

# **Confessions of J. J. Rousseau, the — Volume 10 eBook**

## **Confessions of J. J. Rousseau, the — Volume 10 by Jean-Jacques Rousseau**

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# Contents

<a href="#">Confessions of J. J. Rousseau, the — Volume 10 eBook.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Table of Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">Page 1.....</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">Page 2.....</a>	<a href="#">6</a>
<a href="#">Page 3.....</a>	<a href="#">7</a>
<a href="#">Page 4.....</a>	<a href="#">8</a>
<a href="#">Page 5.....</a>	<a href="#">9</a>
<a href="#">Page 6.....</a>	<a href="#">10</a>
<a href="#">Page 7.....</a>	<a href="#">11</a>
<a href="#">Page 8.....</a>	<a href="#">12</a>
<a href="#">Page 9.....</a>	<a href="#">14</a>
<a href="#">Page 10.....</a>	<a href="#">15</a>
<a href="#">Page 11.....</a>	<a href="#">17</a>
<a href="#">Page 12.....</a>	<a href="#">18</a>
<a href="#">Page 13.....</a>	<a href="#">20</a>
<a href="#">Page 14.....</a>	<a href="#">21</a>
<a href="#">Page 15.....</a>	<a href="#">22</a>
<a href="#">Page 16.....</a>	<a href="#">23</a>
<a href="#">Page 17.....</a>	<a href="#">24</a>
<a href="#">Page 18.....</a>	<a href="#">25</a>
<a href="#">Page 19.....</a>	<a href="#">26</a>
<a href="#">Page 20.....</a>	<a href="#">27</a>
<a href="#">Page 21.....</a>	<a href="#">28</a>
<a href="#">Page 22.....</a>	<a href="#">29</a>



Page 23..... 30

Page 24..... 31

Page 25..... 32

Page 26..... 33

Page 27..... 34

Page 28..... 35

Page 29..... 37

Page 30..... 38

Page 31..... 39

Page 32..... 40

Page 33..... 41

Page 34..... 42

Page 35..... 44

Page 36..... 45

Page 37..... 46

Page 38..... 47

Page 39..... 49

Page 40..... 50

Page 41..... 52

Page 42..... 54

Page 43..... 55

Page 44..... 56

# Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
BOOK X.		1



# Page 1

## BOOK X.

The extraordinary degree of strength a momentary effervescence had given me to quit the Hermitage, left me the moment I was out of it. I was scarcely established in my new habitation before I frequently suffered from retentions, which were accompanied by a new complaint; that of a rupture, from which I had for some time, without knowing what it was, felt great inconvenience. I soon was reduced to the most cruel state. The physician Thieiry, my old friend, came to see me, and made me acquainted with my situation. The sight of all the apparatus of the infirmities of years, made me severely feel that when the body is no longer young, the heart is not so with impunity. The fine season did not restore me, and I passed the whole year, 1758, in a state of languor, which made me think I was almost at the end of my career. I saw, with impatience, the closing scene approach. Recovered from the chimeras of friendship, and detached from everything which had rendered life desirable to me, I saw nothing more in it that could make it agreeable; all I perceived was wretchedness and misery, which prevented me from enjoying myself. I sighed after the moment when I was to be free and escape from my enemies. But I must follow the order of events.

My retreat to Montmorency seemed to disconcert Madam d'Epinay; probably she did not expect it. My melancholy situation, the severity of the season, the general dereliction of me by my friends, all made her and Grimm believe, that by driving me to the last extremity, they should oblige me to implore mercy, and thus, by vile meanness, render myself contemptible, to be suffered to remain in an asylum which honor commanded me to leave. I left it so suddenly that they had not time to prevent the step from being taken, and they were reduced to the alternative of double or quit, to endeavor to ruin me entirely, or to prevail upon me to return. Grimm chose the former; but I am of opinion Madam d'Epinay would have preferred the latter, and this from her answer to my last letter, in which she seemed to have laid aside the airs she had given herself in the preceding ones, and to give an opening to an accommodation. The long delay of this answer, for which she made me wait a whole month, sufficiently indicates the difficulty she found in giving it a proper turn, and the deliberations by which it was preceded. She could not make any further advances without exposing herself; but after her former letters, and my sudden retreat from her house, it is impossible not to be struck with the care she takes in this letter not to suffer an offensive expression to escape her. I will copy it at length to enable my reader to judge of what she wrote:

*Geneva, January 17, 1758.*



## Page 2

“*Sir*: I did not receive your letter of the 17th of December until yesterday. It was sent me in a box filled with different things, and which has been all this time upon the road. I shall answer only the postscript. You may recollect, sir, that we agreed the wages of the gardener of the Hermitage should pass through your hands, the better to make him feel that he depended upon you, and to avoid the ridiculous and indecent scenes which happened in the time of his predecessor. As a proof of this, the first quarter of his wages were given to you, and a few days before my departure we agreed I should reimburse you what you had advanced. I know that of this you, at first, made some difficulty; but I had desired you to make these advances; it was natural I should acquit myself towards you, and this we concluded upon. Cahouet informs me that you refused to receive the money. There is certainly some mistake in the matter. I have given orders that it may again be offered to you, and I see no reason for your wishing to pay my gardener, notwithstanding our conventions, and beyond the term even of your inhabiting the Hermitage. I therefore expect, sir, that recollecting everything I have the honor to state, you will not refuse to be reimbursed for the sums you have been pleased to advance for me.”

After what had passed, not having the least confidence in Madam d’Epinay, I was unwilling to renew my connection with her; I returned no answer to this letter, and there our correspondence ended. Perceiving I had taken my resolution, she took hers; and, entering into all the views of Grimm and the Coterie Holbachique, she united her efforts with theirs to accomplish my destruction. Whilst they manoeuvred at Paris, she did the same at Geneva. Grimm, who afterwards went to her there, completed what she had begun. Tronchin, whom they had no difficulty in gaining over, seconded them powerfully, and became the most violent of my persecutors, without having against me, any more than Grimm had, the least subject of complaint. They all three spread in silence that of which the effects were seen there four years afterwards.

They had more trouble at Paris, where I was better known to the citizens, whose hearts, less disposed to hatred, less easily received its impressions. The better to direct their blow, they began by giving out that it was I who had left them. Thence, still feigning to be my friends, they dexterously spread their malignant accusations by complaining of the injustice of their friend. Their auditors, thus thrown off their guard, listened more attentively to what was said of me, and were inclined to blame my conduct. The secret accusations of perfidy and ingratitude were made with greater precaution, and by that means with greater effect. I knew they imputed to me the most atrocious crimes without being able to learn in what these consisted. All I could infer from public rumor was that this was founded upon the four following capital offences: my retiring to the country; my passion for Madam d’Houdetot; my refusing to accompany Madam d’Epinay to Geneva, and my leaving the Hermitage. If to these they added other griefs, they took their measures so well that it has hitherto been impossible for me to learn the subject of them.

## Page 3

It is therefore at this period that I think I may fix the establishment of a system, since adopted by those by whom my fate has been determined, and which has made such a progress as will seem miraculous to persons who know not with what facility everything which favors the malignity of man is established. I will endeavor to explain in a few words what to me appeared visible in this profound and obscure system.

With a name already distinguished and known throughout all Europe, I had still preserved my primitive simplicity. My mortal aversion to all party faction and cabal had kept me free and independent, without any other chain than the attachments of my heart. Alone, a stranger, without family or fortune, and unconnected with everything except my principles and duties, I intrepidly followed the paths of uprightness, never flattering or favoring any person at the expense of truth and justice. Besides, having lived for two years past in solitude, without observing the course of events, I was unconnected with the affairs of the world, and not informed of what passed, nor desirous of being acquainted with it. I lived four leagues from Paris as much separated from that capital by my negligence as I should have been in the Island of Tinian by the sea.

Grimm, Diderot and D'Holbach were, on the contrary, in the centre of the vortex, lived in the great world, and divided amongst them almost all the spheres of it. The great wits, men of letters, men of long robe, and women, all listened to them when they chose to act in concert. The advantage three men in this situation united must have over a fourth in mine, cannot but already appear. It is true Diderot and D'Holbach were incapable, at least I think so, of forming black conspiracies; one of them was not base enough, nor the other sufficiently able; but it was for this reason that the party was more united. Grimm alone formed his plan in his own mind, and discovered more of it than was necessary to induce his associates to concur in the execution. The ascendancy he had gained over them made this quite easy, and the effect of the whole answered to the superiority of his talents.

It was with these, which were of a superior kind, that, perceiving the advantage he might acquire from our respective situations, he conceived the project of overturning my reputation, and, without exposing himself, of giving me one of a nature quite opposite, by raising up about me an edifice of obscurity which it was impossible for me to penetrate, and by that means throw a light upon his manoeuvres and unmask him.



## Page 4

This enterprise was difficult, because it was necessary to palliate the iniquity in the eyes of those of whose assistance he stood in need. He had honest men to deceive, to alienate from me the good opinion of everybody, and to deprive me of all my friends. What say I? He had to cut off all communication with me, that not a single word of truth might reach my ears. Had a single man of generosity come and said to me, "You assume the appearance of virtue, yet this is the manner in which you are treated, and these the circumstances by which you are judged: what have you to say?" truth would have triumphed and Grimm have been undone. Of this he was fully convinced; but he had examined his own heart and estimated men according to their merit. I am sorry, for the honor of humanity, that he judged with so much truth.

In these dark and crooked paths his steps to be the more sure were necessarily slow. He has for twelve years pursued his plan and the most difficult part of the execution of it is still to come; this is to deceive the public entirely. He is afraid of this public, and dares not lay his conspiracy open.

[Since this was written he has made the dangerous step with the fullest and most inconceivable success. I am of opinion it was Tronchin who inspired him with courage, and supplied him with the means.]

But he has found the easy means of accompanying it with power, and this power has the disposal of me. Thus supported he advances with less danger. The agents of power piquing themselves but little on uprightness, and still less on candor, he has no longer the indiscretion of an honest man to fear. His safety is in my being enveloped in an impenetrable obscurity, and in concealing from me his conspiracy, well knowing that with whatever art he may have formed it, I could by a single glance of the eye discover the whole. His great address consists in appearing to favor whilst he defames me, and in giving to his perfidy an air of generosity.

I felt the first effects of this system by the secret accusations of the Coterie Holbachiens without its being possible for me to know in what the accusations consisted, or to form a probable conjecture as to the nature of them. De Leyre informed me in his letters that heinous things were attributed to me. Diderot more mysteriously told me the same thing, and when I came to an explanation with both, the whole was reduced to the heads of accusation of which I have already spoken. I perceived a gradual increase of coolness in the letters from Madam d'Houdetot. This I could not attribute to Saint Lambert; he continued to write to me with the same friendship, and came to see me after his return. It was also impossible to think myself the cause of it, as we had separated well satisfied with each other, and nothing since that time had happened on my part, except my departure from the Hermitage, of which she felt the necessity.

## Page 5

Therefore, not knowing whence this coolness, which she refused to acknowledge, although my heart was not to be deceived, could proceed, I was uneasy upon every account. I knew she greatly favored her sister-in-law and Grimm, in consequence of their connections with Saint Lambert; and I was afraid of their machinations. This agitation opened my wounds, and rendered my correspondence so disagreeable as quite to disgust her with it. I saw, as at a distance, a thousand cruel circumstances, without discovering anything distinctly. I was in a situation the most insupportable to a man whose imagination is easily heated. Had I been quite retired from the world, and known nothing of the matter I should have become more calm; but my heart still clung to attachments, by means of which my enemies had great advantages over me; and the feeble rays which penetrated my asylum conveyed to me nothing more than a knowledge of the blackness of the mysteries which were concealed from my eyes.

I should have sunk, I have not a doubt of it, under these torments, too cruel and insupportable to my open disposition, which, by the impossibility of concealing my sentiments, makes me fear everything from those concealed from me, if fortunately objects sufficiently interesting to my heart to divert it from others with which, in spite of myself, my imagination was filled, had not presented themselves. In the last visit Diderot paid me, at the Hermitage, he had spoken of the article 'Geneva', which D'Alembert had inserted in the 'Encyclopedie'; he had informed me that this article, concerted with people of the first consideration, had for object the establishment of a theatre at Geneva, that measures had been taken accordingly, and that the establishment would soon take place. As Diderot seemed to think all this very proper, and did not doubt of the success of the measure, and as I had besides to speak to him upon too many other subjects to touch upon that article, I made him no answer: but scandalized at these preparatives to corruption and licentiousness in my country, I waited with impatience for the volume of the 'Encyclopedie', in which the article was inserted; to see whether or not it would be possible to give an answer which might ward off the blow. I received the volume soon after my establishment at Mont Louis, and found the articles to be written with much art and address, and worthy of the pen whence it proceeded. This, however, did not abate my desire to answer it, and notwithstanding the dejection of spirits I then labored under, my griefs and pains, the severity of the season, and the inconvenience of my new abode, in which I had not yet had time to arrange myself, I set to work with a zeal which surmounted every obstacle.



## Page 6

In a severe winter, in the month of February, and in the situation I have described, I went every day, morning and evening, to pass a couple of hours in an open alcove which was at the bottom of the garden in which my habitation stood. This alcove, which terminated an alley of a terrace, looked upon the valley and the pond of Montmorency, and presented to me, as the closing point of a prospect, the plain but respectable castle of St. Gratien, the retreat of the virtuous Catinat. It was in this place, then, exposed to freezing cold, that without being sheltered from the wind and snow, and having no other fire than that in my heart; I composed, in the space of three weeks, my letter to D'Alembert on theatres. It was in this, for my 'Eloisa' was not then half written, that I found charms in philosophical labor. Until then virtuous indignation had been a substitute to Apollo, tenderness and a gentleness of mind now became so. The injustice I had been witness to had irritated me, that of which I became the object rendered me melancholy; and this melancholy without bitterness was that of a heart too tender and affectionate, and which, deceived by those in whom it had confided, was obliged to remain centred. Full of that which had befallen me, and still affected by so many violent emotions, my heart added the sentiment of its sufferings to the ideas with which a meditation on my subject had inspired me; what I wrote bore evident marks of this mixture. Without perceiving it I described the situation I was then in, gave portraits of Grimm, Madam d'Epinau, Madam d' Houdetot, Saint Lambert and myself. What delicious tears did I shed as I wrote! Alas! in these descriptions there are proofs but too evident that love, the fatal love of which I made such efforts to cure myself, still remained in my heart. With all this there was a certain sentiment of tenderness relative to myself; I thought I was dying, and imagined I bid the public my last adieu. Far from fearing death, I joyfully saw it approach; but I felt some regret at leaving my fellow creatures without their having perceived my real merit, and being convinced how much I should have deserved their esteem had they known me better. These are the secret causes of the singular manner in which this work, opposite to that of the work by which it was preceded, is written.—[Discours sur l'Inegalite. Discourse on the Inequality of Mankind.]

I corrected and copied the letter, and was preparing to print it when, after a long silence, I received one from Madam d'Houdetot, which brought upon me a new affliction more painful than any I had yet suffered. She informed me that my passion for her was known to all Paris, that I had spoken of it to persons who had made it public, that this rumor, having reached the ears of her lover, had nearly cost him his life; yet he did her justice, and peace was restored between them; but on his account, as well as on hers, and for the sake of her reputation, she thought it her duty to break off all correspondence with me, at the same time assuring me that she and her friend were both interested in my welfare, that they would defend me to the public, and that she herself would, from time to time, send to inquire after my health.

## Page 7

“And thou also, Diderot,” exclaimed I, “unworthy friend!”

I could not, however, yet resolve to condemn him. My weakness was known to others who might have spoken of it. I wished to doubt, but this was soon out of my power. Saint Lambert shortly after performed an action worthy of himself. Knowing my manner of thinking, he judged of the state in which I must be; betrayed by one part of my friends and forsaken by the other. He came to see me. The first time he had not many moments to spare. He came again. Unfortunately, not expecting him, I was not at home. Theresa had with him a conversation of upwards of two hours, in which they informed each other of facts of great importance to us all. The surprise with which I learned that nobody doubted of my having lived with Madam d’Epinay, as Grimm then did, cannot be equalled, except by that of Saint Lambert, when he was convinced that the rumor was false. He, to the great dissatisfaction of the lady, was in the same situation with myself, and the eclairsissements resulting from the conversation removed from me all regret, on account of my having broken with her forever. Relative to Madam d’Houdetot, he mentioned several circumstances with which neither Theresa nor Madam d’Houdetot herself were acquainted; these were known to me only in the first instance, and I had never mentioned them except to Diderot, under the seal of friendship; and it was to Saint Lambert himself to whom he had chosen to communicate them. This last step was sufficient to determine me. I resolved to break with Diderot forever, and this without further deliberation, except on the manner of doing it; for I had perceived secret ruptures turned to my prejudice, because they left the mask of friendship in possession of my most cruel enemies.

The rules of good breeding, established in the world on this head, seem to have been dictated by a spirit of treachery and falsehood. To appear the friend of a man when in reality we are no longer so, is to reserve to ourselves the means of doing him an injury by surprising honest men into an error. I recollected that when the illustrious Montesquieu broke with Father de Tournemine, he immediately said to everybody: “Listen neither to Father Tournemine nor myself, when we speak of each other, for we are no longer friends.” This open and generous proceeding was universally applauded. I resolved to follow the example with Diderot; but what method was I to take to publish the rupture authentically from my retreat, and yet without scandal? I concluded on inserting in the form of a note, in my work, a passage from the book of Ecclesiasticus, which declared the rupture and even the subject of it, in terms sufficiently clear to such as were acquainted with the previous circumstances, but could signify nothing to the rest of the world. I determined not to speak in my work of the friend whom I renounced, except with the honor always due to extinguished friendship. The whole may be seen in the work itself.



## Page 8

There is nothing in this world but time and misfortune, and every act of courage seems to be a crime in adversity. For that which has been admired in Montesquieu, I received only blame and reproach. As soon as my work was printed, and I had copies of it, I sent one to Saint Lambert, who, the evening before, had written to me in his own name and that of Madam d' Houdetot, a note expressive of the most tender friendship.

The following is the letter he wrote to me when he returned the copy I had sent him.

*Eaubonne*, 10th October, 1758.

“Indeed, sir, I cannot accept the present you have just made me. In that part of your preface where, relative to Diderot, you quote a passage from Ecclesiastes (he mistakes, it is from Ecclesiasticus) the book dropped from my hand. In the conversations we had together in the summer, you seemed to be persuaded Diderot was not guilty of the pretended indiscretions you had imputed to him. You may, for aught I know to the contrary, have reason to complain of him, but this does not give you a right to insult him publicly. You are not unacquainted with the nature of the persecutions he suffers, and you join the voice of an old friend to that of envy. I cannot refrain from telling you, sir, how much this heinous act of yours has shocked me. I am not acquainted with Diderot, but I honor him, and I have a lively sense of the pain you give to a man, whom, at least not in my hearing, you have never reproached with anything more than a trifling weakness. You and I, sir, differ too much in our principles ever to be agreeable to each other. Forget that I exist; this you will easily do. I have never done to men either good or evil of a nature to be long remembered. I promise you, sir, to forget your person and to remember nothing relative to you but your talents.”

This letter filled me with indignation and affliction; and, in the excess of my pangs, feeling my pride wounded, I answered him by the following note:

MONTMORUNCY, 11th October, 1758.

“*Sir*: While reading your letter, I did you the honor to be surprised at it, and had the weakness to suffer it to affect me; but I find it unworthy of an answer.

“I will no longer continue the copies of Madam d’Houdetot. If it be not agreeable to her to keep that she has, she may send it me back and I will return her money. If she keeps it, she must still send for the rest of her paper and the money; and at the same time I beg she will return me the prospectus which she has in her possession. Adieu, sir.”

Courage under misfortune irritates the hearts of cowards, but it is pleasing to generous minds. This note seemed to make Saint Lambert reflect with himself and to regret his having been so violent; but too haughty in his turn to make open advances, he seized and perhaps prepared, the opportunity of palliating what he had done.

A fortnight afterwards I received from Madam d'Epinay the following letter:



## Page 9

Thursday, 26th.

*“Sir:* I received the book you had the goodness to send me, and which I have read with much pleasure. I have always experienced the same sentiment in reading all the works which have come from your pen. Receive my thanks for the whole. I should have returned you these in person had my affairs permitted me to remain any time in your neighborhood; but I was not this year long at the Chevrette. M. and Madam Dupin come there on Sunday to dinner. I expect M. de Saint Lambert, M. de Francueil, and Madam d’Houdetot will be of the party; you will do me much pleasure by making one also. All the persons who are to dine with me, desire, and will, as well as myself, be delighted to pass with you a part of the day. I have the honor to be with the most perfect consideration,” etc.

This letter made my heart beat violently; after having for a year past been the subject of conversation of all Paris, the idea of presenting myself as a spectacle before Madam d’Houdetot, made me tremble, and I had much difficulty to find sufficient courage to support that ceremony. Yet as she and Saint Lambert were desirous of it, and Madam d’Epinay spoke in the name of her guests without naming one whom I should not be glad to see, I did not think I should expose myself accepting a dinner to which I was in some degree invited by all the persons who with myself were to partake of it. I therefore promised to go: on Sunday the weather was bad, and Madam D’Epinay sent me her carriage.

My arrival caused a sensation. I never met a better reception. An observer would have thought the whole company felt how much I stood in need of encouragement. None but French hearts are susceptible of this kind of delicacy. However, I found more people than I expected to see. Amongst others the Comte d’ Houdetot, whom I did not know, and his sister Madam de Blainville, without whose company I should have been as well pleased. She had the year before came several times to Eaubonne, and her sister-in-law had left her in our solitary walks to wait until she thought proper to suffer her to join us. She had harbored a resentment against me, which during this dinner she gratified at her ease. The presence of the Comte d’ Houdetot and Saint Lambert did not give me the laugh on my side, and it may be judged that a man embarrassed in the most common conversations was not very brilliant in that which then took place. I never suffered so much, appeared so awkward, or received more unexpected mortifications. As soon as we had risen from table, I withdrew from that wicked woman; I had the pleasure of seeing Saint Lambert and Madam de’Houdetot approach me, and we conversed together a part of the afternoon, upon things very indifferent it is true, but with the same familiarity as before my involuntary error. This friendly attention was not lost upon my heart, and could Saint Lambert have read what passed there, he certainly would have been satisfied with it. I can safely assert that although on my arrival the presence of Madam d’Houdetot gave me the most violent palpitations, on returning from the house I scarcely thought of her; my mind was entirely taken up with Saint Lambert.



## Page 10

Notwithstanding the malignant sarcasms of Madam de Blainville, the dinner was of great service to me, and I congratulated myself upon not having refused the invitation. I not only discovered that the intrigues of Grimm and the Holbachiens had not deprived me of my old acquaintance,

[Such is the simplicity of my heart was my opinion when I wrote these confessions.]

but, what flattered me still more, that Madam d'Houdetot and Saint Lambert were less changed than I had imagined, and I at length understood that his keeping her at a distance from me proceeded more from jealousy than from disesteem. This was a consolation to me, and calmed my mind. Certain of not being an object of contempt in the eyes of persons whom I esteemed, I worked upon my own heart with greater courage and success. If I did not quite extinguish in it a guilty and an unhappy passion, I at least so well regulated the remains of it that they have never since that moment led me into the most trifling error. The copies of Madam d' Houdetot, which she prevailed upon me to take again, and my works, which I continued to send her as soon as they appeared, produced me from her a few notes and messages, indifferent but obliging. She did still more, as will hereafter appear, and the reciprocal conduct of her lover and myself, after our intercourse had ceased, may serve as an example of the manner in which persons of honor separate when it is no longer agreeable to them to associate with each other.

Another advantage this dinner procured me was its being spoken of in Paris, where it served as a refutation of the rumor spread by my enemies, that I had quarrelled with every person who partook of it, and especially with M. d'Epinay. When I left the Hermitage I had written him a very polite letter of thanks, to which he answered not less politely, and mutual civilities had continued, as well between us as between me and M. de la Lalive, his brother-in-law, who even came to see me at Montmorency, and sent me some of his engravings. Excepting the two sisters-in-law of Madam d'Houdetot, I have never been on bad terms with any person of the family.

My letter to D'Alembert had great success. All my works had been very well received, but this was more favorable to me. It taught the public to guard against the insinuations of the Coterie Holbachique. When I went to the Hermitage, this Coterie predicted with its usual sufficiency, that I should not remain there three months. When I had stayed there twenty months, and was obliged to leave it, I still fixed my residence in the country. The Coterie insisted this was from a motive of pure obstinacy, and that I was weary even to death of my retirement; but that, eaten up with pride, I chose rather to become a victim of my stubbornness than to recover from it and return to Paris. The letter to D'Alembert breathed a gentleness of mind which every one perceived not to be affected. Had I been dissatisfied with my retreat, my style and manner would have borne evident marks of my ill-humor. This reigned in all the works I had written in Paris; but in the first I wrote in the country not the least appearance of it was to be found. To

persons who knew how to distinguish, this remark was decisive. They perceived I was returned to my element.



## Page 11

Yet the same work, notwithstanding all the mildness it breathed, made me by a mistake of my own and my usual ill-luck, another enemy amongst men of letters. I had become acquainted with Marmontel at the house of M. de la Popliniere, and his acquaintance had been continued at that of the baron. Marmontel at that time wrote the 'Mercure de France'. As I had too much pride to send my works to the authors of periodical publications, and wishing to send him this without his imagining it was in consequence of that title, or being desirous he should speak of it in the Mercure, I wrote upon the book that it was not for the author of the Mercure, but for M. Marmontel. I thought I paid him a fine compliment; he mistook it for a cruel offence, and became my irreconcilable enemy. He wrote against the letter with politeness, it is true, but with a bitterness easily perceptible, and since that time has never lost an opportunity of injuring me in society, and of indirectly ill-treating me in his works. Such difficulty is there in managing the irritable self-love of men of letters, and so careful ought every person to be not to leave anything equivocal in the compliments they pay them.

Having nothing more to disturb me, I took advantage of my leisure and independence to continue my literary pursuits with more coherence. I this winter finished my Eloisa, and sent it to Rey, who had it printed the year following. I was, however, interrupted in my projects by a circumstance sufficiently disagreeable. I heard new preparations were making at the opera-house to give the 'Devin du Village'. Enraged at seeing these people arrogantly dispose of my property, I again took up the memoir I had sent to M. D'Argenson, to which no answer had been returned, and having made some trifling alterations in it, I sent the manuscript by M. Sellon, resident from Geneva, and a letter with which he was pleased to charge himself, to the Comte de St. Florentin, who had succeeded M. D'Argenson in the opera department. Duclos, to whom I communicated what I had done, mentioned it to the 'petits violons', who offered to restore me, not my opera, but my freedom of the theatre, which I was no longer in a situation to enjoy. Perceiving I had not from any quarter the least justice to expect, I gave up the affair; and the directors of the opera, without either answering or listening to my reasons, have continued to dispose as of their own property, and to turn to their profit, the Devin du Village, which incontestably belong to nobody but myself.

Since I had shaken off the yoke of my tyrants, I led a life sufficiently agreeable and peaceful; deprived of the charm of too strong attachments I was delivered from the weight of their chains. Disgusted with the friends who pretended to be my protectors, and wished absolutely to dispose of me at will, and in spite of myself, to subject me to their pretended good services, I resolved in future to have no other



## Page 12

connections than those of simple benevolence. These, without the least constraint upon liberty, constitute the pleasure of society, of which equality is the basis. I had of them as many as were necessary to enable me to taste of the charm of liberty without being subject to the dependence of it; and as soon as I had made an experiment of this manner of life, I felt it was the most proper to my age, to end my days in peace, far removed from the agitations, quarrels and cavillings in which I had just been half submerged.

During my residence at the Hermitage, and after my settlement at Montmorency, I had made in the neighborhood some agreeable acquaintance, and which did not subject me to any inconvenience. The principal of these was young Loiseau de Mauleon, who, then beginning to plead at the bar, did not yet know what rank he would one day hold there. I for my part was not in the least doubt about the matter. I soon pointed out to him the illustrious career in the midst of which he is now seen, and predicted that, if he laid down to himself rigid rules for the choice of causes, and never became the defender of anything but virtue and justice, his genius, elevated by this sublime sentiment, would be equal to that of the greatest orators. He followed my advice, and now feels the good effects of it. His defence of M. de Portes is worthy of Demosthenes. He came every year within a quarter of a league of the Hermitage to pass the vacation at St. Brice, in the fife of Mauleon, belonging to his mother, and where the great Bossuet had formerly lodged. This is a fief, of which a like succession of proprietors would render nobility difficult to support.

I had also for a neighbor in the same village of St. Brice, the bookseller Guerin, a man of wit, learning, of an amiable disposition, and one of the first in his profession. He brought me acquainted with Jean Neaulme, bookseller of Amsterdam, his friend and correspondent, who afterwards printed Emilius.

I had another acquaintance still nearer than St. Brice, this was M. Maltor, vicar of Groslay, a man better adapted for the functions of a statesman and a minister, than for those of the vicar of a village, and to whom a diocese at least would have been given to govern if talents decided the disposal of places. He had been secretary to the Comte de Luc, and was formerly intimately acquainted with Jean Bapiste Rousseau. Holding in as much esteem the memory of that illustrious exile, as he held the villain who ruined him in horror; he possessed curious anecdotes of both, which Segur had not inserted in the life, still in manuscript, of the former, and he assured me that the Comte de Luc, far from ever having had reason to complain of his conduct, had until his last moment preserved for him the warmest friendship. M. Maltor, to whom M. de Vintimille gave this retreat after the death of his patron, had formerly been employed in many affairs of which, although far advanced in years, he still preserved a distinct remembrance, and reasoned upon them tolerably well. His conversation, equally amusing and instructive, had nothing in it resembling that of a village pastor: he joined the manners of a man of

the world to the knowledge of one who passes his life in study. He, of all my permanent neighbors, was the person whose society was the most agreeable to me.



## Page 13

I was also acquainted at Montmorency with several fathers of the oratory, and amongst others Father Berthier, professor of natural philosophy; to whom, notwithstanding some little tincture of pedantry, I become attached on account of a certain air of cordial good nature which I observed in him. I had, however, some difficulty to reconcile this great simplicity with the desire and the art he had of everywhere thrusting himself into the company of the great, as well as that of the women, devotees, and philosophers. He knew how to accommodate himself to every one. I was greatly pleased with the man, and spoke of my satisfaction to all my other acquaintances. Apparently what I said of him came to his ear. He one day thanked me for having thought him a good-natured man. I observed something in his forced smile which, in my eyes, totally changed his physiognomy, and which has since frequently occurred to my mind. I cannot better compare this smile than to that of Panurge purchasing the Sheep of Dindenaut. Our acquaintance had begun a little time after my arrival at the Hermitage, to which place he frequently came to see me. I was already settled at Montmorency when he left it to go and reside at Paris. He often saw Madam le Vasseur there. One day, when I least expected anything of the kind, he wrote to me in behalf of that woman, informing me that Grimm offered to maintain her, and to ask my permission to accept the offer. This I understood consisted in a pension of three hundred livres, and that Madam le Vasseur was to come and live at Deuil, between the Chevrette and Montmorency. I will not say what impression the application made on me. It would have been less surprising had Grimm had ten thousand livres a year, or any relation more easy to comprehend with that woman, and had not such a crime been made of my taking her to the country, where, as if she had become younger, he was now pleased to think of placing her. I perceived the good old lady had no other reason for asking my permission, which she might easily have done without, but the fear of losing what I already gave her, should I think ill of the step she took. Although this charity appeared to be very extraordinary, it did not strike me so much then as afterwards. But had I known even everything I have since discovered, I should still as readily have given my consent as I did and was obliged to do, unless I had exceeded the offer of M. Grimm. Father Berthier afterwards cured me a little of my opinion of his good nature and cordiality, with which I had so unthinkingly charged him.

This same Father Berthier was acquainted with two men, who, for what reason I know not, were to become so with me; there was but little similarity between their taste and mine. They were the children of Melchisedec, of whom neither the country nor the family was known, no more than, in all probability, the real name. They were Jansenists, and passed for priests in disguise, perhaps on account of their

## Page 14

ridiculous manner of wearing long swords, to which they appeared to have been fastened. The prodigious mystery in all their proceedings gave them the appearance of the heads of a party, and I never had the least doubt of their being the authors of the 'Gazette Ecclesiastique'. The one, tall, smooth-tongued, and sharping, was named Ferrand; the other, short, squat, a sneerer, and punctilious, was a M. Minard. They called each other cousin. They lodged at Paris with D'Alembert, in the house of his nurse named Madam Rousseau, and had taken at Montmorency a little apartment to pass the summers there. They did everything for themselves, and had neither a servant nor runner; each had his turn weekly to purchase provisions, do the business of the kitchen, and sweep the house. They managed tolerably well, and we sometimes ate with each other. I know not for what reason they gave themselves any concern about me: for my part, my only motive for beginning an acquaintance with them was their playing at chess, and to make a poor little party I suffered four hours' fatigue. As they thrust themselves into all companies, and wished to intermeddle in everything, Theresa called them the gossips, and by this name they were long known at Montmorency.

Such, with my host M. Mathas, who was a good man, were my principal country acquaintance. I still had a sufficient number at Paris to live there agreeably whenever I chose it, out of the sphere of men of letters, amongst whom Duclos, was the only friend I reckoned: for De Levre was still too young, and although, after having been a witness to the manoeuvres of the philosophical tribe against me, he had withdrawn from it, at least I thought so, I could not yet forget the facility with which he made himself the mouthpiece of all the people of that description.

In the first place I had my old and respectable friend Roguin. This was a good old-fashioned friend for whom I was not indebted to my writings but to myself, and whom for that reason I have always preserved. I had the good Lenieps, my countryman, and his daughter, then alive, Madam Lambert. I had a young Genevese, named Coindet, a good creature, careful, officious, zealous, who came to see me soon after I had gone to reside at the Hermitage, and, without any other introducer than himself, had made his way into my good graces. He had a taste for drawing, and was acquainted with artists. He was of service to me relative to the engravings of the New Eloisa; he undertook the direction of the drawings and the plates, and acquitted himself well of the commission.



## Page 15

I had free access to the house of M. Dupin, which, less brilliant than in the young days of Madam Dupin, was still, by the merit of the heads of the family, and the choice of company which assembled there, one of the best houses in Paris. As I had not preferred anybody to them, and had separated myself from their society to live free and independent, they had always received me in a friendly manner, and I was always certain of being well received by Madam Dupin. I might even have counted her amongst my country neighbors after her establishment at Clichy, to which place I sometimes went to pass a day or two, and where I should have been more frequently had Madam Dupin and Madam de Chenonceaux been upon better terms. But the difficulty of dividing my time in the same house between two women whose manner of thinking was unfavorable to each other, made this disagreeable: however I had the pleasure of seeing her more at my ease at Deuil, where, at a trifling distance from me, she had taken a small house, and even at my own habitation, where she often came to see me.

I had likewise for a friend Madam de Crequi, who, having become devout, no longer received D'Alembert, Marmontel, nor a single man of letters, except, I believe the Abbe Trublet, half a hypocrite, of whom she was weary. I, whose acquaintance she had sought lost neither her good wishes nor intercourse. She sent me young fat pullets from Mons, and her intention was to come and see me the year following had not a journey, upon which Madam de Luxembourg determined, prevented her. I here owe her a place apart; she will always hold a distinguished one in my remembrance.

In this list I should also place a man whom, except Roguin, I ought to have mentioned as the first upon it; my old friend and brother politician, De Carrio, formerly titular secretary to the embassy from Spain to Venice, afterwards in Sweden, where he was charge des affaires, and at length really secretary to the embassy from Spain at Paris. He came and surprised me at Montmorency when I least expected him. He was decorated with the insignia of a Spanish order, the name of which I have forgotten, with a fine cross in jewelry. He had been obliged, in his proofs of nobility, to add a letter to his name, and to bear that of the Chevalier de Carrion. I found him still the same man, possessing the same excellent heart, and his mind daily improving, and becoming more and more amiable. We would have renewed our former intimacy had not Coindet interposed according to custom, taken advantage of the distance I was at from town to insinuate himself into my place, and, in my name, into his confidence, and supplant me by the excess of his zeal to render me services.

The remembrance of Carrion makes me recollect one of my country neighbors, of whom I should be inexcusable not to speak, as I have to make confession of an unpardonable neglect of which I was guilty towards him: this was the honest M. le Blond, who had done me a service at Venice, and, having made an excursion to France with his family, had taken a house in the country, at Birche, not far from Montmorency.



## Page 16

[When I wrote this, full of my blind confidence, I was far from suspecting the real motive and the effect of his journey to Paris.]

As soon as I heard he was my neighbor, I, in the joy of my heart, and making it more a pleasure than a duty, went to pay him a visit. I set off upon this errand the next day. I was met by people who were coming to see me, and with whom I was obliged to return. Two days afterwards I set off again for the same purpose: he had dined at Paris with all his family. A third time he was at home: I heard the voice of women, and saw, at the door, a coach which alarmed me. I wished to see him, at least for the first time, quite at my ease, that we might talk over what had passed during our former connection.

In fine, I so often postponed my visit from day to day, that the shame of discharging a like duty so late prevented me from doing it at all; after having dared to wait so long, I no longer dared to present myself. This negligence, at which M. le Blond could not but be justly offended, gave, relative to him, the appearance of ingratitude to my indolence, and yet I felt my heart so little culpable that, had it been in my power to do M. le Blond the least service, even unknown to himself, I am certain he would not have found me idle. But indolence, negligence and delay in little duties to be fulfilled have been more prejudicial to me than great vices. My greatest faults have been omissions: I have seldom done what I ought not to have done, and unfortunately it has still more rarely happened that I have done what I ought.

Since I am now upon the subject of my Venetian acquaintance, I must not forget one which I still preserved for a considerable time after my intercourse with the rest had ceased. This was M. de Joinville, who continued after his return from Genoa to show me much friendship. He was fond of seeing me and of conversing with me upon the affairs of Italy, and the follies of M. de Montaigne, of whom he of himself knew many anecdotes, by means of his acquaintance in the office for foreign affairs in which he was much connected. I had also the pleasure of seeing at my house my old comrade Dupont who had purchased a place in the province of which he was, and whose affairs had brought him to Paris. M. de Joinville became by degrees so desirous of seeing me, that he in some measure laid me under constraint; and, although our places of residence were at a great distance from each other, we had a friendly quarrel when I let a week pass without going to dine with him. When he went to Joinville he was always desirous of my accompanying him; but having once been there to pass a week I had not the least desire to return. M. de Joinville was certainly an honest man, and even amiable in certain respects but his understanding was beneath mediocrity; he was handsome, rather fond of his person and tolerably fatiguing. He had one of the most singular collections perhaps in the



## Page 17

world, to which he gave much of his attention and endeavored to acquire it that of his friends, to whom it sometimes afforded less amusement than it did to himself. This was a complete collection of songs of the court and Paris for upwards of fifty years past, in which many anecdotes were to be found that would have been sought for in vain elsewhere. These are memoirs for the history of France, which would scarcely be thought of in any other country.

One day, whilst we were still upon the very best terms, he received me so coldly and in a manner so different from that which was customary to him, that after having given him an opportunity to explain, and even having begged him to do it, I left his house with a resolution, in which I have persevered, never to return to it again; for I am seldom seen where I have been once ill received, and in this case there was no Diderot who pleaded for M. de Joinville. I vainly endeavored to discover what I had done to offend him; I could not recollect a circumstance at which he could possibly have taken offence. I was certain of never having spoken of him or his in any other than in the most honorable manner; for he had acquired my friendship, and besides my having nothing but favorable things to say of him, my most inviolable maxim has been that of never speaking but in an honorable manner of the houses I frequented.

At length, by continually ruminating. I formed the following conjecture: the last time we had seen each other, I had supped with him at the apartment of some girls of his acquaintance, in company with two or three clerks in the office of foreign affairs, very amiable men, and who had neither the manner nor appearance of libertines; and on my part, I can assert that the whole evening passed in making melancholy reflections on the wretched fate of the creatures with whom we were. I did not pay anything, as M. de Joinville gave the supper, nor did I make the girls the least present, because I gave them not the opportunity I had done to the padoana of establishing a claim to the trifle I might have offered, We all came away together, cheerfully and upon very good terms. Without having made a second visit to the girls, I went three or four days afterwards to dine with M. de Joinville, whom I had not seen during that interval, and who gave me the reception of which I have spoken. Unable to suppose any other cause for it than some misunderstanding relative to the supper, and perceiving he had no inclination to explain, I resolved to visit him no longer, but I still continued to send him my works: he frequently sent me his compliments, and one evening, meeting him in the green-room of the French theatre, he obligingly reproached me with not having called to see him, which, however, did not induce me to depart from my resolution. Therefore this affair had rather the appearance of a coolness than a rupture. However, not having heard of nor seen him since that time, it would have been too late after an absence of several years, to renew my acquaintance with him. It is for this reason M. de Joinville is not named in my list, although I had for a considerable time frequented his house.



## Page 18

I will not swell my catalogue with the names of many other persons with whom I was or had become less intimate, although I sometimes saw them in the country, either at my own house or that of some neighbor, such for instance as the Abbes de Condillac and De Malby, M. de Mairan, De la Lalive, De Boisgelou, Vatelet, Ancelet, and others. I will also pass lightly over that of M. de Margency, gentleman in ordinary of the king, an ancient member of the 'Coterie Holbachique', which he had quitted as well as myself, and the old friend of Madam d'Epinay from whom he had separated as I had done; I likewise consider that of M. Desmahis, his friend, the celebrated but short-lived author of the comedy of the Impertinent, of much the same importance. The first was my neighbor in the country, his estate at Margency being near to Montmorency. We were old acquaintances, but the neighborhood and a certain conformity of experience connected us still more. The last died soon afterwards. He had merit and even wit, but he was in some degree the original of his comedy, and a little of a coxcomb with women, by whom he was not much regretted.

I cannot, however, omit taking notice of a new correspondence I entered into at this period, which has had too much influence over the rest of my life not to make it necessary for me to mark its origin. The person in question is De Lamoignon de Malesherbes of the 'Cour des aides', then censor of books, which office he exercised with equal intelligence and mildness, to the great satisfaction of men of letters. I had not once been to see him at Paris; yet I had never received from him any other than the most obliging condescensions relative to the censorship, and I knew that he had more than once very severely reprimanded persons who had written against me. I had new proofs of his goodness upon the subject of the edition of Eloisa. The proofs of so great a work being very expensive from Amsterdam by post, he, to whom all letters were free, permitted these to be addressed to him, and sent them to me under the countersign of the chancellor his father. When the work was printed he did not permit the sale of it in the kingdom until, contrary to my wishes an edition had been sold for my benefit. As the profit of this would on my part have been a theft committed upon Rey, to whom I had sold the manuscript, I not only refused to accept the present intended me, without his consent, which he very generously gave, but persisted upon dividing with him the hundred pistoles (a thousand livres—forty pounds), the amount of it but of which he would not receive anything. For these hundred pistoles I had the mortification, against which M. de Malesherbes had not guarded me, of seeing my work horribly mutilated, and the sale of the good edition stopped until the bad one was entirely disposed of.



## Page 19

I have always considered M. de Malesherbes as a man whose uprightness was proof against every temptation. Nothing that has happened has even made me doubt for a moment of his probity; but, as weak as he is polite, he sometimes injures those he wishes to serve by the excess of his zeal to preserve them from evil. He not only retrenched a hundred pages in the edition of Paris, but he made another retrenchment, which no person but the author could permit himself to do, in the copy of the good edition he sent to Madam de Pompadour. It is somewhere said in that work that the wife of a coal-heaver is more respectable than the mistress of a prince. This phrase had occurred to me in the warmth of composition without any application. In reading over the work I perceived it would be applied, yet in consequence of the very imprudent maxim I had adopted of not suppressing anything, on account of the application which might be made, when my conscience bore witness to me that I had not made them at the time I wrote, I determined not to expunge the phrase, and contented myself with substituting the word Prince to King, which I had first written. This softening did not seem sufficient to M. de Malesherbes: he retrenched the whole expression in a new sheet which he had printed on purpose and stuck in between the other with as much exactness as possible in the copy of Madam de Pompadour. She was not ignorant of this manoeuvre. Some good-natured people took the trouble to inform her of it. For my part, it was not until a long time afterwards, and when I began to feel the consequences of it, that the matter came to my knowledge.

Is not this the origin of the concealed but implacable hatred of another lady who was in a like situation, without my knowing it, or even being acquainted with her person when I wrote the passage? When the book was published the acquaintance was made, and I was very uneasy. I mentioned this to the Chevalier de Lorenzy, who laughed at me, and said the lady was so little offended that she had not even taken notice of the matter. I believed him, perhaps rather too lightly, and made myself easy when there was much reason for my being otherwise.

At the beginning of the winter I received an additional mark of the goodness of M. de Malesherbes of which I was very sensible, although I did not think proper to take advantage of it. A place was vacant in the 'Journal des Savans'. Margency wrote to me, proposing to me the place, as from himself. But I easily perceived from the manner of the letter that he was dictated to and authorized; he afterwards told me he had been desired to make me the offer. The occupations of this place were but trifling. All I should have had to do would have been to make two abstracts a month, from the books brought to me for that purpose, without being under the necessity of going once to Paris, not even to pay the magistrate a visit of thanks. By this employment I should

## Page 20

have entered a society of men of letters of the first merit; M. de Mairan, Clairaut, De Guignes and the Abbe Barthelemi, with the first two of whom I had already made an acquaintance, and that of the two others was very desirable. In fine, for this trifling employment, the duties of which I might so commodiously have discharged, there was a salary of eight hundred livres (thirty-three pounds); I was for a few hours undecided, and this from a fear of making Margency angry and displeasing M. de Malesherbes. But at length the insupportable constraint of not having it in my power to work when I thought proper, and to be commanded by time; and moreover the certainty of badly performing the functions with which I was to charge myself, prevailed over everything, and determined me to refuse a place for which I was unfit. I knew that my whole talent consisted in a certain warmth of mind with respect to the subjects of what I had to treat, and that nothing but the love of that which was great, beautiful and sublime, could animate my genius. What would the subjects of the extracts I should have had to make from books, or even the books themselves, have signified to me? My indifference about them would have frozen my pen, and stupefied my mind. People thought I could make a trade of writing, as most of the other men of letters did, instead of which I never could write but from the warmth of imagination. This certainly was not necessary for the 'Journal des Savans'. I therefore wrote to Margency a letter of thanks, in the politest terms possible, and so well explained to him my reasons, that it was not possible that either he or M. de Malesherbes could imagine there was pride or ill-humor in my refusal. They both approved of it without receiving me less politely, and the secret was so well kept that it was never known to the public.

The proposition did not come in a favorable moment. I had some time before this formed the project of quitting literature, and especially the trade of an author. I had been disgusted with men of letters by everything that had lately befallen me, and had learned from experience that it was impossible to proceed in the same track without having some connections with them. I was not much less dissatisfied with men of the world, and in general with the mixed life I had lately led, half to myself and half devoted to societies for which I was unfit. I felt more than ever, and by constant experience, that every unequal association is disadvantageous to the weaker person. Living with opulent people, and in a situation different from that I had chosen, without keeping a house as they did, I was obliged to imitate them in many things; and little expenses, which were nothing to their fortunes, were for me not less ruinous than indispensable. Another man in the country-house of a friend, is served by his own servant, as well at table as in his chamber; he sends him to seek for everything he wants; having nothing directly to do with the servants of



## Page 21

the house, not even seeing them, he gives them what he pleases, and when he thinks proper; but I, alone, and without a servant, was at the mercy of the servants of the house, of whom it was necessary to gain the good graces, that I might not have much to suffer; and being treated as the equal of their master, I was obliged to treat them accordingly, and better than another would have done, because, in fact, I stood in greater need of their services. This, where there are but few domestics, may be complied with; but in the houses I frequented there were a great number, and the knaves so well understood their interests that they knew how to make me want the services of them all successively. The women of Paris, who have so much wit, have no just idea of this inconvenience, and in their zeal to economize my purse they ruined me. If I supped in town, at any considerable distance from my lodgings, instead of permitting me to send for a hackney coach, the mistress of the house ordered her horses to be put to and sent me home in her carriage. She was very glad to save me the twenty-four sous (shilling) for the fiacre, but never thought of the half-crown I gave to her coachman and footman. If a lady wrote to me from Paris to the Hermit age or to Montmorency, she regretted the four sous (two pence) the postage of the letter would have cost me, and sent it by one of her servants, who came sweating on foot, and to whom I gave a dinner and half a crown, which he certainly had well earned. If she proposed to me to pass with her a week or a fortnight at her country-house, she still said to herself, "It will be a saving to the poor man; during that time his eating will cost him nothing." She never recollected that I was the whole time idle, that the expenses of my family, my rent, linen and clothes were still going on, that I paid my barber double that it cost me more being in her house than in my own, and although I confined my little largesses to the house in which I customarily lived, that these were still ruinous to me. I am certain I have paid upwards of twenty-five crowns in the house of Madam d'Houdetot, at Raubonne, where I never slept more than four or five times, and upwards of a thousand livres (forty pounds) as well at Epinay as at the Chevrette, during the five or six years I was most assiduous there. These expenses are inevitable to a man like me, who knows not how to provide anything for himself, and cannot support the sight of a lackey who grumbles and serves him with a sour look. With Madam Dupin, even where I was one of the family, and in whose house I rendered many services to the servants, I never received theirs but for my money. In course of time it was necessary to renounce these little liberalities, which my situation no longer permitted me to bestow, and I felt still more severely the inconvenience of associating with people in a situation different from my own.



## Page 22

Had this manner of life been to my taste, I should have been consoled for a heavy expense, which I dedicated to my pleasures; but to ruin myself at the same time that I fatigued my mind, was insupportable, and I had so felt the weight of this, that, profiting by the interval of liberty I then had, I was determined to perpetuate it, and entirely to renounce great companies, the composition of books, and all literary concerns, and for the remainder of my days to confine myself to the narrow and peaceful sphere in which I felt I was born to move.

The produce of this letter to D'Alembert, and of the New Eloisa, had a little improved the state of my finances, which had been considerably exhausted at the Hermitage. Emilius, to which, after I had finished Eloisa, I had given great application, was in forwardness, and the produce of this could not be less than the sum of which I was already in possession. I intended to place this money in such a manner as to produce me a little annual income, which, with my copying, might be sufficient to my wants without writing any more. I had two other works upon the stocks. The first of these was my 'Institutions Politiques'. I examined the state of this work, and found it required several years' labor. I had not courage enough to continue it, and to wait until it was finished before I carried my intentions into execution. Therefore, laying the book aside, I determined to take from it all I could, and to burn the rest; and continuing this with zeal without interrupting Emilius, I finished the 'Contrat Social'.

The dictionary of music now remained. This was mechanical, and might be taken up at any time; the object of it was entirely pecuniary. I reserved to myself the liberty of laying it aside, or of finishing it at my ease, according as my other resources collected should render this necessary or superfluous. With respect to the 'Morale Sensitive', of which I had made nothing more than a sketch, I entirely gave it up.

As my last project, if I found I could not entirely do without copying, was that of removing from Paris, where the affluence of my visitors rendered my housekeeping expensive, and deprived me of the time I should have turned to advantage to provide for it; to prevent in my retirement the state of lassitude into which an author is said to fall when he has laid down his pen, I reserved to myself an occupation which might fill up the void in my solitude without tempting me to print anything more. I know not for what reason they had long tormented me to write the memoirs of my life. Although these were not until that time interesting as to the facts, I felt they might become so by the candor with which I was capable of giving them, and I determined to make of these the only work of the kind, by an unexampled veracity, that, for once at least, the world might see a man such as he internally was. I had always laughed at the false ingenuousness of Montaigne, who, feigning to confess his faults,

## Page 23

takes great care not to give himself any, except such as are amiable; whilst I, who have ever thought, and still think myself, considering everything, the best of men, felt there is no human being, however pure he maybe, who does not internally conceal some odious vice. I knew I was described to the public very different from what I really was, and so opposite, that notwithstanding my faults, all of which I was determined to relate, I could not but be a gainer by showing myself in my proper colors. This, besides, not being to be done without setting forth others also in theirs and the work for the same reason not being of a nature to appear during my lifetime, and that of several other persons, I was the more encouraged to make my confession, at which I should never have to blush before any person. I therefore resolved to dedicate my leisure to the execution of this undertaking, and immediately began to collect such letters and papers as might guide or assist my memory, greatly regretting the loss of all I had burned, mislaid and destroyed.

The project of absolute retirement, one of the most reasonable I had ever formed, was strongly impressed upon my mind, and for the execution of it I was already taking measures, when Heaven, which prepared me a different destiny, plunged me into a another vortex.

Montmorency, the ancient and fine patrimony of the illustrious family of that name, was taken from it by confiscation. It passed by the sister of Duke Henry, to the house of Conde, which has changed the name of Montmorency to that of Enguien, and the duchy has no other castle than an old tower, where the archives are kept, and to which the vassals come to do homage. But at Montmorency, or Enguien, there is a private house, built by Crosat, called 'le pauvre', which having the magnificence of the most superb chateaux, deserves and bears the name of a castle. The majestic appearance of this noble edifice, the view from it, not equalled perhaps in any country; the spacious saloon, painted by the hand of a master; the garden, planted by the celebrated Le Notre; all combined to form a whole strikingly majestic, in which there is still a simplicity that enforces admiration. The Marechal Duke de Luxembourg who then inhabited this house, came every year into the neighborhood where formerly his ancestors were the masters, to pass, at least, five or six weeks as a private inhabitant, but with a splendor which did not degenerate from the ancient lustre of his family. On the first journey he made to it after my residing at Montmorency, he and his lady sent to me a valet de chambre, with their compliments, inviting me to sup with them as often as it should be agreeable to me; and at each time of their coming they never failed to reiterate the same compliments and invitation. This called to my recollection Madam Beuzenval sending me to dine in the servants' hall. Times were changed; but I was still the same man. I did not choose to be sent to dine in the servants'



## Page 24

hall, and was but little desirous of appearing at the table of the great I should have been much better pleased had they left me as I was, without caressing me and rendering me ridiculous. I answered politely and respectfully to Monsieur and Madam de Luxembourg, but I did not accept their offers, and my indisposition and timidity, with my embarrassment in speaking; making me tremble at the idea alone of appearing in an assembly of people of the court. I did not even go to the castle to pay a visit of thanks, although I sufficiently comprehended this was all they desired, and that their eager politeness was rather a matter of curiosity than benevolence.

However, advances still were made, and even became more pressing. The Countess de Boufflers, who was very intimate with the lady of the marechal, sent to inquire after my health, and to beg I would go and see her. I returned her a proper answer, but did not stir from my house. At the journey of Easter, the year following, 1759, the Chevalier de Lorenzy, who belonged to the court of the Prince of Conti, and was intimate with Madam de Luxembourg, came several times to see me, and we became acquainted; he pressed me to go to the castle, but I refused to comply. At length, one afternoon, when I least expected anything of the kind, I saw coming up to the house the Marechal de Luxembourg, followed by five or six persons. There was now no longer any means of defence; and I could not, without being arrogant and unmannerly, do otherwise than return this visit, and make my court to Madam la Marechale, from whom the marechal had been the bearer of the most obliging compliments to me. Thus, under unfortunate auspices, began the connections from which I could no longer preserve myself, although a too well-founded foresight made me afraid of them until they were made.

I was excessively afraid of Madam de Luxembourg. I knew, she was amiable as to manner. I had seen her several times at the theatre, and with the Duchess of Boufflers, and in the bloom of her beauty; but she was said to be malignant; and this in a woman of her rank made me tremble. I had scarcely seen her before I was subjugated. I thought her charming, with that charm proof against time and which had the most powerful action upon my heart. I expected to find her conversation satirical and full of pleasantries and points. It was not so; it was much better. The conversation of Madam de Luxembourg is not remarkably full of wit; it has no sallies, nor even finesse; it is exquisitely delicate, never striking, but always pleasing. Her flattery is the more intoxicating as it is natural; it seems to escape her involuntarily, and her heart to overflow because it is too full. I thought I perceived, on my first visit, that notwithstanding my awkward manner and embarrassed expression, I was not displeasing to her. All the women of the court know how to persuade us of this when they please, whether it be true or not, but they do not all, like Madam de Luxembourg,



## Page 25

possess the art of rendering that persuasion so agreeable that we are no longer disposed ever to have a doubt remaining. From the first day my confidence in her would have been as full as it soon afterwards became, had not the Duchess of Montmorency, her daughter-in-law, young, giddy, and malicious also, taken it into her head to attack me, and in the midst of the eulogiums of her mamma, and feigned allurements on her own account, made me suspect I was only considered by them as a subject of ridicule.

It would perhaps have been difficult to relieve me from this fear with these two ladies had not the extreme goodness of the marechal confirmed me in the belief that theirs was not real. Nothing is more surprising, considering my timidity, than the promptitude with which I took him at his word on the footing of equality to which he would absolutely reduce himself with me, except it be that with which he took me at mine with respect to the absolute independence in which I was determined to live. Both persuaded I had reason to be content with my situation, and that I was unwilling to change it, neither he nor Madam de Luxembourg seemed to think a moment of my purse or fortune; although I can have no doubt of the tender concern they had for me, they never proposed to me a place nor offered me their interest, except it were once, when Madam de Luxembourg seemed to wish me to become a member of the French Academy. I alleged my religion; this she told me was no obstacle, or if it was one she engaged to remove it. I answered, that however great the honor of becoming a member of so illustrious a body might be, having refused M. de Tressan, and, in some measure, the King of Poland, to become a member of the Academy at Nancy, I could not with propriety enter into any other. Madam de Luxembourg did not insist, and nothing more was said upon the subject. This simplicity of intercourse with persons of such rank, and who had the power of doing anything in my favor, M. de Luxembourg being, and highly deserving to be, the particular friend of the king, affords a singular contrast with the continual cares, equally importunate and officious, of the friends and protectors from whom I had just separated, and who endeavored less to serve me than to render me contemptible.

When the marechal came to see me at Mont Louis, I was uneasy at receiving him and his retinue in my only chamber; not because I was obliged to make them all sit down in the midst of my dirty plates and broken pots, but on account of the state of the floor, which was rotten and falling to ruin, and I was afraid the weight of his attendants would entirely sink it. Less concerned on account of my own danger than for that to which the affability of the marechal exposed him, I hastened to remove him from it by conducting him, notwithstanding the coldness of the weather, to my alcove, which was quite open to the air, and had no chimney. When he was there I told him my reason for having brought him to it; he told it to his lady, and they both pressed me to accept, until the floor was repaired, a lodging of the castle; or, if I preferred it, in a separate edifice called the Little Castle which was in the middle of the park. This delightful abode deserves to be spoken of.



## Page 26

The park or garden of Montmorency is not a plain, like that of the Chevrette. It is uneven, mountainous, raised by little hills and valleys, of which the able artist has taken advantage; and thereby varied his groves, ornaments, waters, and points of view, and, if I may so speak, multiplied by art and genius a space in itself rather narrow. This park is terminated at the top by a terrace and the castle; at bottom it forms a narrow passage which opens and becomes wider towards the valley, the angle of which is filled up with a large piece of water. Between the orangery, which is in this widening, and the piece of water, the banks of which are agreeably decorated, stands the Little Castle of which I have spoken. This edifice, and the ground about it, formerly belonged to the celebrated Le Brun, who amused himself in building and decorating it in the exquisite taste of architectural ornaments which that great painter had formed to himself. The castle has since been rebuilt, but still, according to the plan and design of its first master. It is little and simple, but elegant. As it stands in a hollow between the orangery and the large piece of water, and consequently is liable to be damp, it is open in the middle by a peristyle between two rows of columns, by which means the air circulating throughout the whole edifice keeps it dry, notwithstanding its unfavorable situation. When the building is seen from the opposite elevation, which is a point of view, it appears absolutely surrounded with water, and we imagine we have before our eyes an enchanted island, or the most beautiful of the three Boromeans, called Isola Bella, in the greater lake.

In this solitary edifice I was offered the choice of four complete apartments it contains, besides the ground floor, consisting of a dancing room, billiard room and a kitchen. I chose the smallest over the kitchen, which also I had with it. It was charmingly neat, with blue and white furniture. In this profound and delicious solitude, in the midst of the woods, the singing of birds of every kind, and the perfume of orange flowers, I composed, in a continual ecstasy, the fifth book of Emilius, the coloring of which I owe in a great measure to the lively impression I received from the place I inhabited.

With what eagerness did I run every morning at sunrise to respire the perfumed air in the peristyle! What excellent coffee I took there *tete-a-tete* with my Theresa. My cat and dog were our company. This retinue alone would have been sufficient for me during my whole life, in which I should not have had one weary moment. I was there in a terrestrial paradise; I lived in innocence and tasted of happiness.



## Page 27

At the journey of July, M. and Madam de Luxembourg showed me so much attention, and were so extremely kind, that, lodged in their house, and overwhelmed with their goodness, I could not do less than make them a proper return in assiduous respect near their persons; I scarcely quitted them; I went in the morning to pay my court to Madam la Marechale; after dinner I walked with the marechal; but did not sup at the castle on account of the numerous guests, and because they supped too late for me. Thus far everything was as it should be, and no harm would have been done could I have remained at this point. But I have never known how to preserve a medium in my attachments, and simply fulfil the duties of society. I have ever been everything or nothing. I was soon everything; and receiving the most polite attention from persons of the highest rank, I passed the proper bounds, and conceived for them a friendship not permitted except among equals. Of these I had all the familiarity in my manners, whilst they still preserved in theirs the same politeness to which they had accustomed me. Yet I was never quite at my ease with Madam de Luxembourg. Although I was not quite relieved from my fears relative to her character, I apprehended less danger from it than from her wit. It was by this especially that she impressed me with awe. I knew she was difficult as to conversation, and she had a right to be so. I knew women, especially those of her rank, would absolutely be amused, that it was better to offend than to weary them, and I judged by her commentaries upon what the people who went away had said what she must think of my blunders. I thought of an expedient to spare me with her the embarrassment of speaking; this was reading. She had heard of my Eloisa, and knew it was in the press; she expressed a desire to see the work; I offered to read it to her, and she accepted my offer. I went to her every morning at ten o'clock; M. de Luxembourg was present, and the door was shut. I read by the side of her bed, and so well proportioned my readings that there would have been sufficient for the whole time she had to stay, had they even not been interrupted.

[The loss of a great battle, which much afflicted the King, obliged M. de Luxembourg precipitately to return to court.]

The success of this expedient surpassed my expectation. Madam de Luxembourg took a great liking to Julia and the author; she spoke of nothing but me, thought of nothing else, said civil things to me from morning till night, and embraced me ten times a day. She insisted on me always having my place by her side at table, and when any great lords wished it she told them it was mine, and made them sit down somewhere else. The impression these charming manners made upon me, who was subjugated by the least mark of affection, may easily be judged of. I became really attached to her in proportion to the attachment she showed me. All my fear in perceiving this infatuation, and feeling the want of agreeableness in myself to support it, was that it would be changed into disgust; and unfortunately this fear was but too well founded.



## Page 28

There must have been a natural opposition between her turn of mind and mine, since, independently of the numerous stupid things which at every instant escaped me in conversation, and even in my letters, and when I was upon the best terms with her, there were certain other things with which she was displeased without my being able to imagine the reason. I will quote one instance from among twenty. She knew I was writing for Madam d'Houdetot a copy of the New Eloisa. She was desirous to have one on the same footing. This I promised her, and thereby making her one of my customers, I wrote her a polite letter upon the subject, at least such was my intention. Her answer, which was as follows, stupefied me with surprise.

*Versailles, Tuesday.*

“I am ravished, I am satisfied: your letter has given me infinite pleasure, and I take the earliest moment to acquaint you with, and thank you for it.

“These are the exact words of your letter: ‘Although you are certainly a very good customer, I have some pain in receiving your money: according to regular order I ought to pay for the pleasure I should have in working for you.’ I will say nothing more on the subject. I have to complain of your not speaking of your state of health: nothing interests me more. I love you with all my heart: and be assured that I write this to you in a very melancholy mood, for I should have much pleasure in telling it to you myself. M. de Luxembourg loves and embraces you with all his heart.

“On receiving the letter I hastened to answer it, reserving to myself more fully to examine the matter, protesting against all disobliging interpretation, and after having given several days to this examination with an inquietude which may easily be conceived, and still without being able to discover in what I could have erred, what follows was my final answer on the subject.

*“Montmorency, 8th December, 1759.*

“Since my last letter I have examined a hundred times the passage in question. I have considered it in its proper and natural meaning, as well as in every other which may be given to it, and I confess to you, madam, that I know not whether it be I who owe to you excuses, or you from whom they are due to me.”

It is now ten years since these letters were written. I have since that time frequently thought of the subject of them; and such is still my stupidity that I have hitherto been unable to discover what in the passages, quoted from my letter, she could find offensive, or even displeasing.

I must here mention, relative to the manuscript copy of Eloisa Madam de Luxembourg wished to have, in what manner I thought to give it some marked advantage which should distinguish it from all others. I had written separately the adventures of Lord

Edward, and had long been undetermined whether I should insert them wholly, or in extracts, in the work in which they seemed to be wanting. I at length determined



## Page 29

to retrench them entirely, because, not being in the manner of the rest, they would have spoiled the interesting simplicity, which was its principal merit. I had still a stronger reason when I came to know Madam de Luxembourg: There was in these adventures a Roman marchioness, of a bad character, some parts of which, without being applicable, might have been applied to her by those to whom she was not particularly known. I was therefore, highly pleased with the determination to which I had come, and resolved to abide by it. But in the ardent desire to enrich her copy with something which was not in the other, what should I fall upon but these unfortunate adventures, and I concluded on making an extract from them to add to the work; a project dictated by madness, of which the extravagance is inexplicable, except by the blind fatality which led me on to destruction.

'Quos vult perdere Jupiter dementet.'

I was stupid enough to make this extract with the greatest care and pains, and to send it her as the finest thing in the world; it is true, I at the same time informed her the original was burned, which was really the case, that the extract was for her alone, and would never be seen, except by herself, unless she chose to show it; which, far from proving, to her my prudence and discretion, as it was my intention to do, clearly intimated what I thought of the application by which she might be offended. My stupidity was such, that I had no doubt of her being delighted with what I had done. She did not make me the compliment upon it which I expected, and, to my great surprise, never once mentioned the paper I had sent her. I was so satisfied with myself, that it was not until a long time afterwards, I judged, from other indications, of the effect it had produced.

I had still, in favor of her manuscript, another idea more reasonable, but which, by more distant effects, has not been much less prejudicial to me; so much does everything concur with the work of destiny, when that hurries on a man to misfortune. I thought of ornamenting the manuscript with the engravings of the New Eloisa, which were of the same size. I asked Coindet for these engravings, which belonged to me by every kind of title, and the more so as I had given him the produce of the plates, which had a considerable sale. Coindet is as cunning as I am the contrary. By frequently asking him for the engravings he came to the knowledge of the use I intended to make of them. He then, under pretence of adding some new ornament, still kept them from me; and at length presented them himself.

'Ego versiculos feci, tulit alter honores.'



## Page 30

This gave him an introduction upon a certain footing to the Hotel de Luxembourg. After my establishment at the little castle he came rather frequently to see me, and always in the morning, especially when M. and Madam de Luxembourg were at Montmorency. Therefore that I might pass the day with him, I did not go the castle. Reproaches were made me on account of my absence; I told the reason of them. I was desired to bring with me M. Coindet; I did so. This was, what he had sought after. Therefore, thanks to the excessive goodness M. and Madam de Luxembourg had for me, a clerk to M. Thelusson, who was sometimes pleased to give him his table when he had nobody else to dine with him, was suddenly placed at that of a marechal of France, with princes, duchesses, and persons of the highest rank at court. I shall never forget, that one day being obliged to return early to Paris, the marechal said, after dinner, to the company, "Let us take a walk upon the road to St. Denis, and we will accompany M. Coindet." This was too much for the poor man; his head was quite turned. For my part, my heart was so affected that I could not say a word. I followed the company, weeping like a child, and having the strongest desire to kiss the foot of the good marechal; but the continuation of the history of the manuscript has made me anticipate. I will go a little back, and, as far as my memory will permit, mark each event in its proper order.

As soon as the little house of Mont Louis was ready, I had it neatly furnished and again established myself there. I could not break through the resolution I had made on quitting the Hermitage of always having my apartment to myself; but I found a difficulty in resolving to quit the little castle. I kept the key of it, and being delighted with the charming breakfasts of the peristyle, frequently went to the castle to sleep, and stayed three or four days as at a country-house. I was at that time perhaps better and more agreeably lodged than any private individual in Europe. My host, M. Mathas, one of the best men in the world, had left me the absolute direction of the repairs at Mont Louis, and insisted upon my disposing of his workmen without his interference. I therefore found the means of making of a single chamber upon the first story, a complete set of apartments consisting of a chamber, antechamber, and a water closet. Upon the ground-floor was the kitchen and the chamber of Theresa. The alcove served me for a closet by means of a glazed partition and a chimney I had made there. After my return to this habitation, I amused myself in decorating the terrace, which was already shaded by two rows of linden trees; I added two others to make a cabinet of verdure, and placed in it a table and stone benches: I surrounded it with lilies, syringa and woodbines, and had a beautiful border of flowers parallel with the two rows of trees. This terrace, more elevated than that of the castle, from which the view was at



## Page 31

least as fine, and where I had tamed a great number of birds, was my drawing-room, in which I received M. and Madam de Luxembourg, the Duke of Villeroy, the Prince of Tingry, the Marquis of Armentieres, the Duchess of Montmorency, the Duchess of Bouffiers, the Countess of Valentinois, the Countess of Boufflers, and other persons of the first rank; who, from the castle disdained not to make, over a very fatiguing mountain, the pilgrimage of Mont Louis. I owed all these visits to the favor of M. and Madam de Luxembourg; this I felt, and my heart on that account did them all due homage. It was with the same sentiment that I once said to M. de Luxembourg, embracing him: "Ah! Monsieur le Marechal, I hated the great before I knew you, and I have hated them still more since you have shown me with what ease they might acquire universal respect." Further than this I defy any person with whom I was then acquainted, to say I was ever dazzled for an instant with splendor, or that the vapor of the incense I received ever affected my head; that I was less uniform in my manner, less plain in my dress, less easy of access to people of the lowest rank, less familiar with neighbors, or less ready to render service to every person when I had it in my power so to do, without ever once being discouraged by the numerous and frequently unreasonable importunities with which I was incessantly assailed.

Although my heart led me to the castle of Montmorency, by my sincere attachment to those by whom it was inhabited, it by the same means drew me back to the neighborhood of it, there to taste the sweets of the equal and simple life, in which my only happiness consisted. Theresa had contracted a friendship with the daughter of one of my neighbors, a mason of the name of Pilleu; I did the same with the father, and after having dined at the castle, not without some constraint, to please Madam de Luxembourg, with what eagerness did I return in the evening to sup with the good man Pilleu and his family, sometimes at his own house and at others, at mine.

Besides my two lodgings in the country, I soon had a third at the Hotel de Luxembourg, the proprietors of which pressed me so much to go and see them there, that I consented, notwithstanding my aversion to Paris, where, since my retiring to the Hermitage, I had been but twice, upon the two occasions of which I have spoken. I did not now go there except on the days agreed upon, solely to supper, and the next morning I returned to the country. I entered and came out by the garden which faces the boulevard, so that I could with the greatest truth, say I had not set my foot upon the stones of Paris.



## Page 32

In the midst of this transient prosperity, a catastrophe, which was to be the conclusion of it, was preparing at a distance. A short time after my return to Mont Louis, I made there, and as it was customary, against my inclination, a new acquaintance, which makes another era in my private history. Whether this be favorable or unfavorable, the reader will hereafter be able to judge. The person with whom I became acquainted was the Marchioness of Verdelin, my neighbor, whose husband had just bought a country-house at Soisy, near Montmorency. Mademoiselle d'Ars, daughter to the Comte d'Ars, a man of fashion, but poor, had married M. de Verdelin, old, ugly, deaf, uncouth, brutal, jealous, with gashes in his face, and blind of one eye, but, upon the whole, a good man when properly managed, and in possession of a fortune of from fifteen to twenty thousand a year. This charming object, swearing, roaring, scolding, storming, and making his wife cry all day long, ended by doing whatever she thought proper, and this to set her in a rage, because she knew how to persuade him that it was he who would, and she would not have it so. M. de Margency, of whom I have spoken, was the friend of madam, and became that of monsieur. He had a few years before let them his castle of Margency, near Eaubonne and Andilly, and they resided there precisely at the time of my passion for Madam d'Houdetot. Madam d'Houdetot and Madam de Verdelin became acquainted with each other, by means of Madam d'Aubeterre their common friend; and as the garden of Margency was in the road by which Madam d'Houdetot went to Mont Olympe, her favorite walk, Madam de Verdelin gave her a key that she might pass through it. By means of this key I crossed it several times with her; but I did not like unexpected meetings, and when Madam de Verdelin was by chance upon our way I left them together without speaking to her, and went on before. This want of gallantry must have made on her an impression unfavorable to me. Yet when she was at Soisy she was anxious to have my company. She came several times to see me at Mont Louis, without finding me at home, and perceiving I did not return her visit, took it into her head, as a means of forcing me to do it, to send me pots of flowers for my terrace. I was under the necessity of going to thank her; this was all she wanted, and we thus became acquainted.

This connection, like every other I formed; or was led into contrary to my inclination, began rather boisterously. There never reigned in it a real calm. The turn of mind of Madam de Verdelin was too opposite to mine. Malignant expressions and pointed sarcasms came from her with so much simplicity, that a continual attention too fatiguing for me was necessary to perceive she was turning into ridicule the person to whom she spoke. One trivial circumstance which occurs to my recollection will be sufficient to give an idea of her manner. Her brother had just obtained the command of a frigate cruising against



## Page 33

the English. I spoke of the manner of fitting out this frigate without diminishing its swiftness of sailing. "Yes," replied she, in the most natural tone of voice, "no more cannon are taken than are necessary for fighting." I seldom have heard her speak well of any of her absent friends without letting slip something to their prejudice. What she did not see with an evil eye she looked upon with one of ridicule, and her friend Margency was not excepted. What I found most insupportable in her was the perpetual constraint proceeding from her little messages, presents and billets, to which it was a labor for me to answer, and I had continual embarrassments either in thanking or refusing. However, by frequently seeing this lady I became attached to her. She had her troubles as well as I had mine. Reciprocal confidence rendered our conversations interesting. Nothing so cordially attaches two persons as the satisfaction of weeping together. We sought the company of each other for our reciprocal consolation, and the want of this has frequently made me pass over many things. I had been so severe in my frankness with her, that after having sometimes shown so little esteem for her character, a great deal was necessary to be able to believe she could sincerely forgive me.

The following letter is a specimen of the epistles I sometimes wrote to her, and it is to be remarked that she never once in any of her answers to them seemed to be in the least degree piqued.

*Montmorency, 5th November, 1760.*

"You tell me, madam, you have not well explained yourself, in order to make me understand I have explained myself ill. You speak of your pretended stupidity for the purpose of making me feel my own. You boast of being nothing more than a good kind of woman, as if you were afraid to being taken at your word, and you make me apologies to tell me I owe them to you. Yes, madam, I know it; it is I who am a fool, a good kind of man; and, if it be possible, worse than all this; it is I who make a bad choice of my expressions in the opinion of a fine French lady, who pays as much attention to words, and speak as well as you do. But consider that I take them in the common meaning of the language without knowing or troubling my head about the polite acceptations in which they are taken in the virtuous societies of Paris. If my expressions are sometimes equivocal, I endeavored by my conduct to determine their meaning," *etc.* The rest of the letter is much the same.

Coindet, enterprising, bold, even to effrontery, and who was upon the watch after all my friends, soon introduced himself in my name to the house of Madam de Verdellin, and, unknown to me, shortly became there more familiar than myself. This Coindet was an extraordinary man. He presented himself in my name in the houses of all my acquaintance, gained a footing in them, and eat there without ceremony. Transported with zeal to do me service, he never



## Page 34

mentioned my name without his eyes being suffused with tears; but, when he came to see me, he kept the most profound silence on the subject of all these connections, and especially on that in which he knew I must be interested. Instead of telling me what he had heard, said, or seen, relative to my affairs, he waited for my speaking to him, and even interrogated me. He never knew anything of what passed in Paris, except that which I told him: finally, although everybody spoke to me of him, he never once spoke to me of any person; he was secret and mysterious with his friend only; but I will for the present leave Coindet and Madam de Verdelin, and return to them at a proper time.

Sometime after my return to Mont Louis, La Tour, the painter, came to see me, and brought with him my portrait in crayons, which a few years before he had exhibited at the salon. He wished to give me this portrait, which I did not choose to accept. But Madam d'Epinau, who had given me hers, and would have had this, prevailed upon me to ask him for it. He had taken some time to retouch the features. In the interval happened my rupture with Madam d'Epinau; I returned her her portrait; and giving her mine being no longer in question, I put it into my chamber, in the castle. M. de Luxembourg saw it there, and found it a good one; I offered it him, he accepted it, and I sent it to the castle. He and his lady comprehended I should be very glad to have theirs. They had them taken in miniature by a very skilful hand, set in a box of rock crystal, mounted with gold, and in a very handsome manner, with which I was delighted, made me a present of both. Madam de Luxenbourg would never consent that her portrait should be on the upper part of the box. She had reproached me several times with loving M. de Luxembourg better than I did her; I had not denied it because it was true. By this manner of placing her portrait she showed very politely, but very clearly, she had not forgotten the preference.

Much about this time I was guilty of a folly which did not contribute to preserve me to her good graces. Although I had no knowledge of M. de Silhoutte, and was not much disposed to like him, I had a great opinion of his administration. When he began to let his hand fall rather heavily upon financiers, I perceived he did not begin his operation in a favorable moment, but he had my warmest wishes for his success; and as soon as I heard he was displaced I wrote to him, in my intrepid, heedless manner, the following letter, which I certainly do not undertake to justify.

*Montmorency, 2d December, 1759.*

“Vouchsafe, sir, to receive the homage of a solitary man, who is not known to you, but who esteems you for your talents, respects you for your administration, and who did you the honor to believe you would not long remain in it. Unable to save the State, except at the expense of the capital by which it has been ruined, you have braved the clamors of the gainers of money. When I saw you crush these wretches, I envied you your place; and at seeing you quit it without departing from your system, I admire you. Be satisfied

with yourself, sir; the step you have taken will leave you an honor you will long enjoy without a competitor. The malediction of knaves is the glory of an honest man.”



## Page 35

Madam de Luxembourg, who knew I had written this letter, spoke to me of it when she came into the country at Easter. I showed it to her and she was desirous of a copy; this I gave her, but when I did it I did not know she was interested in under-farms, and the displacing of M. de Silhoutte. By my numerous follies any person would have imagined I wilfully endeavored to bring on myself the hatred of an amiable woman who had power, and to whom, in truth, I daily became more attached, and was far from wishing to occasion her displeasure, although by my awkward manner of proceeding, I did everything proper for that purpose. I think it superfluous to remark here, that it is to her the history of the opiate of M. Tronchin, of which I have spoken in the first part of my memoirs, relates; the other lady was Madam de Mirepoix. They have never mentioned to me the circumstance, nor has either of them, in the least, seemed to have preserved a remembrance of it; but to presume that Madam de Luxembourg can possibly have forgotten it appears to me very difficult, and would still remain so, even were the subsequent events entirely unknown. For my part, I fell into a deceitful security relative to the effects of my stupid mistakes, by an internal evidence of my not having taken any step with an intention to offend; as if a woman could ever forgive what I had done, although she might be certain the will had not the least part in the matter.

Although she seemed not to see or feel anything, and that I did not immediately find either her warmth of friendship diminished or the least change in her manner, the continuation and even increase of a too well founded foreboding made me incessantly tremble, lest disgust should succeed to infatuation. Was it possible for me to expect in a lady of such high rank, a constancy proof against my want of address to support it? I was unable to conceal from her this secret foreboding, which made me uneasy, and rendered me still more disagreeable. This will be judged of by the following letter, which contains a very singular prediction.

N. B. This letter, without date in my rough copy, was written in October, 1760, at latest.

“How cruel is your goodness? Why disturb the peace of a solitary mortal who had renounced the pleasures of life, that he might no longer suffer the fatigues of them. I have passed my days in vainly searching for solid attachments. I have not been able to form any in the ranks to which I was equal; is it in yours that I ought to seek for them? Neither ambition nor interest can tempt me: I am not vain, but little fearful; I can resist everything except caresses. Why do you both attack me by a weakness which I must overcome, because in the distance by which we are separated, the over-flowings of susceptible hearts cannot bring mine near to you? Will gratitude be sufficient for a heart which knows not two manners of bestowing its affections, and feels itself incapable of everything



## Page 36

except friendship? Of friendship, madam la marechale! Ah! there is my misfortune! It is good in you and the marechal to make use of this expression; but I am mad when I take you at your word. You amuse yourselves, and I become attached; and the end of this prepares for me new regrets. How I do hate all your titles, and pity you on account of your being obliged to bear them? You seem to me to be so worthy of tasting the charms of private life! Why do not you reside at Clarens? I would go there in search of happiness; but the castle of Montmorency, and the Hotel de Luxembourg! Is it in these places Jean Jacques ought to be seen? Is it there a friend to equality ought to carry the affections of a sensible heart, and who thus paying the esteem in which he is held, thinks he returns as much as he receives? You are good and susceptible also: this I know and have seen; I am sorry I was not sooner convinced of it; but in the rank you hold, in the manner of living, nothing can make a lasting impression; a succession of new objects efface each other so that not one of them remains. You will forget me, madam, after having made it impossible for me to imitate, you. You have done a great deal to make me unhappy, to be inexcusable.”

I joined with her the marechal, to render the compliment less severe; for I was moreover so sure of him, that I never had a doubt in my mind of the continuation of his friendship. Nothing that intimidated me in madam la marechale, ever for a moment extended to him. I never have had the least mistrust relative to his character, which I knew to be feeble, but constant. I no more feared a coldness on his part than I expected from him an heroic attachment. The simplicity and familiarity of our manners with each other proved how far dependence was reciprocal. We were both always right: I shall ever honor and hold dear the memory of this worthy man, and, notwithstanding everything that was done to detach him from me, I am as certain of his having died my friend as if I had been present in his last moments.

At the second journey to Montmorency, in the year 1760, the reading of Eloisa being finished, I had recourse to that of Emilius, to support myself in the good graces of Madam de Luxembourg; but this, whether the subject was less to her taste; or that so much reading at length fatigued her, did not succeed so well. However, as she reproached me with suffering myself to be the dupe of booksellers, she wished me to leave to her care the printing the work, that I might reap from it a greater advantage. I consented to her doing it, on the express condition of its not being printed in France, on which we had along dispute; I affirming that it was impossible to obtain, and even imprudent to solicit, a tacit permission; and being unwilling to permit the impression upon any other terms in the kingdom; she, that the censor could not make the least difficulty, according to the system



## Page 37

government had adopted. She found means to make M. de Malesherbes enter into her views. He wrote to me on the subject a long letter with his own hand, to prove the profession of faith of the Savoyard vicar to be a composition which must everywhere gain the approbation of its readers and that of the court, as things were then circumstanced. I was surprised to see this magistrate, always so prudent, become so smooth in the business, as the printing of a book was by that alone legal, I had no longer any objection to make to that of the work. Yet, by an extraordinary scruple, I still required it should be printed in Holland, and by the bookseller Neaulme, whom, not satisfied with indicating him, I informed of my wishes, consenting the edition should be brought out for the profit of a French bookseller, and that as soon as it was ready it should be sold at Paris, or wherever else it might be thought proper, as with this I had no manner of concern. This is exactly what was agreed upon between Madam de Luxembourg and myself, after which I gave her my manuscript.

Madam de Luxembourg was this time accompanied by her granddaughter Mademoiselle de Boufflers, now Duchess of Lauzun. Her name was Amelia. She was a charming girl. She really had a maiden beauty, mildness and timidity. Nothing could be more lovely than her person, nothing more chaste and tender than the sentiments she inspired. She was, besides, still a child under eleven years of age. Madam de Luxembourg, who thought her too timid, used every endeavor to animate her. She permitted me several times to give her a kiss, which I did with my usual awkwardness. Instead of saying flattering things to her, as any other person would have done, I remained silent and disconcerted, and I know not which of the two, the little girl or myself, was most ashamed.

I met her one day alone in the staircase of the little castle. She had been to see Theresa, with whom her governess still was. Not knowing what else to say, I proposed to her a kiss, which, in the innocence of her heart, she did not refuse; having in the morning received one from me by order of her grandmother, and in her presence. The next day, while reading Emilius by the side of the bed of Madam de Luxembourg, I came to a passage in which I justly censure that which I had done the preceding evening. She thought the reflection extremely just, and said some very sensible things upon the subject which made me blush. How was I enraged at my incredible stupidity, which has frequently given me the appearance of guilt when I was nothing more than a fool and embarrassed! A stupidity, which in a man known to be endowed with some wit, is considered as a false excuse. I can safely swear that in this kiss, as well as in the others, the heart and thoughts of Mademoiselle Amelia were not more pure than my own, and that if I could have avoided meeting her I should have done it; not that I had not great pleasure in seeing her,



## Page 38

but from the embarrassment of not finding a word proper to say. Whence comes it that even a child can intimidate a man, whom the power of kings has never inspired with fear? What is to be done? How, without presence of mind, am I to act? If I strive to speak to the persons I meet, I certainly say some stupid thing to them; if I remain silent, I am a misanthrope, an unsociable animal, a bear. Total imbecility would have been more favorable to me; but the talents which I have failed to improve in the world have become the instruments of my destruction, and of that of the talents I possessed.

At the latter end of this journey, Madam de Luxembourg did a good action in which I had some share. Diderot having very imprudently offended the Princess of Robeck, daughter of M. de Luxembourg, Palissot, whom she protected, took up the quarrel, and revenged her by the comedy of 'The Philosophers', in which I was ridiculed, and Diderot very roughly handled. The author treated me with more gentleness, less, I am of opinion, on account of the obligation he was under to me, than from the fear of displeasing the father of his protectress, by whom he knew I was beloved. The bookseller Duchesne, with whom I was not at that time acquainted, sent me the comedy when it was printed, and this I suspect was by the order of Palissot, who, perhaps, thought I should have a pleasure in seeing a man with whom I was no longer connected defamed. He was greatly deceived. When I broke with Diderot, whom I thought less ill-natured than weak and indiscreet, I still always preserved for his person an attachment, an esteem even, and a respect for our ancient friendship, which I know was for a long time as sincere on his part as on mine. The case was quite different with Grimm; a man false by nature, who never loved me, who is not even capable of friendship, and a person who, without the least subject of complaint, and solely to satisfy his gloomy jealousy, became, under the mask of friendship, my most cruel calumniator. This man is to me a cipher; the other will always be my old friend.

My very bowels yearned at the sight of this odious piece: the reading of it was insupportable to me, and, without going through the whole, I returned the copy to Duchesne with the following letter:

*Montmorency, 21st, May, 1760.*

"In casting my eyes over the piece you sent me, I trembled at seeing myself well spoken of in it. I do not accept the horrid present. I am persuaded that in sending it me, you did not intend an insult; but you do not know, or have forgotten, that I have the honor to be the friend of a respectable man, who is shamefully defamed and calumniated in this libel."

Duchesne showed the letter. Diderot, upon whom it ought to have had an effect quite contrary, was vexed at it. His pride could not forgive me the superiority of a generous action, and I was informed his wife everywhere inveighed against me with a bitterness

with which I was not in the least affected, as I knew she was known to everybody to be a noisy babbler.



## Page 39

Diderot in his turn found an avenger in the Abbe Morrellet, who wrote against Palissot a little work, imitated from the 'Petit Prophete', and entitled the Vision. In this production he very imprudently offended Madam de Robeck, whose friends got him sent to the Bastile; though she, not naturally vindictive, and at that time in a dying state, I am certain had nothing to do with the affair.

D'Alembert, who was very intimately connected with Morrellet, wrote me a letter, desiring I would beg of Madam de Luxembourg to solicit his liberty, promising her in return encomiums in the 'Encyclopedie'; my answer to this letter was as follows:

"I did not wait the receipt of your letter before I expressed to Madam de Luxembourg the pain the confinement of the Abbe Morrellet gave me. She knows my concern, and shall be made acquainted with yours, and her knowing that the abbe is a man of merit will be sufficient to make her interest herself in his behalf. However, although she and the marechal honor me with a benevolence which is my greatest consolation, and that the name of your friend be to them a recommendation in favor of the Abbe Morrellet, I know not how far, on this occasion, it may be proper for them to employ the credit attached to the rank they hold, and the consideration due to their persons. I am not even convinced that the vengeance in question relates to the Princess Robeck so much as you seem to imagine; and were this even the case, we must not suppose that the pleasure of vengeance belongs to philosophers exclusively, and that when they choose to become women, women will become philosophers.

"I will communicate to you whatever Madam de Luxembourg may say to me after having shown her your letter. In the meantime, I think I know her well enough to assure you that, should she have the pleasure of contributing to the enlargement of the Abbe Morrellet, she will not accept the tribute of acknowledgment you promise her in the Encyclopedie, although she might think herself honored by it, because she does not do good in the expectation of praise, but from the dictates of her heart."

I made every effort to excite the zeal and commiseration of Madam de Luxembourg in favor of the poor captive, and succeeded to my wishes. She went to Versailles on purpose to speak to M. de St. Florentin, and this journey shortened the residence at Montmorency, which the marechal was obliged to quit at the same time to go to Rouen, whither the king sent him as governor of Normandy, on account of the motions of the parliament, which government wished to keep within bounds. Madam de Luxembourg wrote me the following letter the day after her departure:

*Versailles, Wednesday.*



## Page 40

“M. de Luxembourg set off yesterday morning at six o'clock. I do not yet know that I shall follow him. I wait until he writes to me, as he is not yet certain of the stay it will be necessary for him to make. I have seen M. de St. Florentin, who is as favorably disposed as possible towards the Abbe Morrellet; but he finds some obstacles to his wishes which however, he is in hopes of removing the first time he has to do business with the king, which will be next week. I have also desired as a favor that he might not be exiled, because this was intended; he was to be sent to Nancy. This, sir, is what I have been able to obtain; but I promise you I will not let M. de St. Florentin rest until the affair is terminated in the manner you desire. Let me now express to you how sorry I am on account of my being obliged to leave you so soon, of which I flatter myself you have not the least doubt. I love you with all my heart, and shall do so for my whole life.”

A few days afterwards I received the following note from D'Alembert, which gave me real joy.

August 1st.

“Thanks to your cares, my dear philosopher, the abbe has left the Bastile, and his imprisonment will have no other consequence. He is setting off for the country, and, as well as myself, returns you a thousand thanks and compliments. 'Vale et me ama'.”

The abbe also wrote to me a few days afterwards a letter of thanks, which did not, in my opinion, seem to breathe a certain effusion of the heart, and in which he seemed in some measure to extenuate the service I had rendered him. Some time afterwards, I found that he and D'Alembert had, to a certain degree, I will not say supplanted, but succeeded me in the good graces of Madam de Luxembourg, and that I had lost in them all they had gained. However, I am far from suspecting the Abbe Morrellet of having contributed to my disgrace; I have too much esteem for him to harbor any such suspicion. With respect to D'Alembert, I shall at present leave him out of the question, and hereafter say of him what may seem necessary.

I had, at the same time, another affair which occasioned the last letter I wrote to Voltaire; a letter against which he vehemently exclaimed, as an abominable insult, although he never showed it to any person. I will here supply the want of that which he refused to do.

The Abbe Trublet, with whom I had a slight acquaintance, but whom I had but seldom seen, wrote to me on the 13th of June, 1760, informing me that M. Formey, his friend and correspondent, had printed in his journal my letter to Voltaire upon the disaster at Lisbon. The abbe wished to know how the letter came to be printed, and in his jesuitical manner, asked me my opinion, without giving me his own on the necessity of reprinting it. As I most sovereignly hate this kind of artifice and strategem, I returned such thanks as were proper, but in a manner so reserved as to make him feel it, although this did not

prevent him from wheedling me in two or three other letters until he had gathered all he wished to know.



## Page 41

I clearly understood that, notwithstanding all Trublet could say, Formey had not found the letter printed, and that the first impression of it came from himself. I knew him to be an impudent pilferer, who, without ceremony, made himself a revenue by the works of others. Although he had not yet had the incredible effrontery to take from a book already published the name of the author, to put his own in the place of it, and to sell the book for his own profit.

[In this manner he afterwards appropriated to himself Emilius.]

But by what means had this manuscript fallen into his hands? That was a question not easy to resolve, but by which I had the weakness to be embarrassed. Although Voltaire was excessively honored by the letter, as in fact, notwithstanding his rude proceedings, he would have had a right to complain had I had it printed without his consent, I resolved to write to him upon the subject. The second letter was as follows, to which he returned no answer, and giving greater scope to his brutality, he feigned to be irritated to fury.

*Montmorency, 17th June, 1760.*

“I did not think, sir, I should ever have occasion to correspond with you. But learning the letter I wrote to you in 1756 had been printed at Berlin, I owe you an account of my conduct in that respect, and will fulfil this duty with truth and simplicity.

“The letter having really been addressed to you was not intended to be printed. I communicated the contents of it, on certain conditions, to three persons, to whom the right of friendship did not permit me to refuse anything of the kind, and whom the same rights still less permitted to abuse my confidence by betraying their promise. These persons are Madam de Chenonceaux, daughter-in-law to Madam Dupin, the Comtesse d’Houdetot, and a German of the name of Grimm. Madam de Chenonceaux was desirous the letter should be printed, and asked my consent. I told her that depended upon yours. This was asked of you which you refused, and the matter dropped.

“However, the Abbe Trublet, with whom I have not the least connection, has just written to me from a motive of the most polite attention that having received the papers of the journal of M. Formey, he found in them this same letter with an advertisement, dated on the 23d of October, 1759, in which the editor states that he had a few weeks before found it in the shops of the booksellers of Berlin, and, as it is one of those loose sheets which shortly disappear, he thought proper to give it a place in his journal.

“This, sir, is all I know of the matter. It is certain the letter had not until lately been heard of at Paris. It is also as certain that the copy, either in manuscript or print, fallen into the hands of M. de Formey, could never have reached them except by your means (which is not probable) or of those of one of the three persons I have mentioned. Finally, it is well known the two ladies are incapable of such a perfidy. I cannot, in my retirement

learn more relative to the affair. You have a correspondence by means of which you may, if you think it worth the trouble, go back to the source and verify the fact.



## Page 42

“In the same letter the Abbe’ Trublet informs me that he keeps the paper in reserve, and will not lend it without my consent, which most assuredly I will not give. But it is possible this copy may not be the only one in Paris. I wish, sir, the letter may not be printed there, and I will do all in my power to prevent this from happening; but if I cannot succeed, and that, timely perceiving it, I can have the preference, I will not then hesitate to have it immediately printed. This to me appears just and natural.

“With respect to your answer to the same letter, it has not been communicated to anyone, and you may be assured it shall not be printed without your consent, which I certainly shall not be indiscreet enough to ask of you, well knowing that what one man writes to another is not written to the public. But should you choose to write one you wish to have published, and address it to me, I promise you faithfully to add to it my letter and not to make to it a single word of reply.

“I love you not, sir; you have done me, your disciple and enthusiastic admirer; injuries which might have caused me the most exquisite pain. You have ruined Geneva, in return for the asylum it has afforded you; you have alienated from me my fellow-citizens, in return for eulogiums I made of you amongst them; it is you who render to me the residence of my own country insupportable; it is you who will oblige me to die in a foreign land, deprived of all the consolations usually administered to a dying person; and cause me, instead of receiving funeral rites, to be thrown to the dogs, whilst all the honors a man can expect will accompany you in my country. Finally I hate you because you have been desirous I should but I hate you as a man more worthy of loving you had you chosen it. Of all the sentiments with which my heart was penetrated for you, admiration, which cannot be refused your fine genius, and a partiality to your writings, are those you have not effaced. If I can honor nothing in you except your talents, the fault is not mine. I shall never be wanting in the respect due to them, nor in that which this respect requires.”

In the midst of these little literary cavillings, which still fortified my resolution, I received the greatest honor letters ever acquired me, and of which I was the most sensible, in the two visits the Prince of Conti deigned to make to me, one at the Little Castle and the other at Mont Louis. He chose the time for both of these when M. de Luxembourg was not at Montmorency, in order to render it more manifest that he came there solely on my account. I have never had a doubt of my owing the first condescensions of this prince to Madam de Luxembourg and Madam de Boufflers; but I am of opinion I owe to his own sentiments and to myself those with which he has since that time continually honored me.

[Remark the perseverance of this blind and stupid confidence in the midst of all the treatment which should soonest have undeceived me. It continued until my return to Paris in 1770.]



## Page 43

My apartments at Mont Louis being small, and the situation of the alcove charming, I conducted the prince to it, where, to complete the condescension he was pleased to show me, he chose I should have the honor of playing with him a game of chess. I knew he beat the Chevalier de Lorenzy, who played better than I did. However, notwithstanding the signs and grimace of the chevalier and the spectators, which I feigned not to see, I won the two games we played: When they were ended, I said to him in a respectful but very grave manner: "My lord, I honor your serene highness too much not to beat you always at chess." This great prince, who had real wit, sense, and knowledge, and so was worthy not to be treated with mean adulation, felt in fact, at least I think so, that I was the only person present who treated him like a man, and I have every reason to believe he was not displeased with me for it.

Had this even been the case, I should not have reproached myself with having been unwilling to deceive him in anything, and I certainly cannot do it with having in my heart made an ill return for his goodness, but solely with having sometimes done it with an ill grace, whilst he himself accompanied with infinite gracefulness the manner in which he showed me the marks of it. A few days afterwards he ordered a hamper of game to be sent me, which I received as I ought. This in a little time was succeeded by another, and one of his gamekeepers wrote me, by order of his highness, that the game it contained had been shot by the prince himself. I received this second hamper, but I wrote to Madam de Boufflers that I would not receive a third. This letter was generally blamed, and deservedly so. Refusing to accept presents of game from a prince of the blood, who moreover sends it in so polite a manner, is less the delicacy of a haughty man, who wishes to preserve his independence, than the rusticity of a clown, who does not know himself. I have never read this letter in my collection without blushing and reproaching myself for having written it. But I have not undertaken my Confession with an intention of concealing my faults, and that of which I have just spoken is too shocking in my own eyes to suffer me to pass it over in silence.

If I were not guilty of the offence of becoming his rival I was very near doing it; for Madam de Boufflers was still his mistress, and I knew nothing of the matter. She came rather frequently to see me with the Chevalier de Lorenzy. She was yet young and beautiful, affected to be whimsical, and my mind was always romantic, which was much of the same nature. I was near being laid hold of; I believe she perceived it; the chevalier saw it also, at least he spoke to me upon the subject, and in a manner not discouraging. But I was this time reasonable, and at the age of fifty it was time I should be so. Full of the doctrine I had just preached to graybeards in my letter to D'Alembert, I should have been ashamed of

## Page 44

not profiting by it myself; besides, coming to the knowledge of that of which I had been ignorant, I must have been mad to have carried my pretensions so far as to expose myself to such an illustrious rivalry. Finally, ill cured perhaps of my passion for Madam de Houdetot, I felt nothing could replace it in my heart, and I bade adieu to love for the rest of my life. I have this moment just withstood the dangerous allurements of a young woman who had her views; and if she feigned to forget my twelve lustres I remember them. After having thus withdrawn myself from danger, I am no longer afraid of a fall, and I answer for myself for the rest of my days.

Madam de Boufflers, perceiving the emotion she caused in me, might also observe I had triumphed over it. I am neither mad nor vain enough to believe I was at my age capable of inspiring her with the same feelings; but, from certain words which she let drop to Theresa, I thought I had inspired her with a curiosity; if this be the case, and that she has not forgiven me the disappointment she met with, it must be confessed I was born to be the victim of my weaknesses, since triumphant love was so prejudicial to me, and love triumphed over not less so.

Here finishes the collection of letters which has served me as a guide in the last two books. My steps will in future be directed by memory only; but this is of such a nature, relative to the period to which I am now come, and the strong impression of objects has remained so perfectly upon my mind, that lost in the immense sea of my misfortunes, I cannot forget the detail of my first shipwreck, although the consequences present to me but a confused remembrance. I therefore shall be able to proceed in the succeeding book with sufficient confidence. If I go further it will be groping in the dark.