Orbe was ignorant however that the first two names are titles of distinction in Russia; but Boyard is only that of a private gentleman.

[64] The reader is not yet acquainted with this reason; but he is desired not to be impatient.

[65] You women are very ridiculous, to think of rendering such a frivolous and fluctuating passion as that of love consistent. Every thing in nature is changeable, every thing is continually fluctuating, and yet you would inspire a constant passion! And what right have you to pretend that we must love you for ever, because we loved you yesterday? Then preserve the same face, the same age, the same humour; be always the same, and we will always love you, if we can. But when you alter continually, and require us always to love you, it is in fact desiring us every minute not to love you; it is not seeking for constant minds, but looking out for such as are as fickle as your own.

[66] A bird of passage on the lake of Geneva, which is not good to eat.

[67] Different sorts of birds on the lake of Geneva, and very good to eat.

[68] These mountains are so high, that half an hour after sun-set, its rays still gild the tops of them, and the reflection of red on those white summits, forms a beautiful roseate colour, which may be perceived at a great distance.

[69] The snipe on the lake of Geneva is not the bird called by that name in France. The more lively and animated chirping of the former, gives an air of life and freshness to the lake at night, which renders its banks still more delightful.

[70] This letter appears to have been written before the receipt of the preceding.

[71] Not that this philosophical age has not produced one true philosopher. I know one, I must confess, and but one; but the happiest circumstance is, that he resides in my native country. Shall I venture publicly to name him, whose honour it is to have remained unknown? Yes, learned and modest Abauzit, let your sublime simplicity forgive my zeal, which, to say truth, hath not your name for its object. No, it is not you I would make known in an age unworthy to admire you; it is Geneva I would honour, by making it known as the place of your residence. It is my fellow citizens who are honoured by your presence. Happy the country, where the merit that conceals itself, is by so much the more esteemed. Happy the people, among whom presumptuous and forward youth is ashamed of its dogmatic insolence, and blushes at its vain knowledge before the learned ignorance of age. Venerable and virtuous old man! you have never been praised by babbling wits; no noisy academician has written your elogium. Instead of depositing all your wisdom in books, you have displayed it in your life, as an example to the country you have deigned to make the object of your esteem. You have lived like Socrates; but he died by the hands of his fellow citizens, while you are cherished by yours.

[72] The letter here alluded to is not inserted in this collection. The reason of it, will be seen hereafter.

[73] There is near Clarens a village called Moutru, the right of common to which is sufficient to maintain the inhabitants, though they had not a foot of land of their own. For which reason, the freedom of that village is almost as difficult to be obtained as that of Berne. It is a great pity that some honest magistrate is not appointed to make these burghers a little more sociable, or their burghership less dear.

[74] Man, perverted from his first state of simplicity, becomes so stupid that he even knows not what to desire. His wishes always tend to wealth and never to happiness.

[75] To give to beggars, say some people, is to raise a nursery of thieves: though it is, on the contrary, to prevent their becoming such. I allow that the poor ought not to be encouraged to turn beggars; but, when once they are so, they ought to be supported, lest they should turn robbers. Nothing induces people to change their profession so much as their not being able to live by it: now those, who have once experienced the lazy life of a beggar, get such an aversion to work that they had rather go upon the highway, at the hazard of their necks, than betake themselves again to labour. A farthing is soon asked for and soon refused; but twenty farthings might provide a supper for a poor man, whom twenty refusals might exasperate to despair: and who is there who would ever refuse so slight a gift, if he reflected that he might thereby be the means of saving two men, the one from theft, and perhaps the other from being murdered? I have somewhere read that beggars are a kind of vermin, that hang about the wealthy. It is natural for children to cling about their parents; but the rich, like cruel parents, disown theirs, and leave them to be maintained by each other.

[76] And that it does so, appears to me indisputable. There is true magnificence in the proportion and symmetry of the parts of a great palace; but there is none in a confused heap of irregular buildings. There is a magnificence in the uniformity of a regiment in battalia; but none in the crowd of people, that stand gazing on them,

although perhaps there is not a man among them whose apparel is not of more value than those of any individual soldier. In a word, magnificence is nothing more than a grand scene of regularity, whence it comes to pass that, of all sights imaginable, the most magnificent are those of nature.

[77] The noise of people in a house of distinction continually disturbs the quiet of the master of it. It is impossible for him to conceal any thing from so many Arguses. A crowd of creditors make him pay dear for that of his admirers. His apartments are generally so large and splendid, that he is obliged to betake himself to a closet that he may sleep at ease, and his monkey is often better lodged than himself. If he would dine, it depends on his cook and not on his appetite; if he would go abroad, he lies at the mercy of his horses. A thousand embarrassments stop him in the streets; he is impatient to be where he is going, but knows not the use of his legs. His mistress expects him, but the dirty pavement frightens him, and the weight of his laced coat oppresses him, so that he cannot walk twenty paces. Hence he loses, indeed, the opportunity of seeing his mistress; but he is well repaid by the by-standers for the disappointment, every one remarking his equipage, admiring it, and saying aloud to the next person, There goes Mr. Such-a-one!

[78] Locke himself, the sagacious Locke, has forgot it, instructing us rather in the things we ought to require of our children, than in the means.

[79] This doctrine, so true in itself, surprizes me as adopted by Mr. Wolmar; the reason of it will be seen presently.

[80] If there ever was a man upon earth made happy by his vanity, it is past a doubt, that he was a fool.

[81] Here appears to be some little mistake. Nothing is so useful to the judgment as memory: it is true, however, that it is not the remembrance of words.

[82] The translator cannot help observing that it was extraordinary in Mr. Rousseau to put such a false, ridiculous, assertion in the mouth of an Englishman.

[83] God forbid, that I should give a sanction to assertions so rash and severe; I insinuate only, that there are people who make such assertions; and for whose indiscretion, the conduct of the clergy in every country and of all religions, often give but too much occasion. So far am I, however, from intending meanly to screen myself by this note, that my real opinion on this subject is, that no true believer can be a persecutor and an enemy to toleration. If I were a magistrate, and the law inflicted death on atheists, I would begin to put it in execution, by burning the first man that should come to accuse and prosecute another.

[84] How! Will the deity take up with only the refuse of his creatures? not so; all the love the human heart can possess for created beings is so little, that when they think it is replete, it is yet vacant; an infinite object only can possess it entirely.

[85] It is certain, the mind must be fatigued by the unequal talk of contemplating the deity. Such ideas are too sensible for the vulgar, who require a more sensible object of devotion. Are the Catholics to blame, then, in filling their legends, their calendars, and their churches with little angels, cherubs, and handsome saints? The infant Jesus, in the arms of his modest and beautiful mother, is one of the most affecting, and, at the same time, the most agreeable spectacles that Christian devotion can present to the view of the faithful.

[86] How much more natural is this humane sentiment, than the horrid zeal of persecutors, always employed in tormenting the unbeliever, as if, to damn him in this life, they themselves were the fore-runners of devils? I shall ever continue to repeat it; a persecutor of others cannot be a believer himself.

[87] There is here a long letter wanting, from Lord B—— to Eloisa. It is mentioned in the sequel; but, for particular reasons, I was obliged to suppress it.

[88] Hunting indeed might be added. But this exercise is now made so commodious, that there is not half the fatigue or pleasure in it there used to be. But I shall not here treat of this subject, which would furnish too much matter to be inserted in a note: I

may take occasion, perhaps, to speak of it elsewhere.

[89] The vintage is very late in this country; because the principal crop is of white wines; to which the frost is of service.

[90] This will be better understood by the following extract of a letter from Eloisa, not inserted in this collection. This, says Mr. Wolmar, taking me aside, is the second proof I intended to put him to, if he had not paid great respect to your father, I should have mistrusted him. But, said I, how shall we reconcile that respect to the antipathy that subsists between them? It subsists no longer, replied he. Your father's prejudices have done St. Preux all the harm they could; he has no farther reason to fear them, he is not angry at your father, but pities him. The baron, on his side, is no longer jealous of St. Preux; he has a good heart; is sensible he has injured him, and is sorry for it. I see they will do very well together, and will for the future see each other with pleasure. From this moment therefore I shall put an entire confidence in him.

[91] In Switzerland they drink a great deal of bitter wine; and in general, as the herbs of the Alps have more virtue than the plants of other countries, they make great use of infusions.

[92] If hence arises a kind of equality not less agreeable to those who descend, than to those who are elevated, does it not follow, that all conditions of life are in themselves almost indifferent, since people are not always confined to them? Beggars are unhappy, because they are always beggars; kings are miserable, because they are always kings. People in a middling condition are the happiest, because they can easier vary their circumstances, to enjoy the pleasures of those above or those below them. They are also more intelligent, because they have an opportunity of knowing more of the prejudices of mankind and of comparing them with each other. This seems to me the principal reason why, generally speaking, people of a middling station in life are the most happy and are persons of the best sense.

[93] For the better understanding this letter, the reader should have been made acquainted with the adventures of Lord B——, which at first I had indeed some notion of inserting in this collection. But, on second thought, I could not resolve to spoil the simplicity of this history of the two lovers, with the romance of his. It is better to leave something to the reader's imagination.

[94] By a letter not published in this collection, it appears that Lord B—— was of opinion, that the souls of the wicked are annihilated in death.

[95] At present they do not take the trouble to seek the vices of foreigners: the latter are ready enough to bring them.

[96] It is to be remembered that these letters were written some years ago, a circumstance, I am afraid, that will be often suggested to the reader.

[97] Some men are continent without having any merit in it, others are so through virtue, and I doubt not there are many Romish priests in the latter situation: but to impose a state of celibacy on so numerous a body of men as the clergy of that church, it is not to bid them abstain from women, but to be content with the wives of other men. I am really surprized that in countries where morals are held in any esteem, the legislature should tolerate such scandalous engagements.

[98] This is a direct contradiction to what he asserted before. The poor philosopher seems to be in a droll dilemma between two pretty women. One might be apt to think he chose to make love to neither, that he might the better love them both.

[99] St. Preux supposes moral conscience to depend on sentiment not on judgment, which is contrary to the opinion of the philosophers. I am apt to think however that he is in the right.

[100] This is not the matter in dispute. It is to know whether the will be determined without a cause, or what is the cause that determines the will.

[101] Our gallant philosopher having imitated Abelard in his practice, seems desirous also of adopting his principles. Their notion of prayer being a good deal

alike.

[102] A sort of enthusiasts that take it into their heads to follow the gospel strictly according to the letter; in the manner of the Methodists in England the Moravians in Germany, and the Jansenists in France; excepting, however, that the latter want only to be masters to be more severe and persecuting than their enemies.

[103] Hence it is that every sovereign who aspires to be despotic, aspires to the honour of being miserable. In every kingdom in the world, would you see the man who is the most unhappy of all his countrymen, go directly to the sovereign, particularly if he be an absolute monarch.

[104] This is not quite exact. Suetonius tells us that Vespasian employed himself as usual, and gave audience on his deathbed: but perhaps he had done better to have risen to give audience, and to have gone to bed again to die. This I know, that Vespasian, if not a great man, was at least a great prince; but it is not a time to put on the comedian at the hour of death.

[105] Plato says, that the souls of the just, who have contracted no uncleanness on earth, disengage themselves by death of all matter, and recover their original purity. But as to the souls of those who have indulged themselves in filthy and vicious passions, they do not soon recover that purity, but drag along with them certain terrestrial particles, that confine them, as it were, to hover about the receptacles of their bodies. Hence, says he, are seen those apparitions, which sometimes haunt burial places, etc. in expectation of new transmigrations,——It is a madness common to philosophers in all ages, to deny the existence of what is real, and to puzzle their brains to explain what is only imaginary.

[106] This seems to me to be well expressed; for what can it be to meet the Deity face to face, but to be able to read the supreme intelligence.

[107] It is easy to understand that, by the word see, is here meant purely an act of the intellect, such as that whereby we are said to see the Deity, and the Deity to see us.

We cannot perceive the immediate communication of spirits: but we can conceive it very well; and better, in my opinion, than the communication of motion between bodies.

[108] It is clearly to be seen that the dream of St. Preux, of which Mrs. Orbe's imagination was constantly full, suggested the expedient of the veil. I conceive also that if we examine into matters of this kind strictly, we shall find the same relation between many predictions and their accomplishment. Events are not always predicted because they are to happen; but they happen because they were predicted.

[109] The people of this country, though protestants, are extremely superstitious.

[110] After having read these letters several times over, I think I have discovered the reason why the interest, which I imagine every well-disposed reader will take in them, though perhaps not very great, is yet agreeable: and this is, because, little as it may prove, it is not excited by villainies or crimes, nor mixed with the disagreeable sensations of hatred. I cannot conceive what pleasure it can give a writer, to imagine and describe the character of a villain; to put himself in his situation as often as he represents his actions, or to set them in the most flattering point of view. For my part, I greatly pity the authors of many of our tragedies, so full of wickedness and horror, who spend their lives in making characters act and speak, which one cannot see or hear without shuddering. It would be to me a terrible misfortune to be condemned to such labour; nor can I think but that those who do it for amusement must be violently zealous for the amusement of the public. I admire their genius and talents; but I thank God, that he has not bestowed such talents upon me.——

Finis.

Transcriber's Note

This e-book was prepared by Veronica Litt and based on the text of the second London edition of Kenrick's translation of Rousseau's novel. The second London

edition was printed for R. Griffiths, T. Becket, and P.A. De Hondt in 1761. I accessed this version of the text via Gale Cengage's Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (ECCO) database. The document is used with their permission.

When preparing this edition for e-publication, I retained original spellings and only intervened in particular circumstances. These include silently regularizing spellings that shifted over the course of the text (i.e. D'Etange replaced D' Etange and d'Etange; Valaisian replaced Valaisan, Valiasan, entire replaced a combination of entire and intire, phrenzy replaced a combination of phrensy, phrenzy, and frenzy, farewell replaced a combination of farewel and farewell, etc). In all instances, I used the spelling that was more frequently featured in the text. I also silently corrected obvious printer's errors, including misnumbered letters (i.e. two letters in a row mislabeled as letter CVI).

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Rousseau frequently includes Italian and Latin quotes as well as occasional French turns of phrase. These are not translated in this edition. Stewart and Vaché's modern translation of Rousseau's original French text includes translations of most of these sources as well as excellent scholarly notes. See Julie, or the New Heloise, trans. Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché (University Press of New England, 1997).

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