The Confessions of J. J. Rousseau, Book 9 by Jean Jacques Rousseau

My impatience to inhabit the Hermitage not permitting me to wait until
the return of fine weather, the moment my lodging was prepared I hastened
to take possession of it, to the great amusement of the 'Coterie
Holbachaque', which publicly predicted I should not be able to support
solitude for three months, and that I should unsuccessfully return to
Paris, and live there as they did. For my part, having for fifteen years
been out of my element, finding myself upon the eve of returning to it,
I paid no attention to their pleasantries. Since contrary to my
inclinations, I have again entered the world, I have incessantly
regretted my dear Charmettes, and the agreeable life I led there. I felt
a natural inclination to retirement and the country: it was impossible
for me to live happily elsewhere. At Venice, in the train of public
affairs, in the dignity of a kind of representation, in the pride of
projects of advancement; at Paris, in the vortex of the great world, in
the luxury of suppers, in the brilliancy of spectacles, in the rays of
splendor; my groves, rivulets, and solitary walks, constantly presented
themselves to my recollection, interrupted my thought, rendered me
melancholy, and made me sigh with desire. All the labor to which I had
subjected myself, every project of ambition which by fits had animated my
ardor, all had for object this happy country retirement, which I now
thought near at hand. Without having acquired a genteel independence,
which I had judged to be the only means of accomplishing my views, I
imagined myself, in my particular situation, to be able to do without it,
and that I could obtain the same end by a means quite opposite. I had no
regular income; but I possessed some talents, and had acquired a name.
My wants were few, and I had freed myself from all those which were most
expensive, and which merely depended on prejudice and opinion. Besides
this, although naturally indolent, I was laborious when I chose to be so.
and my idleness was less that of an indolent man, than that of an
independent one who applies to business when it pleases him.

My profession of a copyist of music was neither splendid nor lucrative, but it was certain. The world gave me credit for the courage I had shown in making choice of it. I might depend upon having sufficient employment to enable me to live. Two thousand livres which remained of the produce of the 'Devin du Village', and my other writings, were a sum which kept me from being straitened, and several works I had upon the stocks promised me, without extorting money from the booksellers, supplies sufficient to enable me to work at my ease without exhausting myself, even by turning to advantage the leisure of my walks. My little family, consisting of three persons, all of whom were usefully employed, was not expensive to support. Finally, from my resources, proportioned to my wants and desires, I might reasonably expect a happy and permanent existence, in that manner of life which my inclination had induced me to adopt.

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

It was on the ninth of August, 1756, that I left cities, never to reside
in them again: for I do not call a residence the few days I afterwards
remained in Paris, London, or other cities, always on the wing, or
contrary to my inclinations. Madam d'Epinay came and took us all three
in her coach; her farmer carted away my little baggage, and I was put
into possession the same day. I found my little retreat simply
furnished, but neatly, and with some taste. The hand which had lent its
aid in this furnishing rendered it inestimable in my eyes, and I thought
it charming to be the guest of my female friend in a house I had made
choice of, and which she had caused to be built purposely for me.
Although the weather was cold, and the ground lightly covered with snow, the earth began to vegetate: violets and primroses already made their appearance, the trees began to bud, and the evening of my arrival was distinguished by the song of the nightingale, which was heard almost under my window, in a wood adjoining the house. After a light sleep, forgetting when I awoke my change of abode, I still thought myself in the Rue Grenelle, when suddenly this warbling made me give a start, and I exclaimed in my transport: "At length, all my wishes are accomplished!"

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

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

Of the different works I had upon the stocks, that I had longest resolved
in my mind which was most to my taste; to which I destined a certain
portion of my life, and which, in my opinion, was to confirm the
reputation I had acquired, was my 'Institutions Politiques. I had,
fourteen years before, when at Venice, where I had an opportunity of
marking the defects of that government so much boasted of, conceived
the first idea of them. Since that time my views had become much more
extended by the historical study of morality. I had perceived everything
to be radically connected with politics, and that, upon whatever
principles these were founded, a people would never be more than that
which the nature of the government made them; therefore the great
question of the best government possible appeared to me to be reduced to
this: What is the nature of a government the most proper to form the most
virtuous and enlightened, the wisest and best people, taking the last
epithet in its most extensive meaning? I thought this question was much
if not quite of the same nature with that which follows: What government
is that which, by its nature, always maintains itself nearest to the
laws, or least deviates from the laws. Hence, what is the law? and a
series of questions of similar importance. I perceived these led to
great truths, useful to the happiness of mankind, but more especially to
that of my country, wherein, in the journey I had just made to it, I had
not found notions of laws and liberty either sufficiently just or clear.
I had thought this indirect manner of communicating these to my fellow-
citizens would be least mortifying to their pride, and might obtain me
forgiveness for having seen a little further than themselves.

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

[It was more especially the wise severity of Duclos which inspired
me with this fear; as for Diderot, I know not by what means all my
conferences with him tended to make me more satirical than my
natural disposition inclined me to be. This prevented me from
consulting him upon an undertaking, in which I wished to introduce
nothing but the force of reasoning without the least appearance of
ill humor or partiality. The manner of this work may be judged of
by that of the 'Contrat Social', which is taken from it.]
I did not yet know that it would be finished in time, and in such a manner as to appear before my decease. I wished fearlessly to give to my subject everything it required; fully persuaded that not being of a satirical turn, and never wishing to be personal, I should in equity always be judged irreprehensible. I undoubtedly wished fully to enjoy the right of thinking which I had by birth; but still respecting the government under which I lived, without ever disobeying its laws, and very attentive not to violate the rights of persons, I would not from fear renounce its advantages.

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

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

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

Another undertaking much of the same kind, but of which the project was more recent, then engaged my attention: this was the extract of the works of the Abbe de Saint Pierre, of which, having been led away by the thread of my narrative, I have not hitherto been able to speak. The idea was suggested to me, after my return from Geneva, by the Abbe Malby, not immediately from himself, but by the interposition of Madam Dupin, who had some interest in engaging me to adopt it. She was one of the three or four pretty women of Paris, of whom the Abbe de Saint Pierre had been the spoiled child, and although she had not decidedly had the preference, she had at least partaken of it with Madam d'Aiguillon. She preserved for the memory of the good man a respect and an affection which did honor to them both; and her self-love would have been flattered by seeing the still-born works of her friend brought to life by her secretary. These works contained excellent things, but so badly told that the reading of them was almost insupportable; and it is astonishing the Abbe de Saint Pierre, who looked upon his readers as schoolboys, should nevertheless have spoken to them as men, by the little care he took to induce them to give him a hearing. It was for this purpose that the work was proposed to me as useful in itself, and very proper for a man laborious in
manoeuvre, but idle as an author, who finding the trouble of thinking
very fatiguing, preferred, in things which pleased him, throwing a light
upon and extending the ideas of others, to producing any himself.

Besides, not being confined to the functions of a translator, I was at
liberty sometimes to think for myself; and I had it in my power to give
such a form to my work, that many important truths would pass in it under
the name of the Abbe de Saint Pierre, much more safely than under mine.

The undertaking also was not trifling; the business was nothing less than
to read and meditate twenty-three volumes, diffuse, confused, full of
long narrations and periods, repetitions, and false or little views, from
amongst which it was necessary to select some few that were good and
useful, and sufficiently encouraging to enable me to support the painful
labor. I frequently wished to have given it up, and should have done so,
could I have got it off my hands with a great grace; but when I received
the manuscripts of the abbe, which were given to me by his nephew, the
Comte de Saint Pierre, I had, by the solicitation of St. Lambert, in some
measure engaged to make use of them, which I must either have done, or
have given them back. It was with the former intention I had taken the
manuscripts to the Hermitage, and this was the first work to which I
proposed to dedicate my leisure hours.

I had likewise in my own mind projected a third, the idea of which I owed
to the observations I had made upon myself and I felt the more disposed
to undertake this work, as I had reason to hope I could make it a truly
useful one, and perhaps, the most so of any that could be offered to the
world, were the execution equal to the plan I had laid down. It has been
remarked that most men are in the course of their lives frequently unlike
themselves, and seem to be transformed into others very different from what they were. It was not to establish a thing so generally known that I wished to write a book; I had a newer and more important object. This was to search for the causes of these variations, and, by confining my observations to those which depend on ourselves, to demonstrate in what manner it might be possible to direct them, in order to render us better and more certain of our dispositions. For it is undoubtedly more painful to an honest man to resist desires already formed, and which it is his duty to subdue, than to prevent, change, or modify the same desires in their source, were he capable of tracing them to it. A man under temptation resists once because he has strength of mind, he yields another time because this is overcome; had it been the same as before he would again have triumphed.

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

I have, however, applied myself but very little to this work, the title of which was to have been 'Morale Sensitive' ou le Materialisme du Sage. --[Sensitive Morality, or the Materialism of the Sage.]-- Interruptions, the cause of which will soon appear, prevented me from continuing it, and the fate of the sketch, which is more connected with my own than it may appear to be, will hereafter be seen.

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

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

During a considerable time I exactly followed the distribution I had prescribed myself, and found it very agreeable; but as soon as the fine weather brought Madam d'Epinay more frequently to Epinay, or to the Chervette, I found that attentions, in the first instance natural to me, but which I had not considered in my scheme, considerably deranged my projects. I have already observed that Madam d'Epinay had many amiable qualities; she sincerely loved her friends; served them with zeal; and, not sparing for them either time or pains, certainly deserved on their part every attention in return. I had hitherto discharged this duty without considering it as one, but at length I found that I had given myself a chain of which nothing but friendship prevented me from feeling
the weight, and this was still aggravated by my dislike to numerous
societies. Madam d’Epinay took advantage of these circumstances to make
me a proposition seemingly agreeable to me, but which was more so to
herself; this was to let me know when she was alone, or had but little
company. I consented, without perceiving to what a degree I engaged
myself. The consequence was that I no longer visited her at my own hour
--but at hers, and that I never was certain of being master of myself for
a day together. This constraint considerably diminished the pleasure
I had in going to see her. I found the liberty she had so frequently
promised was given me upon no other condition than that of my never
enjoying it; and once or twice when I wished to do this there were so
many messages, notes, and alarms relative to my health, that I perceived
that I could have no excuse but being confined to my bed, for not
immediately running to her upon the first intimation. It was necessary
I should submit to this yoke, and I did it, even more voluntarily than
could be expected from so great an enemy to dependence: the sincere
attachment I had to Madam D’Epinay preventing me, in a great measure,
from feeling the inconvenience with which it was accompanied. She,
on her part, filled up, well or ill, the void which the absence of her
usual circle left in her amusements. This for her was but a very slender
supplement, although preferable to absolute solitude, which she could not
support. She had the means of doing it much more at her ease after she
began with literature, and at all events to write novels, letters,
comedies, tales, and other trash of the same kind. But she was not so
much amused in writing these as in reading them; and she never scribbled
over two or three pages--at one sitting--without being previously assured
of having, at least, two or three benevolent auditors at the end of so
much labor. I seldom had the honor of being one of the chosen few except
by means of another. When alone, I was, for the most part, considered as
a cipher in everything; and this not only in the company of Madam
D'Epinay, but in that of M. d'Holbach, and in every place where Grimm
gave the 'ton'. This nullity was very convenient to me, except in a
tete-a-tete, when I knew not what countenance to put on, not daring to
speak of literature, of which it was not for me to say a word; nor of
gallantry, being too timid, and fearing, more than death, the
ridiculousness of an old gallant; besides that, I never had such an idea
when in the company of Madam D'Epinay, and that it perhaps would never
have occurred to me, had I passed my whole life with her; not that her
person was in the least disagreeable to me; on the contrary, I loved her
perhaps too much as a friend to do it as a lover. I felt a pleasure in
seeing and speaking to her. Her conversation, although agreeable enough
in a mixed company, was uninteresting in private; mine, not more elegant
or entertaining than her own, was no great amusement to her. Ashamed of
being long silent, I endeavored to enliven our tete-a-tete and, although
this frequently fatigued me, I was never disgusted with it. I was happy
to show her little attentions, and gave her little fraternal kisses,
which seemed not to be more sensual to herself; these were all. She was
very thin, very pale, and had a bosom which resembled the back of her hand.
This defect alone would have been sufficient to moderate my most ardent
desires; my heart never could distinguish a woman in a person who had it;
and besides other causes useless to mention, always made me forget the sex
of this lady.

Having resolved to conform to an assiduity which was necessary,
I immediately and voluntarily entered upon it, and for the first year at
least, found it less burthensome than I could have expected. Madam
d’Epinay, who commonly passed the summer in the country, continued there
but a part of this; whether she was more detained by her affairs in
Paris, or that the absence of Grimm rendered the residence of the
Chevrette less agreeable to her, I know not. I took the advantage of
the intervals of her absence, or when the company with her was numerous,
to enjoy my solitude with my good Theresa and her mother, in such a
manner as to taste all its charms. Although I had for several years
passed been frequently in the country, I seldom had enjoyed much of its
pleasures; and these excursions, always made in company with people who
considered themselves as persons of consequence, and rendered insipid by
constraint, served to increase in me the natural desire I had for rustic
pleasures. The want of these was the more sensible to me as I had the
image of them immediately before my eyes. I was so tired of saloons,
jets d’eau, groves, parterres, and of more fatiguing persons by whom they
were shown; so exhausted with pamphlets, harpsichords, trios,
unravellings of plots, stupid bon mots, insipid affections, pitiful
storytellers, and great suppers; that when I gave a side glance at a poor
simple hawthorn bush, a hedge, a barn, or a meadow; when, in passing
through a hamlet, I scented a good chervil omelette, and heard at a
distance the burden of a rustic song of the Bisquieres; I wished all
rouge, furbelows and amber at the d---l, and envying the dinner of the
good housewife, and the wine of her own vineyard, I heartily wished to
give a slap on the chaps to Monsieur le Chef and Monsieur le Maitre, who
made me dine at the hour of supper, and sup when I should have been
asleep, but especially to Messieurs the lackeys, who devoured with their
eyes the morsel I put into my mouth, and upon pain of my dying with
thirst, sold me the adulterated wine of their master, ten times dearer
than that of a better quality would have cost me at a public house.

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

I have always considered the day on which I was united to Theresa as that
which fixed my moral existence. An attachment was necessary for me,
since that which should have been sufficient to my heart had been so
cruelly broken. The thirst after happiness is never extinguished in the
heart of man. Mamma was advancing into years, and dishonored herself!
I had proofs that she could never more be happy here below; it therefore
remained to me to seek my own happiness, having lost all hopes of
partaking of hers. I was sometimes irresolute, and fluctuated from one
idea to another, and from project to project. My journey to Venice would
have thrown me into public life, had the man with whom, almost against my
inclination, I was connected there had common sense. I was easily
discouraged, especially in undertakings of length and difficulty. The
ill success of this disgusted me with every other; and, according to my
old maxims, considering distant objects as deceitful allurements, I
resolved in future to provide for immediate wants, seeing nothing in life
which could tempt me to make extraordinary efforts.
It was precisely at this time we became acquainted. The mild character of the good Theresa seemed so fitted to my own, that I united myself to her with an attachment which neither time nor injuries have been able to impair, and which has constantly been increased by everything by which it might have been expected to be diminished. The force of this sentiment will hereafter appear when I come to speak of the wounds she has given my heart in the height of my misery, without my ever having, until this moment, once uttered a word of complaint to any person whatever.

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

I fall into repetitions; I know it; and these are necessary. The first of my wants, the greatest, strongest and most insatiable, was wholly in my heart; the want of an intimate connection, and as intimate as it could possibly be: for this reason especially, a woman was more necessary to me than a man, a female rather than a male friend. This singular want was such that the closest corporal union was not sufficient: two souls would have been necessary to me in the same body, without which I always felt a void. I thought I was upon the point of filling it up forever. This young person, amiable by a thousand excellent qualities, and at that time by her form, without the shadow of art or coquetry, would have confined within herself my whole existence, could hers, as I had hoped it would, have been totally confined to me. I had nothing to fear from men; I am certain of being the only man she ever really loved and her moderate passions seldom wanted another not even after I ceased in this respect to be one to her. I had no family; she had one; and this family was composed of individuals whose dispositions were so different from mine, that I could never make it my own. This was the first cause of my unhappiness. What would I not have given to be the child of her mother? I did everything in my power to become so, but could never succeed. I in vain attempted to unite all our interests: this was impossible. She always created herself one different from mine, contrary to it, and to that even of her daughter, which already was no longer separated from it. She, her other children, and grand-children, became so many leeches, and the least evil these did to Theresa was robbing her. The poor girl,
accustomed to submit, even to her nieces, suffered herself to be pilfered and governed without saying a word; and I perceived with grief that by exhausting my purse, and giving her advice, I did nothing that could be of any real advantage to her. I endeavored to detach her from her mother; but she constantly resisted such a proposal. I could not but respect her resistance, and esteemed her the more for it; but her refusal was not on this account less to the prejudice of us both. Abandoned to her mother and the rest of her family, she was more their companion than mine, and rather at their command than mistress of herself. Their avarice was less ruinous than their advice was pernicious to her; in fact, if, on account of the love she had for me, added to her good natural disposition, she was not quite their slave, she was enough so to prevent in a great measure the effect of the good maxims I endeavored to instil into her, and, notwithstanding all my efforts, to prevent our being united.

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

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

My first steps conducted me by a new path to another intellectual world,
the simple and noble economy of which I cannot contemplate without
enthusiasm. I reflected so much on the subject that I soon saw nothing
but error and folly in the doctrine of our sages, and oppression and
misery in our social order. In the illusion of my foolish pride,
I thought myself capable of destroying all imposture; and thinking that,
to make myself listened to, it was necessary my conduct should agree with
my principles, I adopted the singular manner of life which I have not
been permitted to continue, the example of which my pretended friends
have never forgiven me, which at first made me ridiculous, and would at
length have rendered me respectable, had it been possible for me to
persevere.
Until then I had been good; from that moment I became virtuous, or at least infatuated with virtue. This infatuation had begun in my head, but afterwards passed into my heart. The most noble pride there took root amongst the ruins of extirpated vanity. I affected nothing; I became what I appeared to be, and during four years at least, whilst this effervescence continued at its greatest height, there is nothing great and good that can enter the heart of man, of which I was not capable between heaven and myself. Hence flowed my sudden eloquence; hence, in my first writings, that fire really celestial, which consumed me, and whence during forty years not a single spark had escaped, because it was not yet lighted up.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Most of the writings of the Abbe de Saint Pierre were either
observations, or contained observations, on some parts of the government
of France, and several of these were of so free a nature, that it was
happy for him he had made them with impunity. But in the offices of all
the ministers of state the Abbe de St. Pierre had ever been considered as
a kind of preacher rather than a real politician, and he was suffered to
say what he pleased, because it appeared that nobody listened to him.

Had I procured him readers the case would have been different. He was a
Frenchman, and I was not one; and by repeating his censures, although in
his own name, I exposed myself to be asked, rather rudely, but without
injustice, what it was with which I meddled. Happily before I proceeded
any further, I perceived the hold I was about to give the government
against me, and I immediately withdrew. I knew that, living alone in the
midst of men more powerful than myself, I never could by any means
whatever be sheltered from the injury they chose to do me. There was but
one thing which depended upon my own efforts: this was, to observe such a
line of conduct that whenever they chose to make me feel the weight of
authority they could not do it without being unjust. The maxim which
induced me to decline proceeding with the works of the Abbe de Saint
Pierre, has frequently made me give up projects I had much more at heart.
People who are always ready to construe adversity into a crime, would be
much surprised were they to know the pains I have taken, that during my
misfortunes it might never with truth be said of me, Thou hast deserved
them.

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

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

I had a retired residence in a charming solitude, was master of my own
house, and could live in it in the manner I thought proper, without being
controlled by any person. This habitation imposed on me duties agreeable
to discharge, but which were indispensable. My liberty was precarious.
In a greater state of subjection than a person at the command of another, it was my duty to be so by inclination. When I arose in the morning, I never could say to myself, I will employ this day as I think proper. And, moreover, besides my being subject to obey the call of Madam d’Epinay, I was exposed to the still more disagreeable importunities of the public and chance comers. The distance I was at from Paris did not prevent crowds of idlers, not knowing how to spend their time, from daily breaking in upon me, and, without the least scruple, freely disposing of mine. When I least expected visitors I was unmercifully assailed by them, and I seldom made a plan for the agreeable employment of the day that was not counteracted by the arrival of some stranger.

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

The recollection of the different periods of my life led me to reflect upon that at which I was arrived, and I found I was already on the decline, a prey to painful disorders, and imagined I was approaching the end of my days without having, tasted, in all its plenitude, scarcely anyone of the pleasures after which my heart had so much thirsted, or having given scope to the lively sentiments I felt it had in reserve. I had not favored even that intoxicating voluptuousness with which my mind was richly stored, and which, for want of an object, was always compressed, an never exhaled but by signs.
How was it possible that, with a mind naturally expansive, I, with whom
to live was to love, should not hitherto have found a friend entirely
devoted to me; a real friend: I who felt myself so capable of being such
a friend to another? How can it be accounted for that with such warm
affections, such combustible senses, and a heart wholly made up of love,
I had not once, at least, felt its flame for a determinate object?
Tormented by the want of loving, without ever having been able to satisfy
it, I perceived myself approaching the eve of old age, and hastening on
to death without having lived.

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

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

These were my meditations during the finest season of the year, in the
month of June, in cool shades, to the songs of the nightingale, and the
warbling of brooks. Everything concurred in plunging me into that too
seducing state of indolence for which I was born, and from which my
austere manner, proceeding from a long effervescence, should forever have
delivered me. I unfortunately remembered the dinner of the Chateau de Toune, and my meeting with the two charming girls in the same season, in places much resembling that in which I then was. The remembrance of these circumstances, which the innocence that accompanied them rendered to me still more dear, brought several others of the nature to my recollection. I presently saw myself surrounded by all the objects which, in my youth, had given me emotion. Mademoiselle Galley, Mademoiselle de Graffenried, Mademoiselle de Breil, Madam Basile, Madam de Larnage, my pretty scholars, and even the bewitching Zulietta, whom my heart could not forget. I found myself in the midst of a seraglio of houris of my old acquaintance, for whom the most lively inclination was not new to me. My blood became inflamed, my head turned, notwithstanding my hair was almost gray, and the grave citizen of Geneva, the austere Jean Jacques, at forty-five years of age, again became the fond shepherd.

The intoxication, with which my mind was seized, although sudden and extravagant, was so strong and lasting, that, to enable me to recover from it, nothing less than the unforeseen and terrible crisis it brought on was necessary.

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

What step did I take upon this occasion? My reader will already have guessed it, if he has taken the trouble to pay the least attention to my narrative. The impossibility of attaining real beings threw me into the regions of chimera, and seeing nothing in existence worthy of my delirium, I sought food for it in the ideal world, which my imagination quickly peopled with beings after my own heart. This resource never came more apropos, nor was it ever so fertile. In my continual ecstasy I intoxicated my mind with the most delicious sentiments that ever entered the heart of man. Entirely forgetting the human species, I formed to myself societies of perfect beings, whose virtues were as celestial as their beauty, tender and faithful friends, such as I never found here below. I became so fond of soaring in the empyrean, in the midst of the charming objects with which I was surrounded, that I thus passed hours and days without perceiving it; and, losing the remembrance of all other things, I scarcely had eaten a morsel in haste before I was impatient to make my escape and run to regain my groves. When ready to depart for the enchanted world, I saw arrive wretched mortals who came to detain me upon earth, I could neither conceal nor moderate my vexation; and no longer master of myself, I gave them so uncivil a reception, that it might justly be termed brutal. This tended to confirm my reputation as a misanthrope, from the very cause which, could the world have read my
heart, should have acquired me one of a nature directly opposite.

In the midst of my exultation I was pulled down like a paper kite, and
restored to my proper place by means of a smart attack of my disorder.

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

Other domestic broils came at the same time to increase my chagrin.

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

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

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

Struck by seeing this poor man overwhelmed, if I may so speak, with
prosperity and honor, bitterly exclaiming against the miseries of this
life, and finding everything to be wrong, I formed the mad project of
making him turn his attention to himself, and of proving to him that
everything was right. Voltaire, while he appeared to believe in God,
ever really believed in anything but the devil; since his pretended
deity is a malicious being, who, according to him, had no pleasure but in
evil. The glaring absurdity of this doctrine is particularly disgusting
from a man enjoying the greatest prosperity; who, from the bosom of
happiness, endeavors, by the frightful and cruel image of all the
calamities from which he is exempt, to reduce his fellow creatures to
despair. I, who had a better right than he to calculate and weigh all
the evils of human life, impartially examine them, and proved to him that
of all possible evils there was not one to be attributed to Providence,
and which had not its source rather in the abusive use man made of his faculties than in nature. I treated him, in this letter, with the greatest respect and delicacy possible. Yet, knowing his self-love to be extremely irritable, I did not send the letter immediately to himself, but to Doctor Tronchin, his physician and friend, with full power either to give it him or destroy it. Voltaire informed me in a few lines that being ill, having likewise the care of a sick person, he postponed his answer until some future day, and said not a word on the subject. Tronchin, when he sent me the letter, inclosed in it another, in which he expressed but very little esteem for the person from whom he received it.

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

All these interruptions ought to have cured me of my fantastic amours, and they were perhaps the means offered me by Heaven to prevent their destructive consequences; but my evil genius prevailed, and I had scarcely begun to go out before my heart, my head, and my feet returned to the same paths. I say the same in certain respects; for my ideas, rather less exalted, remained this time upon earth, but yet were busied in making so exquisite a choice of all that was to be found there amiable of every kind, that it was not much less chimerical than the imaginary world I had abandoned.
I figured to myself love and friendship, the two idols of my heart, under the most ravishing images. I amused myself in adorning them with all the charms of the sex I had always adored. I imagined two female friends rather than two of my own sex, because, although the example be more rare, it is also more amiable. I endowed them with different characters, but analogous to their connection, with two faces, not perfectly beautiful, but according to my taste, and animated with benevolence and sensibility. I made one brown and the other fair, one lively and the other languishing, one wise and the other weak, but of so amiable a weakness that it seemed to add a charm to virtue. I gave to one of the two a lover, of whom the other was the tender friend, and even something more, but I did not admit either rivalry, quarrels, or jealousy: because every painful sentiment is painful for me to imagine, and I was unwilling to tarnish this delightful picture by anything which was degrading to nature. Smitten with my two charming models, I drew my own portrait in the lover and the friend, as much as it was possible to do it; but I made him young and amiable, giving him, at the same time, the virtues and the defects which I felt in myself.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Whilst he seemed to address himself to me only, I suffered everything,
but being desirous of giving an account of the fruit, I was obliged to
declare by whom a great part of it had been stolen. Madam d'Epinay
desired me to pay and discharge him, and look out for another; I did so.
As this rascal rambled about the Hermitage in the night, armed with a
thick club staff with an iron ferrule, and accompanied by other villains
like himself, to relieve the governesses from their fears, I made his
successor sleep in the house with us; and this not being sufficient to
remove their apprehensions, I sent to ask M. d'Epinay for a musket, which
I kept in the chamber of the gardener, with a charge not to make use of
it except an attempt was made to break open the door or scale the walls
of the garden, and to fire nothing but powder, meaning only to frighten
the thieves. This was certainly the least precaution a man indisposed
could take for the common safety of himself and family, having to pass
the winter in the midst of a wood, with two timid women. I also procured
a little dog to serve as a sentinel. De Leyre coming to see me about
this time, I related to him my situation, and we laughed together at my
military apparatus. At his return to Paris he wished to amuse Diderot
with the story, and by this means the 'Coterie d'Holbachique' learned
that I was seriously resolved to pass the winter at the Hermitage. This perseverance, of which they had not imagined me to be capable, disconcerted them, and, until they could think of some other means of making my residence disagreeable to me, they sent back, by means of Diderot, the same De Leyre, who, though at first he had thought my precautions quite natural, now pretended to discover that they were inconsistent with my principles, and styled them more than ridiculous in his letters, in which he overwhelmed me with pleasantries sufficiently bitter and satirical to offend me had I been the least disposed to take offence. But at that time being full of tender and affectionate sentiments, and not susceptible of any other, I perceived in his biting sarcasms nothing more than a jest, and believed him only jocose when others would have thought him mad.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Although my disorder then gave me but little respite in winter, and a part of the interval was employed in seeking relief from pain, this was still upon the whole the season which since my residence in France I had passed with most pleasure and tranquillity. During four or five months, whilst the bad weather sheltered me from the interruptions of importunate visits, I tasted to a greater degree than I had ever yet or have since done, of that equal simple and independent life, the enjoyment of which still made it more desirable to me; without any other company than the two governesses in reality, and the two female cousins in idea. It was then especially that I daily congratulated myself upon the resolution I had had the good sense to take, unmindful of the clamors of my friends, who were vexed at seeing me delivered from their tyranny; and when I heard of the attempt of a madman, when De Leyre and Madam d'Epinay spoke to me in letters of the trouble and agitation which reigned in Paris, how thankful was I to Heaven for having placed me at a distance from all such spectacles of horror and guilt. These would have been continued and increased the bilious humor which the sight of public disorders had given me; whilst seeing nothing around me in my retirement but gay and pleasing objects, my heart was wholly abandoned to sentiments which were amiable.

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

The return of spring had increased my amorous delirium, and in my
melancholy, occasioned by the excess of my transports, I had composed for
the last parts of Eloisa several letters, wherein evident marks of the
rapture in which I wrote them are found. Amongst others I may quote
those from the Elysium, and the excursion upon the lake, which, if my
memory does not deceive me, are at the end of the fourth part. Whoever,
in reading these letters, does not feel his heart soften and melt into
the tenderness by which they were dictated, ought to lay down the book:
nature has refused him the means of judging of sentiment.
Precisely at the same time I received a second unforeseen visit from Madam d'Houdetot, in the absence of her husband, who was captain of the Gendarmerie, and of her lover, who was also in the service. She had come to Eaubonne, in the middle of the Valley of Montmorency, where she had taken a pretty house, from thence she made a new excursion to the Hermitage. She came on horseback, and dressed in men's clothes. Although I am not very fond of this kind of masquerade, I was struck with the romantic appearance she made, and, for once, it was with love. As this was the first and only time in all my life, the consequence of which will forever render it terrible to my remembrance, I must take the permission to enter into some particulars on the subject.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Guilty without remorse, I soon became so without measure; and I entreat it may be observed in what manner my passion followed my nature, at length to plunge me into an abyss. In the first place, it assumed the air of humility to encourage me; and to render me intrepid it carried this humility even to mistrust. Madam d'Houdetot incessantly putting in mind of my duty, without once for a single moment flattering my folly, treated me with the greatest mildness, and remained with me upon the footing of the most tender friendship. This friendship would, I protest, have satisfied my wishes, had I thought it sincere; but finding it too strong to be real, I took it into my head that love, so ill-suited to my age and appearance, had rendered me contemptible in the eyes of Madam d'Houdetot; that this young mad creature only wished to divert herself with me and my superannuated passion; that she had communicated this to Saint Lambert; and that the indignation caused by my breach of friendship, having made her lover enter into her views, they were agreed to turn my head and then to laugh at me. This folly, which at twenty-six years of age, had made me guilty of some extravagant behavior to Madam de Larnage, whom I did not know, would have been pardonable in me at forty-five with Madam d'Houdetot had not I known that she and her lover were persons of too much uprightness to indulge themselves in such a barbarous amusement.
Madam d’Houdetot continued her visits, which I delayed not to return. She, as well as myself, was fond of walking, and we took long walks in an enchanting country. Satisfied with loving and daring to say I loved, I should have been in the most agreeable situation had not my extravagance spoiled all the charm of it. She, at first, could not comprehend the foolish pettishness with which I received her attentions; but my heart, incapable of concealing what passed in it, did not long leave her ignorant of my suspicions; she endeavored to laugh at them, but this expedient did not succeed; transports of rage would have been the consequence, and she changed her tone. Her compassionate gentleness was invincible; she made me reproaches, which penetrated my heart; she expressed an inquietude at my unjust fears, of which I took advantage. I required proofs of her being in earnest. She perceived there was no other means of relieving me from my apprehensions. I became pressing: the step was delicate. It is astonishing, and perhaps without example, that a woman having suffered herself to be brought to hesitate should have got herself off so well. She refused me nothing the most tender friendship could grant; yet she granted me nothing that rendered her unfaithful, and I had the mortification to see that the disorder into which the most trifling favors had thrown all my senses had not the least effect upon hers.

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

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

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

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

Do not, however, imagine that in this situation my passions left me as
undisturbed as I was with Theresa and mamma. I have already observed
I was this time inspired not only with love, but with love and all its
energy and fury. I will not describe either the agitations, tremblings,
palpitations, convulsionary emotions, nor faintings of the heart,
I continually experienced; these may be judged of by the effect her image
alone made upon me. I have observed the distance from the Hermitage to
Eaubonne was considerable; I went by the hills of Andilly, which are
delightful; I mused, as I walked, on her whom I was going to see, the
charming reception she would give me, and upon the kiss which awaited me
at my arrival. This single kiss, this pernicious embrace, even before
I received it, inflamed my blood to such a degree as to affect my head,
my eyes were dazzled, my knees trembled, and were unable to support me;
I was obliged to stop and sit down; my whole frame was in inconceivable
disorder, and I was upon the point of fainting. Knowing the danger,
I endeavored at setting out to divert my attention from the object,
and think of something else. I had not proceeded twenty steps before the
same recollection, and all that was the consequence of it, assailed me in
such a manner that it was impossible to avoid them, and in spite of all
my efforts I do not believe I ever made this little excursion alone with
impunity. I arrived at Eaubonne, weak, exhausted, and scarcely able to
support myself. The moment I saw her everything was repaired; all I felt
in her presence was the importunity of an inexhaustible and useless
ardor. Upon the road to Raubonne there was a pleasant terrace called
Mont Olympe, at which we sometimes met. I arrived first, it was proper I
should wait for her; but how dear this waiting cost me! To divert my
attention, I endeavored to write with my pencil billets, which I could
have written with the purest drops of my blood; I never could finish one
which was eligible. When she found a note in the niche upon which we had
agreed, all she learned from the contents was the deplorable state in
which I was when I wrote it. This state and its continuation, during
three months of irritation and self-denial, so exhausted me, that I was
several years before I recovered from it, and at the end of these it left
me an ailment which I shall carry with me, or which will carry me to the
grave. Such was the sole enjoyment of a man of the most combustible
constitution, but who was, at the same time, perhaps, one of the most
timid mortals nature ever produced. Such were the last happy days I can
reckon upon earth; at the end of these began the long train of evils, in
which there will be found but little interruption.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

My suspicions of Madam d'Epinay were changed into a certainty the moment
I heard what had passed in my own house. When I was at the Chevrette,
Theresa frequently came there, either to bring me letters or to pay me
that attention which my ill state of health rendered necessary. Madam
d'Epinay had asked her if Madam d'Houdetot and I did not write to each
other. Upon her answering in the affirmative, Madam d'Epinay pressed her
to give her the letters of Madam d'Houdetot, assuring her that she would
reseal them in such a manner as it should never be known. Theresa,
without showing how much she was shocked at the proposition, and without
even putting me upon my guard, did nothing more than seal the letters she
brought me more carefully; a lucky precaution, for Madam d'Epinay had her
watched when she arrived, and, waiting for her in the passage, several
times carried her audaciousness as far as to examine her tucker. She did
more even than this: having one day invited herself with M. de Margency
to dinner at the Hermitage, for the first time since I resided there,
she seized the moment I was walking with Margency to go into my closet
with the mother and daughter, and to press them to show her the letters
of Madam d'Houdetot. Had the mother known where the letters were, they
would have been given to her; fortunately, the daughter was the only person who was in the secret, and denied my having preserved any one of them. A virtuous, faithful and generous falsehood; whilst truth would have been a perfidy. Madam d'Epinay, perceiving Theresa was not to be seduced, endeavored to irritate her by jealousy, reproaching her with her easy temper and blindness. "How is it possible," said she to her, "you cannot perceive there is a criminal intercourse between them? If besides what strikes your eyes you stand in need of other proofs, lend your assistance to obtain that which may furnish them; you say he tears the letters from Madam d'Houdetot as soon as he has read them. Well, carefully gather up the pieces and give them to me; I will take upon myself to put them together."

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

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

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

ANSWER.

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

SECOND NOTE FROM THE SAME.

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

ANSWER.

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

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

"Thus the woman whom I most esteem would, with my knowledge, have been
loaded with the infamy of dividing her heart and person between two
lovers, and I with that of being one of these wretches. If I knew that,
for a single moment in your life, you ever had thought this, either of
her or myself, I should hate you until my last hour. But it is with
having said, and not with having thought it, that I charge you. In this
case, I cannot comprehend which of the three you wished to injure; but,
if you love peace of mind, tremble lest you should have succeeded.
I have not concealed either from you or her all the ill I think of
certain connections, but I wish these to end by a means as virtuous as
their cause, and that an illegitimate love may be changed into an eternal
friendship. Should I, who never do ill to any person, be the innocent
means of doing it to my friends? No, I should never forgive you; I
should become your irreconcilable enemy. Your secrets are all I should
respect; for I will never be a man without honor.
"I do not apprehend my present perplexity will continue a long time. I shall soon know whether or not I am deceived; I shall then perhaps have great injuries to repair, which I will do with as much cheerfulness as that with which the most agreeable act of my life has been accompanied. But do you know in what manner I will make amends for my faults during the short space of time I have to remain near to you? By doing what nobody but myself would do; by telling you freely what the world thinks of you, and the breaches you have to repair in your reputation. Notwithstanding all the pretended friends by whom you are surrounded, the moment you see me depart you may bid adieu to truth, you will no longer find any person who will tell it to you."

THIRD LETTER FROM THE SAME.

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

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

I had not to bear the attack I had expected, and fear was the greatest
evil I received from it. At my approach, Madam d' Epinay threw her arms
about my neck, bursting into tears. This unexpected reception, and by an
old friend, extremely affected me; I also shed many tears. I said to her
a few words which had not much meaning; she uttered others with still
less, and everything ended here. Supper was served; we sat down to
table, where, in expectation of the explanation I imagined to be deferred
until supper was over, I made a very poor figure; for I am so overpowered
by the most trifling inquietude of mind that I cannot conceal it from
persons the least clear-sighted. My embarrassed appearance must have
given her courage, yet she did not risk anything upon that foundation.
There was no more explanation after than before supper: none took place
on the next day, and our little tete-a-tete conversations consisted of
indifferent things, or some complimentary words on my part, by which,
while I informed her I could not say more relative to my suspicions,
I asserted, with the greatest truth, that, if they were ill-founded,
my whole life should be employed in repairing the injustice. She did not
show the least curiosity to know precisely what they were, nor for what
reason I had formed them, and all our peacemaking consisted, on her part
as well as on mine, in the embrace at our first meeting. Since Madam
d'Epinay was the only person offended, at least in form, I thought it was
not for me to strive to bring about an éclaircissement for which she
herself did not seem anxious, and I returned as I had come; continuing,
besides, to live with her upon the same footing as before, I soon almost
entirely forgot the quarrel, and foolishly believed she had done the
same, because she seemed not to remember what had passed.

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

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

by means of tormenting me. These originated from Diderot and the
d'Holbachiens. Since I had resided at the Hermitage, Diderot incessantly
harrassed me, either himself or by means of De Leyre, and I soon
perceived from the pleasuranties of the latter upon my ramblings in the
groves, with what pleasure he had travestied the hermit into the gallant
shepherd. But this was not the question in my quarrels with Diderot; the
cause of these were more serious. After the publication of Fils Naturel
he had sent me a copy of it, which I had read with the interest and
attention I ever bestowed on the works of a friend. In reading the kind
of poem annexed to it, I was surprised and rather grieved to find in it,
amongst several things, disobliging but supportable against men in solitude, this bitter and severe sentence without the least softening:

'Il n'y a que le mechant qui fail feul.'-[The wicked only is alone.]--

This sentence is equivocal, and seems to present a double meaning; the one true, the other false, since it is impossible that a man who is determined to remain alone can do the least harm to anybody, and consequently he cannot be wicked. The sentence in itself therefore required an interpretation; the more so from an author who, when he sent it to the press, had a friend retired from the world. It appeared to me shocking and uncivil, either to have forgotten that solitary friend, or, in remembering him, not to have made from the general maxim the honorable and just exception which he owed, not only to his friend, but to so many respectable sages, who, in all ages, have sought for peace and tranquillity in retirement, and of whom, for the first time since the creation of the world, a writer took it into his head indiscriminately to make so many villains.

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

The last two expressions of this letter want explanation.

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

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

This was one of the atrocious accusations from which he did not except me
in his remark; that none but the wicked were alone: and the meaning of
his pathetic exclamation with the et cetera, which he had benignantly
I thought the best answer that could be given to this reproach would be
from Madam le Vasseur herself. I desired her to write freely and
naturally her sentiments to Madam d'Epinay. To relieve her from all
constraint I would not see her letter. I showed her that which I am
going to transcribe. I wrote it to Madam d'Epinay upon the subject of an
answer I wish to return to a letter still more severe from Diderot, and
which she had prevented me from sending.

Thursday.

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

"I will not send my letter because you do not choose I should; but,
feeling myself grievously offended, it would be baseness and falsehood,
of either of which it is impossible for me to be guilty, to acknowledge
myself in the wrong. Holy writ commands him to whom a blow is given, to
turn the other cheek, but not to ask pardon. Do you remember the man in
comedy who exclaims, while he is giving another blows with his staff,
'This is the part of a philosopher!'
Do not flatter yourself that he will be prevented from coming by the bad weather we now have. His rage will give him the time and strength which friendship refuses him, and it will be the first time in his life he ever came upon the day he had appointed.

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

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

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

Adieu, my good friend, I shall never again mention to you this unhappy affair. You speak of going to Paris with an unconcern, which, at any other time, would give me pleasure."
I wrote to Diderot, telling him what I had done, relative to Madam le
Vasseur, upon the proposal of Madam d'Epinay herself; and Madam le
Vasseur having, as it may be imagined, chosen to remain at the Hermitage,
where she enjoyed a good state of health, always had company, and lived
very agreeably, Diderot, not knowing what else to attribute to me as a
crime, construed my precaution into one, and discovered another in Madam
le Vasseur continuing to reside at the Hermitage, although this was by
her own choice; and though her going to Paris had depended, and still
depended upon herself, where she would continue to receive the same
succors from me as I gave her in my house.

This is the explanation of the first reproach in the letter of Diderot.

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

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

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

Here is a good and respectable old man, who, after having worked hard all
his lifetime, no longer being able to continue his labors, is in his old
days dying with hunger. My conscience is more satisfied with the two
sous I give him every Monday, than with the hundred farthings I should
have distributed amongst all the beggars on the rampart. You are
pleasant men, you philosophers, while you consider the inhabitants of the
cities as the only persons whom you ought to befriend. It is in the
country men learn how to love and serve humanity; all they learn in
cities is to despise it."

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

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

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

The day after my arrival, he would absolutely take me to sup with M.
d'Holbach. We were far from agreeing on this point; for I wished even to
get rid of the bargain for the manuscript on chemistry, for which I was
enraged to be obliged to that man. Diderot carried all before him. He
swore D'Holbach loved me with all his heart, said I must forgive him his
manner, which was the same to everybody, and more disagreeable to his
friends than to others. He observed to me that, refusing the produce of
this manuscript, after having accepted it two years before, was an
affront to the donor which he had not deserved, and that my refusal might
be interpreted into a secret reproach, for having waited so long to
conclude the bargain. "I see," added he, "D'Holbach every day, and know
better than you do the nature of his disposition. Had you reason to be
dissatisfied with him, do you think your friend capable of advising you
to do a mean thing?" In short, with my accustomed weakness, I suffered
myself to be prevailed upon, and we went to sup with the baron, who
received me as he usually had done. But his wife received me coldly and
almost uncivilly. I saw nothing in her which resembled the amiable
Caroline, who, when a maid, expressed for me so many good wishes. I
thought I had already perceived that since Grimm had frequented the house
of D'Aine, I had not met there so friendly a reception.
Whilst I was at Paris, Saint Lambert arrived there from the army. As I was not acquainted with his arrival, I did not see him until after my return to the country, first at the Chevrette, and afterwards at the Hermitage; to which he came with Madam d'Houdetot, and invited himself to dinner with me. It may be judged whether or not I received him with pleasure! But I felt one still greater at seeing the good understanding between my guests. Satisfied with not having disturbed their happiness, I myself was happy in being a witness to it, and I can safely assert that, during the whole of my mad passion, and especially at the moment of which I speak, had it been in my power to take from him Madam d'Houdetot I would not have done it, nor should I have so much as been tempted to undertake it. I found her so amiable in her passion for Saint Lambert, that I could scarcely imagine she would have been as much so had she loved me instead of him; and without wishing to disturb their union, all I really desired of her was to permit herself to be loved. Finally, however violent my passion may have been for this lady, I found it as agreeable to be the confidant, as the object of her amours, and I never for a moment considered her lover as a rival, but always as my friend. It will be said this was not love: be it so, but it was something more.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The grief caused me by the coldness of Madam d'Houdetot, and the certainty of not having merited it, made me take the singular resolution to complain of it to Saint Lambert himself. While waiting the effect of the letter I wrote to him, I sought dissipations to which I ought sooner to have had recourse. Fetes were given at the Chevrette for which I composed music. The pleasure of honoring myself in the eyes of Madam d'Houdetot by a talent she loved, warmed my imagination, and another object still contributed to give it animation, this was the desire the author of the 'Devin du Village' had of showing he understood music; for I had perceived some persons had, for a considerable time past,
endeavored to render this doubtful, at least with respect to composition. My beginning at Paris, the ordeal through which I had several times passed there, both at the house of M. Dupin and that of M. de la Popliniere; the quantity of music I had composed during fourteen years in the midst of the most celebrated masters and before their eyes;--finally, the opera of the 'Muses Gallantes', and that even of the 'Devin'; a motet I had composed for Mademoiselle Fel, and which she had sung at the spiritual concert; the frequent conferences I had had upon this fine art with the first composers, all seemed to prevent or dissipate a doubt of such a nature. This however existed even at the Chevrette, and in the mind of M. d'Epinay himself. Without appearing to observe it, I undertook to compose him a motet for the dedication of the chapel of the Chevrette, and I begged him to make choice of the words. He directed de Linant, the tutor to his son, to furnish me with these. De Linant gave me words proper to the subject, and in a week after I had received them the motet was finished. This time, spite was my Apollo, and never did better music come from my hand. The words began with: 'Ecce sedes hic tonantis'. (I have since learned these were by Santeuil, and that M. de Linant had without scruple appropriated them to himself.) The grandeur of the opening is suitable to the words, and the rest of the motet is so elegantly harmonious that everyone was struck with it. I had composed it for a great orchestra. D'Epinay procured the best performers. Madam Bruna, an Italian singer, sung the motet, and was well accompanied. The composition succeeded so well that it was afterwards performed at the spiritual concert, where, in spite of secret cabals, and notwithstanding it was badly executed, it was twice generally applauded. I gave for the birthday of M. d'Epinay the idea of a kind of piece half dramatic and half pantomimical, of which I also composed the music. Grimm, on his
arrival, heard speak of my musical success. An hour afterwards not a
word more was said on the subject; but there no longer remained a doubt,
not at least that I know of, of my knowledge of composition.

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

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

Madam d' Epinay blushed at his behavior, and, to induce him to repair his rudeness, offered me her place. He said nothing, nor did he ever look at me. Not being able to approach the fire, I walked about the chamber until a cover was brought. Indisposed as I was, older than himself, longer acquainted in the house than he had been, the person who had introduced him there, and to whom as a favorite of the lady he ought to have done the honors of it, he suffered me to sup at the end of the table, at a distance from the fire, without showing me the least civility. His whole behavior to me corresponded with this example of it. He did not treat me precisely as his inferior, but he looked upon me as a cipher. I could scarcely recognize the same Grimm, who, to the house of the Prince de Saxe-Gotha, thought himself honored when I cast my eyes upon him. I had still more difficulty in reconciling this profound silence and insulting haughtiness with the tender friendship he possessed
for me to those whom he knew to be real friends. It is true the only
proofs he gave of it was pitying my wretched fortune, of which I did not
complain; compassionating my sad fate, with which I was satisfied; and
lamenting to see me obstinately refuse the benevolent services he said,
he wished to render me. Thus was it he artfully made the world admire
his affectionate generosity, blame my ungrateful misanthropy, and
insensibly accustomed people to imagine there was nothing more between a
protector like him and a wretch like myself, than a connection founded
upon benefactions on one part and obligations on the other, without once
thinking of a friendship between equals. For my part, I have vainly
sought to discover in what I was under an obligation to this new
protector. I had lent him money, he had never lent me any; I had
attended him in his illness, he scarcely came to see me in mine; I had
given him all my friends, he never had given me any of his; I had said
everything I could in his favor, and if ever he has spoken of me it has
been less publicly and in another manner. He has never either rendered
or offered me the least service of any kind. How, therefore, was he my
Mecaenas? In what manner was I protected by him? This was
incomprehensible to me, and still remains so.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I was stupefied with surprise: I knew not what to say; not a word could
I utter. The whole scene had the appearance of the reprimand a preceptor
gives to his pupil while he graciously spares inflicting the rod.

I never think of it without perceiving to what degree judgments, founded
upon appearances to which the vulgar give so much weight, are deceitful,
and how frequently audaciousness and pride are found in the guilty, and
shame and embarrassment in the innocent.

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

So many successive vexations overwhelmed me to such a degree as to leave
me but little power over my mind. Receiving no answer from Saint
Lambert, neglected by Madam d'Houdetot, and no longer daring to open my
heart to any person, I began to be afraid that by making friendship my
idol, I should sacrifice my whole life to chimeras. After putting all
those with whom I had been acquainted to the test, there remained but two
who had preserved my esteem, and in whom my heart could confide: Duclos,
of whom since my retreat to the Hermitage I had lost sight, and Saint
Lambert. I thought the only means of repairing the wrongs I had done the
latter, was to open myself to him without reserve, and I resolved to
confess to him everything by which his mistress should not be exposed.

I have no doubt but this was another snare of my passions to keep me
nearer to her person; but I should certainly have had no reserve with her lover, entirely submitting to his direction, and carrying sincerity as far as it was possible to do it. I was upon the point of writing to him a second letter, to which I was certain he would have returned an answer, when I learned the melancholy cause of his silence relative to the first. He had been unable to support until the end the fatigues of the campaign. Madam d'Epinay informed me he had had an attack of the palsy, and Madam d'Houdetot, ill from affliction, wrote me two or three days after from Paris, that he was going to Aix-la-Chapelle to take the benefit of the waters. I will not say this melancholy circumstance afflicted me as it did her; but I am of opinion my grief of heart was as painful as her tears. The pain of knowing him to be in such a state, increased by the fear least inquietude should have contributed to occasion it, affected me more than anything that had yet happened, and I felt most cruelly a want of fortitude, which in my estimation was necessary to enable me to support so many misfortunes. Happily this generous friend did not long leave me so overwhelmed with affliction; he did not forget me, notwithstanding his attack; and I soon learned from himself that I had ill judged his sentiments, and been too much alarmed for his situation. It is now time I should come to the grand revolution of my destiny, to the catastrophe which has divided my life in two parts so different from each other, and, from a very trifling cause, produced such terrible effects.

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

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

NOTE FROM DIDEROT.

“T'am naturally disposed to love you, and am born to give you trouble. I
am informed Madam d'Epinay is going to Geneva, and do not hear you are to accompany her. My friend, you are satisfied with Madam d'Epinay, you must go, with her; if dissatisfied you ought still less to hesitate. Do you find the weight of the obligations you are under to her uneasy to you? This is an opportunity of discharging a part of them, and relieving your mind. Do you ever expect another opportunity like the present one, of giving her proofs of your gratitude? She is going to a country where she will be quite a stranger. She is ill, and will stand in need of amusement and dissipation. The winter season too! Consider, my friend. Your ill state of health may be a much greater objection than I think it is; but are you now more indisposed than you were a month ago, or than you will be at the beginning of spring? Will you three months hence be in a situation to perform the journey more at your ease than at present? For my part I cannot but observe to you that were I unable to bear the shaking of the carriage I would take my staff and follow her. Have you no fears lest your conduct should be misinterpreted? You will be suspected of ingratitude or of a secret motive. I well know, that let you do as you will you will have in your favor the testimony of your conscience, but will this alone be sufficient, and is it permitted to neglect to a certain degree that which is necessary to acquire the approbation of others? What I now write, my good friend, is to acquit myself of what I think I owe to us both. Should my letter displease you, throw it into the fire and let it be forgotten. I salute, love and embrace you."

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

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

"You cannot, my dear friend, either know the magnitude of the obligations
I am under to Madam d'Epinay, to what a degree I am bound by them,
whether or not she is desirous of my accompanying her, that this is
possible, or the reasons I may have for my noncompliance. I have no
objection to discuss all these points with you; but you will in the
meantime confess that prescribing to me so positively what I ought to do,
without first enabling yourself to judge of the matter, is, my dear
philosopher, acting very inconsiderately. What is still worse, I
perceive the opinion you give comes not from yourself. Besides my being
but little disposed to suffer myself to be led by the nose under your
name by any third or fourth person, I observe in this secondary advice
certain underhand dealing, which ill agrees with your candor, and from
which you will on your account, as well as mine, do well in future to
"You are afraid my conduct should be misinterpreted; but I defy a heart like yours to think ill of mine. Others would perhaps speak better of me if I resembled them more. God preserve me from gaining their approbation! Let the vile and wicked watch over my conduct and misinterpret my actions, Rousseau is not a man to be afraid of them, nor is Diderot to be prevailed upon to hearken to what they say.

"If I am displeased with your letter, you wish me to throw it into the fire, and pay no attention to the contents. Do you imagine that anything coming from you can be forgotten in such a manner? You hold, my dear friend, my tears as cheap in the pain you give me, as you do my life and health, in the cares you exhort me to take. Could you but break yourself of this, your friendship would be more pleasing to me, and I should be less to be pitied."

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

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

The season became bad, and people began to quit the country. Madam d'Houdetot informed me of the day on which she intended to come and bid adieu to the valley, and gave me a rendezvous at Laubonne. This happened to be the same day on which Madam d'Epinay left the Chevrette to go to Paris for the purpose of completing preparations for her journey. Fortunately she set off in the morning, and I had still time to go and dine with her sister-in-law. I had the letter from Saint Lambert in my pocket, and read it over several times as I walked along. This letter served me as a shield against my weakness. I made and kept to the resolution of seeing nothing in Madam d'Houdetot but my friend and the mistress of Saint Lambert; and I passed with her a tete-a-fete of four hours in a most delicious calm, infinitely preferable, even with respect to enjoyment, to the paroxysms of a burning fever, which, always, until that moment, I had had when in her presence. As she too well knew my heart not to be changed, she was sensible of the efforts I made to conquer myself, and esteemed me the more for them, and I had the pleasure
of perceiving that her friendship for me was not extinguished. She announced to me the approaching return of Saint Lambert, who, although well enough recovered from his attack, was unable to bear the fatigues of war, and was quitting the service to come and live in peace with her.

We formed the charming project of an intimate connection between us three, and had reason to hope it would be lasting, since it was founded on every sentiment by which honest and susceptible hearts could be united; and we had moreover amongst us all the knowledge and talents necessary to be sufficient to ourselves without the aid of any foreign supplement. Alas! in abandoning myself to the hope of so agreeable a life I little suspected that which awaited me.

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

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

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

Here ends my personal connections with Madam d'Houdetot; connections of
which each has been able to judge by appearance according to the
disposition of his own heart, but in which the passion inspired me by
that amiable woman, the most lively passion, perhaps, man ever felt, will
be honorable in our own eyes by the rare and painful sacrifice we both
made to duty, honor, love, and friendship. We each had too high an
opinion of the other easily to suffer ourselves to do anything derogatory
to our dignity. We must have been unworthy of all esteem had we not set
a proper value upon one like this, and the energy of my sentiments which
have rendered us culpable, was that which prevented us from becoming so.
Thus after a long friendship for one of these women, and the strongest affection for the other, I bade them both adieu the same day, to one never to see her more, to the other to see her again twice, upon occasions of which I shall hereafter speak.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Struck with astonishment at reading this letter I vainly endeavored to
find out what it meant. How! instead of answering me with simplicity,
he took time to consider of what I had written, as if the time he had
already taken was not sufficient! He intimates even the state of
suspense in which he wishes to keep me, as if a profound problem was to
be resolved, or that it was of importance to his views to deprive me of
every means of comprehending his intentions until the moment he should
think proper to make them known. What therefore did he mean by these
precautions, delays, and mysteries? Was this manner of acting consistent
with honor and uprightness? I vainly sought for some favorable
interpretation of his conduct; it was impossible to find one. Whatever
his design might be, were this inimical to me, his situation facilitated
the execution of it without its being possible for me in mine to oppose
the least obstacle. In favor in the house of a great prince, having an
extensive acquaintance, and giving the tone to common circles of which he
was the oracle, he had it in his power, with his usual address, to
dispose everything in his favor; and I, alone in my Hermitage, far
removed from all society, without the benefit of advice, and having no
communication with the world, had nothing to do but to remain in peace.
All I did was to write to Madam d'Epinay upon the illness of her son, as
polite a letter as could be written, but in which I did not fall into the
snare of offering to accompany her to Geneva.

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

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

"This then is the letter upon which you took time to meditate: I return
it to you, it is not for me. You may show mine to the whole world and
hate me openly; this on your part will be a falsehood the less."
My telling he might show my preceding letter related to an article in his 
by which his profound address throughout the whole affair will be judged 
of.

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

To relieve himself from this embarrassment he resolved to break with me 
in the most violent manner possible, and to set forth in his letter the 
favor he did me in not showing mine. He was certain that in my 
indignation and anger I should refuse his feigned discretion, and permit 
him to show my letter to everybody; this was what he wished for, and 
everything turned out as he expected it would. He sent my letter all 
over Paris, with his own commentaries upon it, which, however, were not 
so successful as he had expected them to be. It was not judged that the 
permission he had extorted to make my letter public exempted him from the 
blame of having so lightly taken me at my word to do me an injury.
People continually asked what personal complaints he had against me to 
authorize so violent a hatred. Finally, it was thought that if even my 
behavior had been such as to authorize him to break with me, friendship, 
although extinguished, had rights which he ought to have respected. But 
unfortunately the inhabitants of Paris are frivolous; remarks of the 
moment are soon forgotten; the absent and unfortunate are neglected; the
man who prospers secures favor by his presence; the intriguing and malicious support each other, renew their vile efforts, and the effects of these, incessantly succeeding each other, efface everything by which they were preceded.

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

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

HERMITAGE 23d NOV., 1757.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

GENEVA, 1st December, 1757.

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

"Since you are determined to quit the Hermitage, and are persuaded that
you ought to do it, I am astonished your friends have prevailed upon you
to stay there. For my part I never consult mine upon my duty, and I have
nothing further to say to you upon your own."
Such an unforeseen dismission, and so fully pronounced, left me not a moment to hesitate. It was necessary to quit immediately, let the weather and my health be in what state they might, although I were to sleep in the woods and upon the snow, with which the ground was then covered, and in defiance of everything Madam d'Houdetot might say; for I was willing to do everything to please her except render myself infamous.

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

I sent her off, to Paris in a carriage of the messenger with all the furniture and effects she and her daughter had in common. I gave her some money, and engaged to pay her lodging with her children, or elsewhere to provide for her subsistence as much as it should be possible for me to do it, and never to let her want bread as long as I should have it myself.

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

MONTMORENCY, 17th December 1757.

"Nothing, madam, is so natural and necessary as to leave your house the moment you no longer approve of my remaining there. Upon you refusing your consent to my passing the rest of the winter at the Hermitage I quitted it on the fifteenth of December. My destiny was to enter it in spite of myself and to leave it the same. I thank you for the residence you prevailed upon me to make there, and I would thank you still more had I paid for it less dear. You are right in believing me unhappy; nobody upon earth knows better than yourself to what a degree I must be so. If being deceived in the choice of our friends be a misfortune, it is another not less cruel to recover from so pleasing an error."
Such is the faithful narrative of my residence at the Hermitage, and of the reasons which obliged me to leave it. I could not break off the recital, it was necessary to continue it with the greatest exactness; this epoch of my life having had upon the rest of it an influence which will extend to my latest remembrance.

**ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:**

- An author must be independent of success
- Cemented by reciprocal esteem
- Difficult to think nobly when we think for a livelihood
- Dine at the hour of supper; sup when I should have been asleep
- Force me to be happy in the manner they should point out
- Hastening on to death without having lived
- How many wrongs are effaced by the embraces of a friend
- I loved her too well to wish to possess her
- I never heard her speak ill of persons who were absent
- Idea of my not being everything to her
- In the course of their lives frequently unlike themselves
- Is it possible to dissimulate with persons whom we love?
- Letters illustrious in proportion as it was less a trade
- Loaded with words and redundancies
- Make men like himself, instead of taking them as they were
- Manoeuvres of an author to the care of publishing a good book
- No longer permitted to let old people remain out of Paris
- No sooner had lost sight of men than I ceased to despise them
Not knowing how to spend their time, daily breaking in upon me

Painful to an honest man to resist desires already formed

Rather bashful than modest

This continued desire to control me in all my wishes

To make him my apologies for the offence he had given me

Tyranny of persons who called themselves my friends

Virtuous minds, which vice never attacks openly

When once we make a secret of anything to the person we love

Without the least scruple, freely disposing of my time
Writing for bread would soon have extinguished my genius