TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.

CHAPTER I. HOLBACH THE MAN.

Early Letters to John Wilkes.

Holbach's family.

Relations with Diderot, Rousseau, Hume, Garrick
and other important persons of the century.

Estimate of Holbach. His character and personality.
CHAPTER II. HOLBACH'S WORKS.

Miscellaneous Works.

Translations of German Scientific Works.

Translations of English Deistical Writers.

_Le bons-sens_.

Voltaire's correspondence on the subject.

Goethe's sentiment.

Refutations and criticisms.

Holbach's philosophy.
APPENDIX. HOLBACH'S CORRESPONDENCE.

Five unpublished letters to John Wilkes.

[ENDNOTES]

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Part I. Editions of Holbach's works in Chronological Order.

Part II. General Bibliography.

BARON D'HOLBACH

J. A. Naigeon, _Journal de Paris_, le 9 fev. 1789

INTRODUCTION

Diderot, writing to the Princess Dashkoff in 1771, thus analysed
the spirit of his century:
The following study proposes to deal with this attack on religion that preceded and helped to prepare the French Revolution. Similar phenomena are by no means rare in the annals of history; eighteenth-century atheism, however, is of especial interest, standing as it does at the end of a long period of theological and ecclesiastical disintegration and prophesying a reconstruction of society on a purely rational and naturalistic basis. The anti-theistic movement has been so obscured by the less thoroughgoing tendency of deism and by subsequent romanticism that the real issue in the eighteenth century has been largely lost from view. Hence it has seemed fit to center this study about the man who stated the situation with the most unmistakable and uncompromising clearness, and who still occupies a unique though obscure position in the history of thought.

Holbach has been very much neglected by writers on the eighteenth century. He has no biographer. M. Walferdin wrote (in an edition of Diderot's Works, Paris, 1821, Vol. XII p. 115): "Nous nous
et dans l'ouvrage que nous nous proposons de publier sous le titre

une habitude et la bienfaisance un besoin." This work has never appeared and M. Tourneux thinks that nothing of it was found among M. Walferdin's papers. [2:2] In 1834 Mr. James Watson published

_A Short Sketch of the Life and the Writings of Baron d'Holbach_

by Mr. Julian Hibbert, compiled especially for that edition from

Saint Saurin's article in Michaud's _Biographie Universelle_

(Paris, 1817, Vol. XX, pp. 460-467), from Barbier's _Dict. des ouvrages anonymes_ (Paris, 1822) and from the preface to the Paris sketch was later published separately (London, 1834, 12mo, pp. 14) but on account of the author's sudden death it was left unfinished and is of no value from the point of view of scholarship. Another attempt to publish something on Holbach was made by Dr. Anthony C. Middleton of Boston in 1857. In the preface to his translation

Baron d'Holbach which I am now preparing for the press." If ever published at all this _Memoir_ probably came to light in the _Boston Investigator_, a free-thinking magazine published by Josiah P. Mendum, 45 Cornhill, Boston, but it is not to be found.

to include in a proposed study of Diderot and the philosophical movement, a chapter to be devoted to Holbach and his society; but this work has never appeared. [3:3]

Of the two works bearing Holbach's name as a title, one is a piece
of libellous fiction by Mme. de Genlis, _Les Diners du baron d'Holbach_ (Paris, 1822, 8vo), the other a romance pure and simple by F. T. Claudon (Paris, 1835, 2 vols., 8vo) called _Le Baron d'Holbach_, the events of which take place largely at his house and in which he 

(Paris, 1895, 16vo). There are several works which devote a chapter or section to Holbach. [3:4] The French critics and the histories of philosophy contain slight notices; Rosenkranz's "Diderot's Leben" devotes a chapter to Granval, Holbach's country seat, and life there as described by Diderot in his letters to Mlle. Volland; and he is nowhere else is there anything more than the merest encyclopedic account, often defective and incorrect.

The sources are in a sense full and reliable for certain phases of his life and literary activity. His own publications, numbering about fifty, form the most important body of source material for the history and development of his ideas. Next in importance are contemporary memoirs and letters including those of Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Grimm, Morellet, Marmontel, Mme. d'Epinay, Naigeon, Garat, Galiani, Hume, Garrick, Wilkes, Romilly and others; and scattered letters by Holbach himself, largely to his English friends. In addition there is a large body of contemporary hostile criticism of his books, by Voltaire, Frederick II, Castillon, Holland, La Harpe, Delisle de Sales and a host of outraged
ecclesiastics, so that one is well informed in regard to the scandal that his books caused at the time. Out of these materials and other scattered documents and notices it is possible to reconstruct--though somewhat defectively--the figure of a man who since lost its significance--even in the ears of scholars. It is at the suggestion of Professor James Harvey Robinson that this reconstruction has been made. If it shall prove of any interest or value he must be credited with the initiation of the idea as well as constant aid in its realization. For rendering possible the necessary investigations, recognition is due to the administration of the necessary investigations, recognition is due to the administration.


M. P. C.

NEW YORK CITY,
July, 1914.

CHAPTER I. HOLBACH, THE MAN.

Paul Heinrich Dietrich, or as he is better known, Paul-Henri Thiry, baron d’Holbach, was born in January, 1723, in the little village of Heidelsheim (N.W. of Carlsruhe) in the Palatinate. Of his parentage and youth nothing is known except that his father, a rich
parvenu, according to Rousseau, brought him to Paris at the age of twelve, where he received the greater part of his education.

His father died when Holbach was still a young man. It may be doubted if young Holbach inherited his title and estates immediately as there was an uncle "Messire Francois-Adam, Baron d'Holbach, Neuve S. Augustin and died in 1753. His funeral was held at Saint-Roch, his parish church, Thursday, September 16th, where he was afterward entombed. Holbach was a student in the University of Leyden in 1746 and spent a good deal of time at his uncle's estate Eindhoven). He also traveled and studied in Germany. There are two manuscript letters in the British Museum (Folio 30867, pp. 14, 18, 20) addressed by Holbach to John Wilkes, which throw some light on his school-days. It is interesting to note that most of Holbach's friends were young Englishmen of whom there were some twenty-five at the University of Leyden at that time. Already at the age of twenty-three Holbach was writing very good English, and all his life he was a friend of Englishmen and English ideas. His friendship for Wilkes, then a lad of nineteen, lasted all his life and increased in intimacy and dignity. The two letters following are of interest because they are the only documents we have bearing on Holbach's early manhood. They reveal a certain sympathy and feeling--rather gushing to be sure--quite unlike anything in his later writings, and quite out of line with the supposedly cold temper of a materialist and an atheist.

[Footnote: These letters, contrary to modern usage, are printed with all
the peculiarities of eighteenth century orthography. It was felt that
they would lose their quaintness and charm if Holbach’s somewhat
fantastic English were trifled with or his spelling, capitalization
and punctuation modernized.

HOLBACH TO WILKES

_Dearest Friend_

I should not have felt by half enough the pleasure your kind letter
gave me, if I had words to express it; I never doubted of your
friendship, nor I hope do you know me so little as to doubt of
mine, but your letter is full of such favorable sentiments to me
that I must own I cannot repay them but by renewing to you the
entire gift of my heart that has been yours ever since heaven
favour’d me with your acquaintance. I need not tell you the
sorrow our parting gave me, in vain Philosophy cried aloud nature
was still stronger and the philosopher was forced to yield to the
friend, even now I feel the wound is not cur’d. Therefore no more
of that—_Hope_ is my motto. Telling me you are happy you make me
so but in the middle of your happiness you don’t forget your friend,
What flattering thought to me! Such are the charms of friendship
every event is shar’d and nothing nor even the greatest intervals
are able to interrupt the happy harmony of truly united minds. I
left Leyden about 8 or 10 days after you but before my departure I
thought myself obliged to let Mr Dowdenwell know what you told me,
he has seen the two letters Mr Johnson had received and I have been
mediator of ye peace made betwixt the 2 parties, I don't doubt but
you have seen by this time Messrs Bland & Weatherill who were to set
out for Engelland the same week I parted with them. When I was leaving
Leyden Mr Vernon happen'd to tell me he had a great mind to make a trip
to Spa. So my uncles' estate being on ye road I desir'd him to come
along with me, he has been here a week and went on afterwards in his
journey, at my arrival here, I found that General Count Palfi
with an infinite number of military attendants had taken possession
of my uncles' house, and that the 16 thousd men lately come from
Germany to strengthen the allies army, commanded by Count Bathiani
and that had left ye neighborhood of Breda a few days before and
was come to Falkenswert (where you have past in your journey to Spa)
one hour from hence. Prince Charles arrived here the same day from
Germany to take ye command of the allies, the next Day the whole army

the French from beseiging Namur, I hear now that the two armies are
only one hour from another, so we expect very soon the news of a great
battle but not without fear, Count Saxes army being, by all account of
hundred ten thoud. men besides. Prince Counti's army of 50 thd. this
latter General is now employ'd at the siege of Charleroy. that can't
resist a long while, it is a report that the King of France is arrived
in his army, I hope this long account will entertain you for want of
news papers: Mr. Dowdeswell being left alone of our club at Leyden
I Desir'd him to come and spend with me the time of his vacations
here, which proposal I hope he will accept and be here next week.
What happy triumvirat would be ours if you were to join: but that is impossible at present; however those who can't enjoy reality are fond of feeding their fancies with agreeable Dreams and charming pictures; that helps a little to soothe the sorrow of absence and makes one expect with more patience till fortune allows him to put in execution the cherish'd systems he has been fed upon for some time I shall expect with great many thanks the books you are to send me; it will be for me a double pleasure to read them, being of your choice which I value as much as it deserves, and looking at them as upon a new proof of your benevolence, as to those I design'd to get from Paris for you, I heard I could not get them before my uncle's return hither all commerce being stopt by the way betwixt this country and France.

A few days before my departure from Leyden I receiv'd a letter from Mr Freeman from Berlin, he seems vastly pleas'd with our Germany, and chiefly with Hambourg where a beautiful lady has taken in his heart the room of poor Mss. Vitiavius, my prophesy was just; traveling seems to have alter'd a good deal his melancholy disposition as I may conjecture by his way of writing. He desired his service to you. As to me, idleness renders me every day more philosopher every passion is languishing within me, I retain but one in a warm degree, viz, friendship in which you share no small part. I took a whim to study a little Physic accordingly I purchased several books in that Way, and my empty hours here are employ'd with them. I am sure your time will be much better employ'd at Alesbury you'll find there a much nobler entertainment Cupid is by far Lovlier than Esculapius, however I shall not envy your happiness, in the Contrary I wish that all your desires
be crown’d with success, that a Passion that proves fatal to great many
of men be void of sorrow for you, that all the paths of love be spred
over with flowers in one Word that you may not address in vain to the
charming Mss. M. I am almost tempted to fall in love with that
unknown beauty, ’t would not be quite like Don Quixotte for your
liking to her would be for me a very strong prejudice of her merit,
which the poor Knight had not in his love for Dulcinea.

I shall not ask your pardon for the length of this letter I am sure
friendship will forgive the time I steal to Love however I cannot
give up so easily a conversation with a true friend with whom I fancy
to speak yet in one of those delightfull evening walks at Leyden. It
is a dream, I own it, but it is so agreable one to me that nothing
but reality could be compared to the pleasure I feel: let me therefore
insist a little more upon’t and travel with my Letter, we are gone! I
think to be at Alesbury! there I see my Dear Wilkes! What a Flurry of
Panioms! Joy! fear of a second parting! what charming tears! what
sincere Kisses!--but time flows and the end of this Love is now as
unwelcome to me, as would be to another to be awaken’d in the middle
of a Dream wherein he is going to enjoy a beloved mistress; the
enchantment ceases, the delightfull images vanish, and nothing is left
to me but friendship, which is of all my possessions the fairest, and
the surest, I am most sincerely Dear Wilkes

Your affectionate friend and humble servant

DE HOLBACH

Heze the 9th august 1746 N. S.
I shall expect with impatience the letter you are to write me from 
Alesbury. Will it be here very soon!

HOLBACH TO WILKES

_Dearest Wilkes_

During a little voyage I have made into Germany I have received your 
charming letter of the 8th. September O. S. the many affairs I have 
been busy with for these 3 months has hindered me hitherto from 
returning to you as speedy an answer as I should have done. I know 
too much your kindness for me to make any farther apology and I hope 
you are enough acquainted with the sincerity of my friendship towards 
you to adscribe my fault to forgetfulness or want of gratitude be 
sure, Dear friend, that such a disposition will allways be unknown 
to me in regard to you. I don't doubt but you will be by this time 
returned at London, the winter season being an obstacle to the 
pleasures you have enjoyed following ye Letter at Alesbury during 
the last Autumn. I must own I have felt a good deal of pride when 
you gave me the kind assurance that love has not made you forget an 
old friend, I need not tell you my disposition. I hope you know it 
well enough and like my friendship for you has no bounds I want 
expressions to show it. Mr Dowdeswell has been so good as to let me 
enjoy his company here in the month of August, and returned to Leyden
to pursue his studies in the middle of September. We often wished
your company and made sincere libations to you with burgundy and
Champagne I had a few weeks there after I set out for Germany where
I expected to spend the whole winter but the sudden death of my
Uncle's Steward has forced me to come back here to put in order the
affairs of this estate, I don't know how long I shall be obliged to
stay in the meanwhile I act pretty well the part of a County Squire,
Id est, hunting, shooting, fishing, walking every day without to
lay aside the ever charming conversation of Horace Virgil Homer and
all our noble friends of the Elysian fields. They are allways faithfull
to me, with their aid I find very well how to employ my time, but I want
in this country a true bosom friend like my dear Wilkes to converse
with, but my pretensions are too high, for every abode with such a
company would be heaven for me.

I perceive by your last letter that your hopes are very like to
succeed by Mss Mead, you are sure that every happines that can
befall to you will make me vastly happy. I beseech you therefore
to let me know everytime how far you are gone, I take it to be a
very good omen for you, that your lovely mistress out of compliance
has vouchsafed to learn a harsh high-dutch name, which would otherwise
have made her starttle, at the very hearing of it. I am very thankful
for her kind desire of seeing me in Engelland which I dont wish the
less but you know my circumstances enough, to guess that I cannot
follow my inclinations. I have not heard hitherto anything about
the books you have been so kind as to send me over by the opportunity
of a friend. I have wrote about it to Msrs Conrad et Bouwer of
Rotterdam, they answered that they were not yet there. Nevertheless
I am very much obliged to you for your kindness and wish to find very
soon the opportunity of my revenge. Mr Dowderswell complains very much
of Mrs Bland and Weatherill, having not heard of them since their
departure from Leyden. I desire my compliments to Mr Dyer and all
our old acquaintances. Pray be so good as to direct your first
letter under the covert of Mr Dowderwell at Ms Alliaume's at Leyden
he shall send it to me over immediately, no more at Mr Van Sprang's
like you used to do. I wish to know if Mr Lyson since his return to
his native country, continues in his peevish cross temper. If you
have any news besides I'll be glad to hear them by your next which
I expect very soon.

About politics I cannot tell you anything at present, you have heard
everybody has little hopes of the Congress of Breda, the Austrian and
Piedmontese are entered into provence, which is not as difficult as to
maintain themselves therein, I wish a speedy peace would enable us both
to see the rejoicings that will attend the marriage of the Dauphin of
France with a Princess of Saxony. I have heard that peace is made
between England and Spain, which you ought to know better than I.
We fear very much for the next campaign the siege of Maestrich in
our neighborhood. These are all the news I know. I'll tell you
another that you have known a long while viz. that nobody is with
more sincerity My Dear Wilkes

Your faithfull humble Servant and Friend
By 1750 Holbach was established in Paris as a young man of the world.

His fortune, his learning, his sociability attracted the younger literary set toward him. In 1749 he was already holding his Thursday dinners which later became so famous. Among his early friends were Diderot, Rousseau and Grimm. With them he took the side of the Italian _Opera buffa_ in the famous musical quarrel of 1752, and published two witty brochures ridiculing French music. [12:9] He was an art connoisseur and bought Oudry's _Chienne allaitant ses petits_, the _chef d'oeuvre_ of the Salon of 1753. [12:10] During these years he was hard at work at his chosen sciences of chemistry and mineralogy. In 1752 he published in a huge volume in quarto with excellent plates, a translation of Antonio Neri's _Art of Glass making_, and in 1753 a translation of Wallerius' _Mineralogy_. On July 26, 1754, the Academy of Berlin made him a foreign associate in recognition of his scholarly attainments in Natural History, [12:11] and later he was elected to the Academies of St. Petersburg and Mannheim.

All that was now lacking to this brilliant young man was an attractive wife to rule over his salon. His friends urged him to wed, and in 1753 Marius-Jean-Baptiste Nicolas d'Aine, conseiller au Roi en son grand of means. Mme. d'Holbach was a very charming and gracious woman and Holbach's good fortune seemed complete when suddenly Mme. d'Holbach
died from a most loathsome and painful disease in the summer of 1754. Holbach was heart-broken and took a trip through the provinces with his friend Grimm, to whom he was much attached, to distract his mind from his grief. He returned in the early winter and the next year (1755) got a special dispensation from the Pope to marry his deceased wife's sister, Mlle. Charlotte-Susanne d'Aine. By her he had four children, two sons and two daughters. The first, Charles-Marius, was born about the middle of August, 1757, and baptized in Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, Aug. 22. He inherited the family title and was a captain in the regiment of the Schomberg-Dragons. [13:13] The first daughter was born towards the end of 1758 and the second about the middle of Jan., 1760. [13:14] The elder married the King and Queen and the Royal Family signed their marriage contract May 27, 1781. [13:15] Of the second son there seem to be no traces. Holbach's mother-in-law, Madame d'Aine, was a very interesting old brother-in-law, "Messire Marius-Jean-Baptiste-Nicholas d'Aine, paroisse Saint-Sulpice. There was in Holbach's household for a long time an old Scotch surgeon, a homeless, misanthropic old fellow by the name of Hope, of whom Diderot gives a most interesting account. [14:16] These are the only names we have of the personnel of Holbach's household. His town house was in the rue Royale, butte Saint-Roch. It was here that for an almost unbroken period of forty years he gave his Sunday and Thursday dinners. The latter day was known to the more intimate set of encyclopedists as the _jour du
its doctrines and publish its propaganda of radicalism.

is pleasantly situated in the valley of a little stream, the Morbra, which flows into the Marne. The property was really the estate of Mme. d'Aine who lived with the Holbachs. Here the family and their numerous guests passed the late summer and fall. Here Diderot spent weeks at a time working on the Encyclopedia, dining, and walking on the steep slopes of the Marne with congenial companions. To him we are indebted for our intimate knowledge of Grandval and its inhabitants, their slightest doings and conversations; and as Danou has well said, if we were to wish ourselves back in any past age we should choose with many others the mid-eighteenth century and the charming society of Paris and Grandval. [14:17]

Holbach's life, in common with that of most philosophers, offers no events, except that he came near being killed in the crush and riot in the rue Royale that followed the fire at the Dauphin's wedding in 1770. [15:18] He was never an official personage. His entire life was spent in study, writing and conversation with his friends. He traveled but he disliked England very thoroughly and was glad to get back to Paris. The events of his life in so far as there were any, were his relations with people. He knew intimately practically all the great men of his century, except Montesquieu and Voltaire, who were off the stage before his day. [15:19] Holbach's most intimate and life-long
friend among the great figures of the century was Diderot, of whom

All his contemporaries agreed that nothing was so charged with divine
fire as the conversation of Diderot. Gautherin, in his fine bronze
spirit of his talk and has depicted him as he might have sat in the
midst of Holbach's society, of which he was the inspiration and the soul.
Holbach backed Diderot financially in his great literary and scientific
undertaking and provided articles for the Encyclopedia on chemistry
and natural science. Diderot had a high opinion of his erudition and

justifier." [16:21] Opinions differ in regard to the intellectual
influence of these men upon each other. Diderot was without doubt
the greater thinker, but Holbach stated his atheism with far greater
clarity and Diderot gave his sanction to it by embellishing Holbach's
books with a few eloquent pages of his own. Diderot said to Sir
died in 1784 in the belief that complete infidelity was the first
step toward philosophy. Five years later Holbach was buried by his
side in the crypt of the Chapel of the Virgin behind the high altar
in Saint-Roch. No tablet marks their tombs, and although repeated
investigations have been made no light has been thrown on the exact
position of their burial place. According to Diderot's daughter,
Mme. Vandeuil, their entire correspondence has been destroyed or

lost. [16:23]

Holbach's relations with Rousseau were less harmonious. The account
of their mutual misunderstandings contained in the _Confessions_, in a letter by Cerutti in the _Journal de Paris_ Dec. 2, 1789, and in private letters of Holbach's to Hume, Garrick, and Wilkes, is a long publication des confessions de Rousseau... (Paris, 1789) blames the _club holbachique_ for their treatment of Rousseau, but the fault seems to lie on both sides. According to Rousseau's account, Holbach sought his friendship and for a few years he was one of Holbach's society. But, after the success of the _Devin du Village_ in 1753, the _holbachiens_ turned against him out of jealousy of his genius as a composer. Visions of a dark plot against him rose before his fevered and sensitive imagination, and after 1756 he left the Society of the Encyclopedists, never to return. Holbach, on the other hand, while admitting rather questionable treatment of Rousseau, never speaks of any personal injury on his part, and bewails the fact that anti-social." [17:24] He did warn Hume against taking him to England, and in a letter to Wilkes predicted the quarrel that took place shortly after. In writing to Garrick [17:25] he says some hard but true things about Rousseau, who on his part never really defamed Holbach but depicted him as the virtuous atheist under the guise of Wolmar in on the grounds of the radical differences in their temperaments and types of mind and by the fact that Rousseau was too sensitive to get on with anybody for any great length of time.

Two other great Frenchmen, Buffon and d'Alembert, were for a time members of Holbach's society, but, for reasons that are not altogether
clear, gradually withdrew. Grimm suggests that Buffon did not find
the young philosophers sufficiently deferential to him and to the
authorized powers, and feared for his dignity,--and safety, in
their company. D'Alembert, on the other hand, was a recluse by
nature, and, after giving up his editorship on the Encyclopedia,
easily dropped out of Diderot's society and devoted himself to
Mlle. Lespinasse and Mme. Geoffrin. Holbach and Helvetius were
life-long friends and spent much time together reading at Helvetius's
Mme. Helvetius' salon where he knew and deeply influenced Volney,
Cabanis, de Tracy, and the first generation of the Ideologists who
continued his and Helvetius' philosophical doctrines. Among the
other Frenchmen of the day who were on intimate relations with
Holbach and frequented his salon were La Condamine, Condillac,
Condorcet, Turgot, Morellet, Raynal, Grimm, Marmontel, Colaradeau,
Saurin, Suard, Saint-Lambert, Thomas, Duclos, Chastellux, Boulanger,
Lagrange and lesser names,--but well known in Paris in the eighteenth
century,--d'Alinville, Chauvelin, Desmahis, Gauffecourt, Margency,
de Croismare, de Pezay, Coyer, de Valory, Charnoi, not to mention a
host of others.

Among Holbach's most intimate English friends were Hume, Garrick,
Wilkes, Sterne, Gibbon, Horace Walpole, Adam Smith, Benjamin Franklin,
MacDonald, Dr. Gem, Messrs. Stewart, Demster, Fordyce, Fitzmaurice,
Foley, etc. Holbach addressed a letter to Hume in 1762, before making
his acquaintance, in which he expressed his admiration of his
philosophy and the desire to know him personally. [18:26] In 1764
Hume came to Paris as secretary of the British Embassy and immediately called on Holbach and became a regular frequenter of his salon. It was to Holbach that he wrote first on the outbreak of his quarrel with Rousseau and they corresponded at length in justify Hume in the eyes of the French. Hume and Holbach had much in common intellectually, although the latter was far more thoroughgoing in his repudiation of Theism.

David Garrick and his wife were frequent visitors at the rue Royale on their trips to Paris where they were very much liked by Holbach's society. Nothing is more cordial or gracious than the compliments passed between them in their subsequent correspondence. There are two published letters from Holbach in Mr. Hedgecock's recent study of Garrick and his French friends, excellent examples of the happy spontaneity and sympathy that were characteristic of French sociability in the eighteenth century. [19:27] Holbach in turn spent several months with Garrick at Hampton.

Holbach's early friendship for Wilkes has already been mentioned. Wilkes spent a great deal of time in Paris on the occasion of his exiles from England and became very intimate with Holbach. They corresponded up to the very end of Holbach's life and there was a constant interchange of friendly offices between them. [19:28] Miss Wilkes, who spent much time in Paris, was a very good friend of Mme. Holbach and Mlle. Helvetius. Adam Smith often dined at Holbach's with Turgot and the economists; Gibbon also found his
dinners agreeable except for the dogmatism of the atheists; Walpole resented it also and kept away. Priestley seems to have gotten on very well, although the philosophers found his materialism and unitarianism a trifle inconsistent. It was at Holbach's that Shelburne met Morellet with whom he carried on a long and serious correspondence on economics. There seem to be no details of Holbach's relations with Franklin, who was evidently more assiduous at the salon of Mme. Helvetius whom he desired to marry.

of the Neapolitan Embassy, who spent ten years in the salons of Paris. After his return to Naples his longing for Paris led him to a voluminous correspondence with his French friends including Holbach. A few of their letters are extant. Beccaria also came to Paris at the invitation of the translator of his _Crimes and Punishments_.

his friend Veri, who accompanied him, had long been admirers of French philosophy, and the Frenchmen found much to admire in Beccaria's book.

of Holbach's, tried to put his reforms in practice and shared the fate of most reformers. Holbach was also in correspondence with Beccaria, and one of his letters has been published in M. Landry's recent study of Beccaria.

Among the other Italians whom Holbach befriended were Paulo Frizi, the mathematician; Dr. Gatti; Pincini, the musician; and Mme. Riccoboni, ex-actress and novelist; whose lively correspondence with Garrick whom she met at Holbach's sheds much light on the social relations of
the century.

Among the other foreigners who were friends or acquaintances of Holbach were his fellow countrymen, Frederich Melchon Grimm, like himself a naturalized Frenchman and the bosom friend of Diderot; Meister, his collaborator in the _Literary Correspondence_; Kohant, a Bohemian lute-teacher; Baron Gleichen, Comte de Creutz, Danish and Scandinavian diplomats; and a number of German nobles; the hereditary princes of Brunswick and Saxe Gotha, Baron Alaberg, afterwards elector of Mayence, Baron Schomberg and Baron Studitz.

Among the well known women of the century Holbach was most intimate with Mme. d'Epinay, who became a very good friend of Mme. Holbach's and was present at the birth of her first son, and, in her will, left her a portrait by Rembrandt. He was also a friend of Mme. Geoffrin, attended her salon, and knew Mlle. de Lespinasse, Mme. Houderot and most of the important women of the day.

There are excellent sources from which to form an estimate of this man whose house was the social centre of the century. Just after Holbach's death on January 21, 1789, Naigeon, his literary agent, who had lived on terms of the greatest intimacy with him for twenty-four years, wrote a long eulogy which filled the issue of the _Journal de Paris_ for Feb. 9. There was another letter to March contains a long account of him by Meister, and there are other
notices in contemporary memoirs such as Morellet's and Marmontel's. All these accounts agree in picturing him as the most admirable of men.

It must be remembered that Holbach always enjoyed what was held to be a considerable fortune in his day. From his estates in Westphalia he had a yearly income of 60,000 _livres_ which he spent in entertaining. This freedom from economic pressure gave him leisure to devote his time to his chosen intellectual pursuits and to his friends. He was a universally learned man. He knew French, German, English, Italian and Latin extremely well and had a fine private library of about three thousand works often of several volumes each, in these languages and in Greek and Hebrew. The catalogue of this library was published by Debure in 1789. It would be difficult to imagine a more comprehensive and complete collection of its size. He had also a rich collection of drawings by the best masters, fine pictures of which he was a connoisseur, bronzes, marbles, porcelains and a natural history cabinet, so in vogue in those days, containing some very valuable specimens. He was one of the most learned men of his day in natural science, especially chemistry and mineralogy, and to his translations from the best German scientific works is largely due the spread of scientific learning in France in the eighteenth century. Holbach was also very widely read in English theology and philosophy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and derived his anti-theological inspiration from these two sources. To this vast fund of learning, he joined an extreme modesty and simplicity. He sought no academic honors, published all his works anonymously, and, had it not been for the pleasure he took in communicating his ideas to his
friends, no one would have suspected his great erudition. He had an extraordinary memory and the reputation of never forgetting anything of interest. This plenitude of information, coupled with his easy and pleasant manner of talking, made his society much sought after. Naigeon said of him (in his preface to the works of Lagrange):

M. le baron d'Holbach portait dans leur discussion un jugement sain, science dont il parlait; et on ne le quittait jamais sans regretter into all the relations of life. He was always glad to lend or give his books to anyone who could make use of them. "Je suis riche," he used to say, "mais je ne vois dans la fortune qu'un instrument de plus Holbach's whole principle of life and action was to increase the store of human well being. And he did this without any religious of Holbach's gracious benevolence. As he said to Helvetius,
to him. Diderot tells how at the Salon of 1753 after Holbach had
bought Oudry's famous picture, all the collectors who had passed it
by came to him and offered him twice what he paid for it. Holbach
went to find the artist to ask him permission to cede the picture
to his profit, but Oudry refused, saying that he was only too happy
that his best work belonged to the man who was the first to appreciate
it. Instances of Holbach's liberality to Kohant, a poor musician,
and to Suard, a poor literary man, are to be found in the pages of
Diderot and Meister, and his constant generosity to his friends is
a commonplace in their Memoirs and Correspondence. Only Rousseau was
ungrateful enough to complain that Holbach's free-handed gifts insulted
his poverty. His kindness to Lagrange, a young literary man whom he
rescued from want, has been well told by M. Naigeon in the preface to
the works of Lagrange (p. xviii).

But perhaps the most touching instances of Holbach's benevolence
was published in the _Journal de Lecture_, 1775, the other in an
anonymous letter to the _Journal de Paris_, Feb. 12, 1789. The
first concerns the reconciliation of two old peasants who, not
wanting to go to court, brought their differences to their respected
friend for a settlement. Nothing is more simple and beautiful than
this homely tale as told in a letter of Holbach's to a friend of his.
The second, which John Wilkes said ought to be written in letters of
gold, deserves to be reproduced as a whole.
M. le Baron d'Holbach dans deux voyages que j'ai faits aux eaux de

l'ami, le consolateur de quiconque venait aux eaux et il semblait bien

les leur procurait avec un plaisir qui lui faisait plus de bien que

les eaux. Je me promenais un soir avec lui sur une hauteur couverte

comme elle et l'autre jeune. Tous trois, les larmes aux yeux,

Baron d'Holbach; laissez moi, on m'attend, ne me suivez pas, adieu;

les trois personnes reconnaissantes disparurent. Je lui demandai

paysanne aussi pauvre que lui, je viens d'acheter pour eux un petit

d'hyacinthe. Ils travaillaient dans le champ, voisin du bois, je suis

This humanity of Holbach's is the very keynote of his character and
of his intellectual life as well. As M. Walferdin has said, the
denial of the supernatural was for him the base of all virtue, and
resting on this principle, he exemplified social qualities that do the
greatest honor to human nature. He and Madame Holbach are the only
conspicuous examples of conjugal fidelity and happiness among all the
people that one has occasion to mention in a study of the intellectual
and literary circles of the eighteenth century. They were devoted to
each other, to their children and to their friends. Considering the
traits of Holbach's character that have been cited, there can scarcely
be two opinions in regard to completeness with which he realized his
ideal of humanity and sociability. M. Naigeon has well summed up in
a few words Holbach's relation to the only duties that he recognized,
"He was a good husband, a good father and a good friend."

CHAPTER II. HOLBACH'S WORKS.

Holbach's published works, with the exception of a few scattered ones,
may be divided into three classes, viz., translations of German
scientific works, translations of English deistical writings, and his
own works on theology, philosophy, politics and morals. Those which
fall into none of these categories can be dealt with very summarily.
They are:

2. A translation in prose of Akenside's _The Pleasures of Imagination_
3. A translation of Swift's _History of the Reign of Queen Anne_ in collaboration with M. Eidous (Amsterdam, 1765, 12mo, pp. xxiv + 416).

4. Translations of an _Ode on Human Life_ and a _Hymn to the Sun_.

_Prononciation des langues_ in the _Dictionnaire de Grammaire_.

6. Translation of Wallerius' _Agriculture reduced to its true principles_ (Paris, 1774, 12mo).

8. Parts of Raynal's _Histoire philosophique des deux Indes_.

Holbach's translations of German scientific works are as follows:

(Complete titles to be found in Bibliography, Pt. I.)

1. _Art de la Verrerie de Neri, Merret, et Kunckel_ (Paris, Durand,
1752). Original work in Italian. Latin translation by

Holbach's translation comprises the seven books of Antionio Neri,
Merret's notes on Neri, Kunckel's observations on both these authors,
his own experiments and others relative to glass-making. The translation
was dedicated to Malesherbes who had desired to see the best German

Holbach writes:

J. G. Wallerius_ (Paris, Durand, 1753) followed by _Hydrologie_
Originally in Swedish (Wallerius was a professor of chemistry
in the University of Upsala). German translation by J. D. Denso,
Professor of Chemistry, Stargard, Pomerania. Holbach's translation
was made from the German edition which Wallerius considered
preferable to the Swedish. He was assisted by Bernard de Jussien
and Rouelle, and the work was dedicated to a friend and co-worker
in the natural sciences, Monsieur d'Arclais de Montamy.

M. J. F. Henckel_, Paris, Cavelier, 1756, first published under title

M. Stephani, as an outline of his lectures. Holbach's translation
made from a German edition, corrected, with notes on new discoveries added.

1758, translated earlier. Approbation May 1, 1753, Privilege Dec. 21, 1754. Originally a text written by Gellert for four artillery officers whom the King of Sardinia sent to Freyburg to learn mining-engineering.

III. Essai d'une histoire naturelle des couches de la terre.
In his preface to the third volume Holbach has some interesting remarks about the deluge, the irony of which seems to have escaped

Il s'agit simplement d'examiner si les naturalistes, tels que

seul la formation des couches de la terre et lorsqu'ils

l'Ecriture sainte se contente de nous apprendre la voie miraculeuse dont Dieu s'est servi pour punir les crimes du genre humain; elle ne dit rien qui puisse limiter les sentiments des naturalistes sur les autres effets physiques que

question whether the deluge could have produced the results
attributed to it and argues against catastrophism which, it
must be remembered, was the received geological doctrine down
to the days of Lyell. "Les causes les plus simples sont capables
lorsqu'elles agissent incessament; et nous voyons toutes ces causes
suffisent point pour expliquer la formation des couches de la terre.
On risquera toujours de se tromper, lorsque par l'envie de simplifier
unique cause."

6. _Pyritologie_ by J. F. Henkel, Paris, Herrissant, 1760, a large
volume in quarto, translated by Holbach. It contains _Flora Saturnisans_
(translated by M. Charas and reviewed by M. Roux), Henkel's
_Pyritologia_, Leipzig, 1725, 1754; _Flora Saturnisans_, Leipzig, 1721;
_De Appropriatione Chymica_, Dresden, 1727, and _De Lapidum origine_,
Dresden, 1734, translated into German, with excellent notes, Dresden,
1744, by M. C. F. Zimmermann, a pupil of M. Henkel. Holbach's translations
seem to have been well received because he writes in this preface:

Orschall still accepted the old alchemist tradition but was sound in
practice and was the best authority on copper. Holbach does not attempt
to justify his physics which was that of the preceding century. Orschall
was held in high esteem by Henckel and Stahl.
Didot, 1764. These records of experiments made in the Royal Laboratories of Sweden, founded in 1683 by Charles XI, had already been translated into German and English. Holbach’s translation was made from the German and Latin. He promises further treatises on Agriculture, Natural History and Medicine.

Stahl's theories Holbach says: "Il ne faut pas croire que ces connaissances

Holbach understood very clearly the utility of science in his scheme of increasing the store of human well-being, and would doubtless have translated other useful works had not other interests prevented. There is Administrateur de la Librairie Royale; suggesting other German treatises that might well be translated. (MSS. 22194).

HOLBACH TO MALESHERBES

_Monsieur_

J'ai l'honneur de vous envoyer ci-joint la liste des ouvrages dont
The list of books was as follows:

1. Johann Kunckel's _Laboratorium Chymicum_, 8vo.


3. _Cadmologia_, or the _Natural History of Cobalt_, by

After 1760 Holbach became interested in another line of intellectual activity, namely the writing and translation of anti-religious literature. His first book of this sort really appeared in 1761 although no copies bear this date. From 1767 on however he published a great many works of this character. It is convenient to deal first with his translations of English deistical writers. They are in chronological order.

(Amsterdam), 1767. This book appeared in England in 1720 under
the title of _The Independent Whig_; its author was Thomas Gordon
(known through his Commentaries on Sallust and Tacitus) who wrote
in collaboration with John Trenchard. The book was partially
rewritten by Holbach and then touched up by Naigeon, who, according
to a manuscript note by his brother, "atheised it as much as
possible." It was sold with great secrecy and at a high price--
a reward which the colporters demanded for the risk they ran in
peddling seditious literature. The book was a violent attack on
the spirit of domination which characterized the Christian
priesthood at that time.

Contains translations of various pamphlets including
Davisson, _A true picture of Popery_; Brown, _Popery a Craft_,
London 1735; Gordon, _Apology for the danger of the church_,
1719; Gordon, _The Creed of an Independent Whig_, 1720.

Translation of Anthony Collins, _A Discourse on the Grounds and
Contains also _The Scheme of literal Prophecy considered_, 1727,
also by Collins in answer to the works of Clarke, Sherlock,
Chandler, Sykes, and especially to Whiston's _Essay towards
restoring the text of the Old Testament_, one of the thirty-five works directed against Collins' original _"Discourse"_.


Copies of this work have become very rare.

4. _David, ou l'histoire de l'homme selon le coeur de Dieu_.

Londres (Amsterdam), 1768. This work appeared in England in 1761 and is attributed to Peter Annet, also to John Noorthook. Some English eulogists of George II, Messrs. Chandler, Palmer and others, had likened their late King to David, "the man after God's own heart." The deists, struck by the absurdity of the comparison, proceeded to relate all the scandalous facts they could find recorded of David, and by clever distortions painted him as the most execrable of Kings, in a work entitled _David or the Man after God's Own Heart_, which formed the basis of Holbach's translation.


6. _Lettres philosophiques..._. Londres (Amsterdam, 1768).

Translation of J. Toland's _Letters to Serena_, London, 1704. The book, which had become very rare in Holbach's time, had caused a great scandal at the time of its publication and was much sought after by collectors. It contains five letters, the first three of which are by Toland, the other two and the preface by Holbach and Naigeon. The matters treated are, the origin of prejudices, the dogma of the immortality of the soul,
idolatry, superstition, the system of Spinoza and the origin of movement in matter.

Diderot said of these works, in writing to Mlle. Volland
Madame de Blacy, je crains bien que le Fils de l'Homme ne

_Considerations upon war, upon cruelty in general and religious cruelty in particular_, London, printed for Thomas Hope, 1761.

8. _Dissertation critique sur les tourmens de l'enfer_ printed
1769. A translation of Whitefoot's _The Torments of Hell, the foundation and pillars thereof discover'd, search'd, shaken and remov'd_, London, 1658.

9. In the _Recueil philosophique_ edited by Naigeon, Londres (Amsterdam), 1770.
II. Dissertation sur le suicide (Hume).

III. Extrait d’un livre Anglais qui a pour titre le Christianisme aussi ancien que le monde. (Tindal, Christianity as old as Creation.)

Londres (Amsterdam), 1770 (1769), translated from Anthony Collins.

With the exception of some of Holbach's own works this is one of the fiercest denunciations of Judaism and Christianity to be found in print. In fact, it is very much in the style of Holbach's anti-religious works and shows beyond a doubt that Holbach derived his inspiration from Collins and the more radical of the English school. The volume has become exceedingly rare.

After outlining the history of Judaism the book ends thus:

faîtes pour les habitans de ton climat. Occupe-toi du soin de

la route du bonheur.

11. _Examen critique de la vie et des ouvrages de Saint Paul_,

Londres (Amsterdam), 1770. A free translation of Peter Annet's _History and character of St. Paul examined_, written in answer to Lyttelton. New edition 1790 and translated back into English
"from the French of Boulanger," London, R. Carlile, 1823. A rather unsympathetic account, but with flashes of real insight

Annet said of Paul's type of man "l'enthousiaste s'enivre, pour l'ainsi dire, de son propre vin, il se persuade que la cause de ses passions est la cause de Dieu (p. 72), mais


13. _Discours sur les Miracles de Jesus Christ_ (Amsterdam, 1780?). Translated from Woolston, whom Holbach admired very much for his uncompromising attitude toward truth. He suffered fines and imprisonments, but would not give up the privilege of writing as he pleased. The present discourse was the cause of a quarrel with his friend Whiston. He died Jan. 27, 1733, "avec beaucoup de et rendit l'esprit." This work exists in a manuscript book

In fact it is mentioned by Grimm before 1770, but the dictionaries
Before turning to Holbach's original works mention should be made of a very interesting and extraordinary book that he brought to light, retouched, and later used as a kind of shield against the attacks of the parliaments upon his own works.

Terre_. Par feu M. Boulanger, Amsterdam, 1766. This is a work based on an original manuscript by Boulanger, who died in 1759, preceded by an excellent letter on him by Diderot, published also in the

The use made by Holbach of Boulanger's name makes it necessary to consider for a moment this almost forgotten writer. Nicholas Antoine Boulanger was born in 1722. As a child he showed so little aptitude for study that later his teachers could scarcely believe that he had turned out to be a really learned man. As Diderot observes, "ces pas rares, cependant ils surprennent toujours" (p. 1). Boulanger studied mathematics and architecture, became an engineer and was employed by the government as inspector of bridges and highways. He passed a busy life in exacting outdoor work but at the same time his active intellect played over a large range of human interests. He became especially concerned with historical origins and set himself to learn Latin and Greek that he might get at the sources. Not satisfied that he had come to the root of the matter he learned Arabic,
divided in two hemispheres, one occupied by the continents, the other by the oceans, and by a singular coincidence he found that the meridian of the continental hemisphere passed through Paris. Some such rearrangement of hemispheres is one of the commonplaces of

for the Encyclopedia and wrote several large and extremely learned books, among them _Recherches sur l'origine du Despotisme oriental_ and

Boulanger's ideas on philosophy, mythology, anthropology and history are of extraordinary interest today. Diderot relates his saying--"Que faits." He carried over this inductive method into realm of history, which he thought had been approached from the wrong side, i.e., the

l'histoire." Curiously enough the central fact in history appeared to Boulanger to be the deluge, and on the basis of it he attempted to interpret the _Kulturgeschichte_ of humanity. It is a bit unfortunate that he took the deluge quite as literally as he did; his idea, however, is obviously the influence of environmental pressure on the changing beliefs and practices of mankind. Under the spell of this new point of view, he writes, "Ce qu'on appelle l'histoire n'en est que la partie la plus ingrate, la plus uniforme, la plus inutile, quoi qu'elle soit temps" (p. 7). Boulanger however was not to be daunted and on the firm foundation of the fact of some ancient and universal catastrophe,
as recorded on the surface of the earth and in human mythology, he
proceeds to inquire into the moral effects of the changes in the
physical environment back to which if possible the history of antiquity
must be traced. Man's defeat in his struggle with the elements made
him religious, _hinc prima mali labes_. "Son premier pas fut un faux
fault nor has time repaired the evil moral effects of that early
arisen the various psychological states through which mankind has passed.
Contemporary savages are still in the primitive state--Boulanger
(p. 12) and with a vast store of anthropological and folklorist learning

ici un tissus de mensonges grossiers, de sophismes rebattus et bouffons,

In 1767 Holbach published his first original work, a few copies of
which had been printed in Nancy in 1761. This work was _Le Christianisme
Par feu M. Boulanger. Londres (Amsterdam), 1767. There were several
other editions the same year, one printed at John Wilkes' private press
in Westminster. It was reprinted in later collections of Boulanger's
works, and went through several English and Spanish editions. The form
of the title and the attribution of the work to Boulanger were designed
to set persecution on the wrong track. There has been some discussion
as to its authorship. Voltaire and Laharpe attributed it to Damilaville,
at whose book shop it was said to have been sold, but M. Barbier has
published detailed information given him by Naigeon to the effect that
Holbach entrusted his manuscript to M. De Saint-Lambert, who had it printed by Leclerc at Nancy in 1761. Most of the copies that got to Paris at that time were bought by several officers of the King's regiment then in garrison at Nancy, among them M. de Villevielle, a friend of Voltaire and of Condorcet. Damilaville did not sell a single copy and even had a great deal of trouble to get one for Holbach who waited for it a long time. This circumstantial evidence is of greater value than the statement of Voltaire who was in the habit of attributing anonymous works to whomever he pleased. [39:2]

The edition of 1767 was printed in Amsterdam as were most of Holbach's works. We have the details of their publication from Naigeon _cadet_, a copyist, whose brother, J. A. Naigeon, was Holbach's literary factotum. How he copied nearly all Holbach's works, either at Paris or at Sedan, where he was stationed, and where his friend Blon, the postmaster, aided was a correspondent of Marc-Michel Rey, the printer in Amsterdam. Sometimes they were sent directly by the diligence or through travellers. This account agrees perfectly with information given M. Barbier orally into France _sous le manteau_, as the expression is, and sold at absurd rates by colporters. [40:3]

When caught the colporters were severely punished. Diderot gives
the following instance in a letter to Mlle. Volland Oct. 8, 1768

sa vie."

There are two very interesting pieces of contemporary criticism

Grimm. Voltaire writes in a letter to Madame de Saint Julien
December 15, 1766 (_Oeuvres_, XLIV, p. 534, ed. Garnier): "Vous

fait ne m'attribuent point du tout cet ouvrage. J'avoue avec vous

qu'il serait impertinent de dire qu'une horloge ne prouve pas un horloger.

trop ennemi des puissances. Des hommes qui penseraient comme lui
ne formeraient qu'une anarchie: et je vois trop, par l'exemple de

sur la marge de mes livres ce que je pense d'eux, vous verrez, quand
faits les plus essentiels." These notes may be read in Voltaire's works (Vol. XXXI, p. 129, ed. Garnier) and the original copy of Museum (c. 28, k. 3) where it is jealously guarded as one of the most precious autographs of the Patriarch of Ferney.

fabrique de Ferney, parce que j'aimerais mieux croire que le patriarche

mettre personne dans son secret. C'est le livre le plus hardi et le plus terrible qui ait jamais parti dans aucun lieu du monde. La

des empires, et s'il convient de la respecter sous ce point de vue.

funestes, et que le genre humain lui doit tous les malheurs dont il a
sec; son ton est grave et soutenu. On n'y apprend rien de nouveau,

je pense que ses bonnes intentions seraient une sauvegarde bien

and fair account of a book that is without doubt the severest criticism
of the theory and practice of historical Christianity ever put in print.

The church very naturally did not let such a book pass unanswered.

trionphera des nouveaux Philosophes. Dieu qui veille sur son ouvrage
n'a pas besoin de nos faibles mains pour le soutenir"
(Psaume 32, vs. 10, 11).

2. There already existed in 1767 another work by Holbach entitled

went through many editions and was augmented by subsequent authors
and editors. Voltaire was already writing to d'Alembert about it
August 14, 1767. [44:5]

In a letter to Damilaville, October 16, he writes (Vol. XIV, p. 406):
d'en rire. Les jeunes gens et les femmes lisent cette folie avec

And on February 8, 1768, he wrote:

On fait tous les jours des livres contre la religion, dont je voudrais

philosophe_, ouvrage qui court toute l'Europe? [by Naigeon and Holbach]

en condamnant la coupable hardiesse de l'auteur. Lisez _l'Imposture

malheureusement inondent l'Europe; mais quelle est la cause de cette

pourraient qu'irriter le mal_. [Footnote: the italics are mine.]

It is to be noted however that Voltaire's sentiments varied according
to the point of view of the person to whom he was writing. In a
letter to d'Alembert, May 24, 1769 (Vol. LXV, p. 453), he calls the

But in a letter to the Bishop of Annecy June, 1769, he writes
(Vol. XXVIII, p. 73): "Vous lui [M. de Saint Florentin] imputez,

_l_a Theologie portative_, ouvrage fait apparemment dans quelque

dans un beaucoup plus grand nombre de mauvaises" and this criticism
is just. A few examples of the better jokes will suffice:
3. Holbach furnished the last chapter of Naigeon's book _Le Militaire philosophe, ou Difficulties sur la religion_, Londres (Amsterdam), 1768. Voltaire ascribed the work to St. Hyacinthe. Grimm recognized that the last chapter was by another hand and considered it the weakest part of the book. It attempts to demonstrate that all supernatural religions have been harmful to society and that the only useful religion is natural religion or morals. The book was refuted by Guidi, in a
naturelle de la Superstition_, Londres (Amsterdam), 1768. In his
preface Holbach attributed the alleged English original of this
work to John Trenchard but that was only a ruse to avoid persecution.
The book is by Holbach. It has gone through many editions and been
translated into English and Spanish. The first edition had an
introduction by Naigeon. According to him manuscripts of this
book became quite rare at one time and were supposed to have been
lost. Later they became more common and this edition was corrected
by collation with six others.

[PG transcriber's note: at this point there appears to be a break
in the original text. A sentence introducing the fifth book in
this list, "Letters to Eugenie", has evidently been lost.]

The letters were written in 1764, according to Lequinio
(_Feuilles posthumes_), who had his information from Naigeon, to
Marguerite, Marchioness de Vermandois in answer to a very touching
and pitiful letter from that lady who was in great trouble over
religion. Her young husband was a great friend of the Holbachs,
but having had a strict Catholic bringing up she was shocked at
their infidelity and warned by her confessor to keep away from them.
"Yet in their home she saw all the domestic virtues exemplified and
beheld that sweet and unchangeable affection for which the d'Holbachs
were eminently distinguished among their acquaintances and which was
remarkable for its striking contrast with the courtly and Christian
habits of the day. Her natural good sense and love for her friends struggled with her monastic education and reverence for the priests. The conflict rendered her miserable and she returned to her country seat to brood over it. In this state of mind she at length wrote to the Baron and laid open her situation requesting him to comfort, console, and enlighten her." [47:7] His letters accomplished the desired effect and he later published them in the hope that they would do as much for others. They were carefully revised before they were sent to the press. All the purely personal passages were omitted and others added to hide the identity of the persons concerned. Letters of the sort to religious ladies were common at this time.

6. In 1769 Holbach published two short treatises on the doctrine of eternal punishment which claimed to be translations from English, convaincue de crime et de folie_ as it is sometimes given, and--

Peines_. Londres, Amsterdam, 1769. This letter was translated into English under the title _Hell Destroyed!_ "Now first translated from the French of d'Alembert without any mutilations," London 1823, which led Mr. J. Hibbert to say, "I know not why English publishers attribute this awfully sounding work to the cautious, not to say timid d'Alembert. It was followed by Whitefoot's _'Torments of Hell,'_ now first translated from the French." [47:8]
Of Holbach's remaining works on religion two, _Histoire critique_
began to publish his more philosophical works.

_Evangiles_ was published without name of place or date. It was
but unsympathetic analysis of the Gospel accounts, emphasizing all
the inconsistencies and interpreting them with a literalness that
they can ill sustain. From this rationalistic viewpoint Holbach
found the Gospels a tissue of absurdities and contradictions. His
method, however, would not be followed by the critique of today.

9. The _Tableau des Saints_ is a still more severe criticism of
the heroes of Christendom. Holbach's proposition is "La raison

(p. xviii). Holbach much prefers the heroes of classical antiquity.
The book is violent but learned throughout, and deals not only with
the Jewish patriarchs from Moses on but with the church fathers and
Christian Princes down to the contemporary defenders of the faith.
After a rather one-sided account of the most dreary characters and
events in Christian history, Holbach concludes: "Tel fut, tel est,
morale et de la saine politique" (p. 208).

10. In _Recueil philosophique_, Londres (Amsterdam), 1770, edited
les moeurs et sur le bonheur des Hommes_. Londres (Amsterdam), 1770, under name of Dumarsais. The book pretended to be an elaboration of Dumarsais' essay on the _Philosophe_ published

The special interest connected with it was the refutation Frederick the Great published under the title _Examen de l'Essai sur les moeurs de l'Homme_ written from the point of view of a practical, enlightened despot, took special exception to Holbach's remarks on government. "Il le philosophe, protecteur des moeurs et de la vertu, ignorez vous qu'un bon citoyen doit respecter la forme de gouvernement sous d'insulter les Puissances..." (p. 28).

les ouvrages de Hugo Grotius. J'oserais croire qu'il n'en sera pas cru sur sa parole, et que le _Droit de la guerre et de la paix_.

Holbach in his anti-militaristic enthusiasm had used the words "d'insulter les Puissances..."
Frederick sent his little refutation to Voltaire for his compliments which were forthcoming. A few days after Voltaire wrote to d'Alembert:

roi a aussi les siens, qu'il faut lui pardonner; on n'est pas roi pour rien. Mais je voudrais savoir quel est l'auteur de cet _Essai_

Serait-il de Diderot? serait-il de Damilaville? serait-il d'Helvetius?

(Vol. LXVI, p. 304).

D'Alembert answered:

long, bien monotone et trop amer. Il me semble que ce qu'il y de

(Vol. LXVI, p. 324).

In spite of these unfavorable judgments the _Essai_ was reprinted as late as 1886 by the Bibliotheque Nationale in its _Collection des meilleurs auteurs anciens et modernes_, still attributed to Dumarsais with the account of his life by "le citoyen Daube"

which graced the edition of the year I. (1792)
12. Early in 1770 appeared Holbach's most famous book, the
name in the minds of most historians and philosophers. It seems
wiser, however, to deal with this work in a chapter apart and
continue the account of his later publications.

Londres (Amsterdam), 1772. This work has gone through twenty-five
editions or more and has been translated into English, German, Italian
and Spanish. As early as 1791 it began to be published under the name
publication of what was supposed to be his last will and testament
in which on his death bed he abjured and cursed Christianity. Some
editions contain in the preface Letters by Voltaire and his sketch
of Jean Meslier. The last reprint was by De Laurence, Scott & Co.,
Chicago, 1910. The book is nothing more or less than the

Voltaire, to whom it was attributed by some, said to d'Alembert,
"Il y a plus que du bon sens dans ce livre, il est terrible. S'il

Thomas Jefferson on the title page of his copy of _Bon-sens_.
The book has gone through several editions in the United States and
was sold at a popular price. The German translation was published
in Baltimore on the basis of a copy found in a second-hand book
store in New Orleans. The most serious work written against it is
a long and carefully written treatise against materialism by an
14. In 1773 Holbach published his _Recherches sur les Miracles_, a much more sober work than his previous writings on religion. In this book he raises the well known difficulties with belief in miracles and brings a great deal of real learning and logic to bear on the question. The entire work is in a reasonable and philosophic spirit. His conclusion is that "une vraie religion capables de faire impression sur tout ceux qui la cherchent de bonne foi. Ce ne sont pas les miracles." The same year he published two serious but somewhat tiresome works on politics.

15. _La politique naturelle_.

to the naturalistic principles which were the basis of his entire philosophy. The first is also attributed to Malesherbes. There (Gal. _Corresp._, Vol. II, p. 167).

Richard who criticized it from point of view of the divine right
In a preface of forty-seven pages the fears of the conservative

dele vertu, de la saine politique etc. rompre tous les canaux de
communication entre la terre et le ciel, bannir, exterminer du monde

la plus horrible."

sur la Morale_, Amsterdam, Rey, 1776, is interesting mainly for
its unfortunate dedication and peroration, inscribed to Louis XVI,
who was hailed therein as a long expected Messiah.

18. Holbach's last works dealt exclusively with morals. They

la nature_, Amsterdam, 1771, and

19. A posthumous work, _Elements de la Morale universelle, ou
catechisme de la nature_, Paris, 1790. This is a beautiful
little book. It is simple and clear to the last degree.
There have been several translations in Spanish for the purposes
of elementary education in morals in the public schools. It was
composed in 1765. Holbach's attitude towards morals is indicated
by his _Avertissement_--“La morale est une science dont les principes

(Amsterdam), 1770. This work has gone through over thirty editions
in France, Spain, Germany, England and the United States. No book
of a philosophic or scientific character has ever caused such a
sensation at the time of its publication, excepting perhaps Darwin’s
_Origin of Species_, the thesis of which is more than hinted at by
Holbach. There were several editions in 1770. A very few copies

la Nature_, which ends the book was also published separately and
is sometimes attributed to Diderot, 8vo, 16 pp. [54:1]

1774, attributed to Helvetius, a very clear, concise epitome largely
in Holbach’s own short and telling sentences, and much more effective
than the original because of its brevity. Holbach himself reproduced

Payrard plagiarized it freely in _De la Nature et de ses Lois_, Paris,
1773. The book has been attributed to Diderot, Helvetius, Robinet,
Damilaville and others. Naigeon is certain that it is entirely by
Holbach, although it is generally held that Diderot had a hand in it.
It was published under the name of Mirabaud to obviate persecution.
The manuscript, it was alleged, had been found among his papers as a
sort of "testament" or philosophical legacy to posterity. This work
may be called the bible of scientific materialism and dogmatic atheism.
Nothing before or since has ever approached it in its open and
unequivocal insistence on points of view commonly held, if at all,
with reluctance and reserve. It is impossible in a study of this
length to deal fully with the attacks and refutations that were
published immediately. We may mention first the condemnation of the
book by the _Parlement de Paris_, August 18, 1770, to be burned by
the public hangman along with Voltaire's _Dieu et les Hommes_, and

September 24, 1769. [55:2]

and ridiculous that the _Parlement de Paris_ refused to sanction
its publication, and it was printed by the express order of the King.
As Grimm observed, it seemed designed solely to acquaint the ignorant
with this dangerous work, without opposing any of its propositions.
One would look in vain for a better example of the conservatism of
the legal profession. [55:3]

tout peut changer autour d'eux, _ils restent immuables avec la
loi_ (page 496).

cette multitude de sectes, d'opinions, de partis, et cet esprit
came from two somewhat unexpected quarters, from Ferney and Sans Souci.

Voltaire, as usual, was not wholly consistent in his opinions of it,
as is revealed in his countless letters on the subject. Grimm
attributed his hostility to jealousy, and the fear that the

que le patriarcat ne s'en aille au diable avec lui." [56:4]

sur la jalousie, pour servir de commentaire aux derniers ouvrages
de M. de Voltaire_. 1772. Frederick II naturally felt bound to
defend the kings who, as Voltaire said, were no better treated than

Voltaire's correspondence during this period is so interesting that
it seems worth while to quote at length, especially from his letters
to Fredrick the Great. In May 1770, shortly after the publication

"On a tant dit de sottises sur la nature que je ne lis plus aucun

a fairly favorable impression of the book. "Il m'a paru qu'il y avait

that philosophers or theologians would keep silent about this scandalous

book. Before the end of the month Voltaire was writing to d'Alembert

about his own and the king of Prussia's refutations of it, and the same
Later Voltaire confessed to Frederick that he also had undertaken to

lui les deux hommes les moins superstitieux de l'Europe, ce que devrait
lui plaire beaucoup" (p. 390).

Frederick, however, hesitated to make his refutation public, and

et que je l'eusse fait imprimer. Je sens que je n'ai point du

and in his letters, could not find terms harsh enough in which to

about Holbach's book as time went on. His letters and various works
abound in references to it, and it is difficult to determine his
motives. He was accused, as has been suggested, by Holbach's circle
"de caresser les gens en place, et d'abandonner ceux qui n'y sont
plus." [58:12] M. Avenel believed that he suspected Holbach himself
of making these accusations. Voltaire's letter to the Duc de Richelieu,
Nov. 1, 1770, [58:13] seems to give them foundation.

A very different reaction was that of Goethe and his university

a harmless and uninteresting book, "grau," "cimmerisch," "totenhaft,"
"die echte Quintessenz der Greisenheit." To these fervent young men
in the youthful flush of romanticism, its sad, atheistic twilight
seemed to cast a veil over the beauty of the earth and rob the heaven of stars; and they lightheartedly discredited both Holbach and Voltaire in favor of Shakespeare and the English romantic school. One would look far for a better instance of the romantic reaction which set in so soon and so obscured the clarity of the issues at stake in the eighteenth century thought. [58:14]

The leading refutations directed explicitly against the

2 vols., 12mo.

12mo, pp. viii + 335.

6. Castillon, J. de (Salvernini di Castiglione), Observations sur
Nature_. Paris, Lambert, 1771, 12mo.

Londres, Heydinger, 1773


importantes sur la religion, etc., 1785.

Avignon, Niel, 2 vols., 12mo.


Augsburg, 1803.

Of these and other refutations of materialism such as Saint-Martin's l'univers_, Delisles de Sales' _Philosophie de la nature_, etc.,
the works of Voltaire and Frederick the Great are the most interesting
but by no means the most serious or convincing. Morley finds Voltaire
very weak and much beside the point, especially in his discussion of
order and disorder in nature which Holbach had denied. Voltaire's
argument is that there must be an intelligent motor or cause behind
nature (p. 7). This is God (p. 8). He admits at the outset that all
systems are mere dreams but he continues to insist with a dogmatism
equal to Holbach's on the validity of his dream. He repeatedly asserts
without foundation that Holbach's system is based on the false experiment
of Needham (pp. 5, 6), and even goes so far as to ridicule the
evolutionary hypothesis altogether (p. 6). He speaks of the necessity
of a belief in God, by a kind of natural logic. God and matter exist

nous dit ce qu'il est." God himself seems to be a kind of fatalistic
necessity. "C'est ce que vous appellerez Nature et c'est ce que j'appelle
Dieu." At the end he shifts the argument from the base of necessity to
that of utility. Which is the more consoling doctrine? If the idea of
God has prevented ten crimes I hold that the entire world should embrace
it (p. 27). As Morley has said, such arguments could scarcely have
convinced Voltaire himself.

Frederick was surprised that Voltaire and D'Alembert had found anything
good in the book. His refutation was more methodical than that of
Voltaire, who called it a "homage to the Divinity" but wrote to D'Alembert
that it was written in the style of a notary. Two other refutations
emanating from the Academy of Berlin were those of Castillon and Holland.
The first of these is a very heavy and learned work, formidable and
forbidding in its logic. Castillon reduces Holbach's propositions to
three. The self-existence of matter, the essential relation of movement
to it, and the possibility of deriving everything from it or some mode of
it. Castillon concludes after five hundred pages of reasoning that matter
is contingent, movement not inherent in it, and that purely spiritual beings
and wicked error." Holland's is a still more serious work, which the
Protestant his work was condemned forthwith, Jan. 17, 1773.

Bergier's refutation is interesting as an attack from a churchman of
extraordinary keenness and insight into the progress of the new

Rochfort and Fangouse are milder and more naive in their demonstrations

brutal work which qualifies Holbach as a "vile apostle of vice and crime,"

that has yet dishonored the globe--one which covers the century with
shame and will be the scandal of future generations.

The work of Paulian is of a different sort. Coming comparatively late,
it attempted to review the hostile opinions of many years and then mass
this end Paulian rewrites the entire book chapter by chapter, giving the
"true version." He then reviews Holland's outline and Bergier's comments,

_Dict. des Philosophes_, _Dict. anti-philosophe_, his own _Dict._
in general. He then reviews articles by members of the philosophic
school against materialism and then goes back to Holbach’s sources, Diderot, Bayle, Spinoza, Lucretius, Epicurus, etc. The work is not scholarly but comprehensive and evidently discouraged further formal refutations.

followed 1789. Delisle de Sales found it a monstrosity--a _fratras_; de mensonge et d’invective”; M. Villemain is much more calm and fair; seductive but full of false reasoning; Lerminier was so severe that St.-Beuve was moved to defend Holbach against him. Samuel Wilkinson, the English translator of 1820, is one of the few whose criticism is at all favorable. Holbach has always appealed to a certain type of radical mind and his translators and editors have generally been men who were often over-enthusiastic. For example, Mr. Wilkinson says of surpassed it in the eloquence and sublimity of its language or in the facility with which it treats the most abstruse and difficult subjects. It is without exception the boldest effort the human mind has yet produced in the investigation of Morals and Theology. The republic of letters has never produced another author whose pen was so well calculated to emancipate mankind from all those trammels with which the nurse, the school master, and the priest have successively locked up their noblest faculties, before they were capable of reasoning and judging for themselves."

has been done by Damiron, Soury, Fabre, Lange, Morley, the historians
of philosophy, and encyclopaedists; and the book itself is easily available in the larger libraries. The substance of Holbach's philosophy is susceptible of clearer treatment apart from it or any one of his books, although it permeates all of them.

M. Jules Soury has said, in describing a certain type of mind: "Il gardent toute la vie quelque chose des dons charmants de la jeunesse et de notre conscience, une humeur alerte, toute de joyeuse ardeur, et des intermondes d'Epicure."

Such was Holbach. His philosophy is based on the child-like assumption that things are as they seem, provided they are observed with sufficient care by a sufficient number of people. This brings us at once to the very heart of Holbach's method which was experimental and inductive to the last degree. Holbach was nourished on what might be called scientific rather than philosophical traditions. As M. Tourneux has pointed out, he had been a serious student of the natural sciences, especially those connected with the constitution of the earth. These studies led him to see the disparity between certain accepted and traditional cosmologies and a scientific interpretation of the terrestrial globe and the forms of life which flourish upon it. Finding the supposed sacred and infallible records untrustworthy in
one regard, he began to question their veracity at other points.

Being of a critical frame of mind, he took the records rather more
literally than a sympathetic, allegorical apologist would have done,
although it cannot be said that he used much historical insight.

After having studied the sacred texts for purposes of writing or having
translated other men's studies on Moses, David, the Prophets, Jesus,
Paul, the Christian theologians and saints, miracles, etc., he concluded
that these accounts were untrustworthy and mendacious. He knew ancient
and modern philosophy and found in the greater part of it an unwarranted
romantic or theological trend which his scientific training had caused
him to suspect. It must be admitted that however false or illogical
Holbach's conclusions may be considered, he was by no means ignorant of
the subjects he chose to treat, as some of his detractors would have one
believe. His theory of knowledge was that of Locke and Condillac, and
on this foundation he built up his system of scientific naturalism
and dogmatic atheism.

His initial assumption is, as has been suggested, that experience
to knowledge. By them we become conscious of an external objective
world, of which sentient beings themselves are a part, from which
they receive impressions through their sense organs. These myriad
impressions when compared and reflected upon form reasoned knowledge
or truth, provided they are substantiated by repeated experiences
carefully made. That is, an idea is said to be true when it conforms
perfectly with the actual external object. This is possible unless
one's senses are defective, or one's judgment vitiated by emotion
and passion.
Holbach's contention is that if one applies experience and reason to the external universe, or nature, "ce vaste assemblage de tout ce qui existe"; it reveals a _single objective reality_, i. e., _matter_, which is in itself essentially active or in a state of motion.

From matter in motion are derived all the phenomena that strike our senses. All is matter or a function of it. Matter, then, is not an effect, but a cause. It is not caused; it is from eternity and of necessity. The cardinal point in Holbach's philosophy is an inexorable materialistic necessity. Nothing, then, is exempt from the laws of physics and chemistry. Inorganic substance and organic life fall into the same category. Man himself with all his differentiated faculties is but a function of matter and motion in extraordinary complex and involved relations. Man's imputation to himself of free will and unending consciousness apart from his machine is an idle tale built on his desires, not on his experiences nor his knowledge of nature. This imputation of a will or soul to nature, independent of it or in any sense above it, is a still more idle one derived from his renunciation of the witness of his senses and his following after the phantoms of his imagination. It is ignorance or disregard of nature then that has given rise to supernatural ideas that have "no correspondence with true sight," or, as Holbach expressed it, have no counterpart in the external object. In other words, theology, or poetry about God, as Petrarch said, is ignorance of natural causes reduced to a system.
Man is a purely natural or physical being, like a tree or a stone. His so-called spiritual nature (l'homme moral) is merely a phase of his physical nature considered under a special aspect. He is all matter in motion, and when that ceases to function in a particular way, called life, he ceases to be as a conscious entity. He is so organized, however, that his chief desires are to survive and render his existence happy. By happiness Holbach means the presence of pleasure and the absence of pain. In all his activity, then, man will seek pleasure and avoid pain. The chief cause of man's misery or lack of well being is his ignorance of the powers and possibilities of his own nature and the Universal Nature. All he needs is to ascertain his place in nature and adjust himself to it. From the beginning of his career he has been the dupe of false ideas, especially those connected with supernatural powers, on whom he supposed he was dependent. But, if ignorance of nature gave birth to the Gods, knowledge of nature is calculated to destroy them and the evils resulting from them, the introduction of theistic ideas into politics and morals. In a word, the truth, that is, correct ideas of nature is the one thing needful to the happiness and well-being of man.

The application of these principles to the given situation in France in 1770 would obviously have produced unwelcome results. Holbach's theory was that religion was worse than useless in that it had inculcated false and pernicious ideas in politics and morals. He would do away completely with it in the interest of putting these sciences on a natural basis. This basis is self-interest, or man's inevitable inclination toward survival and the highest degree of
Government then assumes the functions of moral restraint formally delegated to religion; and punishments render virtue attractive and vice repugnant. Holbach's theory of social organization is practically that of Aristotle. Men combine in order to increase the store of individual well-being, to live the good life. If those to whom society has delegated sovereignty abuse their power, society has the right to take it from them. Sovereignty is merely an agent for the diffusion of truth and the maintenance of virtue, which are the prerequisites of social and individual well-being. The technique of progress is enlightenment and good laws.

Nothing could be clearer or simpler than Holbach's system. As Diderot so truly said, he will not be quoted on both sides of any question. His uncompromising atheism is the very heart and core of his system and clarifies the whole situation. All supernatural ideas are to be abandoned. Experience and reason are once for all made supreme, and henceforth refuse to share their throne or abdicate in favor of faith. Holbach's aim was as he said to bring man back to nature and render reason dear to him. "Il est temps que cette raison

If reason is to rule, the usurper, religion, must be ejected; hence atheism was fundamental to his entire system. He did not suppose by any means that it would become a popular faith, because it presupposed too much learning and reflection, but it seemed to him
the necessary weapon of a reforming party at that time. He defines

inutile au bonheur des hommes."

APPENDIX

HOLBACH'S CORRESPONDENCE

The following letters of Holbach are extant:

Holbach to Hume, Aug. 23, 1763.
Holbach to Hume, Mar. 16, 1766.
Holbach to Hume, July 7, 1766.
Holbach to Hume, Aug. 18, 1766.
Holbach to Hume, Sept. 7, 1766.

These were printed in Hume's _Private Correspondence_, London, 1820, pp. 252-263, and deal largely with Hume's quarrel with Rousseau.

Holbach to Garrick, June 16, 1765.
Holbach to Garrick, Feb. 9, 1766.
These two letters are in manuscript in Lansdowne House, Coll. Forster, and were published by F. A. Hedgcock.

Holbach to Wilkes, Nov. 9, 1766 (Brit. Mus. Mss., Vol. 30869, p. 81).

The first seven of these letters are published for the first time in the present volume, pp. 6-11 and pp. 75-80.

Holbach to Galiani, Aug. 11, 1769 (_Critica_, Vol. I, pp. 488 sq.).

Galiani to Holbach, April 7, 1770 (Galiani, _Correspondence_, Paris, 1890, Vol. I, p. 92).


There are references to other letters in _Critica_ which I have not been able to find.

Holbach to Beccaria, Mar. 15, 1767, published by M. Landry  
_Beccaria, Scritte e lettre inediti_, 1910, p. 146.


HOLBACH TO HUME

(Hume, Private Correspondence, London, 1820, pp. 252-263)

PARIS, the 23rd. of August, 1763

_Sir_,--

I have received with the deepest sense of gratitude your very kind and obliging letter of the 8th. inst: favors of great men ought to give pride to those that have at least the merit of setting the value that is due upon them. This is my case with you, sir; the reading of your valuable works has not only inspired me with the strongest admiration for your genius and amiable parts, but gave me the highest idea of your person and the strongest desire of getting acquainted with one of the greatest philosophers of my age, and of the best friend
to mankind. These sentiments have emboldened me to send formally, though unknown to you, the work you are mentioning to me. I thought you were the best to judge of such a performance, and I took only the liberty of giving a hint of my desires, in case it should meet with your approbation, nor was I surprized, or presumed to be displeased, at seeing my wishes disappointed. The reasons appeared very obvious to me; not withstanding the British liberty, I conceived there were limits even to it. However, my late friend's book has appeared since and there is even an edition of it lately done in England: I believe it will be relished by the friends of truth, who like to see vulgar errors struck at the root. This has been your continued task, sir; and you deserve for it the praises of all sincere wellwishers of humanity: give me leave to rank myself among them, and express to you, by this opportunity you have been so kind as to give me, the fervent desire we have to see you in this country. Messrs. Stuart, Dempster, Fordyce, who are so good as to favor me with their company, have given me some hopes of seeing you in this metropolis, where you have so many admirers as readers, and as many sincere friends as there are disciples of philosophy. I don't doubt upon you to come over. I assure you, sir, you won't perceive much the change of the country, for all countries are alike for people that have the same minds.

I am, with the greatest veneration and esteem, sir, your most obedient and most humble servant.

D'HOLBACH.
PARIS, Feb ye 9th, 1766.

I received, my very Dear Sir, with a great deal of pleasure, your agreeable letter of ye 24th of January, but was very sorry to hear that you are inlisted in the numerous troup of _gouty_ people. Tho' I have myself the honour of being of that tribe I dont desire my friends should enter into the same corporation. I am particularly griev'd to see you among the invalids for you have, more than any other, occasion for the free use of your limbs. However, don't be cross and peevish for that would be only increasing you distemper; and I charge you especially of not scolding that admirable lady Mrs Garrick, whose sweetness of temper and care must be a great comfort in your circumstances. I beg leave to present her with my respects and ye compliments of my wife, that has enjoyed but an indifferent state of health, owing to the severity of the winter. Mr and Made Helvetius desire you both their best wishes and so do all your friends, for whom I can answer that every one of them keeps a kind remembrance of your valuable persons. Dr. Gem thinks you'll do very well to go to Bath, but his opinion is that a thin diet would be more serviceable to you than anything else; believe to his queries, but complains of their shortness and laconism; however it is not your fault. He is glad to hear you have receiv'd the compliments of our friend Dr Gatti to whom I gave your direction
before he went to London. Our friend Suard has entered his neck into
the matrimonial halter; we are all of us very sorry for it for we know
that nothing combin'd with love, will at last make nothing at all.

I was not much surpris'd at the particulars you are pleas'd to mention
about Rousseau. According to the thorough knowledge I have had of
him I look on that man as a mere philosophical quack, full of
affectation, of pride, of oddities and even villainies; the work he
is going to publish justifies the last imputation. Is his memory so
short as to forget that Mr Grimm, for those 9 years past, has taken
care of the mother of his wench or _gouvernante_ whom he left to starve
here after having debauch'd her daughter and having got her 3 or 4
times with child. That great philosopher should remember that
Mr. Grimm has in his hands letters under his own hand-writing that
prove him the most ungrateful dogg in the world. During his last
stay in Paris he made some attempts to see Mr Diderot, and being
refused that favor, he pretended that Diderot endeavoured to see
him, but that himself had refused peremptorily to comply with his
request. I hope these particulars will suffice to let you know what
you are to think of that illustrious man. I send you here a copy of
a letter supposed to come from the King of Prussia, but done by
Mr Horace Walpole, whereby you'll see that gentleman has found out
his true character. But enough of that rascal who deserves not to be
in Mr Hume's company but rather among the bears, if there are any in
the mountains of Wales.
great number of copies have been sent over already to England unless you have left your subscription here, where hitherto not one copy has been delivered for prudent reasons.

We have had in the French Comedy a new play called _Le Philosophie sans le savoir_ done and acted in a new stile, quite natural and moving: it has a prodigious success and deserves it extremely well. Marmontel will give us very soon upon the Italian stage his comical opera of Publick, having been very much delighted by the rehearsal of it; the music was done by Mr Cohaut who teaches my wife to play on the luth. We expect a tragedy of the Dutch Barnvelt.

Mr Wilkes is still in this town, where he intends to stay until you give him leave to return to his native country. We have had the pleasure of seeing Mr Chanquion, your friend, who seems to be a very discerning gentleman and to whom in favor of your friendship I have shown all the politeness I could. I hear that Sr James Macdonald has still at Naples and stands a fair chance of being employ’d in the ministry there.

Adieu, very dear Sir and remember your affectionate friend

D'HOLBACH

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HOLBACH TO WILKES

(Brit. Mus. Mss., Vol. 30869, p. 39)
PARIS the 22d Of May (1766)

_My dear Sir_

I am extremely glad to know your lucky passage and happy arrival in your native country. I hope you know too well the sincere dispositions of my heart as to doubt of the friendship I have vowed to you for life; it has been of too long a duration to be shaken by any circumstances, and especially by those that do honor to you. I shall be very happy if your affairs (that seem to be in a fair way) permit you to drop over very soon to spend some time in this place along with Miss Wilkes to whom Made D'Holbach and I pay our best compliments. I can easily paint to my imagination the pleasure you both felt at your first meeting; everybody that has any sensibility must be acquainted with the grateful pangs in those moving circumstances.

Your case with the hawker at your entry in London is very odd and whimsical you did extremely well to humour the man in his opinion about Mr. Wilkes. I dare say if you had done otherwise his fist would have convinc'd you of the goodness of your cause, and then it would have been impossible for you to pass for a dead man any longer; which however, I think was very necessary for you in the beginning. I expect with great eagerness the settlement of your affairs with the ministry to your own satisfaction; be persuaded, Dear Sir, that nobody interests himself in your happiness than myself, and nothing
will conduce more to it than your steady attachment to the principles of honor and patriotism.

If you don't find a way of disposing of the little packet, you need not take much trouble about it, and you may bring it back along with you, when you come to this place, as to the kind offers you are so good as to make me about commissions, experience has taught me that it is unsafe to trust you with them, so I beg leave with gratitude to decline your proposals as that point.

All our common friends and acquaintances desire their best compliments to you, and believe me, my dear Sir.

Your affectionate oblig'd humble servant

D'HOLBACH

HOLBACH TO WILKES

(Brit. Mus. Mss., VOL 30869, p. 81)

PARIS 9ber 10th 1766

_My very Dear Sir_

I receiv'd with the greatest pleasure the news of your lucky arrival in Engelland. You know the sentiments of my heart, and are undoubtedly convinc'd how much I wish for the good success of all your enterprises
tho I am to be a great looser by it. I rejoice very heartily at the
fine prospect you have now in view and don't doubt but the persons you
mention will succeed if they are in good earnest: which is always a
little doubtful in people of that Kidney.

We have had the pleasure of seeing Miss Wilkes three or four times since
your departure, she is extreamly well and longs for the return of her
friend Mlle Helvetius the 20th of this month.

Rousseau will very likely hate the English very cordially for making
him pay so dear for his books, it is however a sign that he told us a
lye when he pretended in his writings to have no books at all, as to
his guitar he should buy a new one to tune his heart a little better
than he did before.

We have no news here, except the Election of Mr Thomas as a member of
the french academy. Marquis Beccaria is going to leave us very soon
being obliged to return to Milan: Count Veri will at the same time set
out for England.

I'll be oblig'd to you for a copy or two of the book printed in holland
you mentioned in your letter you may send it by some private opportunity
to Miss Wilkes, with, proper directions. A gentleman of our Society
should be glad to get 2 copies of Baskervilles' virgil _in octavo_.


Tho Mr Davenport and Rousseau seem to be pleased very much with one
another, I suppose they may very soon be tired of their squabbling,
and the latter like the apostles will shake of against the barbarous
Britons the dust of his feet.

Receive the hearty compliments of my wife and all our friends. You
know the true sentiments of my heart for you,
Dear Sir. I am with great sincerity
your most obedient humble Servant
D'HOLBACH

HOLBACH TO WILKES

_Dear Sir_

I receiv'd with a great deal of pleasure your friendly letter from
Ostende of the 26th. nov. I was extreamly glad to hear your happy
arrival at that place, and do not doubt but you met with a lucky
passage to Dover the following day, we are now enjoying the conversation
of your British friends about elections; that will not be tedious for
you if, according to your hopes, you should succeed in your projects.

I see by your letter that instead of coming back directly by Calais
you intend to travel with Miss Wilkes through Antwerp and the Low
countries, which I should think not very advisable in this rigorous season of the year, for generally at that time the waters are lock'd up by the frost and travelling is bad et tedious and may be would prove hurtful to your tender fellow traveler to whom my wife and I desire our best compliments. Such a scheme will be more advantageous for you both and more conformable to the wishes of your friends in this place.

Galliani to that place, where he complains of having not heard of the sun since he set his foot on British shore, however he may comfort himself for we have had very little of it in this country.

from his Native country for now he may say _Gens inimica mihi Tyrrenenum navigat aquor_. We have no material news in this country, except that the queen continues to be in a very bad state of health.

If there is some good new romance I'll be oblig'd to bring it over along with you as, well as a couple of french books call'd easily find them in London, for we cannot get them here. I am told the works of one Morgan have been esteem'd in your country but I don't know the titles of them, if you should know them and meet with them with facility, I should be very much oblig'd to you provided you make me pay a little more than you have done hitherto for your commissions.

All our common friends beg their compliments and I wish for your speedy return, and I am Sincerely
Dear Sir

Your faithful affectionate humble servant

D'HOLBACH

PARIS the 10th of decemb. 1767

HOLBACH TO WILKES

(Brit. Mus. Mss., Vol. 30870, p. 59)

GRANDVAL, 17th of July 1768

_Dear Sir_

I receiv'd with a great deal of pleasure your very agreeable letter of the 28th of last month. I am extreamly glad that your generous soul is very far from sinking under the weight of these Misfortunes, and to see that you don't give up the hopes of carrying triumphantly your point notwithstanding the discouragements you have met with lately.

I need not tell you how much your friends in Paris and I in particular interest ourselves in all the events that may befall you. Our old friendship ought to be a sure pledge of my sincere sentiments for you, and of my best wishes for your good success in all your undertakings.

I believe you can do no better but to keep strictly to the rules you have laid down for your conduct, and I don't doubt but you'll find it will answer the best to your purpose.

I am very much oblig'd to you, Dear Sir, for the kind offers you make in your friendly letter. I have desir'd already Mr Suard to bring over
a few books lately published in your metropolis. I am very glad to hear
that Gentleman is pleas'd with his journey.

There's no possibility of getting for you a compleat sett of Callots
engravings. Such a collection must be the business of many years; it
is to be found only after the decease of some curious men who have taken
a great deal of trouble to collect them. I found indeed in two shops 8
they wanted to sell them excessively dear; in general 200 guineas would
procure a collection very far from being compleat.

My wife and all our common acquaintance desire their best compliments
to you and to Miss Wilkes and you know the sentiments wherewith I am
for ever

Dear Sir

your affectionate friend and

very humble servant

D'HOLBACH

HOLBACH TO WILKES

(Brit. Mus. Mss., Vol. 30871, p. 16)

PARIS the 19th of March 1770

_Dear Sir_

I receiv'd with a due sense of gratitude the favour of your last
letter, and was overjoy'd to hear from yourself that your long
confinement has not been able hitherto to obstruct the lively flow
of your spirits. A little more patience and you'll reach the end
of all your misfortunes, that have been faithfully partaken by your
friends in England and abroad, for my own part I wish most sincerely
that everything for the future may turn to your profit and welfare,
without hurting that of your country, to whom, as a lover of mankind,
I am a well wisher.

My wife desires her best compliments to you and your beloved Daughter,
whom we both expect to see again with a great deal of pleasure in
this country next month. Notwithstanding our bad circumstances we
are making very great preparations for the Wedding of the Dauphin,
and our metropolis begins already to be filled with foreigners that
flock hither from all parts of the world. Our friend Mr D'Alainville
is to set out at the end of April to fetch the Archduchess at
Strasbourg and bring mask (ed) (?) her different stages on the road
to Versailles.

We have no news in the literary world except that Voltaire

of the _Capucins du pays de Gex_ where he lives, a title of which
all his pranks seemed to exclude him, but grace you know, is omnipotent,
and monks are not over nice when there is something to be got by
their condescension.

If the hurry of affairs should leave you any moments to read
curious books I would advise you to peruse two very strange works lately publish'd viz _Recherches philosophiques sur les_

you'll find them cheaper and more easily in London that at Paris.

All your late acquaintances in this Town desire me to present you with their sincere compliments and best wishes; as to mine you know that they have no other object but your Welfare.

I am, Dear Sir, for ever

your most affectionate friend

and humble servant

D'HOLBACH

P. S. I'll be very much oblig'd to you for sending over to me in 2 vol. small octavo.

HOLBACH TO WILKES

(Wilkes, Correspondence, London, 1805, Vol. 4, p. 176)

PARIS, April 27; 1775

"_My Lord_,

"I received with the utmost gratitude your lordship's friendly
letter of the 28th of March. (1775?) I should have done myself the honor of answering sooner to your kind propositions, if I had not been prevented by some gouty infirmities that have assailed in the beginning of this spring. I esteem myself very happy to find that the hurry of business, and your exhaltation to the rank of chief-magistrate, could not make you forget your friendship to me; though my present circumstances do not permit me to make use of your friendly invitation, be persuaded my very dear lord that Madame D'Holbach and myself shall forever keep these signs of your kindness, in very grateful remembrance.

We both desire our best compliments to your very amiable lady-mayoress: who acted so well her part lately in the Egyptian hall, to the satisfaction of that prodigious crowd you have been entertaining there. All members of our society that have had the happiness of being acquainted with you, desire to be kindly remembered; and a continuation of your valuable friendship shall for ever be the utmost ambition

my lord

of your most sincerely devoted

D'HOLBACH"

GALIANI To HOLBACH

(Galiani, Corresp., Vol. I, p. 199)

NAPLES, le 21 juillet, 1770
Bonjour, mon cher Baron,

et cause la banqueroute du savoir, du plaisir et de l'esprit humain. Mais vous allez me dire qu'aujourd'hui il y avait trop de

Adieu, mon cher baron. Écrivez-moi de longues lettres, pour que le plaisir en soit plus grand. Embrassez-moi longuement la baronne, et soyez longue dans tout que vous faites, dans tout de revoir Paris.

Adieu.

HOLBACH To GALIANI

(Critica, Vol. I, 1903, p. 489)
coutume des voyageurs qui nous quittent toujours avec peine.

Je suis bien aise que vous ayez lu le livre de Mirabaud qui fait

que M. Hume dit d'un catholique que Henri VIII fit conduire au

si bonne dans le royaume. En dernier lieu on vient de publier un

ouvrage sous le titre de _Droit des souverains sur les biens du

proposition si mal sonnante n'a pu manquer de mettre le ciel en

[ENDNOTES]


1858, 3 vols., 8vo); Lange, _Geschichte des Materialismus_ (Eng. tr.,
Boston, 1877); Morley, _Diderot and the Encyclopedists_ (N. Y., 1891,
(Stuttgart, 1896); Hancock, A. E., _The French Revolution and the
English Poets_ (N. Y., 1899); Tallentyre, _The Friends of Voltaire_


[6:7] Carlyle, Rev. Dr. A., _Autobiography_, ed. Burton, Boston, 1861,
p. 137 sq. for Holbach's English friends mentioned in his letters to
Wilkes.

[12:9] See Chap. II and Bibliography, Pt. I, for these and his other works.


His career is somewhat doubtful. He travelled in Italy in 1779 impression of him. John Wilkes, in a letter to his daughter in 1781, seems to imply that he had not turned out very well, and hopes that the baron's second son will make good the deficiencies of the first. In 1806 he published a translation of Weiland's _Oberon_ or _Huon de Bordeaux_ which went thru another edition in 1825, but those are the only details that have come to light.

Diderot, in writing to Mlle Volland Sep. 17, 1760 says: "On bleus, des levres fines, une bouche riante, la peau la plus blanche encore que du blanc et du vermillon."

Gazette de France, June 1, 1781.

Holbach's intendant was [a] Jew, Berlise. After his death several of his old servants Vincent, David, and Plocque, contested Holbach's will, in which they thought they were legatees. The case was in the courts for several years and was finally decided against them. Douarche, pp. 141, 261, 325, 689.

He met Voltaire in Paris in 1778, however, and Naigeon relates that Voltaire greeted him very cordially and said that he had long desired to make his acquaintance.

Collignon, _Diderot_, p. 1.


See appendix, p. 73, p. 77.

See appendix, p. 71.

See appendix, p. 72.

See p. 6 sq. and appendix pp. 75 sq.
flames by the condemnations of Jan. 10, 1774, and February 16, 1776.


seine Gegenwart auszuhalten, dass wir davor wie vor einem Gespenste schauderten. Der Verfasser glaubt sein Buch ganz eigens zu empfehlen, wenn er in der Vorrede versichert, dass er, als ein abgelebter Greis, wolle. Wir lachten ihn aus: denn wir glaubten bemerkt zu haben, dass

"Wie Kirschen und Beeren schmecken, muss man Kinder und Sperlinge fragen"--dies waren unsere Lust und Leibworte: und so schien uns jenes Buch, als die rechte Quintessenz der Greisenheit, unschmackhaft, ja abgeschmackt Alles sollte notwendig sein und deswegen kein Gott.

wir. Dabei gestanden wir freilich, das wir uns den Notwendigkeiten der

nicht aufgeben. Das Wort Freiheit klingt so schon, dass man es nicht

Keiner von uns hatte das Buch hinausgelesen; denn wir fanden uns in Himmels- und Erdbeschreibung, Naturgeschichte und Anatomie und so manches andere hatte nun zeit Jahren und bis auf den letzten Tag uns sowie das Allgemeinere erfahren. Das hierbei wohl manches vorkommen die Feuerprobe bestauden haben. Allein wie hohl und leer ward uns in deiser tristen Atheistischen Halbnacht zu Mute, in welcher die Erde mit
allen ihren Gebilden, der Himmel mit allen seinen Gestirnen verschwand!

Eine Materie sollte sein von Ewigkeit und von Ewigkeit her bewegt, und
sollte nun mit dieser Bewegung rechts und links und nach allen Seiten

wirklich aus seiner bewegten Materie die Welt vor unsern Augen

Natur in der Natur erschient, zur materiellen schweren, zwar bewegten,
aber doch richtungs- und gestaltlosen Natur zu verwandeln, und glaubt
dadurch recht viel gewonnen zu haben. Wenn uns jedoch dieses Buch
einigen Schaden gebracht hat, so war es der, das wir allen
Philosophie, besonderers aber der Metaphysick recht herzlich gram
wurden, und bleiben, dagegen aber auf lebendige Wissen, Erfahren,
Thun und Dichten uns nur desto lebhafter und leidenschaftlicher hinwarfen.


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in Boston, New York or Washington.
ABBREVIATIONS

B. M., British Museum.

L. C., Library of Congress.

C. U., Columbia University.

H. U., Harvard University.

U. T. S., Union Theological Seminary.

G. T. S., General Theological Seminary.

A. T. S., Andover Theological Seminary.

N. Y., New York Public Library.

B. P., Boston Public Library.

Of about 120 editions consulted, C. U. had 13; U. T. S. 7; N. Y. 7; H. U. 6; B. P. 5; L. C. 4; A. T. S. 3; G. T. S. 1. There are 20 or more editions in existence that were not to be found in the library catalogs consulted.

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M. D... A Paris Durand, rue St. Jacques, au Griffon. Pissot, Quai des

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(12mo, pp. xxiv + 416.)
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Homo, quod rationis est particeps, consequentiam cernit causas rerum
videt, earumque progressus et quasi antecessiones non ignorat,
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Latius excisae pestes contagie serpunt, Victoresques suos natio victa premit. Rutilius, Itinerar. Lia I, vs. 394, Londres, MDCCCLXX. (12mo, pp. xxii + 201.)
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Hoc admonere simplices etiam potest,
Opinione alterius ne quid ponderent;
Ambitio namque diffidens mortalium
Aut gratiae subscribunt, aut odio suo;
Erit ille nottis, quem per te cognoveris.
Phaed., Lib. III, Fab. 10.

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Ovando enim ista observans quieto et libero animo esse poteris,
ut ad vem gerendam non Superstionem habeas, sed Rationem ducem.
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