

# DELPHINE.

BY

*Madame de Staël*

MADAME DE STAEL-HOLSTEIN.

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*Un Homme doit savoir braver l'Opinion ! une Femme  
s'y soumettre.*

A Man ought to be able to brave public Opinion ; a Woman  
should submit to it. *Madame Necker's Miscellanies.*

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IN SIX VOLUMES.

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# DELPHINE.

## LETTER I.

LEONCE TO M. BARTON.

Paris, June 10, 1791.

YOU have been told that I am distracted: it is true. The life of Delphine is in danger.—I am in the room next to hers—I hear her groan—Wretch that I am, I have plunged her into this state. What then can give me calm? Do you imagine, that to be resolved not to exist after her, is sufficient to tranquillize me? No, while her fate is in suspence, my torments are unspeakable. Yesterday she regarded me with an air of celestial mildness. She rested her head on my breast,



as if she expected to receive some benefit from me—from me, the only cause . . . . No, she shall not die! For these some hours her complaints have been less piercing.

In her delirium, she constantly recollects a horrible scene in a church . . . . . Last night in particular, while Madame de Lebensei and I watched by her bedside, she started suddenly up. As she raised her head, her hair fell down upon her shoulders: a deadly paleness was spread over her face, and yet it possessed a charm I never observed before. Her look penetrated my heart, and the sentiment of compassion I felt was so painful, that I should have died that moment, to be relieved from it—"Leonce," said she, "Leonce, I conjure you not to exact of me an impious oath, in this most sacred place. Do not make me promise my dishonour—do not threaten me with your death—let me depart! Give me back the promise I made to remain.—Oh! free me from that promise!

She

She called me, and yet she knew me not: her eyes sought me round the room, and she could not perceive me. Throwing myself on my knees before her bed, I exclaimed, that I relieved her from every promise; that she was at liberty to leave me.—What would I not have done to have consoled her! What decree would I not have pronounced against myself! But, alas! she heard not my answer. Then repeating her words over and over, she blamed me for refusing her request; and each time, thinking she received no reply, she begged my pardon in accents still more plaintive, still more distressing.

Good Heaven! Can you imagine any tortures equal to those I then experienced? You would have thought some magic power prevented us from understanding each other: she implored, and I appeared inflexible. She complained of my silence, and her delirium prevented her from hearing me. I, whom she alternately accused and supplicated, was beside her, endeavouring

vouring to make her comprehend some of the words which my despair suggested, but I was not able, either to undeceive or to comfort her. Oh! my master, how have you fashioned my heart? Whence come those sorrows? I recollect, that when I was a boy, I once nearly expired in your arms—Surely you would not have succoured me, had you foreseen what was to happen. I should not have been here—those cries would not have followed me to my tomb—I should have long since reposed in peace!—Oh, God! she calls me. —————

## LETTER II.

LEONCE TO DELPHINE.

[June 12.]

YOU live, my Delphine — they take God to witness that you live; Heaven reward them! How long has been the time which is passed! — Is it true, you were in danger only ten days? The recollection of all the years of my life seems shorter. They assure me you are better, and I ought not to doubt the pleasing assertion; but I am far from being satisfied! The thoughts which agitate you, prolong your sufferings. What shall I do, what shall I say, to pour consolation into your soul? Shall I repeat, that I detest the criminal scene which has produced so terrible an effect on your imagination? Doubtless you are convinced of this. Recollect, that I refused to follow you into that fatal



church—I had been for some days in a state of reverie, which deprived me of all command over myself. The solemn prayer of Theresa, which I believed she had concerted with you; the dread of your departure; the recollection of an unhappy marriage, which memory painfully retraced; the love, the regret I felt, all conspired to distract me: but can man explain the cause of his insanity? I was deprived of reason; but you need not fear that this criminal delirium will again return: you cannot suppose that possible, if you have any idea of the impression made upon my heart, by the state in which I beheld you. My love is unconquerable: it can never lose any thing of its force, but it has changed its character.

Before your indisposition, it seemed to me, that we were both animated by a kind of supernatural existence. Death was by me forgotten: my mind was wholly devoted to passion; its prodigies, its enthusiasm enflamed me. In the midst of this intoxication,

intoxication, trouble brought you to the brink of the tomb. Ah! that scene can never be effaced! Fate has replaced me under her yoke; she has recalled me to her empire, and I submit. Fear as well as duty command this resignation; for have I not been at the point of losing you? Am I certain that I still preserve you? Did not my criminal extacies fill thy innocent soul with terror and remorse?

O Delphine! being whom I adore! angel of youth and beauty! be again thyself! Let not thy spirits be depressed, as if my guilty passion could humble that sublime soul which has triumphed over it! —O Delphine! having seen thee about to ascend to Heaven, I consider thee as a Divinity, who may receive my vows, but from whom I never must expect affections similar to my own. What passeth in thy heart, Delphine? Thou appearest indifferent to life, and yet I am near thee; we are not separated; we see

each other constantly, and yet thou wouldst die ! Can the days we spent at Bellerino, my love, be effaced from thy memory ? They were happy days ! Are they remembered no longer ? Ah ! shall they not return !—Wretch that I am, would I still desire thee to entrust thy destiny to me ? Until I knew thee, Delphine, thy life was peaceful ; thou wert admired and beloved by all who beheld thee ; but since the moment we became acquainted, how great have been thy sufferings ! Celestial creature, dost thou not regret to have loved me ? Is that sentiment which once formed thy only consolation extinguished ? Thou hast not been able to speak to me, and I remain ignorant of thy thoughts—I know no longer how dear I am to thee. But since I do not feel myself alone in the world, doubtless thou lovest me still.

Fearing to agitate thee by discourse, I try to tranquillize thy mind by this letter—I write to tell thee, thou art free, yes, free to leave me ! If my punishment, if my  
despair

despair . . . . No, I would not alarm thee. I give thee absolute power, and thou mayst use it, whatever the sacrifice cost me. But, my dear Delphine, when I swear by all that is sacred, to love thee as a brother, why wouldst thou change our manner of living? Dost thou not shudder at these new resolutions which convulse a state of existence, in which every thing is so happily disposed!—Wretch that I am, why have I not always thought thus? I am resigned—thou hast no longer any thing to fear from me: of this thou must be convinced, for we know ourselves too well not to be able to answer for each other.

Oh! is it not true that at this moment thou mayst recover if thou wilt: health is in thy power. Our love is sufficiently powerful either to summon or to repel death: it animates us; it is our life. Ah! Delphine! let its sacred flame still glow in thy bosom: be happy—fill thy soul with the most delightful hopes. The grief I  
B 5 have



have experienced, has for ever subdued the furious passions of my soul : Yes ! by whatever power the terrible lesson has been given, it never will be forgotten by me.— My love, I come to see thee ; I shall bring this letter : when you have read it, say nothing ; do not answer me ; one of thy looks will inform me of thy most secret thoughts.

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## LETT ER III.

MADemoisELLE D'ALBEMAR TO MADAME  
DE LERENSEI.

Dijon, June 14, 1791.

I SHALL be at Paris, Madam, the day after you receive this letter ; prepare Delphine for my arrival. Oh ! my poor Delphine ! in what state am I to find her ? She will be better, I hope : her youth and your care will have saved her.—Alas ! how

is it in my power to promote her happiness? But she has named me, you say, and that is a sufficient reason for me to fly to her.

I beg of you, Madam, to give me as few occasions as possible of seeing company. You know, not, perhaps, how much I shall suffer on arriving at Paris: but no consideration can withhold me, when a person so dear to me is in danger. Adieu, Madam—I proceed this moment to continue my journey.

LOUIZA D'ALBEMAR.

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## LETTER IV.

MADAME DE LEBENSEI TO MONSIEUR DE LEBENSEI.

YOU may send for me to-morrow, my dear Henry. The sister-in-law of

Madame d'Albemar has been here these two days. Delphine is better, notwithstanding the emotions she experienced in consequence of the presence of her friend; and my cares are not now necessary, though no friendship can be more tender than mine for her. I am anxious to return to my family. Life is painful to me when separated from my husband and my child.

Madame d'Albemar has received a letter from Leonce, which, I believe, has calmed the perturbations of her mind; for she has since recovered a portion of that amiable and lively spirit which renders her so interesting. I shall never be able to describe to you the expressions of joy and gratitude which animated the looks of Leonce at each word she spoke. His conduct, since the life of Delphine appeared in danger, has really interested me. It has exhibited new proofs of the most exquisite sensibility. When she was in pain, Leonce would cling to the posts of her bed with a sort of convulsive motion, still more alarming than the situation of his mistress.

mistress. Sometimes he would place himself before her, watching her countenance with looks so fixed and so penetrating, that he anticipated the changes she was to undergo, and described the stages of her indisposition to the physicians, with a solicitude and sagacity, which astonished them, notwithstanding their long experience and habits of observation. When he was conversing with them the other day, did you not observe with what art he made his inquiries, the desire he showed of discovering their sentiments, and at the same time his anxiety to avert any unfavourable answer? While looking at him, I was convinced, that had the physicians said they despaired of her recovery, he would have fallen dead at their feet.

Since you left us, Delphine's convalescence has become more apparent; his attentions are still as unremitting. When she is asleep, his countenance changes on hearing the least noise that might awake her. Sometimes he tries to amuse her by  
reading;



reading; but if her eyes close while she listens to him, he remains immoveable in the same place for hours together: in vain is he solicited to come out and breathe the fresh air—with eyes moistened with tears he continues to contemplate that beautiful and enchanting creature, whom death had nearly torn from him. Indeed I find no difficulty in excusing Delphine, when I see how she is loved.

The affectionate proofs of friendship which Mademoiselle d'Albemar has shown her sister, have afforded her infinite pleasure; but it appeared to me that M. de Mondoville was extremely troubled on the arrival of Mademoiselle d'Albemar. He imagined, I suppose, that she was come to carry away Delphine; and if I may judge from some words which dropped from him, this project would not be easily effected. It is, however, necessary that they should be separated for some time. A lady of my acquaintance has assured me, that her reputation begins to suffer in the world.

Leonce

Leonce was, on one occasion, met returning at a very late hour from Bellerive: his daily visits there are known; and the warmth with which he defended Delphine, when she devoted herself so generously for us, gave consistence to those vague suspicions which existed before.

The reports which were circulated respecting M. de Serbellane are still recollected; and though they were formally contradicted by the noble conduct of Madame d'Ervins, before she took the veil, you well know, that in a country where a reply to such accusations is never heard, justification is almost useless. One false story is sufficient to stain the purity of female reputation. It might be recovered in a society where the importance attached to virtue, would produce an inquiry into facts; but in Paris, nobody thinks of taking this trouble. We, my dear Henry, have both been the victims of opinion; but you can brave all its unfavourable impressions. The mind of Leonce however is, in  
this

this respect at least, less vigorous than yours. Would it not, therefore, be better that Delphine did not put it to that trial?

In the mean time M. de Mondoville has no suspicion of the rumours which secretly threaten to undermine the character of her he loves. He has not been in public since Delphine become indisposed; he divides his time between her and his wife, and I believe he is very anxious to obtain the friendship of Madame d'Albemar. She seems very grateful for the deference and attention he pays to her. The natural disadvantages of her person inspire her with so much timidity, that she requires encouragement to enable her to enter a room, or to speak in her low tone of voice a few words which are always marked with good sense, though pronounced with great diffidence.

How unfortunate, my dear friend, is it to be thus deprived of all confidence in one's self, and rendered incapable of finding

ing a support in the kind affections of a companion of the other sex ! Had I been formed like Mademoiselle d'Albemar, in vain would my heart and mind have been the same they now are—doubtless I should have loved you, but your love would never have recompensed mine !

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## LETTER V.

DELPHINE TO MADAME DE LEBENSEI.

Paris, July 6.

HOW unfortunate that the indisposition of your son prevented you from coming to me yesterday ! I regret it extremely. A tender and melancholy reflection—a feeling, perhaps, connected with the weakness in which my indisposition has left me, seems to tell me that I have enjoyed my last day of



of happiness. Why then did not you share it with me? When my friends celebrated my convalescence, ought not you to have been present? Your kind attentions have saved my life; and though existence should be of no benefit to me, I shall ever cherish the sentiment which inspired you with the desire of prolonging my days.

You have already observed the attention which Leonce pays to my sister-in-law. He is solicitous to obtain her favour because he supposes that I wish to choose her as the arbitress of our fate. We have had no conversation on this subject; but there exists so perfect an intelligence between our hearts, that he discovers my thoughts even while they are but obscurely formed in my own mind.

Mademoiselle d'Albemar has, from respect to her brother, introduced M. de Valorbe to my house. Leonce, who had given orders that he should not be admitted while I was indisposed, made opposition when he was brought by her. I feel

feel the pleasure of our intimacy much diminished by the presence of M. de Valorbe. But Leonce is so desirous of pleasing my sister-in-law, that he will contradict her in nothing.

I observe, however, for these some days past, that every time the departure of the King is mentioned, and the cruel manner in which he was brought back to Paris, Leonce endeavours to make it understood, that he considers it time to take an active part in the present political disputes. It is easy for me to perceive that his intention is, to shew me that he intends to leave France, and serve against her, if I separate from him.

I sought an opportunity of telling Leonce, that as I had not the resolution to plunge myself again into that state of uncertainty which had nearly cost me my life, I intended to leave it to my sister to decide on the conduct I should pursue. I wished, at the same time, to assure him that I was ignorant of her opinion ; for, from the fear of giving pain to me, she has hitherto avoided

avoided saying a word on my situation. But yesterday evening, about six o'clock, as I was stepping down stairs, for the first time, to my garden, Leonce and my sister-in-law proposed to me to go to Bellerive. your husband, who had come to see me, also advised me to go; and Monsieur de Valrobe thought proper to join in the same request. I should have wished to return alone to scenes where I had so many recollections to indulge; but I yielded to the desire of my friends: I asked for Isore, who is now become more dear to me, in consequence of the affection she showed me during my illness; I was told she had gone out with her governess, and we departed. The carriage stunned me a little: I complained on the road that we would arrive there at night; but, as nobody seemed to be uneasy about that, I allowed them to carry me along. My strength was completely exhausted by the indisposition, which has been succeeded by a state of languor and reverie; and I have not yet been

been able to recover the power of thinking with order, or willing with precision.

We proceeded directly into my house, the doors of which were opened, and I was astonished none of my servants met us as we entered: but the moment I opened the drawing-room, I observed that the whole garden was illuminated, and I heard the sweet sound of distant music. I immediately comprehended the design of Leonce; and whether owing to my still feeble state, or to the powerful emotion I always experience from every attention from him, I felt my cheek covered with tears, on the idea of a fête given by Leonce, to celebrate my escape from death.

I went into the garden, and found it was lighted in a manner altogether new; the lamps were so completely concealed by the leaves of the trees, that they could not be perceived—it seemed a new kind of day; the light was more mild than that of the sun, but it rendered not less visible all the objects



objects of nature. The stream which crosses my park reflected the lights which were placed on each of its banks, and concealed from our view by the flowers and shrubs which covered its margin. My garden was every where enchanting. I still recognized the spots where Leonce had told his love, but the remembrance of my pains was effaced ; my enfeebled imagination was incapable of creating any alarm for the future : I had not sufficient vigour to look beyond the present moment, with which all my faculties were delightfully occupied. The music tended to continue this feeling. I have often described to you its empire over my soul ! The musicians were not seen. We merely heard the soft and harmonious sounds of wind-instruments, wafted towards us as if they had descended from heaven : what language indeed is better suited to angels, than that melody which has more power over all the affections of the soul, than the most sublime eloquence ! It seems to express those indescribable

describable, but exquisitely delicate feelings, which speech never can represent.

Hitherto I had contemplated only the decorations of the fête; but on turning an alley I observed, on some steps of turf, my sweet Isore surrounded with young girls, and behind them some inhabitants of Belle-rive, whom I did not know. Isore came running to me, and begun to sing some verses, with which she meant to honour me; but her emotion did not permit her to proceed. She threw herself into my arms with that grace of infancy which seems to belong to another world than ours, and said to me—"Mamma, I love you; ask no more of me, I love you." I pressed her to my heart, and I could not help thinking of her poor mother. Theresa! said I to myself, must I alone receive those innocent caresses which thou hast sacrificed to thy broken heart! Leonce presented to me, in succession, all the inhabitants of the village to whom I had done any little services: he knew, in detail, all I had performed; and

and while he repeated the circumstances of every transaction, I never thought of interrupting him. I allowed myself to be praised by him, that I might enjoy the pleasure of his voice, of his looks, of every thing which afforded me proofs of his love.

At last he introduced to me those old men whom I have had the happiness of comforting, and said to them : “ You who pass your days in prayer, return thanks to Heaven for preserving her to whom you owe so many of the blessings of your life ! We had almost lost her, added he, while his voice was stifled by his feelings—we had almost lost her, and that moment death menaced the young men much more than the old ; but she is restored to us. Let us then celebrate this day ; and if there be any of your wishes which I can accomplish, you will obtain every thing from me in the name of my happiness.” At that moment I was afraid that M. de Valorbe was near us, and that these words would  
explain

explain to him the sentiments of Leonce: but your husband, who has a degree of foresight with respect to his friends which is altogether marvellous, had drawn him into a political dispute, in which he was so warmly engaged that he remained nearly an hour away from us.

When the dancing began, my sister-in-law, Leonce, and I, returned slowly towards that part of the garden which was particularly reserved for us, and which surrounded the house. Here we were again delighted with the aërial music, the masked lamps, and experienced all those mild agreeable sensations, which so perfectly accord with the state of the soul, in a period of convalescence. The weather was serene, the sky pure: I felt impressions altogether new to me. If reason could believe in supernatural causes;—if there existed a human creature, who merited that the Supreme Being should derange his laws for her, I would have supposed that, during these few hours, some extraordinary pre-



sentiments announced to me, that I should soon pass into another world. All external objects vanished gradually from before me, I lost all bodily power, my ideas were distracted; but the fulness of my heart acquired a new force, and all my internal feelings became more vigorous; my attachment to Leonce was never so strong, and yet it never was so pure and completely disengaged from all the ties of life! My head inclined on his shoulder. He said to me several times, in the accent of fear, My dear, my dear! what is the matter?—I could not answer him: my soul was half separated from the earth. At last the measures taken to recover me, made me open my eyes, and I found myself between my sister and Leonce.

He regarded me in silence; his perfect delicacy would not permit him to ask a question, even on a day when his endearing attentions gave him new claims; but it was not necessary he should inquire, to induce me to answer him.—“Leonce,” said I,  
clasping

clasping his hands in mine, "I give to my sister the power of pronouncing on our destiny. See her to-morrow; speak to her; and whatever be her determination, I shall regard it as the decree of Heaven."—

"What do you require of me?" interrupted my sister.—"My father, my husband, my protector, live again in you," I replied; "judge of my situation; you now know, Leonce, I have nothing more to say." My sister made no reply. Leonce was silent, and seemed to me absorbed in the most profound reflexions. Your husband and M. de Valorbe rejoined us, and we returned to Paris. M. de Valorbe and M. de Le-bensei conversed together, on the way, on subjects with which we did not interfere.

What use will Louisa make of the power which I have given to her? Perhaps she will pronounce that we must separate! But I hope she will allow me still some farther time; and if I have time, who knows whether I shall live? You know not how much, in certain situations, dis-

ease, and the debility which succeeds it, tend to tranquillize the soul. Life is no longer regarded as certain, and the intensity of grief is diminished by a confused idea, that every thing with regard to us may soon be completely ended. In this manner I explain to myself the calm I experienced at the moment when a resolution was to be decided, the very thought of which would, at other times, have been terrible to me. I resist grief. My faculties are no longer the same. Do I remain myself? Alas! I know not whether I shall not to-morrow again feel the return of all the sorrows I fancy I have subdued?

I shall send you an account of the decree pronounced on my fate. You interest yourself in my happiness;—you have assured me you do;—and you have given me a thousand proofs of your affection. My heart shall never conceal any thing from you. Adieu! this long letter has fatigued me. But I wish you had been present at this fête, for no one more contributed to my recovery.

LETTER

## LETTER VI.

MADAME D'ALBEMAR TO DELPHINE.

Paris, July 8.

I AM much better pleased with writing to you, than with conversing with you, my dear Delphine; I do not wish to prolong your anxiety, and I do not feel strength enough, this evening, after the long conversation I have had with Leonce, to support a fresh emotion. It is your wish, that I should become the umpire of your fate: but is that wish dictated by weakness, or by courage? I know not which: but, whatever it may cost me, I cannot induce myself to reject your confidence: and as I have united my own destiny with yours, I have, as it were, a privilege to interfere in the most important decision in your life.



Still I am at a loss, what counsel to impart; I ought, naturally, to feel more resolution than yourself, and perhaps I shall discover less: it is my duty to encourage you in a most painful effort, and the effect of my advice, perhaps, will invalidate the motives that might support you in the conflict. I shall adopt a plan of conduct contrary to your expectation; but as I sacrifice myself to the counsels which I propose for your adoption, I am convinced, at least, that my opinion is not influenced by personal interest, which frequently fatally biasses the conduct of mankind.

It is possible, that you may find but an indifferent guide in me; I know not much of the world, and the spectacle of contending passions, which is entirely novel to me, too forcibly agitates my soul. Still, however, after a pretty long observation of Leonce's conduct and sentiments, I do not think myself authorised to advise you to separate from him at this  
peculiar

peculiar time. The excessive grief which he expressed to me, and that more corroding grief which he in vain attempted to conceal, the fatal resolutions which, in the present peculiar political circumstances of France, you alone are able to prevent him from adopting; every circumstance, in fine, contributes to alarm me for your safety, should you pursue a plan which is now too insupportable for you both. Delphine! as you have been the means of exciting so violent a passion in the breast of Leonce, it is the duty of a soul so sensible to manifest the most anxious and delicate concern for that impassioned character. I do not pretend to determine the precise limits of morality, and of love, as it has been my lot not to have been practically qualified to decide: but it seems to me, after the marriage of Leonce, you ought to have separated from him; but you ought not, now, to break his heart, by making him a sudden sacrifice to *unseasonable* virtues.

I know not whether Leonce's accomplishments may not have had too much influence on my opinion ; but, I confess that, if there be any species of glory for a woman beyond the path and limits of morality, that glory consists undoubtedly in being beloved by such a man. His distinguished qualities do not, certainly, furnish a motive strong enough to induce you to sacrifice your principles to him ; but you are bound to endeavour to reconcile them with his happiness ; and a character so eminent imposes some duties on all who may influence his fate. While I speak to you thus, believe me, that I have solemnly bound myself not to leave you yet, notwithstanding my great distance from Paris ; and I shall wait till you are able to set off with me, without endangering the life of Leonce. You have offered me an apartment in your house, and I accept it : M. de Mondoville submits to the condition of seeing you, only in my company ; and he protests,  
that

that considering every ground of his apprehensions, he will be happy with your presence only, with your conversation, and that charm which you know so well to spread around you, and the sweet influence of which I have myself so often experienced. I request you, my dear Delphine, to make an essay of this new kind of life; it will calm, by degrees, the violent sentiments of Leonce, and perhaps, one day you may experience together the pure enjoyment of friendship alone.

What I am persuaded of, at least as far as my understanding will allow, is, that it would be inconsistent to introduce so much rigour after so much weakness, and to cease suddenly seeing Leonce, after having passed six months almost entirely in his company. Permit me to tell you, my dearest friend, that perfect virtue always preserves a degree of doubt and uncertainty; but when we indulge some slender faults, our duties become recombined, and the relations of our conduct less



simple; and you must not think to atone for every thing by an inconsiderate sacrifice, which will lacerate the heart of him whose love you have accepted. If you separate from Leonce before you have, if possible, mitigated the sorrow which the idea of separation afflicts him with, you will be guilty of an action as barbarous as it is inconsistent; and you will deliver him over to despair, which will be caused by that very passion which you yourself have excited.

In allowing myself to deliver a counsel, which the austerity of virtue perhaps would condemn, I have reflected deeply, and considered my own feelings in such a case. It is possible, that never having been the object of any sentiment of love, I may be less accustomed to the compassion which it inspires; it is possible that having never triumphed over my own heart, I may hesitate to recommend a sacrifice, the force and value of which I have never calculated; and it is possible, especially

espécially as I have passed my sorrowful life without having been the object of any attachment, that I may tremble to destroy the image which such a blessing presents before me. It belongs to you, to judge of the motives which have influenced my opinion; but, whatever may have been their cause, it was my duty to state them to you.

Convinced as I am, that if, in the actual disposition of Leonce, you persist in your resolution to leave him, you will expose him to inevitable death, I cannot possibly advise you to depart. In advising you to such a measure, I should suffer as much, as in doing an unjust and cruel action; and therefore I shall give you no such advice.

## LETTER VII.

DELPHINE TO MADAME DE LEBENSEI.

Paris, July 12.

MY sister has determined that I ought not to depart: such is the irresistible influence of Leonce over her sentiments! This circumstance is, perhaps, my own best excuse, as I had promised to abide entirely by her decision. She sacrifices her taste to my happiness; she desires to stay with me, to watch over my destiny. The promises of Leonce, the reflexions which I made during my long illness, every thing inspires me with confidence in him and in myself. I therefore have experienced, my dear Eliza, a very pleasing sensation of tranquillity, for some days past; but still is it lawful for me to refer, from my own conscience, to the opinion of another person?

person? I know not that it is; but I had no longer any power to direct myself, and I experienced so much anxiety, that it was reasonable in me to feel some concern for my condition, and seek for myself, as I would for another, some kind of resource to mitigate the troubles which I could no longer endure. As I have chosen for my umpire the most upright and the purest soul in the world, have I not done enough? and what more can be expected from me?

Leonce was yesterday perfectly happy. My sister looked at us both with tenderness, and I thought we were enjoying the purest pleasures of innocence. Is it impossible for them to exist in our situation? or is this a further instance of the illusion of love? Nevertheless I repeated, when I gave my consent to stay there, that, if Matilda felt any uneasiness from my presence, I should depart; but she has visited me twice or thrice since my recovery: she employed herself in writing every day  
she



she came to see me in my illness; and I could perceive nothing, either in her manners or deportment, which could give me room to suspect her disposition towards me: she has the air of the most perfect tranquillity. I have no conception, how she can be married to such a man as Leonce, and can love him sincerely, without any exalted sentiments of passion, or any thing like the inquietude which such sentiments inspire.

I am unwilling to return to Bellerive, because that solitary manner of living is too dangerous for me. I am apprehensive, moreover, that I have done myself some injury in the opinion of the world, by absenting myself from society. Leonce has seen nobody since my illness; but is it certain that he will hear nothing respecting the slanders against me, which may hurt his feelings? Yesterday Madame d'Artenas came to see me, when I was without company: she seemed to me rather embarrassed in her conversation, and addressed frequent  
consolations

consolations to me, without acquainting me on what subject they were intended: she assured me of her support, without telling me what danger I was to encounter with it, and scattered at random her general ideas upon reason and philosophy, in a manner no way conformable to her habitual character. I wished to prevail on her to explain herself; and she answered me in a vague manner, that every thing would be properly arranged when I should re-appear in the world; and not wishing to enter into any details with me, she pressed me very much to come to see her. As far as I know Madame d'Artenas, her impressions are all derived from the same source; that is, the drawing-rooms of Paris; her universe is in them, and her mind is totally concentrated within those busy circles. Nevertheless, she has, upon such a soil, a good share of independence and generosity; but having no idea that any happiness or consideration can be found, except in the best company in France, she either con-

doles

doles with, or congratulates you, in exact proportion to the disposition of that company towards you, as if there existed no other object of pursuit in the world. I am persuaded, that she would have at last spoken with frankness to me, if my sister had not at that instant come in; and she laid hold of this circumstance as a pretext for her departure, repeating to me, in a friendly manner, that she relied on seeing me every evening, when there was company at her house.

May you not have learned something, my dear Eliza, which confirms the observations of Madame d'Artenas? It is not to you, who have sacrificed opinion to love, that I ought to express that kind of uneasiness which it causes me; but how can I avoid suffering on account of any circumstance that will make Leonce unhappy? The public affairs which engage the attention of your husband, bring him more in contact with society than you generally are; and I therefore conjure you to discover,

cover, by his means, every thing that concerns me, and every thing that Leonce will not fail to know, as soon as he returns to the busy world. On a subject so delicate, you are the only person I would venture to interrogate: unless to intimate friends, we are tender of communicating our uneasiness respecting the discourses that are held about us; and there are very few who do not derive, from this species of confidence, a reason for being less inclined to the person who imparts it to them.

Send me word, therefore, about what you know, and pardon me for this letter, which can only be authorised by your perfect friendship.

LETTER



## LETTER VIII.

DELPHINE TO MADAME DE LEBENSEI.

YOUR answer, my dear Eliza, has not entirely satisfied me : I could perceive that it was your intention to make me easy ; but the sincerity of your character would not permit you to employ any artifice for that purpose. You must know, I am certain, every thing which I have but too well observed, since my attempt to return once more into society. Indeed, my position is not entirely the same ; I do not yet stand on a bad footing with the world, but I do not perceive myself so well established in opinion, nor in style so solid and so splendid as before.

Yesterday, for instance, I went to Madame d'Artenas's ; and as my sister-in-law feels an invincible repugnance to show herself in company, I did not request her  
to

to accompany me. On my arrival, I perceived several carriages of ladies of my acquaintance, which followed me; and without reflecting on what I was doing, I stopped some time on the stair-case, in order to enter at the same time with them. Before now, it was not disagreeable to me to appear alone; but yesterday an indescribable uneasiness prevented me from wishing to be so. My reception was apparently as warm as usual; but I was far from feeling, in this company, a degree of pleasure equal to that which I had before experienced in it.

I attached some importance to every trifling circumstance: the attentions of Madame d'Artenas seemed to me rather too marked, and had too much the air of a supposition, on her part, that it was necessary to give me confidence, and to point out to others the conduct which they should follow with respect to me. The coldness of some ladies, which I should not have noticed on any other occasion,  
a coldness

a coldness which was occasioned by circumstances foreign to my thoughts, gave me so much uneasiness, that I could not take a lively part in the conversation, as I formerly did with so much good-will. Conversation was no longer an amusement, an agreeable and diversified relaxation for me: I made observations on every word and every motion, like an ambitious courtier at a levee. But in reality, was not he on whom I depend, in the midst of the company? It struck me, that I could perceive some shades of confusion in the countenance of Leonce; he was more circumspect in his conduct, and more cautious in concealing his sentiments, than I had ever remarked before: what I felt was not trouble, but every foreboding symptom of it.

Having been, from my infancy, accustomed to nothing but the respectful attentions of the men, and the friendship of the women; being independent by my situation and my fortune; having never entertained.

entertained an idea, that any other relations could subsist between myself and others, but the relations of good offices on my side, and those of gratitude and affection on theirs; this was the first time that I beheld society as a sort of hostile power, which threatened me with its arms, should I ever provoke it again.

I need not tell you, my dear Eliza, that none of these reflections would have presented themselves to my mind, were I not most scrupulously attentive to preserve, in Leonce's eyes, that splendour of reputation which pleases him, and which he so much desires to enjoy. If society should once become less agreeable to me, I should bid adieu to it for ever; for I am not so weak as to be afflicted on the score of opinion, possessing, as I do, a character which naturally inclines me to treat it with contempt; but what concerns me most, in my present situation, is, that my sentiments respecting Leonce expose me to censure, and the object for whom I  
would



would cheerfully brave this censure, is a thousand times more feelingly alive to it than myself. Nevertheless, since this evening at Madame d'Artenas's, I have noticed nothing in my friend's manner, which testified the least uneasiness on his part; I could only suspect it from expressions, still more affectionate and tender, which he addressed to me the following day.

M. de Mondoville will certainly soon go to Cernay: by accustoming himself to see M. de Lebensei every day during my illness, he has laid aside the political prejudices which prepossessed him against that gentleman, and is now penetrated with esteem for his character, and admiration for his talents. He feels the sincerest friendship for you, my dear Eliza; and if, by any expression of his, you may learn that he is troubled about my situation in the world, inform me of it, I conjure you, without any hesitation or ceremony. It is the only subject on which

Leonce

Leonce would not speak to me with downright confidence; judge then, my dear Eliza, how much it imports me, that I should possess every information on this head.

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## LETTER IX.

DELPHINE TO MADAME DE LEBENSEI.

Paris, Aug. 1.

LEONCE has told you nothing, and I have learned nothing new from Madame d'Artenas, or any other person. I hope, therefore, that my imagination may have exaggerated the causes of my alarm; but as soon as one trouble ceases, another takes its place; and it seems that the faculty of suffering must be kept in constant exercise. The assiduities of M. de Valorbe begin visibly to displease Leonce; and his condescension to my sister, is almost entirely

tirely exhausted on this account : I do not well know how to keep M. de Valorbe at a distance; without giving him room to accuse me of the most flagrant ingratitude; and you will be able to judge yourself, whether, after what has happened, I ought not to seek some pretext to avoid his visits. He endeavoured to find out my sister yesterday, and declared to her, that he had discovered my attachment to Leonce. His first determination, as he said, was to have challenged Leonce; but considering that it would be the surest way to lose my favour, he discovered that the most eligible method would be to force me from an attachment, which compromised my reputation, morals, and happiness; he came therefore to my sister, to conjure her to determine me to marry him. It is certainly a curious connexion of ideas, which induces a man to desire to marry me the more eagerly, the more attachment he discovers me to entertain for another man. But such a man is M. de

de Valorbe ; his vanity would be flattered by obtaining my hand, particularly as it would furnish him with a sort of triumph over Leonce, whose superiority makes him uneasy ; and though he loves me sincerely, he gives himself less concern about my sentiments respecting himself, than about the external preference which he desires me to grant him. He is a man who learns from others, whether he himself is happy or not, and who must excite envy, in order to be content with his own situation. His pride attacks and overcomes whatever good qualities he may possess in other respects ; and though I am apprehensive of his anger, I feel that I must be compelled to wound his feelings by a downright refusal.

For several days past, I have repeated to my sister, how much I was alarmed, lest she should repent for bringing M. de Valorbe so often into my company. But this morning she came to me ; and what perhaps, will sufficiently astonish you,



made me a formal proposal of marrying him. At first, she assured me, that he loved me to an excess approaching to idolatry, and that the greater part of those faults which disgusted me with him when in company, arose from his embarrassment in my presence. He is a man, said she to me, whom his good fortune and happiness will always keep in temper: I cannot answer for his conduct in adversity; but as in all probability he will be delivered from every apprehension on that head, if he has the good fortune to marry you, my dear Delphine, you may rely with safety on the general goodness of his character. I will allow, that after having loved Leonce, you will never feel a strong attachment to any other man; but in a marriage of reason and convenience, you may taste the blessing of being a mother, and believe me, my dear friend, it is a matter of such difficulty to marry the man of one's choice, and there are so many chances against happiness, that Providence

dence, perhaps, has decreed, that female felicity should consist, almost totally, in the sensations of the maternal state. That forms the recompense of the sacrifices which their destiny demands, and the only blessing which can console them for the loss of beauty and of youth.

I must confess to you, my dear Eliza, that I was mortally offended with my sister, who was herself the first to declare, that I could not separate from Leonce, without the most barbarous cruelty—and she to come now to me, with a proposal of downright treachery against him ! As I expressed my sentiments to her with great warmth, she interrupted me by asserting, that she now provided me with the only means of restoring Leonce to his proper duties, and the natural avocations of his life. She assured me, that, as long as I should remain disengaged, Leonce would never make an effort against his inclinations to renounce me. She repeated to me, likewise, every thing that is usually said on a similar situation,

situation, when persons, though otherwise possessed of some sensibility, can form no conception of a passion which supplies the place of every thing in the universe, and in which no enjoyments, hopes, or considerations are to be found derived from ordinary reason and sensibility, that are not internally rejected by the lover with contempt. Still it is a pleasing reflexion to indulge the sentiment of profound contempt, which the heart entertains for every rival of the favoured and beloved object of our affections !

Our conversation on this subject was soon at an end : some expressions of mine furnished my sister with such an idea of impossibility, as would put it out of the power of any human creature to change my resolution, and I thought of nothing more but supplicating Louisa to remove M. de Valorbe from my presence. She promised to take that business in hand, but entertained little hopes of success, either on account of his natural obstinacy,

nacy, or from a secret reluctance of dis-obliging a man who had saved her brother's life.

My dear Eliza, I request of you to ask M. de Lebensei for his advice in this my critical and perplexing situation. He is acquainted with M. de Valorbe, for they often converse together on political subjects. Although M. de Valorbe be, in his heart, the enemy of the revolution, he nevertheless affects to pass for a philosopher, and gives himself much trouble to explain to your husband, that he supports prejudices only as a statesman, but, as a profound thinker, he disdains them. M. de Lebensei sees something very inconsistent in this profundity, and then M. de Valorbe smiles, as if your husband pretended not to understand him, and as if they were both like a pair of soothsayers, one of whom had the air of not understanding the other. In any other disposition of mind, I should find amusement in these discussions between M. de Valorbe, who



wished to be admired by both parties, and your husband, who argues only for what he conceives to be the truth; between M. de Valorbe, who pretends to despise mankind, merely for the purpose of concealing the importance he attaches to their suffrages, and your husband, who, being indifferent to the opinion of what is termed the world, is notwithstanding untainted with misanthropy, because he never miscalculates his pretensions, or his success. What engages my attention, is to know, whether M. de Lebensci may not have discovered, in the playful sallies of M. de Valorbe's vanity, some method of fixing his attention upon some idea or pursuit, which may divert him from the violent prosecution of his addresses to me.

I am extremely uneasy on account of any events which may alarm the pride of Leonce, or the vanity of M. de Valorbe. When he is in company with M. de Mondoville, he feels himself restrained by that  
dignity

dignity of character, which imposes, even on Leonce's enemies, an awful respect in his presence; but I am convinced that, in secret, he proudly revolts against the involuntary impression of Leonce's dignity; and any effort which his vanity may dictate to relieve him from a state of painful inferiority, must naturally tend to incline him to some measure of violence and indecorum. Once more, my dear Eliza, I pray you to consult your husband on this delicate situation, and be cautious to keep from Leonce's knowledge what I have in confidence imparted to you with respect to M. de Valorbe.

## LETTER X.

DELPHINE TO MADAME DE LEBENSEI.

Paris, Aug. 7, 11 o'clock in the morning.

GOOD Heavens! how well-founded were my apprehensions! I now send to you without the knowledge of Leonce, to beseech M. de Lebensei to come to us; and write this letter to you, while my valet is gone to procure a horse to convey it to Cernay. Acquaint your husband with every thing, deliver him my letter to read, that he may, if possible, before he comes to us, devise some method of saving us from ruin. Fatal incident! my evil genius still pursues me.

Yesterday, Leonce informed me that there was a grand fête in preparation at one of his relations, who lives in the same street with me; he added, that he thought

thought it expedient to be present on the occasion, in order that his absence from society might not be too much noticed. It occurred to me, that on the same morning M. de Valorbe had spoken with much confidence of his pretensions respecting me; and I had reason to apprehend, that Leonce would be informed of every circumstance at this assembly, where there must be such a number of persons collected together; but as I could not assign any reasonable motive for my absence, I was silent, and my sister coinciding with Leonce, he left us shortly after, and went in search of one of his friends, who was to accompany him to the fête. A quarter of an hour afterwards, M. de Valorbe came to my house in great confusion, and acquainted us, that having rather imprudently interfered in some business concerning the flight of the King, he had, at that instant, received advice that an order of arrest had been issued against him, which was to be put in exe-



cution in a few hours ; he came therefore, to request of me an asylum in my house for this night, and to beg of me to obtain from your husband's intercession, some means of departing this day to join his regiment, and to continue with it, until this affair shall have been finally adjusted.

You are sensible, my dear Eliza, that if it were possible to hesitate, that an asylum cannot be decently refused ! I granted his request ; and it was agreed on, that my sister, who lodged in an apartment belonging to one of her relations, with whom she had put up on her arrival at Paris, should stop that night with me ; that M. de Valorbe should come to my house when all the servants had retired to rest ; and that Anthony only should stay up, for the purpose of giving him admittance. It was then eight o'clock in the evening ; M. de Valorbe had gone to his notary's, to settle some business of importance, and was to wait there as long as he

he conveniently could, in expectation of the appointed hour. Every thing that concerned the safety of M. de Valorbe being thus regulated, he departed, after testifying more gratitude to me than I really deserved, since at that time I was ignorant what this favour was likely to cost me.

I returned instantly to my apartment to write to Leonce, under the seal of secrecy, about every thing that passed. I had no other motive in communicating this intelligence to him, than that of acquainting him minutely with all the actions of my life; and I gave orders, that my letter should be carefully delivered to the coachman, desiring him to look for Leonce in the house where he supped, as probably he might be found there at that time. I retired to rest with perfect composure, assured as I was of the approbation of Leonce, for an action so generous, though even his own rival was the object of it.

This morning Mademoiselle d'Albemar entered my chamber, and I could discover, on her first appearance, that she was coming to announce some great misfortune: "What has happened?" cried I, with every symptom of terror.—"Nothing as yet," said she, "but listen to me, and try whether you have any resource against the cruel event which threatens us." She then acquainted me, that she had discovered by some expressions of M. de Valorbe, that he had met Leonce the night before; but as he would not communicate to her what had passed, she had written at eight o'clock in the morning to M. de Mondoville, in such a manner as to make him believe that she was acquainted with every circumstance, and that it was useless for him to conceal any thing from her. His answer contained a detail of the circumstance which I shall now communicate to you.

Yesterday, on coming from the ball, Leonce being out of patience on account of the crowd which prevented his carriage coming

coming up, determined to go on foot to it, towards the end of the street. He acknowledges, that he felt much displeasure from the circumstance of several persons announcing to him my marriage with M. de Valorbe, as a very probable event. In this state of mind, however, he still felt some pleasure, as he said, in seeing my house, during my sleep; and with this intent, he chose that side of the street, which was to bring him close by my door on his return home; it was then one o'clock in the morning.

By a fatal accident, at the moment when he approached my house, M. de Valorbe, carefully concealing himself from every eye, and wrapped up in his cloak, glides along the wall, knocks at my door, which, in an instant, is opened to receive him. Leonce recognized Anthony, who held in his hand a light to show the way to M. de Valorbe. Leonce has confessed, and I believe him, that it never entered his thoughts that I had made any arrangement  
with



with M. de Valorbe ; but being convinced, he said, that his conduct was occasioned by some infamous design, he rushed upon him, before he entered my house, seized him by the collar, and dragging him violently from the door, demanded of him, with much *hauteur*, what motive could induce him to come at such an hour, and in such a disguise, to Mademoiselle d'Albemar's house ? M. de Valorbe, being much provoked, avoided making any reply ; Leonce, in the height of his rage, seized him a second time, and desired him to follow him, with the most insulting expressions. M. de Valorbe was unarmed, and the fear of being discovered recurred to his memory ; he therefore replied to M. de Mondoville in a very careless manner.—“ You are sensible, I am persuaded, Sir,” said he, “ that after the insult which you have exposed me to, your death or mine must terminate this affair. But, I must acquaint you, that I am threatened with an arrest this night, and it  
is

is in order to withdraw myself from this danger, that Mademoiselle d'Albemar has granted me an asylum in her house. I fear I shall be pursued, if my retreat is discovered; let us therefore defer till to-morrow that satisfaction which, unquestionably, concerns me much more than you."—At these words Leonce, in confusion, covered his hand, and retired without making any reply.

He came up with his servants, a few steps farther on; they delivered my letter; and he confesses, that after he had read it, he felt much confusion on account of his impetuosity; but, at the same time, he declares to my sister-in-law, that he must not think of endeavouring to prevent the consequence of his rashness.

When Mademoiselle d'Albemar was acquainted with the whole affair, she spoke to M. de Valorbe on the subject; he seemed mortally offended, and would not admit any idea of the possibility of a reconciliation. However, it is certain that  
nobody

nobody was witness to the violence of Leonce; and cannot your husband be a mediator between M. de Valorbe and M. de Mondoville? If he should obtain a passport for M. de Valorbe, will not so essential a service gave him some influence over him?

I expect Leonce to come to see me every moment; but can I flatter myself with possessing the slightest power over his conduct in a case of such a nature? I shall speak to him, notwithstanding, on the subject; and at this moment I feel a calmness and composure which you would not imagine me to possess. But do you know from what it is derived? It is from the certainty of not surviving Leonce; Heaven itself cannot require it of me! But is this certainty sufficient to enable me to support the weight of woes which oppress me! What! if he should lose that life of which he makes a use so noble, if his love for me should snatch from him the days of glory and happiness which nature has  
destined

destined for him! What! if his mother should demand her son of me, and load my memory with the bitterest curses! Oh! Eliza, Eliza, you have never experienced such misery as mine; and I, who have shed a world of tears, how far was not I from the conception of what I suffer now! —Antoine is arrived, and is again on the point of departing; in the name of Heaven, do not lose an instant!

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## LETTER XI.

DELPHINE TO MADAME DE LEBENSEI.

Paris, Aug. 8.

MY alarms are all dissipated! I am much indebted to your husband, and even to M. de Valorbe himself. He has departed, and every thing is adjusted; but have I  
reason



reason to be satisfied with my own conduct? Will not this day produce fatal effects? What, however, could I reproach myself with, when the life of Leonce was in danger? Your husband stays with us till to-morrow, and I shall have the pleasure of acquainting you with all that your Henry has done for us. But never let a single word from you, my dear Eliza, betray the secrets which I shall confide to you.

Leonce arrived yesterday morning, the moment after I had sent you my letter. There were some marks of uneasiness and embarrassment visible in his countenance; and I hastened to tell him, that if the slightest suspicion to my prejudice was intermingled with his resentment against M. de Valorbe, I should never think of finding any comfort in our mutual attachment. I conjured him to examine his heart, whether he was desirous to ruin a proscribed man, who might be compelled to quit France, and whom the publicity  
of

of a duel must inevitably have discovered?  
“ My dear Delphine,” replied Leonce,  
“ it is I who have insulted M. de Valorbe ; he alone has the privilege of resenting the offence ; I cannot consider myself as injured ; and my desire in this business, must be limited to granting him the satisfaction which he shall demand.”—

“ What !” said I, “ when by your own confession you have been unjust and cruel, do you think it disgraceful to atone for your offence ?”—“ I do not know,” said he to me, “ what M. de Valorbe will consider as atonement ; as he is unfortunate at the present moment. I may think myself inclined to be less rigid with respect to honour ; but this satisfaction I shall never make, unless in our own presence only ; when I had the misfortune to offend M. de Valorbe, we were unseen and unattended by any other persons, and will he consider this a reasonable ground for accepting an apology made without any witnesses ? In his place,

place, nothing would satisfy me ; in mine, what I shall decide upon, is founded on certain rules, against which I shall never trespass." "Inexorable man!" said I to him, with lively indignation, "you have not, as yet, even designed to entertain a thought for me ; do you reflect, that the subject of the present dispute will be shortly made public ? and then my total ruin will be the consequence."—"It is the most profound secret" interrupted he.—"Are you ignorant," replied I, "that there is no such thing as a secret? But I do not mean to insist on this motive : it is your part, and not mine, to determine its due weight. If you triumph, it is true, I am dishonoured ; if you perish, I shall die ; but the consideration superior to all others, is the remorse you must be a prey to, if you do not respect the situation of M. de Valorbe. Can you prevail on yourself to take him to the field when he is forced to hide himself, when you discover his retreat, when you deliver him  
over

over, in these troublesome times to the tribunals, where justice is not secured? can you be guilty of such atrocity?" "My dear Delphine," replied Leonce, more affected than undecided, "I must repeat it to you, it is I who have injured M. de Valorbe; I have only to await his pleasure. Generosity is not the prerogative of the offending party; it is M. de Valorbe's duty to decide: I shall say to him, if he desires it, every thing I can reasonably say: he will judge if my apology be satisfactory or not." At this moment, M. de Lebensei entered; Anthony had met him at the city gates, and he had orders to deliver my letter to either you or him; your excellent Henry read the letter, and did not lose an instant in coming to my house. I repeated to him, on his arrival, what I had already said, and Leonce continued silent:—"It is my duty, in the first place," said M. de Lebensei, "to obtain information on the nature of the charges which affect M. de Valorbe; and  
if



if he is in real danger, it is fit he should take proper measures for his safety. M. de Mondoville undoubtedly wishes, above all, that M. de Valorbe may not be exposed to an arrest." "Certainly," replied Leonce, "my ill-usage of him imposes a heavy duty on me; if I be able to serve him, I will do it with earnestness and zeal: but will you permit me," said he, in a lower tone of voice, to M. de Lebensei, "to speak a few words with you in private?"—"Whence proceeds this mystery?" cried I, "Leonce! am I then unworthy to listen to you on a subject, in which you think your honour is involved? Is not my life endangered as well as yours? And do you imagine, that if your glory were really compromised, I should not find, in the resolution which I have formed to die with you, the power to consent to all your dangers? But, once more let me say, you have been exceedingly unjust towards M. de Valorbe; he is in a state of proscription; on this supposition, your  
inflexible,

inflexible pride ought to submit.—“ Well then,” replied Leonce, “ I shall say nothing to M. de Lebensei, which you may not hear; besides, I can acquaint him with nothing respecting the conduct I ought to pursue; what he would do, I will do.”—“ I only request,” said M. de Lebensei, “ that you will wait for information, which I shall immediately look for, respecting the situation of M. de Valorbe; in a few hours, I shall know every particular.

M. de Lebensei then left us, to take the charge of this business on himself, and, immediately before he departed, said to me: “ M. de Mondoville is very right in some respects, for it is M. de Valorbe who ought to decide on this affair; you had better speak to him this morning, and try to calm his resentment.” At that instant I wished to pass into my sister-in-law’s apartment, where I might find M. de Valorbe. Leonce detained me, and said: “ The compassion which I feel for  
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an unhappy man, the wrongs which I have done him, the apprehension of committing your reputation, all these motives throw obstacles in my way, and prevent me from embracing that simple line of conduct, which on such occasions as the present is so convenient and honourable. But, I conjure you, my dear friend, do not allow yourself to employ one word, in my absence, that I may be compelled to disavow. Consider, that it will be imagined that I approve of every thing you say; and be more proud than passionate, when the reputation of your friend is at stake. I need not recall to your recollection, that I prefer my honour to my life, and I should blush to be under the necessity of acquainting you with that sentiment for the first time; but since your sublime sensibility connects your days with mine, I have stronger grounds, on that account, for relying on the lofty dignity of your deportment. My honour shall be yours; and in defence of your honour, my dear Delphine,  
you

you must not dread even death itself. Adieu—I must leave you now, I must stay at home the whole day, to hear some intelligence from M. de Valorbe.”—There was so much composure and dignity in the accents of Leonce, that I recovered all my resolution for a while; but it soon failed me, when I entered my sister-in-law's apartment, and there beheld M. de Valorbe.

Louisa retired into her closet, to leave us at liberty to converse; I did not well know how to begin the conversation, as M. de Valorbe seemed resolutely determined to avoid it. I hesitated, whether I should attempt to speak sincerely to him, about my regard for Leonce. Although he was not ignorant of that circumstance, I dreaded to hurt his feelings by a plain avowal in favour of another man: at first, I ventured a few words on Leonce's repentance, when he was apprised of the disagreeable situation of M. de Valorbe. He replied to my observation in a general manner,

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manner, but without employing a single expression that might lead to the topic I desired ; and he, who in the moments of irritation is often transported beyond bounds, expressed himself in a calm and firm tone, and in a manner so contrary to my expectation, that I was compelled to surrender all my hopes.

I considered, however, that M. de Valorbe's resolution might depend on a fortunate inspiration, which might prompt me to the means of softening his resentment. Such a method was certainly in existence, and I invoked the powers of my mind, to inspire me with the happy discovery ; but the more I felt the necessity of the aid, the more doubtful and questionable it appeared. Some time had already passed, before M. de Valorbe would even permit me to begin ; he turned off what I wished to say, interrupted me, and, by a thousand artifices, evaded the subject which I was eager to introduce. I felt a most painful anxiety, which he had  
the

the art to prolong; but, at last, I came to a resolution to represent to him, without preamble, the irreparable injury which a public duel would inflict on my reputation; and I asked him in plain terms, if it was reasonable, that the consideration which inclined me to grant him an asylum, should meet with such cruel remuneration. He then dropped some unmeaning expressions in reply, and told me, that the cause of his dispute with M. de Mondoville could only have been heard by a man whom he imagined that he had seen near the spot, but who was a stranger to him. I then acquainted him with a circumstance, which I took to be true at that time, in common with M. de Mondoville, which is, that the man in question was one of Leonce's servants, who came to announce his chariot to his master, and that he had not the slightest idea of what had actually passed. M. de Valorbe appeared to consider attentively this reply, for some time, and then said to me: "Well, Madam,

if nobody has either seen or heard us, you will not be compromised, whatever may take place between M. Mondoville and myself." I was not aware of this argument; and I think now, what I suspected at that very moment, that M. de Valorbe wanted to recollect himself, in order to hinder me from discovering that he felt himself rather at ease, from the idea that nobody had been witness to his quarrel with Leonce. Nevertheless, whatever may have been the idea that passed through his mind, he took an opportunity to break off the conversation, and rose up to call Mademoiselle d'Albemar.

She came; and I knew not what to think, or how to conduct myself: a deadly coldness seized on me; I thought I saw before me the man who wished to take the life of him whom I loved, and my tongue was frozen when I wished to deprecate his resolution. At this moment a note from your husband was put into my hands, in which he informed me, that  
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the charges against M. de Valorbe were of a very serious nature ; that it was the most prudent proceeding for him, to leave Paris without delay ; and that he would furnish him with a passport, under a fictitious name, the same evening, towards night fall ; by which means he might escape unmolested ; that in course of time, he flattered himself it might be in his power to have the order of arrest disannulled ; but for the present, M. de Valorbe would reflect on the probable danger of a discovery, in this period of general fermentation. This note I immediately delivered to M. de Valorbe, and rather indiscreetly let him perceive the sensation of hope with which it inspired me ; he took notice of it, and being hurt at my supposition that the dangers impending on him should have any influence on his conduct, he returned precipitately into the apartment, and came out shortly after, with a letter in his hand for M. de Mondoville. He delivered it to one of



servants, and told him in a voice loud enough to be heard by me, to carry it instantly according to the address. He returned to us a few minutes afterwards, while my poor sister-in-law was in a tremor, and I could not support myself without difficulty.

Dinner was announced, and we all three sat down to table. M. de Valorbe looked at us both by turns, Louisa, and me; and the spectacle of our grief seemed to affect him, although he made efforts to suppress the emotion. During dinner, he spoke incessantly, and with more flippancy than is usually displayed under a calm and stedfast resolution. He soon became highly elevated by his own discourses, and the wine which he drank, while we continued pale and motionless, without uttering a word. At last we recovered from our bitter torments—but what a repast! Good heavens! it was indeed the banquet of death; and he appeared, at last, himself to be

be ashamed of the character which he had assumed, and felt the necessity of making an apology for his conduct.

“ You have done me an essential service,” said he to me, “ and in return, I plunge you into affliction ; but never was there a more mortal insult, and which merited more the vengeance due to a gentleman !—At these words, I flattered myself that I might, at least, be listened to on the subject, and was on the point of making a reply, when M. de Valorbe, in compliance with the natural taste he has for producing some striking effect, bespoke me thus :—“ Every thing is now decided, Madam ; I have written to M. de Mondoville ; the appointment is to take place in this very house, at six o’clock, and we shall depart together. We shall halt in the forest of Senars, ten leagues from Paris ; on that spot, one of us is doomed to perish. If M. de Mondoville should fall, I shall proceed on my journey, without being recognized ; if I must fall, he will return to you. Now,

as you see, the words irrevocable have been pronounced ; return therefore into your apartment, and pray to God I may be killed ; you have no other hope than this.”—At the moment of delivering these frightful words, the clock had already struck five, the hand was advancing towards the appointed hour, and the punctuality of Leonce had never been called in question. This departure, this forest, and these murderous expressions of M. de Valorbe, all added horror to the idea of the duel. What I feared a few hours before, was nothing, in comparison with my present apprehensions ; my mind became disordered—the death, the inevitable death of Leonce was before my eyes, and his murderer addressed me.

I know not what expressions of grief escaped from my bosom, but they excited a violent emotion in the breast of M. de Valorbe, and he threw himself instantly at my feet.—“What then !” says he, “you love Leonce, and do you expect that I should spare his life ?” I return thanks to  
Heaven

Heaven for the insult which he has offered me, as it furnishes me with an opportunity of avenging another injury, and it is for that injury—yes, it is for that injury,” said he, in a transport of rage, “that I thirst after his blood!” “Good heavens!” cried I, “what is become of those sentiments of generosity which have procured you so much respect and esteem? Can you prevail on yourself to wish to espouse me, when you know my heart is in the possession of another?” “Yes,” said he, “I do wish so; time will probably clear up the sentiments which your heart cherishes; and you will pay some regard to the duty which you owe to me. You possess such soft and amiable qualities, that if I should even become your husband before I should be blessed with your love, I should be the happiest of mankind. But otherwise, you must have victims, you must have blood, and the fatal hour is approaching; as soon as the deadly stroke is heard, I shall no longer listen to your prayers.”—Eliza, do



not you shudder for your unhappy friend ? At that moment, my senses became disordered ; I supplicated M. de Valorbe with an accent, and with words of fire ; but he rejected every remonstrance, his whole imagination being engrossed with that idea which constantly recurred to him. —“What can you do for me,” cried he, “if I am disgraced, if the whole world should learn the insulting usage I have met with ?” —“Nothing will be discovered, repeated I, absolutely nothing ! —“But if this expectation proves delusive, tell me,” cried he, in a fury, “tell me, you who do not promise me love, how will you enable me to endure infamy and dishonour ?” —“It will never reach you, replied I ; but if any uneasiness may result to you from the sacrifice which I beseech you to make, the devotion of my whole life, my gratitude, friendship, fortune, and attentions, every thing that I can bestow, shall be dedicated to your service. —“Everything that you can bestow ! enchanting creature,” interrupted he ;

he; "it is thyself I desire to possess; thou alone canst make me forget dishonour itself! Thou shudderest at the thought of blood, and the spectacle of approaching death affrights thee!—Swear, therefore, that I am to be thy husband; let me enjoy that glimpse of glory, that intoxicating bliss."

On pronouncing these words, he seized my hand in a transport of passion, and the clock struck six. A carriage stopped at the door, and only one instant more remained to guard against the greatest of all miseries. From what I could collect from M. de Valorbe's expression, I imagined that his resolution was not irrevocable; but still, that he would not renounce it, unless I furnished him with some pretext that might tend to keep his vanity in countenance. But he, perceiving my perplexity and silence, renewed his efforts with more zeal, and thus addressed me:—"Let me be allowed to look upon this silence as an auspicious omen; let me consider it as a

favourable reply; it shall be a secret between us both, and you shall have time to reflect on the result. I do not mean tyrannically to abuse a compliance extorted from you by your fears alone.”—At this moment, we heard Leonce’s chariot entering the court, and I do not recollect what then passed in my troubled mind; but, I believe, that it struck me that a silly scruple alone would induce me to speak, when perhaps my silence only might be the means of saving Leonce’s life. On the preceding day, Madame d’Artenas had scolded me bitterly for what she called my intolerable qualities, which exposed me to every description of misfortunes, without allowing me to employ any dexterity in extricating myself from such dilemmas. Her counsels occurred to me on this occasion, and I condemned my own character, and was determined to act in opposition to it; above all, the words that might expose the life of Leonce could never find a passage from my lips. M. de  
Valorbe

Valorbe cried out in an ecstasy, that he thanked me for my silence ! I did not disavow it ; I therefore deceived him ; yes, gracious God ! it was the first time that ever dissimulation defiled my heart ! Leonce appeared—What an impression was produced by his presence on every person in the room ! My sister turned aside, in order to conceal her tears ; M. de Valorbe endeavoured to compose his looks ; and I, who did not well know whether I had saved the life of the person I loved, or had only made myself unworthy of his regard, could scarce support myself from falling. M. de Mondoville, wishing to shorten this scene, having saluted my sister and me with that grace and nobleness of demeanour which ever charm the indifferent, requested M. de Valorbe to shew him into his apartment. They both left the room at the same time, and my torments were redoubled ; I had not seen Leonce since the morning, and I knew not what change the course of the day might



might have made in his disposition. The silence which I had, alas ! too dexterously observed, was, perhaps, sufficient to disarm M. de Valorbe's resentment ; or, did he not reflect, that, at such a perplexing moment he could draw no reasonable conclusion in his favour from my silence ? So far, therefore, was I from feeling an alleviation of my anxiety, that it became still more oppressive, from the hope, of which I had a glimpse, and which time did not tend to confirm.

This day, which already had been too painful, was marked, still further, by a very unfortunate accident. Madame du Marset came to my door, and enquired for Mademoiselle d'Albemar ; and my servants, who had received no orders to the contrary from my sister-in-law, shewed her in. She came up into the drawing-room, where I was with Mademoiselle d'Albemar ; she came to pay her a visit, and to acquit herself of one of those ordinary duties of society, the coldness and insipidity

insipidity of which form so striking a contrast with the violent emotions of the soul. Figure to yourself, my dear Eliza, what I must have suffered during the half-hour she continued with my sister ! I could not leave the room, because I could hear the voice of Leonce and of M. de Valorbe, from the apartment in which we were at that time. I had thus an assurance that they had not as yet departed ; and I strove to form an opinion, from the higher or lower key of their conversation, whether they were pacified or irritated afresh. I do not think it possible to give you a clear idea of the frightful restraint which I felt from the presence of Madame du Marset ! I wished to conceal my uneasiness from her, and I betrayed it the more ; I made replies to her questions, without attending to them, and in words which had no connexion with the subject of her discourse. She perceived my embarrassment, and every instant expressed her astonishment ; and I am inclined to believe, that she pro-

protracted her visits from motives of malignity and curiosity. I know not how long this punishment might have endured, had not Mademoiselle d'Albemar, being no longer able to support it, taken upon herself to tell Madame du Marset, that I was still suffering from the effects of my former illness, and that, for the present, I had some need of repose. Madame du Marset received this dismissal with a very bad grace; and I have no doubt, from what I learned afterwards, that she came with a design of reconnoitering what was transacting at my house.

When she had retired, Leonce opened the door, and came in with M. de Valorbe. I wished to ask him some questions; but the violence I suffered from Madame du Marset's visit, had thrown me into such a state, that, on attempting to speak, I fell down, almost lifeless, at the feet of Leonce. When I came to myself, I found that I had been conveyed into another apartment: Leonce held one of my hands, my sister  
the

the other, and my little Isore was weeping at the foot of my bed. The moment was soothing, my dear Eliza, when I found myself in the midst of the dearest objects of my affections, and when Leonce's eyes expressed his tender concern for me!—"My dear friend," said he to me, "why alarm yourself thus? Every thing is adjusted; every thing is according to your own wishes: be composed, and allay the emotions of a soul so full of sensibility: since you love me, I still wish to live; do not therefore entertain any apprehensions on my account."


I then requested him to let me know the particulars of his private interview with M. de Valorbe. "I thought him determined on this business," said he, "when I first arrived; but as I had seen M. de Le-bensei, who gave me some causes of real alarm for M. de Valorbe, I was disposed to lend an ear to an accommodation, if he should be desirous of it. He began by asking me, if I could venture to assure him





him, that nothing that had passed the night before should ever be made public. I told him that I pledged him my word and honour, and likewise on the part of M. de Lebensei, that the secret should be faithfully concealed, and that I believed that nobody was acquainted with the circumstance, excepting him and myself.

“ He asked me some further questions, all relative to the possible publicity of our rencontre; and I assured him in this respect, as much as I could do myself, without however pledging myself to a positive certainty on the case; because I was in too violent a passion at that time, to attend to any thing that passed about me. M. de Valorbe stood absorbed in reflexion for a few moments, and then pronounced your name, in a faint voice: he paused on a sudden, not wishing me to know, most certainly, that it was from a regard to your quiet, that he was induced to terminate the business in that manner. It was you alone, my dear Delphine,



phine, that likewise influenced my conduct, and inspired me with the sentiments of mildness and peace which determined me to an accommodation: you were the mediating angel of peace between us. After a pause of a few moments, M. de Valorbe held forth his hand to me; and then I took the opportunity to express to him, with frankness and cheerfulness, the regret which I felt for my unpardonable violence. We then came out to rejoin you; and, from that moment, I have thought only of relieving you, and I have left M. de Lebensei and M. de Valorbe together."

At the moment when Leonce mentioned your husband's name, the latter opened my door, and said to me, with an earnestness which is not usual with him:—"Every thing is ready for M. de Valorbe's journey: he only wishes to see you for a moment, and it is proper not to require M. de Mondoville to be a witness of his grief on leaving you; but his departure must be accelerated by every means." Leonce withdrew



drew without any hesitation; and M. de Lebensei, without losing a moment, introduced M. de Valorbe. I was touched with compassion on seeing him; for it was impossible to assume a more melancholy aspect than his: he drew near my bed; and, taking my hand, fell on his knees before me, and said to me, in a low voice: "I am now on the eve of my departure, and I know not what is to be my fate; perhaps the most untoward events await me on my way; but let my honour remain untouched, and I shall be able to face them all! But I beseech you to bear in mind, that it is for you alone I have made the sacrifice of a most just and necessary resolution: reflect," continued he, laying a singular emphasis on every word, "reflect on what your duty imposes on you with respect to me, if all my prospects are ruined for having obeyed your voice, and for having relied with confidence on your honour."— I blushed on hearing these words, which recalled to my mind a real error on my part.

part. M. de Valorbe wished to make a longer stay; but M. de Lebensei was so eager for his departure, that he interrupted our conversation by his authority. M. de Valorbe then reclined on my hand, and bathed it with his tears. At last your husband conducted him away. As soon as M. de Valorbe's carriage had gone off, M. de Lebensei returned to us, and I asked him the reason of an emotion which I never witnessed in him before. "Alas!" replied he, "I have just learned, on my way to your house, that M. de Fierville was witness to the scene that took place last night: he had gone out, on foot, a few moments after Leonce, from the house where they had supped together. He concealed himself behind the carriages, that he might not be observed; and this day he has related, in a public company, every circumstance that he was witness to the night before. I was, therefore, extremely alarmed lest this intelligence might come to M. de Valorbe's ears before his departure; and that he, in consequence,



consequence, might alter his resolution, and stay behind, let whatever consequences take place. "Good heavens!" cried I, "and will not M. de Valorbe be disgraced, for having avoided fighting Leonce? M. de Lebensei endeavoured to dissipate this alarm, by assuring me, that he would succeed in destroying the effect of M. de Fierville's discourses; but though he took pains to make me easy on this head, he seemed to be troubled by a thought which he did not think proper to communicate to me.

When M. de Lebensei departed, I found myself exceedingly troubled and embarrassed: I certainly do not repent for having done every thing in my power to prevent a duel between M. de Valorbe and Leonce, and I am far from imagining myself to be bound by my silence, which was occasioned by the critical situation in which I was involved. My sister, who was witness to every circumstance on that occasion, assures me, that even M. de Valorbe himself

self had no reason to be persuaded that I should have formed any engagement with him, in the peculiar state which I was in at that time. If M. de Valorbe were unfortunate, I should certainly do him every service in my power; but it is in vain that I continue reasoning with myself for several hours on this matter: the joy that I felt for the peaceable termination of the business is entirely poisoned by an instance of falsehood on my part. Nothing can ever make me confess it to Leonce, and yet it was for his sake.....it must, therefore, have been wrong.....I am persuaded that I shall feel many moments of uneasiness from this circumstance. Faults, that take their origin from our natural character, are so much in unison with our habitual manner of thinking, that we are easily led to pardon them ourselves; but when we are drawn, and dragged, as it were, in violent opposition to our natural feelings and sentiments, we are then conscious of a painful and odious recollection,

recollection, which we in vain attempt to banish from our thoughts. I beseech you, never speak to me about this circumstance, and I shall perhaps be able to forget it.

Give my warmest thanks to your Henry, for the perfect friendship I have experienced at his hands. Is your child still sick? Is it possible for you to leave me? I shall call on you, as soon as I find myself better, for my fresh sufferings have given me a relapse of my fever, and I am desired to be more cautious of my health for a little longer time.

LETTER

## LETTER XII.

MADemoisELLE D'ALBEMAR TO MADAME  
DE LEBENSEI.

Paris, August 25.

I FEEL an inclination, my dear Madam, to confide my sorrows to you, and to ask your friendly advice. Has M. de Lebensei acquainted you, how the base M. de Fierville, and his still more odious friend, have found out the art of aggravating, and totally misrepresenting the business of M. de Valorbe? They have spread abroad a report, that Delphine, our angelic Delphine, had given an assignation to two men on the same night; and that a misconception about the hour of appointment had been the cause of a rencontre, in which Leonce had grievously insulted M. de Valorbe. No—I could not bring myself to write to you about



such a scandalous and infamous slander, without feeling my forehead glow with blushes of shame and indignation ! Is it thus, then, that an innocent creature is to be punished for the excess of her generosity ! Is it thus that the noblest and purest character is to be outraged with impunity ! Two malignant beings, and all the rest either indifferent or weak ; it is thus that a woman's character is decided on by the public of Paris.

Madame du Marset, and M. de Fier-ville, have taken this opportunity, it is said, of avenging themselves, for a humiliating reproof which they once received from Leonce, in defence of Madame d'Albemar's character. But, for the present, what steps must we take in order to defend her reputation ? Assist me, I beseech you, and let us conceal from her especially, that she is the object of so vile a calumny. Her ill state of health confines her to her apartment, and I have advised her to admit no visitors for a time. Leonce has gone to  
conduct

conduct his wife to the estate which she holds as the gift of Delphine, and without which, alas! she never would have married M. de Mondoville. I should have consulted him only on this subject, as from the age of M. de Fierville we have no reason to dread any fatal consequences; but he is absent, and I am alone in the middle of a world so new and strange to me, and the influence of which I have every reason to dread. I have, nevertheless, overcome my repugnance to society; I mix in it now, and shall do so every day, and repeat what will gloriously justify my friend. Without confessing the attachment of Delphine to Leonce, I shall content myself with not denying it, as I am determined to place all my reliance on the solid strength of truth. Indeed, I have no other resource; I am here a stranger without attractions, without friends to support me, and rendered timid by my want of figure, and my ignorance of the forms of life. But still I love Delphine; and, in

pleading for her, I am conscious of defending the justest and most reasonable of all causes.

I know not whom to address, I know not what methods are usually resorted to in this city, in order to repulse the poisoned shafts of calumny. I will therefore say every thing my indignation inspires me with; perhaps I shall, at last, triumph over envy, the only species of malevolence my sweet and charming friend has reason to dread. I had never formed an idea of the evil consequences of the hostility of public opinion, when once the art of deluding it is sufficiently practised and understood. Nothing will persuade me, that those who are usually termed friends, do not expose us to more injuries than our declared enemies. They are loud and frequent in their boast of pretended services, and we cannot distinguish with accuracy, whether they do not exaggerate the attacks which they triumph over for our sakes, in order to add greater force and value to  
their

their fortitude and courage in our behalf. Others confine themselves to the assurances which they make us, of resolutely taking up our defence in all cases whatsoever; and you can never bring them to an exact definition of their meaning of the expression, *all cases whatsoever*; it is more to their taste, to give it a vague and random sense. Some persons advise me to take Delphine into Languedoc; and when I strive to prove to them that this is a very ill-chosen moment to depart, when we should silence and confound so base a calumny, they repeat the same counsel to me a second time, without paying any regard whatsoever to my reply. Their minds are totally occupied with the advice which they give, their own vanity is concerned in it, and they believe themselves to be exempted from any further efforts in your behalf, if you do not implicitly adopt their opinion: it is, therefore, more easy to defend ourselves against open enemies, than to follow the exact line of conduct



which such friends so rigorously impose. They serve only to encourage our enemies, by proving to them what a weak resistance they are to expect ; and yet, if they break with us, they only render our situation still more deplorable. Would not they begin their phrases of renunciation with these words, *I loved Madame d'Albemar, but I confess that at present I see no possibility of defending her conduct?* Wretched country ! in which the name of friend is so frequently lavished with levity, without imposing any duty of defence of mutual interests, and which only furnishes more means of annoyance and injury, when once the unavailing title is discarded !

Opinion appears in every place which we frequent, and vanishes at the moment in which we endeavour to seize it. Every one says to me, that the world tells the most shameful falshood about Delphine ; and I cannot discover, whether the person who speaks to me, repeats these rumours, or spreads them about from his own invention.

sion. I always imagine myself to be surrounded by a crowd of scoffers who betray themselves by a careless glance, or smile, at the moment when they profess themselves concerned at my trouble. I never let slip the opportunity of mentioning the motives of gratitude which might have induced Delphine to afford an asylum to M. de Valorbe, as if it were necessary, in order to do a service to the unfortunate, to be influenced by any other consideration but their misfortunes! In reality, I am inclined to believe that, in this city, it is more dangerous to practise virtue, than to abandon one's self to vice: they give no credit to generous sentiments, and they seek with as much earnestness to depreciate the motives of good actions, as they do to find apologies for the bad.

Alas! how much more comfortable is a life of obscurity, even unattended with those fulsome flatteries, the avant-couriers of hatred, and which she soon follows, in order to exact the price of her favours!

For the first time, I now feel some consolation from being banished from the world by my personal defects.—But why do I speak of consolation? Delphine is unhappy, and what repose can I taste until she is defended and justified! I beseech you, my dear Madam, in conjunction with M. de Lebensei, to determine what may be reasonably done, and to assist me with the united efforts of your judgments, and your friendship.

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### LETTER XIII.

REPLY OF MADAME DE LEBENSEI TO MADE-  
MOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

Cernay, August 30, 1791.

THE emotion which I felt from your letter, Mademoiselle, has been the cause of  
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the first letter dispute I have ever had with my Henry :” after having read it, I exclaimed—“ Alas ! why am I deprived of any influence whatsoever ? Proscribed as I am, I have no means left me to relieve my calumniated friends !” Scarce had I uttered these words, when a deep repentance, and a tender recollection of my friend presented itself to me, and I feared for some hours, that the impression would never be obliterated ; but, at last, he pardoned me, because I was grievously in the wrong ; and he might with the greatest ease have made me sensible of my error, were it not contrary to his nature to afflict me. He has set out for Paris, with the intention of serving Madame d’Albemar’s cause ; and what is necessary to be said in her defence, he will take care to have made public by other persons, as the prejudices of the world against the political opinions of M. de Lebensei are so violent, that it would be injurious to Madame d’Albemar, that he should appear as her most zealous admi-



rer. Ah ! how many resources of mischief does not malice possess ! do not you feel the influence of the wicked like a painful burden on your heart ? Do not they seem to hinder you from breathing ? When once we desire to indulge a flattering prospect of hope, the recollection of their malice dissipates the pleasing image from our hearts. A few hours after M. de Lebensei's departure, my child being well, I could no longer resist the desire which I felt, of conversing with you, and seeing Madame d'Albemar, and left Cernay rather late, as I did not return till midnight. You were not at home, but I saw Delphine, who had that moment received a letter from Leonce, in which he announced his return in a week, and in expressions the most tender and passionate to Madame d'Albemar ; and still she seemed to me to be in profound melancholy. I am convinced that she knows what we wish to conceal, but that her proud soul will not permit her to reveal it to us. Her door  
was

was shut to every one but Mademoiselle d'Artenas and myself. If she has seen Madame d'Artenas, she is informed of every thing! It is impossible for that woman to make a secret of any thing which it may be painful to disclose; she knows how to serve persons with advantage better than to treat them with delicacy. I enquired of Madame d'Albemar how she employed her time, during the absence of Leonce. "I give lessons to Isore," replied she, "and I walk about with her constantly, without seeing any visitors." On saying these words, she sighed, and our conversation ceased for a few minutes. "Will you not be very happy on Leonce's return?" said I.—"With his return!" said she rather hastily, "What will be the consequence of his return?" Then, after a short pause, she said to me: "I must request your pardon; I am both sick and sorrowful."—And then playing with Isore's pretty locks, she relapsed into a reverie. I was doubtful if I should con-

tinue to speak to her, but she seemed not to desire it, and I was fearful of being deceived respecting the cause of her defection, or of telling her more concerning the matter than she already knew.

I quitted her in sorrow, and she made no attempt to detain me; her deportment was not so affectionate as is usual with her; and as I know her disposition well, I am persuaded she is grievously afflicted with some cause of deep uneasiness. Whenever she is happy, she wishes to associate her friends in her happiness; but I have always remarked, that she is disposed to indulge her sorrow alone.

Alas! what mournful thoughts possessed my mind on my return home! You now see an instance that convinces you, that there is no resource for a woman from the troubles attending the unjust opinions of the world. Delphine, the independent Delphine, is herself a prey to this species of unhappiness, and nothing can prevail on her to disclose the cause of her uneasiness to us.

P. S.

P. S. I had so far proceeded in my letter, when Leonce, whom we did not expect for eight days, came to the gate of Cernay House to ask for Mr. de Lebenzei: as soon as he learnt that M. de Lebenzei was not there, he set out on his return, in full speed, to Paris.

My servants learned from the footman who attended him, that he had left Madame de Mondoville and had suddenly departed in extraordinary haste. On arriving at Paris he never stopped, but mounted a horse, and instantly proceeded hither.—My servants also told me, that he appeared much agitated, and that during the short time he spoke to them, his countenance changed two or three times. Doubtless he has discovered every thing; and knowing his sensibility for the reputation of Delphine, I shudder to think of the consequences. Ah! my God! what will become of our friends? If M. de Lebenzei sees Leonce, I shall hasten to inform you of what passes between them. Adieu, Mademoiselle;



Mademoiselle ; how much do I feel for your situation, and admire your perfect friendship for Madame d'Albemar !

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## LETTER XIV.

DELPHINE TO MONSIEUR DE LEBENSEI.

September 1.

I KNOW every thing my friends wished to conceal from me ; I have either learned or conjectured all that has passed. The feeling I experience is painful : I had reflected on the injustice of the world, and assigned it to its sphere ; I believed I might have been accused of imprudence, of weakness, of any error except those which would degrade me ! I confess that I have, during the last fortnight, lived in a state of anxiety, of which it would have been painful for me to speak even to you. My  
spirit,

spirit, however, ought to triumph over this chagrin, however tormenting it may be ; but my heart is rent by a still more cruel anguish : I dread the impression which this affair may have made on the mind of Leonce. He arrived yesterday from Andely's, and has not yet visited me. I know he was at Cernay : did he find you there ?—and what did he say to you ?

Fear not, Sir, to speak to me with the most perfect frankness. If I am reserved for the greatest of sufferings, if the affection of him I love be changed by the calumny of which I am the victim, I shall still oppose courage to this last misfortune. Advise me ; I feel myself capable of any sacrifice : there are sorrows which give resolution, and those which afflict an elevated mind are of that number.

LETTER

## LETTER XV.

LEONCE TO MONSIEUR DE LEBENSEI.

Paris, Sept. 1.

I HAVE always observed in you, Sir, in the different relations which have existed between us, a vigorous and a prudent mind: I wish therefore to profit by your advice in a situation in which I am too much agitated to direct myself. One of my friends wrote to me at Andely's, that the reputation of Madame d'Albemar had been basely attacked; and it is to my passion for her, to the numberless faults which that passion has made me commit, that I must attribute her misfortune and my own. I hoped to learn from you the name of the infamous wretch who has calumniated my friend, but I did not find you at home. I returned to Paris, where I had the additional mortification to learn, that an old man was the  
author

author of this shameful slander. You know him. I had offended him some months ago, and the mean wretch took vengeance on Madame d'Albemar.

After having loaded M. de Fierville with my contempt, I this morning obtained from him a thousand useless promises of disavowal, of secrecy and repentance; but now, that the terrible tale which he forged has been circulated, the belief of it does not depend upon him. Shall I not discover another of the calumniators of Delphine? Surely they are not all old men? When I console myself with this idea, when it calms me for a moment, another soon arises to agitate my mind. Can I really be certain that I shall not compromise the character of Delphine, by offering to avenge her wrongs? But must such calumnies be allowed to remain unpunished? Would you advise me to take no notice of them? Would you not hesitate, before you condemn me to such a punishment? Madame d'Albemar is the relation of Madame de Mondoville;



Mondoville ; she has no brother, no near relation to protect her. Is it then not my duty to supply that want ?

The reputation of Madame d'Albemar is doubtless the first interest to be considered ; but if it is not entirely evident to you, that duty requires me to allow the painful sentiments I feel to continue to prey secretly on my mind, you will not require such a sacrifice of me.

I have not yet seen Madame d'Albemar ; I cannot think of returning to her, until I have in some way repaired the affront she received, of which I am the first cause. Oh, I conjure you, if you know any means of attaining this object, explain it to me. Must I leave unprotected that innocence which has no other defender but me ?

## LETTER XVI.

M. DE LEBENSEI'S ANSWER TO LEONCE.

Cernay, Sep. 2.

THERE is indeed, Sir, one means of repairing all the misfortunes of your friend, but it is not that which your courage has suggested.—Madame d'Albemar has, like you, asked my advice. I have this moment replied to her, and stated all the ideas for your mutual happiness my friendship could inspire. I am just going to send off my letter, but I cannot without her consent inform you of its contents: she will, doubtless, communicate them to you.

At present, I can only say, that by following the dictates of the indignation you must naturally feel, you will at last irretrievably ruin Madame d'Albemar's reputation. If your name were not pronounced  
in

in this calumny, if your attachment for Madame d'Albemar were not the subject of general conversation and belief, you might act with some advantage, as her protector against her enemies. It would, besides, be necessary that M. de Fierville had a son, or near relation, who was willing to answer for him; that it might at once be evident why you addressed yourself to one man rather than another, in avenging the reputation of Madame d'Albemar; for the public always wishes to see a brave action founded on reasonable motives; and, when courage is marked by irregularity of conduct, it is always severely condemned, however heroic it may be: but, in your present situation, even though a younger man than M. de Fierville was known to be the author of the calumny against Madame d'Albemar, you would do an irreparable injury to your friend by taking upon yourself the right of avenging the affront she has received.

In

In society, we can with propriety only assume the defence of those its regulations require us to protect, such as a wife, a sister, a daughter, but never those who have no relation to us but that of love. Though you, Sir, are eminently distinguished by all those noble and energetic qualities, which can alone reflect a lustre on the objects of our affection, yet in vain would you attempt to defend the woman you love ; that is a happiness which is denied you.

To none, however, is protection more necessary than to Madame d'Albemar : her conduct is perfectly pure, and yet appearances are such, that in the eyes of the world she may seem criminal. She possesses a superior mind, an excellent heart, a charming figure, youth, beauty and fortune ; but all these advantages serve only to procure her enemies, and render a natural protector more indispensable to her. That enlightened mind which gives independence to her opinions and her conduct,



duct, still more endangers her repose, since she has neither brother nor husband to serve as a security for her conduct in the eyes of others. Women destitute of these reports, generally shelter themselves under all the formalities which prevailing prejudices impose, as under a public guardianship instituted for their protection.

The generous character of Madame d'Albemar might be expected to render all those she has obliged, her friends; but she has already experienced much ingratitude, and has perhaps yet to suffer from more. You have seen what has happened with respect to Madame du Marset. In the societies of Paris, I have frequently remarked, that when men or women, whose characters do not rise above mediocrity, wish to relieve themselves from an importunate feeling of gratitude towards a superior mind, they select some duty easy to be performed by persons of their vulgar stamp, and make an ostentatious display

display of that example of their morality, in order to relieve themselves from the burthen of every other. Madame d'Albemar possesses too great a mind to look for durable kindness from those who are not worthy of loving and admiring her; and it is by the authority of an imposing situation, rather than by her amiable qualities, that she must succeed in disarming hatred. I see her at present surrounded with perils, menaced with the severest afflictions, unless she is preserved from them by a man whom morality and the opinion of society will recognise as her proper defender.

Those who are dazzled with her charms and do not examine into her situation with the solicitude of friendship, will perhaps believe that she is capable of triumphing over every effort of malice. The triumph may be possible; but it would cost her so much pain, that her happiness would at least be greatly injured. I know not even if she can now of herself entirely efface

efface the injury her enemies have done her : but I have said enough ; I ought not to dwell on your misfortunes, until I know whether you will consent to adopt the remedy I propose. You know my opinions, Sir, they are those of which I think I may be proud ; and I have supported, if not with pleasure, at least with firmness, all the troubles in which they have involved me. These opinions have suggested the advice I have given to Madame d'Albemar ; it is the only one which can save you from the evils you now experience, and those you have yet to fear : I believe it is worthy of your attention. You know, I hope, the esteem and the consideration I must always entertain for your talents and your virtues.

HENRY DE LEBENSEI.

LETTER

## LETTER XVII.

M. DE LEBENSEI TO DELPHINE.

Cernay, Sept. 27, 1791.

HE whom you love is ever worthy of you, Madam, but neither his opinions nor yours can contend against the fatality of your destiny. There only remains one means of re-establishing your reputation, and of recovering the happiness you have lost. Collect, in attending to what I am now about to address to you, all the strength of your sensibility and your reason. Leonce is not irrevocably united to Matilda ; Leonce may still be your husband ; the law of divorce will be promulgated by the Constituent Assembly within a month. I have seen the law, and I am sure it will be speedily published. After having read these words, you will doubtless anticipate what is the subject on



which I wish to reason with you ; and the emotion, the uncertainty, feelings different and confused, will harass you to such a degree, that perhaps you will not be able to continue the perusal of my letter. Take it up a second time. I am unacquainted with Madame de Mondoville ; her conduct towards my wife, has given me just grounds of offence ; but still be assured, I shall guard myself from any prejudice which this might create. Your happiness is the only subject which occupies my thoughts ; I know not what opinions you or your friend entertain, on the subject of divorce ; I can easily persuade myself, that love would strongly induce you to approve of it : but still I know your reason and your feelings would reject happiness itself, if it did not accord with the ideas you had formed of real virtue. Those who condemn divorce, pretend that their opinion is founded on the most perfect morality : if this were the case, the wisest philosophers must have adopted it ;

it; for the first object of philosophers is to know what are our duties, in all their extent. But I wish to examine with you, whether the principles which dispose me to approve of divorce, are consistent with the nature of man, and with the beneficent views which it is our duty to ascribe to the Deity.

There is a great mystery in love. Perhaps it is a celestial gift bestowed on us by some angel on quitting the earth; perhaps it is a chimera of the imagination, which it pursues till the chilled heart is more allied to death than to life. No matter if I saw, in the feelings you indulge for Leonce, nothing but love, if I thought the character of his wife unsuitable to his, in every relation of life, I would not advise any steps to be taken to break asunder their ties. But listen to me attentively. In whatever manner human institutions are combined, few persons, of either sex, would willingly renounce the only happiness of existence; that intimate

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confidence,

confidence, that similarity of feelings and sentiments, that reciprocal esteem, and that endearing interest, which increases with every recollection. It is not for the delightful days with which nature has adorned the outset of our career, to prevent us from reflecting on futurity, it is not for these days that similarity of character is necessary; it is for that period of life when we seek, in the heart of another, the oblivion of that time which pursues us, that period when we are all abandoned by the world. The indissolubility of marriage, where there is the greatest disparity of characters betwixt the parties, prepares for old age miseries alleviated by no ray of hope. It seems only necessary to repress the desires of the young; but it is forgotten, that desires, thus repressed, will form the eternal regrets of the aged. Youth takes sufficient care of itself. There is no occasion for any anxiety about the employment or the pleasures of youth; but all institutions, all speculations, ought to have, for their  
object,

object, the protection of advanced life ; those declining years which the most unfeeling cannot behold without pity, or the most intrepid without dismay.

I am far from denying that divorce has its inconveniencies, or rather that its necessity arises from the imperfection of human nature. It is the province of moralists, it is the province of opinion to condemn those divorces whose motives cannot be excused but in the midst of a civilized society, which admits of marriages of conveniency, marriages which have no reference to futurity ; where the laws can punish, neither the relations, who abuse their authority, nor the parties who are deficient in the duties they owe each other ; the prohibition of divorce operates only as a punishment to the suffering party. It only rivets the chains of marriage, without extending any influence over the circumstances which render them cruel or delightful. The law seems to say, I cannot recover your happiness ; but I can, at least,



guarantee the duration of your sufferings. Certainly morality must advance to a high pitch of perfection, before we can meet with many husbands, who will willingly give themselves up to sufferings, without attempting to escape from them, in some manner or other; and if they do escape from them, if society shews indulgence to them, in proportion to the severity of the law, then all ideas of duty and of virtue are confounded; and, in civil as well as in political slavery, man lives liberated from the shackles which the laws impose.

It belongs to the peculiar circumstances of the parties to determine whether a divorce authorised by law, can be approved by the tribunal of public opinion, and receive the sanction of their own heart. A divorce which should be founded on any misfortune which had befallen one of the parties would be one of the vilest proceedings which could enter into the human imagination; for the  
precise

precise object of the affections of the heart, and the ties of family, is to put us in possession of friends who are independent of the successes and reverses of life, and thus to fix at least some limits to the power of fortune over our destiny. The English, that moral, religious, and free nation, have, in their marriage service, an expression which is very affecting: *I take you* (the man and woman reciprocally pronounce) *in health and in sickness, for better and for worse*. Virtue, if at all necessary to make us share in adversity with those with whom we have shared in prosperity—virtue, in this case only requires of us a sympathetic ardour, so consonant to the inbred feelings of a generous nature, that it would be totally impossible to experience any other emotion. But the English, who claim my admiration in almost every part of their civil, religious, and political institutions, have erred in not admitting divorce except in cases of adultery. The effect of this provision is to give independence to vice,

and to hold virtue in bondage. It overlooks the strongest of all oppositions,—those which may result from a difference of character, sentiment, and principle.

Infidelity violates the nuptial vow; but the impossibility of reciprocal love, deprives life of the greatest happiness allotted to it in the destinations of nature: an impossibility really exists, when it is recognized by time, reflexion, and even the judgment of our own friends and relatives. Who shall dare to pronounce that such a marriage is indissolable? An inconsiderate promise, given at an age when the law does not permit us to determine upon the slightest circumstance of our external affairs, shall for ever decide the fate of a being whose years cannot be recalled, who must die—and die without having tasted the pleasures of love!

The Catholic religion is indeed the only system which consecrates the indissolubility of marriage; but it is because it is the spirit of that religion to  
inflict

inflict pain upon man, under a thousand different forms, as the most efficacious means of promoting his moral and religious improvement.

From the severities of a self-mortification, to the tortures decreed by the Inquisition in the ages of barbarism, terror and suffering were the only instruments which that religion employed, to force mankind into the path of Virtue. Nature, under the guidance of Providence, takes a course directly opposite : she conducts man to all that is good for his moral and physical existence, by the most attractive and the softest persuasions.

The Protestant religion, which approaches much nearer to the pure spirit of the Gospel than the Catholic, avails itself not of pain either to terrify or to fetter the powers of the understanding. Hence it happens, that in the Protestant countries of England, Holland, Switzerland and America, the manners are more pure, crimes less atrocious, and the laws



more humane ; whereas in Spain, Italy, all the countries in which Catholicism reigns in its utmost rigour, public institutions and private manners partake of the erroneous principles of a religion, which regards constraint and misery as the most efficient means for the amelioration of man.

Nor is this all :—As this dominion of suffering is repugnant to the nature of man, he endeavours by a thousand ways to escape from its yoke. Hence it is, that the Catholic religion, if it has a few martyrs, makes so great a number of unbelievers. Atheism was openly professed in France before the revolution. Spinoza was an Italian. Almost all the systems of materialism have had their origin in Catholic countries ; whilst in England, America, in a word, all the countries where the Protestant religion prevails, no one possesses that cheerless opinion. Atheism having, in those countries, no superstition to combat, would appear only as the destroyer of the most soothing hopes of an existence.

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The Stoics, like the Catholics, were of opinion that man is rendered more virtuous by misfortune ; but their system, purely philosophical, was infinitely less dangerous. Each individual, applying it to himself only, interpreted it according to his own inclination. It was not united with those religious superstitions which have neither limit nor object. It did not give a corporation of priests an incalculable ascendancy over the human species ; for the imagination, though at first repugnant to sufferings, when it is once prepared to endure them, yields to them with an abject submission proportioned to the difficulty of the conquest ; and it is much easier to govern men who have been induced to inflict on themselves the most cruel punishments, than those who have been left to the guidance of their natural sense, by impressing them only with the principles of reason and of happiness.

One of the benefits which flowed from the evangelical system of morality, was that of

mitigating the rigorous principles of Stoicism. Christianity, beyond every other system, breathed a spirit of beneficence and humanity; yet, by the most singular interpretation, has it been converted into a new system of Stoicism, which subjects the understanding to the will of the priests, whereas the ancient system rendered it independent of all mankind; a Stoicism which makes the heart humble, while the other inspired it with a dignified pride; a Stoicism which wholly detaches you from the public interest, while the other devoted your life to your country; a Stoicism, in short, which employs pain for the purpose of subjugating the soul and understanding, while the other applied it, in order to invigorate all the powers of the mind, by the emancipation of our reason.

If these reflexions, which I could extend much farther, were not your own understanding, Madam, sufficient to supply them—if these reflexions, I say, have convinced you, that he who would conduct mankind  
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to virtue, by means of suffering, is regardless of divine goodness, and thwarts its expectations, you would agree with me in all the consequences which I wish to deduce from them.

Enumerate all the duties which virtue prescribes to us; our moral nature, nay more, the impulse of our corporeal system, every involuntary principle of action within us, urges us to the performance of those duties. Does it require an effort to attend to our parents, whose voice alone vibrates to all the remembrances of our life? If we could represent to ourselves a necessity which should compel us to abandon them, then it is that the soul would be doomed to the most painful torture! Does it require an effort to protect our children? Nature has decreed that the love which they inspire, should be more powerful than all the other passions of the heart. What greater cruelty could be inflicted, than the privation of this duty? Trace all the virtues, magnanimity,



nanimity, candour, pity, humanity— what laborious, what fruitless violence, would be offered to one's own disposition, in order to obtain, in direct repugnance to his nature, his conscious approbation of an act of uneasiness, meanness and cruelty ! Whence proceeds this sublime harmony between our being and our duties ? From the same Providence which attracts us by a sensation of pleasure towards every thing which is necessary for our preservation. What ! that the Deity, who has arranged every thing in the most easy and agreeable manner, for the support of physical existence, should have placed our moral nature in opposition to virtue ! That the reward of virtue should be promised to us in an unknown world ; but that in the present, of which we feel the real burdens, we must incessantly repress the ever-reviving aspirations of the soul after happiness !—that we should repress this sensation, which is so delightful in its own nature, when not unjustly attempted to be subdued !

Of

Of what fantastic irregularities are not men capable? Their Creator had implanted sympathy in their bosoms as a preservative from cruelty; fanaticism has made them disregard this instinct of the soul, by persuading them that the being from whom this endowment of their nature sprung, has commanded them to suppress it. All men are animated with an ardent desire of happiness; this desire has been represented by hypocrites as the temptation of guilt. Thus have they committed blasphemy against God; for the desire of happiness pervades every part of the creation. Doubtless this principle, like all others, is liable to the abuse of being carried beyond its proper limits. There are circumstances in which sacrifices become necessary. Of this kind are all those, in which the happiness of others requires that you should sacrifice your own interest to theirs; but still it is with the view of effecting the greatest possible sum of general felicity, that a few individuals must

must become the victims of suffering; and the means which nature employs in the moral as well as the physical world, are the enjoyments of life.

If these principles are founded in truth, can it be supposed that Providence requires of men to support the bitterest of all afflictions, in dooming them to inseparable union with an object which renders them profoundly miserable? Could such a punishment be enjoined by supreme goodness? And could it be exacted by divine mercy, as an expiation of error?

God has said, *It is not good that man should be alone.* His beneficent intention could not be fulfilled, if there were no means of separation from an insensible, stupid, perhaps criminal woman, who could never enter into your feelings nor sentiments! How absurd must he have been, who dared to pronounce that there existed any ties which despair could not burst asunder! Death comes to relieve us from bodily sufferings when our strength is no longer.

longer able to bear them ; and yet the institutions of society would make this life a Hoglin's prison which has no outlet !

The principal objection which can be made against divorce, is wholly inapplicable to the situation of M. de Mondoville, since he has no children. I shall not, therefore, repeat all that might be urged in removal of that difficulty. Nevertheless I will observe to you, that those moralists who, in their writings against divorce, have argued from the interest of the children, have totally forgotten, that, if the possibility of divorce be a happiness for men, it is also a happiness for children, who will become men in their turn. Children are generally regarded as if they were always to remain such : but the present children are the future spouses ; and you would sacrifice the remainder of their life to their infancy, by depriving, on their account, mature age of a right which might, perhaps, one day, save themselves from the horrors of despair.

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In addressing a person of your vigorous intellect, it was incumbent upon me to discuss the opinion which interests you in a general point of view. But how much stronger will my reasoning appear, if we consider only your particular situation ! Leonce was anxious to be united to you. It is but by an artifice that he is the spouse of Mademoiselle de Vernon. You have not been able to renounce your affection for each other. You pass your life together. Leonce loves you only, exists for you only. His wife is perhaps still ignorant of your attachment, but she must soon discover it. Your generous conduct towards M. de Valerbe, was the first cause, of the abominable injustice which you have suffered ; but it was impossible, that sooner or later your attachment to Leonce should not have injured you in the public opinion. By a lucky chance which should claim your blessing, you live in one of those epochs when power despises not the aid of knowledge. In a month the law of divorce will have

have passed ; and Leonce, in becoming your husband, will honour you by his love instead of exposing you to the ruin of your reputation. Do you fear the displeasure of the world ? You have seen my wife supported, perhaps, with some difficulty ; but I will assure you that this displeasure will daily decrease. The system of manners will become more austere ; marriage will be more highly respected ; and it will be felt that all these advantages have arisen from the possibility of conjoining happiness with duty.

It cannot be denied, that divorce, appearing to some as the result of a revolution which they detest, excites their disapprobation more in this, than in any other point of view ; and as political animosities are more readily directed against a man than a woman, it may happen that Leonce would expose himself to greater severity of censure than you, in adopting a resolution, which the spirit of party would condemn ; but if a sort of intrepid reason be  
neces-

necessary to women, in order to induce them to become the objects of public opinion; a man of sensibility should feel no hesitation in taking measures to secure the reputation and happiness of her whom his love may have exposed to danger.

I am aware that M. de Mondoville has been educated in a country, where the highest importance is attached to ancient opinions, as well as ancient usages; but he is too enlightened, not to perceive that the illusions which inspired the sublime virtues in former times, have not now sufficient power to reproduce them. Uncertain remembrances cannot serve as a steady rule of conduct, and the civil and political virtues must be founded on a basis which is more conformable to the principles of knowledge and reason. In short, I have not the least doubt, that it will only be necessary to inform M. de Mondoville of the possibility of divorce, to make him embrace with transport so fair a prospect of happiness. It would be  
unworthy

unworthy of him to sacrifice your reputation to his love, and to be attentive only to the preservation of his own. It would be unworthy of him to emancipate himself, as he does, from the yoke of matrimony, and not to consent to break it by a judicial decision! Would he acknowledge, that his passion for you is stronger than his duty, but that it would bend to the frivolous censures of society? But I will stop short—such a supposition is impossible.

I have always thought that no man can be secure of his own happiness, or that of the woman whom he loves, without disdaining or subjugating opinion. M. de Mondoville is, of all characters, the most decisive, the most ardent, the most energetic; and could it be, that he should be dependent on the judgment of others, while he seems, more than any are, calculated to gain an ascendancy over every mind? No! I cannot think so; and upon yourself alone will undoubtedly depend the decision of your destiny.

You



You excite, Madam, so tender and profound an interest; you have conducted yourself with such perfect generosity, towards my wife and me, that I should devote many years of my life to inspire you with the courage to be happy. Heaven, love, friendship, all the generous influences will, I hope, aid the prayers which I offer up for you.

HENRY DE LEBENSEL.

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## LETTER XVIII.

ANSWER OF DELPHINE TO M. DE LEBENSEL.

Paris, Sept. 3.

AH! what mischief have you done me! You have written from the inspiration of friendship, but is it necessary to renew the griefs of an irreparable misfortune?

Yes!

Yes! it is, and I should be unworthy of your esteem, if I for a moment entertained the hope which you have conceived in my favour. You love not Matilda; you have even good grounds of complaint against her. It was natural, therefore, that you should deceive yourself, as to the duties which Leonce and I have to perform towards her. This illusion could not have happened to me; I have never admitted, for a single instant, but there are words which overwhelm the soul, even though not productive of any effect. When I read in your letter, as if through a cloud, these expressions—*Leonce is not irrevocably united to Matilda, he may still become your husband*—I shuddered; I felt an indefinite sensation, beyond the bounds of ordinary existence. It is impossible for me, at present, to recall any idea of this impression. If the soul, wound up to extacy, should obtain a glimpse of the destiny of the happy, and should, a moment after, have its attention again driven downwards to the troubles of life;

life ; how could it express all that it had felt ? Such is the confusion I now experience. I felt at my heart, as I read your first lines, a sensation which I shall never recover. It is past ! but the recollection of it embitters the sorrows of real existence.

I hasten to answer without having seen Leonce. I wish him to remain, for ever, ignorant of the proposition which you have made to me ; his consent or his refusal would be equally painful to me. I know that my situation is hopeless ; all that you have said to me is true ; and I am menaced with sufferings with which you are well acquainted. Should Marilda discover those sentiments which chance has hitherto concealed from her, I will sacrifice my happiness to Marilda, after having sacrificed my reputation to Leonce. Every thing, alas ! proves to me, that there is no possible happiness for lovers, out of the married state ; no tranquillity for that weakness which, still retaining its virtue, wishes to enter into a compromise

compromise with love. But this painful conviction cannot induce me to adopt your advice. It would be criminal in me to follow it. Condescend to hear me; I am far from intending to offend you.

Think not that my understanding rejects what the most sage philosophy has dictated to you. I think; it is true, that, except in circumstances similar to those in which Madame de Lebensei was placed, the delicacy of a female must inspire her with considerable repugnance to divorce. But I have no faith in irrevocable vows; they are, in my opinion, nothing more than errors of human reason, sanctioned by the ignorance or despotism of legislators. But, were I capable of exciting Leonce to divorce Matilda, were I to regard that idea as an eventual, a possible chance, I should disavow the principle which has always regulated my moral conduct. I should sacrifice the legitimate happiness of another to my own; in a word, I should do what would appear to me deserving of condemna-



tion, and she who sets her own conscience at defiance is always criminal. Repentance is never unforeseen ; remorse makes itself felt at a distance ; and she who can examine her own heart, knows before guilt takes place all that she must feel after it is committed.

A divorce would plunge Matilda into the deepest despair. She would regard it as a crime, she would never look upon herself as disengaged, and would confine herself for the remainder of her days, in a cloister. I do not positively know what degree of pain she might feel, if she became acquainted with Leonce's attachment for me. But what I cannot doubt is, that she would be for ever miserable, should Leonce, profiting by the law of divorce, adopt a proceeding which would, in her sight, amount to an impious sacrilege. When my censurable and unfortunate friend Madame de Vernon deceived Leonce in order to unite him to her daughter, Matilda was ignorant of the fraud : she would not have consented to it ;  
the

she has evinced sincerity in every part of her conduct; she is not a very amiable, but she is a virtuous character. She is tormented neither by her imagination, nor her sensibility: she observes the conduct of her husband, neither with anxiety of mind nor of heart; but she would sustain an incurable wound, if attached in those ideas in which she has entrenched herself—if her pride and her religion were offended at the same moment.

To attain the happiness of being the wife of Leonce, I know not that pain which would not seem a pleasure to my feelings! In the sincerity of my heart, I confess to you, that I would, with transport accept three months of this happiness, and death. But I ask of your own noble and generous soul, whether you would have espoused your Eliza, at the expence of the happiness of another? Would you even accept of supreme happiness, at such a price? Whither could we fly, to avoid the regret of the pain which would be thus inflicted? Do

you know a feeling which preys upon the heart with such agonizing bitterness! Love, which supersedes every other consideration, duties, fears, oaths—love itself adds new force to pity. They are twin-born sentiments, of which the one can never triumph over the other. The ambitious man easily forgets the vexations which he has felt, in order to attain the object of his pursuit. But the happiness of love so disposes the heart to sympathy, that, towards its completion, it is impossible to remain callous to the presence or the recollection of pain. There are many errors which may be retrieved. Virtue is innate in the human heart; it re-appears after long intervals of absence, like the returning vigour of convalescence; but the moment pity is extinguished we have slain our good genius, and all the instincts of the heart are for ever silent.

Yes! I would banish far from my thoughts that happiness which was once promised me, under the auspices of innocence

cence and of virtue, but which nothing henceforth can restore to me. I ought to go farther: I ought no longer to see Leonce; but I cannot conceal it from myself; my disposition does not possess sufficient energy for sacrifices. I perform those duties which, from the natural qualities of the heart, are easily practicable; but am very little capable of those which require a grand effort. Perhaps, in your system, which makes happiness the source and end of all the virtues—perhaps you have not sufficiently reflected upon those combinations of destiny which enjoin self-subjugation. I feel that I am this instant in one of those afflicting situations, and I know what is wanting to me, in order to enable me to follow the strict path of my duty.

It is not true, as your heart delights to imagine, that it requires no effort to be virtuous. Happiness, I admit with you, must be regarded as the ultimate end of Providence; but morality, which is the command given to



mankind to fulfil the intentions of God upon earth, frequently requires that private should be sacrificed to public happiness. From me, you may estimate the sufferings which must be endured in discharging the whole extent of our duties. I presume to think myself possessed of those virtues which are the result of a good disposition ; but I do not reach those which cannot be exercised without effecting a triumph over the affections of the heart. I do not pretend to deny that I occupy an inferior rank among the upright ; the virtues which consist in sacrifices are perhaps more deserving in esteem, than the most benevolent emotions.

In this instance, at least, I shall feel no hesitation as to the path of duty. Opinion may select me as the object of persecution ; calamity of every description may be heaped on my devoted head ; I cannot, at this time, withdraw myself from their reach, not even by renouncing the society of Leonce ; but still less am I disposed to escape them by  
break-

breaking in upon the destiny of Matilda. Let my errors prove destructive of my own happiness, but never disturb the peace of others ! and may the unfortunate Delphine, the sole victim of her love, never draw forth other tears than her own !

In rejecting the advice which your friendship has dictated, I am not the less deeply sensible of my obligations to you, Sir, for the solicitude with which you have interested yourself in my happiness : and it is a remembrance which I feel as a pleasure in superadding to all those which attach me for life to you and your Eliza.

## LETTER IX.

DELPHINE TO MADAME DE LEBENSEI.

Paris, Sept. 14.

MADAME de Lebensei, my dear Eliza, by acquainting Leonce that he had written to me, has occasioned me fresh regrets, though assuredly his only object was to prevent them. Leonce yesterday paid me a visit. He had then been three days in Paris without calling on me. He must certainly have been extremely dissatisfied with himself, since he felt no impulse to disclose to me the secrets of his heart. I was alone.—His features, as he entered my chamber, discovered a strong expression of unhappiness; and without making any allusion to his absence or his return, his first words were to inquire whether I had received a letter from M. de Lebensei, and if I had returned him an answer. This question gave much uneasiness;

uneasiness; he persisted in it; my answer was not yet sent off; Leonce observed your husband's letter and mine on the table, and requested I would permit him to read them. I at first refused. He complained of my conduct in a tone of sad and bitter displeasure, which it is impossible for me to support. I rose from my chair, and though extremely hurt at yielding to what seemed to me necessity, the will of Leonce, I presented to him M. de Lebensei's letter and my own. I would have given all the world to conceal them from him, but his looks did not permit me to hesitate in obeying him.

On receiving the letters he sighed, and remained silent. I myself also experienced the most painful anxiety. I know not what I wished, I know not what I dreaded to hear; but I was a prey to the most cruel sufferings. The moment he read the first lines of M. de Lebensei's letter, Leonce changed countenance; he grew pale and red alternately, without lifting his eyes towards me, or pronouncing a single word,



though every thing betrayed in him the most profound emotion. Having read the letter of M. de Lebensei, he took up mine; his hands trembled as he held it. During this interval, I made every effort to dissemble my violent agitation, and to assume the appearance of tranquillity. I felt that, in this situation, there would have been a sort of impropriety in betraying the extent of my sufferings.

When Leonce came to that passage of my letter in which I warmly repelled the idea of divorce, he was suffocated with tears, and bent down his head upon his hand, with sighs which pierced me to the heart. I had often seen him melted into sorrow; but this was the first time that, losing all command of himself, he gave way to his tears, as if all the powers of his soul had yielded at the same moment. My feelings were overpowered, on beholding him in this condition, though I did not well know the cause, and even dreaded to discover it. But who can describe the effect produced by a vigorous

vigorous mind when subdued by sensibility? Never could the tears of a female, never could the emotions of weakness, so powerfully agitate the heart! Never could they inspire so tender and yet so painful an interest! Leonce, my dear Leonce, repeatedly exclaimed I, what can be the feeling with which you are thus oppressed? Speak, without fear, to your friend; to her you may disclose your own mind. Is it the calumny propagated respecting me which thus so poignantly afflicts you? Is it that proposition which was so unexpectedly made, and so warmly rejected?—I paused—he made me no reply—his tears flowed in redoubled streams—he endeavoured, but in vain, to contain himself; and throwing back his head, with the impatience of not being able to suppress his emotion, he gave vent to his feelings in cries of sorrow.

Unable, any longer, to support this silence—this extraordinary despair—I threw myself at the feet of Leonce, and conjured him to speak to me—to hear me.

This sudden movement made so strong an impression upon him, that he looked upon me a few moments with astonishment—with rapture—as if some happy chimera had been realized to his view : then clasping me in his arms, and replacing me on the sofa, he prostrated himself at my feet, and exclaimed—“ Yes ! you are an angel ! but I !—but I . . . . . ” His countenance was again clouded, and he rose up.

It was by this time dusk. A motion which I made, led him to think that I was going to ring for lights. He seized me by the hand, and said—“ Let us remain in obscurity ; I do not want you to read any thing in my countenance ; nor in yours do I wish to trace the subject of your thoughts : every thing must remain a mystery ; there can no longer be a reciprocal confidence ! ”—“ Great God ! exclaimed I, what a dreadful change ! ”—I was about to proceed, with the intention of compelling him to an explanation, when my sister entered, and that instant Leonce disappeared.

Conceive what cruel reflexions must have rent my heart! Is it the opinion of M. de Lebensei as to the possibility of divorce which has thrown Leonce into this state of distraction? Or is it not rather that he thinks my reputation ruined, and this misfortune overpowers all the energy of his character? I will know the real cause. The doubts which torment my breast can no longer be endured. But, I conjure you, my dear Eliza, I entreat you, by no means to recall to Leonce's imagination the idea which he had conceived. You must be perfectly aware, that that idea can produce nothing but pain.

LETTER



## LETTER XX.

DELPHINE TO LEONCE.

I AM anxious, Leonce, that you should speak to me with sincerity, and even with courage, though you should considerably increase my sufferings. You know what are the cruel anxieties which, since your quarrel with M. de Valorbe, have disturbed my existence. I will avow to you that, in parting with you, I felt that all my afflictions were nothing when compared with the pains which you alone had made me feel.

I gave you my promise, in the presence of my sister, that I would never separate myself from you, whilst the happiness of Matilda did not exact such a sacrifice. She will soon, perhaps, on her return from Andelys, be informed at once of the truth, with its various misrepresentations. But,  
even

even should some unexpected chance prolong her security, it is of you I would enquire whether I ought not to remove to a distance from you. Do not imagine that the motive of my departure is to withdraw myself from those malevolent attacks of which I am the victim. I may, perhaps, vindicate my character in the opinion of others; at least, in the purity of my own conscience, and my proud sense of personal dignity, I can find means to render myself independent of accusations which I despise; but it is impossible for me to support the prospect of the slightest diminution of that happiness which you derived from my attachment.

Examine, with scrupulous attention, I conjure you, the impression produced on your mind, by the horrid calumnies which have been propagated respecting me, and the sensible degradation which must result from it, in the rank which society has assigned to me. Ask your own heart, whether your imagination was not seduced by  
that

that kind of charm which the courtesy of the world has shed around the female sex; and whether it will not cool, when those, with whom you are in habits of intercourse, so far from participating in the ardour of your attachment to me, will make every possible attempt to eradicate it. The passion of love is made up of so many sentiments of which even we ourselves are unconscious, that the loss of one might involve the destruction of all the others. Ah! should I be obliged to depart, when you would less regret my absence!—Pardon me, Leonce, I do not wish to make you unhappy. If we must separate, it is my fervent prayer, that time and reflexion may assuage your sorrows. But who would condemn me to feel a wish that you should more easily support my absence, because the illusion which rendered me amiable in your eyes, had disappeared!

Oh! save me from so painful a sensation! Permit me to part with you, when I am yet dear to you, when the injustice of the world

world has not had time to operate, and when, in retiring, I can leave with you a remembrance which is still unimpaired. Leonce, reflect upon my request: do not even trust yourself to the first generous impulse which might cause you to reject it. Think that your disposition may overpower you, in defiance of yourself, and that you could never be able to conceal from me your impressions. Love would not be the purest, the most celestial of the affections of the heart, if the powers of the will were capable of imitating its paramount charms. Those females who are actuated only by vanity, may be deceived; but feeling flashes upon feeling; and our souls, long intermingled, cannot now conceal any thing from each other. Consent to my departure, at this moment, which is still dear to me, since my enemies, in rendering you unhappy, have not detached you from me. At a distance from you, I shall not cease to love you: I shall retain some impressions of the past which  
will



will enable me to support existence :—but, should I behold your love slowly withering beneath the empoisoned breath of calumny, nothing could then remain for me but the bitterness of despair.

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## LETTER XXI.

LEONCE TO DELPHINE.

HAVE I merited the letter which you have just written to me? You have made me blush for myself; I must certainly have given you but a very poor idea of my character, to make you, for a moment, entertain the thought that your unhappiness could have weakened my attachment for you. Oh! Delphine, with what profound disdain would I have repelled so unjust an insinuation, had it not proceeded from you? What have I said, what have I done, what have

have I experienced, that can justify a suspicion so unworthy of you !

You saw me yesterday in an extraordinary state.—A proposal striking, but impracticable, had revived all my sorrows.—It filled my bosom with a multitude of sentiments, so painful, different, contrary, and yet so confused, that it would have been difficult for me to express them.—This is the whole secret of my agitation.

I have, undoubtedly, been affected by the infamous calumnies which have been propagated respecting you ; but it is myself whom I accuse as the primary cause of this misfortune. Is not the regret which I have felt on that account, one of the most natural of sentiments ? Can I love you, and be indifferent to your reputation ? Can I love you, and not be driven to despair and madness, when I perceive the fatal circumstances which doom me to the disability of avenging your honour ? But, Delphine, I swear to you, that never did your lover more profoundly cherish you. I feel as  
much

much for you as for myself, or rather a thousand times more. You may confide in those proofs of susceptibility which accord with the habitual disposition: they are the truest of all. Your absence would be, at all times, insupportable to me; but if your departure were to be attributed to the false opinion you have conceived of the dispositions of my heart, I would, for the purpose of undeceiving you, follow you to the very extremity of the globe.

What! my friend, you would fly from me, at the very first cloud which has obscured the splendour of your whole life! You would then think me a companion only for the period of prosperity! You would discover nothing in my heart to solace the hour of misfortune! Ah! what then am I, if it is not to me you would apply under the pressure of affliction, and if the voice of your friend could not charm far from you the sufferings of destiny?

I have no desire to conceal from you what I feel; for I have not a sentiment which is  
not

not an additional proof of my love. I love the concert of praise which every where waited upon your steps; it vibrated to my heart. I loved the men who admired you! I will hate those who disrespect you. But should we even fail in justifying you, and in laying hatred and envy prostrate at your feet, yet still your presence would be the sole happiness which could attach me to existence. My Delphine, I have already suffered much; my soul is painfully agitated; beware of depriving me of my only remaining enjoyments. This is a resolution which I had formed long before I became acquainted with you; and do you think, that the delicious hours which I have passed at Bellerive, have taught me greater patience under misfortune? Never could a heart, endowed with energy of feeling, support the loss of you, after having been the object of your affection.

You sometimes talk of a momentary separation. My friend, do not your own feelings inform you what is the duration of a year,



year, or even a much shorter period, for souls such as ours? Ah! I do not entertain that anticipation of a long life, which should make me so prodigal of time. If the thread of our present destiny be cut asunder, I know not what may be the immediate event; but never, never shall we meet again! Delphine, shudder at this prediction; the voice which pronounces it, proceeds from the bottom of my heart.

Cease, therefore, for an instant to think our separation possible. To whatever quarter of the globe you may fly, thither, may you assure yourself, will I go to rejoin you. The word departure is, therefore, devoid of all meaning. Should you leave Paris, you will compel me to desert Matilda, in order to inhabit the same spot of earth on which you have fixed your abode. This will be the only result of the proceeding with which you persist in menacing me. Is it then not enough, that I scarcely ever see you alone; that I no longer enjoy those long and delightful conversations

versations which perfected my character by loading me with happiness? I have subdued love. The terror I have felt from the danger into which my passion had precipitated you, still represses the most impetuous emotions of my heart. My pains are thus already sufficiently acute; I can bear no addition to them; and wherever you are, there will you find me.

I have been desirous of imploring you only in the name of my love; I am anxious you should remain on my account. But the interests of your own reputation should be sufficient to command your compliancé. Would it be worthy of you to set off at this crisis? Would it not assuredly be reported, that had you been able to vindicate your conduct, you would not have departed? Madame d'Artenas, in whom you have some confidence, said to me, yesterday, that you ought to make your appearance again in society, and triumph in person over your enemies. Do you not know the world? If you sink under the  
pressure

pressure of its injustice, it will not attribute your dejection merely to sorrow, and the sensibility of your disposition. It is your courage, therefore, which must be opposed to the fabrications of envy. Could benevolence have disarmed it, would it ever have attacked you?

My friend, if you re-establish my peace and energy of mind, by assuring me that your heart and intentions are unchanged, we will awe the malevolent into subjection. Can not your sense and goodness make head against those whose only weapons are stupidity and perfidy? Let us place somewhat more of confidence in ourselves. The hatred of the envious has served only to apprise us of our own powers. Well! let us then rely upon those powers. As for you, Delphine, you need only to appear, in order to please; to speak, in order to be loved. Have the courage to face that society which dare not leave you but in your triumph, and you will enjoy it on my account. But should our common efforts fail

fail of their expected success, whatever may happen, entertain no undue distrust. Do not exaggerate the weaknesses of your friend; and let his love be your security for his happiness as long as he shall have an opportunity of seeing you, and an assurance that you love him.

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## LETTER XXII.

DELPHINE TO MADAME DE LEBENSEI.

Paris, Sept. 25.

HOW many testimonies of your friendship did I not receive during the few days you passed with me! You shall not remain ignorant, my dear Eliza, of any thing which interests me; I have the happiness to think that your heart warmly sympathises in all my concerns. Leonce has quieted my fears as to his regard for me. We have now, for



the third time, resumed hopes of happiness which were almost entirely extinguished. But, alas ! I have no longer any confidence in them.

When Leonce passes a few days without mixing with the world, he conceives that he is become entirely insensible to that injustice of public opinion with respect to me, which has given him so deep a wound. But he knows not that, to the feeling mind, this affliction returns as easily as it is dissipated—dies away, and revives, but never is entirely expelled. When Leonce is subject to its attack, he tries to conceal it ; he makes an effort to appear tranquil ; but I, notwithstanding, read what is passing at the bottom of his heart. I perceive that his sufferings on this account are the more exquisite, from his fear of mortifying me by openly declaring them. Thus then is the most soothing of our enjoyments, perfect confidence, already impaired ! Not that we conceal anything from each other ; but we reciprocally feel that our affliction is less painful, when we abstain from talking of it.

I am

I am also afraid of letting him see that my heart is not in every respect satisfied with him ; I do not wish to avail myself of his wrongs, in order to afflict his feelings. Ah ! it is not I who shall punish him for his errors. Alas ! the course of events will, perhaps, but too soon perform this task ! it is his decree, and whatever I may suffer, I will submit to it, that I should begin to go about again, and to renew my former connexions. He conceives that, if I am so inclined, I can remove every impression of the calumnies which have been circulated against me ; and I cannot conceal from myself, that his happiness is connected with my success, in this respect. I will therefore comply with his wishes ; but what a painful effort ! On my first entrance into the world, I imagined I saw a friend in every man who amused himself in talking to me, at present I experience a very opposite feeling ; I dare not address myself to any one, speak to any one ; a timid pride hinders me from making any attempt

to extricate myself from my present situation, though it gives me the most exquisite pain. My mind is necessarily occupied in bitter meditation on what has been said of me, and particularly what has reached the ear of Leonce. Would one's enemies have the heart to continue their persecution, if they knew that they might poison that very affection which remained, as the only consolation for their hatred !

Hatred ! just Heaven ! how have I deserved it, my dear Eliza, whom have I injured ? To whom have I not done all the good in my power ? Whence then has sprung this lurking rancour, which waited only for the moment of disgrace, in order to burst forth ? Must it be ascribed to jealousy ? Ah ! do a few attractions, which I never valued, but as far as they enabled me to please and to be loved, confer so high a degree of happiness, as to excite so much envy ! yet I must brave those malignant feelings from which it would be

so agreeable to me to retire. Two years absence would have naturally produced what I cannot now obtain, but at the expense of a thousand sufferings. But such is his wish, or rather, I am aware of the importance which he attaches to my re-occupying my former rank in the public opinion.

Shall I ever be able to subdue malevolence? It chills my blood, the instant I discover it. In the presence of the malignant, I am disarmed at once of the powers of my mind and my disposition. This is not the effect of weakness; you know whether I am deficient in resolution, when it is necessary to defend my friends: but I fear those who hate me, because I cannot oppose to them the same kind of sentiment; and tears flow more easily from me than contemptuous expressions, when I find myself the object of that active disposition to mischief, which fills up the life of the indolent. But Leonce is unhappy; and in order to alleviate his pain, I shall



be able to recover my resolution ; kindness had weakened it, pride ought to restore it : but what will society, a pleasure already so empty and so insufficient in itself, be to me, if I am obliged to make it a conflict, a war, a continual subject of observation and alarm ?

Have I not already, for the last fortnight, been forced to take an account of those who come, and those who do not come, to see me ? Must I not examine the various shades of civility on the part of the females, and mark the degree of coldness or warmth, in their regards for me ? I have felt my heart beat with apprehension, for a visit to be received, a miserable form of politeness to be observed : there is not a strong quality of the soul, not a superior faculty of the mind, which is not degraded by a life of this nature. The general idea of preserving the public opinion, or of recovering it, after being bereft of it, presents nothing to the mind, but what is prudent and dignified. But how  
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repugnant are all the details of this enterprise, to elevation of sentiment ! How much do they require of pliancy, constraint and condescension ! and how often, in the midst of the laborious task, does an emotion of pride whisper, that we have done wrong in subjecting what is most, to what is least valuable, and of humbling a being of distinction, before the capricious favour of so many individuals without merit—so many individuals, who, were you in a state of prosperity, would soon find out their own level, and voluntarily station themselves at a very great distance beneath you !

But to what purpose are all these complaints, to which I give way in writing to you ! Do I not know that I shall do just what Leonce shall request ; and, even without any request on his part, that I shall do whatever can contribute to make me more amiable in his eyes ? Congratulate yourself, my friend, in having for your husband, a man emancipated from the

yoke of opinion: you are, perhaps, more feeble than he is in that respect; but it is better you should be so, than that you should possess a character naturally independent, from which you could derive no aid, because it would wound the feelings of him who loves you.

I recollect, that before I had ever seen Leonce, and the first time that I read a letter from him, I was forcibly impressed with the idea, that were we to fall in love with each other, the difference of our characters would make us profoundly unhappy. Alas! it is but too true that we are so! but I then knew not that the very defect of which I complain, possesses an indescribable charm, which adds new force to my attachment. A character susceptible and jealous of offence, incessantly occupies the mind with the fear of displeasing him. One daily attaches greater importance to the satisfaction of a man who is so delicate with respect to his reputation and honour; in short, those blemishes which  
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originate even in the extravagance of a proud spirit, when they do not at once detach us from the object of our love, form but an additional link of connexion; and the agitation which they occasion, gives increased ardour to the tender passions. Come to see me, my dear Eliza, and bring your husband along with you; his conversation will restore me that resolution which perfect reason can always inspire.

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## LETTER XXIII.

DELPHINE TO MADAME DE LEBENSEI.

Paris, October 4.

SATURDAY last, about two hours after my departure, my dear Eliza, my sister-in-law received a letter from M. de Valorbe, dated at Moulins, where his regi-



ment is in garrison. He informs her, that he has performed his journey in safety, and indirectly alludes to the claims he thinks he has acquired to my affection; but he seems not to have the slightest idea of what has been said of him in Paris. I hope he will continue ignorant of it, and that the exertions made by Leonce, for his justification, will prove successful. The authority of Leonce is so important, in a question which relates to the courage of any person, that it will, perhaps, be sufficient to defend the honour of M. de Valorbe.

At length, my dear Eliza, I yesterday performed the circle of visits, with the result of which you requested me to acquaint you. Fortunately I did not find all the ladies whom I called upon, at home. Those who had been merely upon a footing of acquaintance with me, gave me very nearly the same reception as formerly. Of them I asked nothing; but when I requested one or two ladies, with whom I had been  
more

more intimately connected, to state the truth, and to repel the calumny of which I had been the object, they seemed to regard themselves as persons in office, who were applied to for a favour, and they displayed all the importance, all the reserve, and all the coldness of power, towards a humble suppliant. I instantly told them, that I renounced my request; and their countenances brightened up a little, as soon as they were fully assured that I would not, from their civility, infer any claim upon their services.

If my reputation in the world can be re-established, it is not, I am certain, by having recourse to the zeal or the friendship of particular individuals. To obtain the assistance of others is merely a lucky chance in the lottery of life. It must not be anticipated; much less ought it to be solicited. It is much better to re-appear courageously in society, and to conduct myself as if I so much despised the falsehoods which some have dared to propagate

respecting me, that I would not even deign to notice them. The feeble characters, on remarking my resolution, will gradually re-approach me; they will resume their former intercourse, when they find that I can dispense with their assistance. There is, in the heart of the greater part of mankind, a principle somewhat ungenerous, which puts them on their guard against the most ordinary proceedings of social intercourse, the moment they perceive that such observances are made an object of anxious expectation. They suspect the presence of some lurking interest in the most simple formalities; and are afraid of being unfortunately engaged to do a greater kindness than they intend. Eliza, we, who are acquainted with suffering, are not of this description. Yes! in all the relations of life, in all the countries of the world, the afflicted are the only fit companions of life. The happy and powerful possess only half the feelings and half the sentiments of their nature.

I hastened

I hastened to finish my painful rounds with visiting Madame d'Artenas, in whose friendship a variety of considerations induced me to place the firmest confidence. Madame de R——, her niece, was the only person with her at the time. Madame d'Artenas received me with the same cordiality as usual, adding, however, a slight air of protection. It but rarely happens, my dear Eliza, that adversity does not, even in the bosom of our friends, effect some change which may wound our delicacy. A greater or less degree of attention, a more marked familiarity, or a less natural ease—every thing is a subject of pain or observation to him who is unfortunate; whether it be that nothing is really more difficult than for others to remain, in all respects the same, after a new conception has introduced itself into their relations with us; or that a suffering heart, like a feeble state of health, is affected by a thousand slight circumstances which would make no impression upon a happy mind or a vigorous constitution.

Madame



Madame d'Artenas, as I have frequently remarked to you, has a good heart, but a very slender share of sensibility. This difference is never perceptible in the ordinary habits of life. But when it is necessary to touch upon subjects which wound the feelings at every point, it is astonishing what pain is occasioned by those decided and positive expressions which, instead of affording any relief to the sufferer, torment his imagination almost as much as much as a new affliction. Madame d'Artenas instantly recalled my attention to what she had done for the re-establishment of her niece's reputation; conceiving that she should encourage me by the example of the services which she had reduced her; as if the comparison was correct—as if it ought not to have been her first care to keep it entirely out of view!

Madame de R. shewed, in the most amiable manner, how much her feelings were shocked by a parallel which she perceived to be in every respect incongruous. As often as Madame d'Antemar made use of

too strong a term, she interrupted her, in order to soften, with the most flattering modifications, what her aunt had pronounced in too decisive a tone. I repeatedly saw the tears start in her eye, as she looked at me. I felt extreme gratitude to Madame de R. for her delicate attentions, but I was unable to express it. My utmost energy was exerted in order to listen with calmness to the useful counsels of Madame d'Artenas. My face reddened and grew pale by turns, as she repeated all that had been said of me in the tone of ordinary narration. One would have imagined that she was relating a story which had happened fifty years before, and to persons entirely unacquainted with it. As it was impossible for me, however to doubt, that the object of all her speeches was to benefit me, and that she as sincerely entertained as she openly professed this intention, I imposed on myself the painful task of hearing her in silence, and thanking her, at least with a nod of the head, when I found

found myself deficient in expressions. I was, besides, aware that the conscious pride of innocence would to Madame d'Artenas have seemed but the height of folly. I restrained those elevated and almost haughty expressions which would have gratified my feelings; and abstained from using that sacred language of dignified souls, which ought not to be prodigally lavished upon those who are unworthy to comprehend it.

The result of the conversation was, that I must mingle again with the world; and as Madame de St. Albe was in a few weeks to give a grand concert, which would be attended by all the fashionable company of Paris, Madame d'Artenas, who is related to her, applied to procure me an invitation, and to conduct me thither. She conceives that, in the interval, my friends will have sufficient to justify my character, and completely to repair the injury done me by M. de Tierville. It will certainly be painful to me, thus to appear in the presence

presence of the whole host of opinion ; but such is Leonce's wish, and it shall be complied with. But who could have told you, my dear Eliza, that that Delphine, whose situation was the object of general envy, who was expected in crowded assemblies (I say it with bitterness of soul) as essential to the festivity of the scene—who could have told you that this same Delphine, without any actual offence, but in consequence of a train of sentiments, benevolent, or at least excusable, should be reduced to the necessity of imploring, before she can venture again into the world, the support of a woman of a character and a mind so infirm!—and that she should dread as a hostile power, that same society, and those very same men, who but lately seemed at a loss for expressions in which to convey their intoxicating adulation!

Ah! who but Leonce could make me endure the torments which I experienced in courting opinion? I suffer from it every hour, and every moment ; and this resolution



tion being once taken, requires a thousand resolutions of detail, all of which are equally painful. I am persuaded, however, that, if no new occurrence interrupts my course, I shall emerge from my present situation and resume that rank which I formerly occupied in society, and of which Leonce so deeply regrets the loss. But can I ever forget that, in order to regain it, I have been obliged almost to descend to humiliations? Will my disposition resume its native independence? and shall I ever enjoy again that pleasure and security which I felt amidst the world; before it made me at once feel its injustice and its power?

How much better have you done, my dear Eliza, to resign yourself nobly to the censure of society! The effort may have been painful, but your enemies know it not; and you have never taken a single measure to conciliate them. I shall, perhaps, internally resume my former situation, but all that made it agreeable to me, my internal

ternal impressions are changed. Calculation, and almost even artifice, will be necessary for me, in order to captivate anew the public approbation. This calculation, this artifice, have disclosed to me all the secrets of my condition. The most soothing illusions have vanished. I have scrutinized friendship as I would hatred; and to reconquer the respect of society, I am compelled to study it in a point of view which strips it beyond recovery of every charm which it had in my estimation. But Leonce! at the sound of this name, the most heart-felt sentiments reanimated my frame! Forget, my dear Eliza, the complaints I have poured forth as to the duties he requires me to perform. He daily repays them with such tender proofs of gratitude, as ought to efface all remembrance of my woes.

## LETTER XXIV.

LEONCE TO DELPHINE.

Paris, Oct. 20.

I HAVE at last, my Delphine, to acquaint you with a happy piece of news. You already know that Madame de Mondoville has been returned these some days past; but you know not, that on her arrival, she did not fail to be informed of all the calumnious reports which had gone abroad. She mentioned them to me, and I assured her that the only foundation for the whole account which she had heard, was a generous act performed by you, in giving an asylum to M. de Valorbe, at the moment when he was pursued. I must do Matilda the justice to say, that it is impossible to give a more favourable reception than she gave, to all that my indignation suggested, as to the infamous conduct

conduct of M. de Fierville and Madame du Marset; if there was any thing to give me the slightest uneasiness, it was the extreme facility with which I directed her opinion! I felt, upon this occasion, the great advantage derived to the intimate relations of life, from a moral rule, even when carried to too high a pitch of refinement.

The very same evening in which I had this conversation with Matilda, she formed one of a very numerous party to which I did not accompany her, and advantage was taken of my absence, to make a very warm attack upon you. Madame de Mondoville has, I am informed by a friend who was present, defended you with so much force, and with such loftiness of character, that she subdued every one into silence; and such was the effect of her manner of expressing herself, and the authority of her reputation, that my friend and several other witnesses of the scene are completely convinced that she has produced a decided change in your favour.

It



It is truly afflicting for me, my Delphine, to express to you, how much I am affected by the conduct of Madame de Mondoville on this occasion ! from this action, her happiness has become dearer and more sacred to me, than from all the ties by which we are united. She is to give you a call this evening ; and as I do not wish to be present while she is with you, I shall deprive myself of the pleasure of seeing you for the whole day. But how consoling to me to reflect, that the danger, with which you incessantly threatened me, no longer exists ! that all anxieties are for ever banished from Marilda's mind, and that nothing, oh ! my friend, can henceforth separate me from you !

## LETTER XXV.

DELPHINE TO LEONCE.

LEONCE ! Leonce ! how shall I inform you of what has happened to me ? What will you think of me ? What pain will you suffer ? Shall I obtain forgiveness ? Will you be capable of hating me, when I am inconsolable for having done that which perhaps was my duty ; that, which it was at least impossible for me to avoid doing, under all the circumstances of my situation ? Your wife knows my attachment to you ; and from whom has she learnt it ? Oh ! Heavens, from me ! the dreadful word is uttered ! now hear me ; throw not my letter from you with indignation, but follow, in my recital, all the impressions which agitated me ; and should your heart detach itself, for an instant, from mine, should it experience a feeling which differs  
from

from those with which I was affected ——— then condemn me.

Madame de Mondoville called upon me two hours ago. I was alone. She shewed a much stronger interest in my happiness, than it is her ordinary habit to testify. I avoided, as much as possible, any intimacy of conversation, and repeatedly recalled her attention to general subjects. I breathed more freely, where she ceased to address me in direct terms of esteem and friendship. But, at length, by a perseverance which is not natural to her, and which certainly resulted from an ardent emotion of justice, and particularly kindness, she broke through all my guards, and said:—  
“ My dear cousin, I know the unjust treatment you have received; it has excited my sincere indignation, and I have defended you with that warmth of conviction which must persuade others.”—I held down my head, without saying a word, while she continued——“ How infamous to convert to your prejudice the service which  
you

you had rendered to M. de Valorbe ! And, at the same time, how absurd to introduce my husband into this affair ! You who accomplished our marriage by your generous conduct relative to the estate of Andelys—you whom my mother had consulted upon this union long before I knew M. de Mondoville—are you not implicated in my fate by all that you have done for me ? Your friendship for my mother, though for a moment interrupted, has certainly preserved sufficient claims upon you to endear to you the happiness of her daughter—— Doubtless, said I, attempting to reply, I wish for your happiness, to which I would sacrifice . . . . . She interrupted me with saying, “ You need not give me any confirmation of it, my cousin. If I have occasionally, in a former period, conducted myself with coldness towards you ; if the difference of our opinions has sometimes estranged us from each other, permit me to make you every compensation at the present crisis when you are in affliction ;

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tion; dispose of my services, and I shall feel happy in the influence which I and my friends may have over every circumstance connected with the reputation of a female, since then my influence will be beneficial to you. I shall excite, in your behalf, those whom you call the devotees; that is, persons who possess such purity of character, and are so fortunate, that in their presence malignity is always reduced to silence.”——Oh! you are too good, much too good, exclaimed I, in the most tender tone; but, I conjure you, give yourself no more trouble on my account; promise that you will not, I request, implore it of you . . . . ——

“And whence proceeds this earnest entreaty?” replied Matilda. Can it be, my dear Delphine, that you have such aversion to me, that you conceive me unworthy of doing you a service?”——“No! no!” interrupted I; “it is I who am unworthy of you.”——“Who could have infused into your mind so cruel an idea, my dear

dear cousin?" answered she, "you do not possess the same opinions with me; I am sorry, for the sake of your own happiness, that you do not; but can you, therefore, suppose that I am so enthusiastic as not to acknowledge your uncommon endowments, and the services which you have twice done me with so much delicacy? Am I, then, incapable of estimating that perfect candour which has never permitted you to assume even the shadow of dissimulation? It is this virtue which I admire in you, and which has always been the foundation of my security. I have frequently remarked, that Leonce took great pleasure in your society. Upon one accession too, which you will recollect, I came to see you at Bellerive with a kind of anxiety; and, perhaps, I was even desirous to prove it to you. But I returned with a conviction that you were not in love with Leonce, since you did not betray yourself, as I spoke to you of my affection for him. Yesterday a certain per-

son, in repeating to me the story which has been circulated respecting yourself and M. de Valorbe, had the impertinence to tell me, that I was a very silly dupe to believe in your sincerity. I could have wished that you had heard with what warmth, with what disdain I repelled this despicable insinuation! what pleasure I took in repeatedly asserting, that not only dissimulation, but even silence itself, which would be as much a falsehood, since it would equally deceive me, was very foreign to your character, in a situation which required of an upright heart to disclose the whole truth. I could have wished that, in order to justify you for ever, I had been requested to vouch for your innocence upon oath."—At this moment, Leonce, my senses forsook me; I thought it base in me to abuse her candour, and to receive praises which I so little merited. Her language was, to my apprehension, a solemn interrogation, and silence appeared to me to be perfidy. In short, I did not  
reason,

reason, but felt that shock of the whole system which renders a base or perfidious action totally impossible. —“Matilda,” exclaimed I, “stop! this is too much! yes, it is too much! If I loved him, ought I to let you know it? If I loved him without being criminal, and without violating your rights, your happiness”. . . . . My agitation said still more than my expression.” —“Proceed,” resumed Matilda warmly, “proceed! Delphine, would you love him? Resist not the generous emotion which you feel! Be candid, I entreat you.” —“What is it to you?” rejoined I, already sorry for what had escaped me, “If I do love him, I will depart, I will die; leave me to myself.” —At this moment Madame de Lebenzei entered; and whether it was that Matilda did not wish to remain in her company, or that she wanted some leisure to reflect on what had passed between us, she left my apartment without saying a word; and I, confounded at the recollection of what I had said, suffered



suffered her to depart with the same silence. Not knowing whether my conduct had been criminal or virtuous; meriting, in fact, neither approbation nor blame, as I had spoken entirely from an involuntary impulse, and having had no time for reflexion, I had not made up my mind as to any particular sacrifice.

What have I now to expect, Leonce? I know my duty; but I know not yet in what shape it may present itself. Come and see me; come and let us enjoy those few days, which will, perhaps, be the last we shall ever spend together. Ah! why should I conceal from you, that my heart is ready to burst, and that I feel, as it were, a kind of repentance?——What is to become of us? At all events, wreck not your displeasure on me; let us not exhaust our souls in reciprocal reproaches and justifications; but let us bear, as a stroke of fate, the consequences of an act completely involuntary; and let us jointly examine whether we have not still some remaining sources of consolation.

LETTER

## LETTER XXVI.

DELPHINE TO MADAME DE LEBENSEI.

October 28.

YOU went away extremely uneasy, my dear Eliza, at my conversation with Madame de Mondoville, and you were pleased to request that I should daily write to inform you of the effects which it might have produced. A week has now elapsed, without my having heard any thing of Matilda. But this silence, far from tranquillizing me, redoubles my anxiety. Leonce has not seen her, during the same period. She has spent her time either in her own apartment, or in attendance at church. Her husband has repeatedly sent to request to see her, but she has constantly returned a refusal. At present she is certainly extremely unhappy; she was tranquil before the conversation which she had with me!—Oh! how culpable should I be, if possessing the weakness, and not the energy, of a good heart, I had only disturbed the repose of Matilda by my openness, without displaying the courage necessary to restore her to happiness!

Mademoiselle d'Albemar was pretty severe upon my conduct. Leonce was generous towards me, and particularly affected to talk of this affair as a matter of little consequence, and to affirm that he was certain of moderating its effects. I did not attempt to undeceive him. I perceive the approach of an irrevocable resolution, an omnipotent necessity, and I no longer argue upon any topic. Ah ! I entered into conversation, when I had a secret desire of being convinced, when I had a vague wish of being prevented from making the sacrifices which I conceived myself disposed to perform ! But now I will remain silent. Every thing presses upon me ; duty and misfortune are still ; all of them must be confined to my own bosom.

How dreadful will be the moment of our separation ! It already presents itself to my view, like a black cloud on the verge of the horizon, ready to advance over my head. Ah ! why can I not die, while it is yet at a distance ! Good Eliza ! Happy Eliza !—Adieu.

① LETTER

## LETTER XXVII.

DELPHINE TO MADAME DE LEBENSEI.

Nov. 4.

MY fate is decided ! it has been so these four days past, but I had not resolution to write to you. Had not your pressing letter arrived this morning, I know not whether I should have taken upon myself the task of recounting to you so many subjects of pain. I still see him, but shall soon see him no more. He is unacquainted with this determination, and ought to remain ignorant of it. He looks at me with the most piercing expression. If he has any fears, he does not wish to express them. It should seem as if he thought he could rivet my affections more closely to him, by not appearing to suspect my design. Oh ! how interesting, how amiable is he ! Yet, in a fatal moment, have I promised to forsake him. Will my energies be sufficient to support this sacrifice ?

Tuesday last, Leonce told me that he should be obliged to absent himself from



Paris on the day following, on indispensable business. I cannot conceive how it did not occur to me, that Madame de Mondoville would fix upon that day for paying me a visit; but when she was announced, I was seized with a surprise equal to my grief. My sister-in-law was with me at the time. Matilda, on her entrance, stated in a solemn tone that she wished to be alone with me, and requested that I would give orders to prevent the admission of any other visitor.

As soon as we were alone, she told me, in a mournful but firm tone, that she could no longer doubt of the love which existed between Leonce and me; that she had recalled to her memory a variety of circumstances, which made no particular impression upon her, when she explained every thing by friendship, but which now only proved too clearly, what my agitation, at our late interview, had begun to reveal to her.—“Another,” added she, “in my situation, would be your enemy. The obligations which I owe you, that emotion of candour to which I owe my first alarm, those

those sentiments of Christian charity which make me anxious to bring you back to the path of virtue, do not permit me to be your enemy. I come therefore to solicit, in the name of your own salvation, as of my happiness, that you will leave Paris, that you will not suffer Leonce to follow you; and that you will not sow discord between us, by telling him that it was I who intreated you to remove from him."—

This harsh and abrupt proposition, though it perfectly accorded with my own reflexions, I must confess gave a shock to my feelings; and I very coldly replied, that I would enter into no engagements but with myself.

——“You refuse me, then,” said Matilda, with an expression and a tone of remarkable bitterness and asperity; “you refuse me!” repeated she, with quivering lips. “Very well! know that I carry in my womb the offspring of Leonce, and that the sorrow which you inflict upon me, will make you answerable for its life as well as my own.”—As she uttered these

words, conceive what I must have felt! I was ignorant of her situation; I knew not her new claims. Sighs escaped from my bosom, and allayed the perturbation of Matilda.—“Return to your duty, to your God,” said he, “poor wanderer; do not doom me to the necessity of pronouncing a curse against you. Who! I! should I give birth to a child, whom its father would perhaps hate, because I was its mother! Time, which enfeebles criminal sentiments, adds new strength to legitimate affections; but should Leonce continue to see you daily, he will be more and more estranged from me, and will incessantly form new connexions with you, which will make odious in his sight every thing which he ought to love.

“Do you forget,” said I to her, “Matilda, that our attachment for each other has never been of a criminal nature?”—“You call nothing criminal,” replied she, “but the last wrong which would have degraded your own character. But what name would you give to robbing me of the  
tender

tender affections of my husband? Unhappy me, who have no other pleasure on earth than his affection, my right—my legal right!—that affection which he vowed to me at the altar. What shall I do to regain it, since you have seduced it from me, by those allurements which Heaven has not bestowed on me, but which will serve only to make yourself and others miserable? What! for a year past, you have seen Leonce every day, and you pretend that you are innocent! What efforts have you made to subdue a criminal sentiment? Have you fled from my spouse? Has he in vain pursued you? Have your sorrows first apprised me of your love? No! Your conduct admits of the simplest and easiest explanation; you pass your life with a married man, for whom you entertain a criminal affection! What innocence, just Heaven! and, above all, what care, what regard for my destiny! You loved my mother, and you fear not to plunge her daughter into despair!—Take back the fatal gifts which you gave me in marriage.



marriage. I will restore them to you : I will, at the same time pay the debts which my mother owed you ; and then I will quit the residence of Leonce—poor—solitary—betrayed by my husband, by him whom I loved, perhaps to a greater degree than God permits us to love any of his creatures ; but, in retiring, I will bequeath to both of you those feelings of remorse which are more cruel than all my sufferings.”——

Eliza, Matilda might have long spoken to me before I should have interrupted her. I remained silent, because my mind had come to a decision. Had I entertained the least hesitation, what she had uttered would have pierced me to the heart. But whom could I pity, when I had resolved to abandon Leonce ? Could any one, placed on coals of fire, have then appeared more worthy of compassion than myself ? The mournful and constrained expression of Matilda's looks indicated, however, her uncertainty, and I assured her that I was ready to do whatever she required of me.

Then,

Then, forgetting her resentment and her natural reserve, she described her gratitude for my promise, and her love for her husband, in a manner altogether new to her, and which her love for Leonce could alone have inspired. Ah ! said I to myself, she who so little resembles him—she whom he never loved—feels for him the most lively passion ! While I, who have a soul always in unison with his, I whom he adores, and who am completely occupied with his image, must leave him ! I have sworn to Madame de Vernon to watch over the happiness of her daughter ; I have promised to God and my conscience never to inflict pain upon another. I shall not be perjured to these vows, which were the first ever pronounced by my heart. But the fear of death cannot produce a more horrid sensation in the wretch who approaches the scaffold, than I experience on renouncing Leonce.

I remained silent, plunged in those bitter reflexions. “ This is not all,” added Matilda ; “ you do nothing for my happiness,  
if

if Leonce believe, that it is at my request you separate from him. On the contrary, he will hate me as soon as that fact comes to his knowledge. If you cannot conceal it from him, rather remain, and prevail upon him to pay attention to my infant, if I live to bring it into the world, and to bestow some tears upon my memory. He must not know that I have seen you. I shall endeavour to return to my accustomed manner with him. Delphine, if you betray yourself by a single word, your promise is vain, and cannot be executed."—"Matilda," said I, "your secret shall be kept." "If your departure," resumed she, "be sudden, Leonce will suspect some connexion between the singular conduct I have for some days held towards him, and that event. Allow me time to appear again tranquil before him, in order that he may believe my inquietude has been gradually removed. You will then endeavour to find some reasonable pretext for going away."—"Matilda," I replied, "I thank you for esteeming me so highly as to believe me capable  
of

of such efforts ; but I give you my word they shall all be accomplished. I shall do more ; to whatever corner of the earth I may fly, Leonce, I am certain, would follow me : If he does, I shall disappear from the world. I know not what shall become of me ; but it is not a journey, a common absence, that can alter sentiments such as mine. My fate, however, concerns not you ; therefore leave me. I require to be alone. Adieu."—Matilda obeyed me, without speaking a word. I had acquired an authority over her, and I merited it ; for at this moment my soul had doubtless become superior to hers, in consequence of the sacrifice I had made.

I have entrusted you, Eliza, with the most important secret of my life. If Leonce discover it, he never will pardon Matilda for the pain our separation will make him suffer, and I should then appear to deserve only contempt. It would seem that I had only assumed an air of generosity, in order to become more artfully perfidious. While Matilda lives, even after my death,  
you



you never must allow a word on the subject to escape you.

I must now proceed to perform what I have promised; for Leonce conjectured my design; if I again witness his sufferings and hear his complaints! . . . . . But he shall know nothing: Matilda herself requires it. If I preserve my reason during the few days I remain, I shall do what I ought: but do not be surprised, if, at this moment when I condemn myself to break the dearest ties of nature, I should appear silent and reserved even with you. Speak not to me of my scheme: allow me to struggle alone with myself, and to summon up all my strength. A single reasonable reflexion might convulse my whole frame, if I were not prepared for it.

Treat me as you would the dying! Their friends know they are about to perish; they know it themselves; but they avoid, and every one near them avoids, saying any thing that may remind them of their situation. The same delicate attention is at least necessary for me... Eliza, I expect it from you.

## LETTER XXVIII.

DELPHINE TO MADAME DE LEBENSIE.

Paris, November 10.

MY sister-in-law begs of you, my dear Eliza, to come and see her to-morrow. I have made use of various pretexts to induce her to leave me, and she returns in two days to Montpellier. I have concealed from her my real design, because she would have opposed it; she would wish to have carried me with her: but it is not thus I would separate from Leonce; it is not a simple change in my manner of life I am about to adopt, I would embrace a sort of death. I have as yet but a confused idea of the state in which I would place myself; but be it what it may, it will be surrounded with all the accomplishments of sadness, and in it I shall have no associate.

My sister-in-law has such a dislike to Paris, that the moment she believed her presence

presence no longer necessary to me she became very impatient to leave it. The declaration of her intention to depart has produced an effect on Leonce which I ought to applaud myself for, but which fills my heart with pain. He is now convinced that I am determined to remain, since I allow her to return alone. Matilda has resumed her accustomed manners with Leonce; this he often tells me, and believes me entirely satisfied on that subject: thus, while every thing becomes calm around me, I alone carry despair in my heart.

Yesterday Madame d'Artenas came to remind me of my engagement to go to Madame de St. Albe's concert, which is to be given next week: for a fortnight I have entirely disregarded every thing connected with the opinions of the world. Real sorrow had banished all the artificial pains of the imagination, and I now estimate their just value. Madame d'Artenas repeated to me, what I knew with certainty from other quarters, that the authority of Madame de Mondoville,

Mondoville, the influence of my friends, and those of Leonce, and finally the natural effect of truth, have entirely removed from every mind those unjust impressions which had given me so much pain. I am therefore recovering the favour of the world at the moment I am about to quit it. It is restored to me when the severest misfortune renders me insensible of an advantage I have so much desired.

I have refused to go to this concert, notwithstanding the pressing solicitations of Madame d'Artenas: at last she told me she would appeal to Leonce for my decision. I hope he will not ask me to go! He knows not the feeling of despair to which I should be condemned in the midst of a fête.

LETTER



## LETTER XXIX.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

Paris, November 16.

MY friend, though misfortune bears heavy upon me, ah ! do not regret having left me ; nothing could have saved me. I know not whether I have deserved it, but the greatest criminal never experienced a severer fate. Ask me not to join you. It is necessary I should live alone, to avert from you a destiny which becomes every day more wretched.

You know that, two days before your departure, I refused the request of Madame d'Artenas to go to Madame de St. Albe's. The evening before that unlucky concert, however, Leonce confessed to me that he was extremely desirous I should attend it. He knew the fact, that the opinion of the world was then more in my favour ; and I believe

believe he wishes to enjoy the triumph he expected. Alas ! what victory would I wish to obtain over my enemies ! Madame de Lebensei, who dreads the world on her own account, strongly insisted upon my yielding to the solicitations of Leonce. I felt much difficulty in resisting them, and I feared to betray before Leonce the melancholy sentiments which rendered even the proposition of any kind of amusement odious to me. Finally, an idea inspired by love seized my mind. About to separate for ever from Leonce, I wished to efface entirely all impressions which might be unfavourable to me in that society whose suffrages he values, and in which he must live. I was desirous of shewing myself to him, recovering for once that distinction he regretted I should have lost, and of leaving in his mind as amiable and powerful a recollection as I could possibly impress. This weakness overcame me ; but if it was a blamable sentiment, none could ever be more severely punished.

I promised

I promised them to go to Madame de St. Albe's: but, on the very day of the assembly, at the hour I expected Madame d'Artenas to call for me, I received a note from her, in which she informed me that she had slipped her foot as she was stepping into her carriage, and in consequence of that accident could not be present. Her regret was expressed with affection: she begged I would not abandon my design of going to Madame de St. Albe's; and assured me I was anxiously expected there, and would be received with every testimony of kindness: such, indeed, was the disposition of the party the day before. I hesitated a few moments; but reflecting that Leonce was already gone, and that he relied on my being there, I could not prevail on myself to disappoint him, and unfortunately I determined to fulfil my original intention.

As it was late when I arrived at Madame de St. Albe's, all the company was assembled. At the moment I entered the room, I heard a kind of murmuring whisper

per' around me. I saw not Leonce, who was at that time in another apartment. The mistress of the house, who is one of the most uncivil women in the world, especially when she thinks she can obtain consideration by assuming that character, paused a considerable time before she took any notice, or advanced towards me: at last she rose, and ordered me a chair, but with an expression of coldness which she particularly wished to be remarked. The ladies on each side of me spoke in a low voice to those next them; no gentleman approached me; and the silence of the whole assembly seemed to arise from that mysterious frigid feeling of disapprobation which neither conscience nor reason can brave in public. So disordered was my mind, that at first I conceived the most unjust suspicions of Madame d'Artenas: a thousand ideas struck me; I dared not put a question to any one, nor make a motion to rise, while all eyes were fastened upon me. Fixed, immoveable, in my place, I felt a cold sweat cover my forehead.



Madame de R. perceiving my situation, rose hastily, took me by the hand, and led me to the window. I thought myself saved, since a living being spoke to me—"Letters, said she, "have arrived this very afternoon from M. de Valorbe's regiment, which state, that the officers of his corps having learned that he had received a very serious insult from M. de Mondoville without avenging it, have declared that they will serve with him. He has already fought with two of them; the first he wounded, but was himself wounded by the second. It is believed, however, that notwithstanding the courage he has displayed, he will be obliged to leave his regiment, and perhaps even France. This affair has produced a strong impression against you: it has renewed every unfavourable opinion, as if you could in the least be accused for the disagreeable situation of M. de Valorbe. I heard the whole story on my arrival here; and I was going to send to desire you not to come, when unfortunately I saw you enter."

My

My first consideration was to enquire what information Leonce had obtained on the subject.—“ One of his relations,” said Madame de R. is just acquainting him with this unfortunate adventure in the adjoining room. I beg of you to return to your place; stop for an hour, if you can, and then go away without taking any notice of what happened.”—While we was speaking to me, M. Montalte, the cousin of M. de Valorbe, who sometimes used to visit me with him, passed, looked at me with an air of serious affectation, and did not salute me. He passed again in about ten minutes after, and hearing Madame de R. name M. de Valorbe, he advanced towards us, and addressing himself to Madame de R. he said, in a voice sufficiently loud for several persons to hear him—“ Madame d'Albemar has thought proper to dishonour my cousin, to please M. de Mondoville; but if she has disposed of a fool, whose brain she has turned, she will find it more difficult to impose silence on his relatives.”

On hearing myself thus addressed, I felt an emotion of haughtiness, an inspiration of dignified pride, which restored all my energy ; and I was about to state what, for a moment at least, would have effected the triumph of truth, when I saw Leonce re-enter the apartment in which I was. I instantly perceived the consequences of an explanation which would have informed him that M. de Montalte had offended me, and I suddenly became silent.

I looked round for the seat which I had occupied on my arrival ; it was taken. I made the circuit of the apartment in a sort of agitation which made me fear, every moment, that I should faint away. None of the ladies offered me a chair by her ; none of the gentlemen rose to give me his. I began to see every thing double, so much did my agitation increase with every fruitless step which I took. I found myself gazed at on every side, while I dared not to fix my eyes on any person. In proportion as I advanced, the company re-  
ceded

ceded before me. The ladies and gentlemen retired to make way for me to pass, and I found myself alone in the middle of the circle, not like a queen surrounded with respect, but like a person proscribed, whose approach would be fatal. In the midst of my despair, I perceived the door of the drawing-room open, and that there was nobody near it. This egress which presented itself to me, appeared an unexpected relief, and in a state of distraction, bordering upon phrenzy, I left the apartment, descended the stair-case, crossed the court, and found myself in the middle of *la place Louis XV*, where Madame de St. Albe resided. Alone, on foot, exposed to the wind and rain, and in a fashionable full-dress, without having given a moment's reflexion to the impulse which hurried me along, I fled before malevolence and rancour, as before a file of bayonets which still repelled me to a greater distance.

Scarcely had I been two minutes in the square, looking around me to meditate on



what I had done, and what was to become of me, when Leonce overtook me. The emotion which he displayed was gloomy and terrible. He seized me by the arm, pressed it to his heart, and walked on with me, without either of us, I am confident, having once thought of the motive which guided our steps. We had already reached the bridge of Louis XVI, when the effect of the cold air compelled me to stop, and I leaned against the parapet, unable to proceed a single step further. Leonce, fastening his arm round me, said :—" Dear and noble unfortunate, with what barbarity have they treated you ! Will you take refuge with me, from these cruel persecutors, in the bosom of death ? Say but one word, and I will plunge headlong into these waves, which are more compassionate than the beings we have quitted. Why struggle any longer with life ? Is it not certain that we shall henceforward experience nothing but misery ? The Heaven which now sees us, has marked us for its victims—let us  
fly

fly from mankind and from it!—He instantly lifted me in his arms : I thought his resolution was taken ; I reclined my head upon his bosom ; and I protest to you, Louisa, that I experienced nothing but the most pleasing sensation. All at once, however, he set me down again, and retiring a few paces, he said, as it were muttering to himself—No ! it is not innocence that should perish ; it is for her vile accusers that death is reserved. Delphine, you shall be avenged—you shall—”

As he uttered these words, my servants, who were looking for me in all directions, discovered me, and conducted me to my carriage—In the name of Heaven, said I to Leonce, think not of revenge : would you complete my ruin?—“ No,” said he, “ fear nothing ; it shall not be this evening, nor to-morrow, I swear to you. I shall one day perhaps—some time hence—take advantage of some remote pretext—wholly unconnected with you ; but if they perish, they shall still know, that it is for  
having

having insulted you.”—I conjure you, added I, to be calm.—“Can you think, that in such a crisis I would expose you to still further danger? The occasion which I wish for, and which I must find, will not, perhaps, occur for a long time. Step into your carriage, I entreat you . . . . .” He wished to follow me, but I would not permit him.

I have not since seen him, and I intend for some days longer to refuse his visits. I require to examine my own heart in solitude; I am anxious to ascertain, whether I really am conscious of self-humiliation. Dreadful doubt! Could I have conceived it possible! The injustice of opinion, I must confess, is capable of inflicting a cruel wound; I must abandon the world for ever. M. de Valorbe, the unhappy Valorbe, pursues me? He will, I hope, continue ignorant of what has become of me. What could I do for him, even if I were not enamoured of Leonce? Am I the same that I was? Can I administer consolation

solation to any one? The enemies of my peace have at last given a mortal wound to my soul. Ah! why did not Leonce obey the first impulse of his feelings? But did I need his assistance, in order to precipitate myself into a watery grave? Was he not himself convinced, that it was my only asylum? Louisa, is it not still time to execute that resolution?

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## LETTER XXX.

MADAME DE R\*\* TO MADAME D'ALBEMAR.

Paris, Nov. 17.

PERMIT one who owes you the most profound gratitude, the complexion of whose life you have changed, and who dates from the day on which you administered her relief, the little good that she has been able to do in the world—permit her, madam, to endeavour to offer you consolation, whatever superiority you may possess in comparison with her. What I have



have to address to you will certainly put me to some uneasiness; but if the effort which I make is painful to my feelings, I shall find pleasure in reflecting, that it discharges a small portion of the debt which I owe you. Besides, can I feel it an humiliation to offer you comfort? Ah! this will be the most honourable action of the whole of my unhappy life.

You yesterday experienced a most cruel scene. It is about eighteen months since your generous kindness saved me from an outrage, similar in appearance, but not equal in anguish; for what I suffered was in some respects merited, and what is merited ought always to be endured.

As I reflected on what had befallen you at Madame de St. Albe's, I recollected that, upon one occasion, my aunt very unthinkingly hurt your feelings, by comparing your situation to mine: I therefore thought, that if, without dissembling my own situation, I could impress upon your mind the extreme difference between us, it would perhaps afford you some motives  
of

of consolation. You possess such nobleness of soul, that I was well assured that the impulse which induced me to write to you, would obliterate, in your sight, all that I must unfortunately recall to view in speaking of myself.

Envy has, for a moment, succeeded in doing you considerable injury. By means of artifice your most generous actions have been perfidiously misinterpreted; and all those beings, who are incapable of devoting themselves, for a single day, to the interests of their friends, have felt a pleasure in misrepresenting those qualities which they themselves do not possess, hoping, by this means, to bring them into general disrepute. But in all the accusations which have been brought against you, what has there appeared of truth, except your virtues, your delicacy, the purity of your soul and your sentiments? Rest assured, therefore, that, in a very short time, your reputation will be justified. We frequently read of the success of calumny; but as to me,

me, who have so much dreaded those reproaches, to which I may have exposed myself, I must own that I am very little apprehensive of the ultimate prevalence of falsehood. Did not your benevolence blunt the weapons of your understanding, while malignity sharpens those of others, nothing could be more easy for you, than to proclaim your innocence. You seem born to inspire conviction; you possess all the means of persuasion, and you would employ none of those means, until, in a few years, perhaps even a few months, facts should explain themselves by that multiplicity of natural coincidences which bring the truth to light, notwithstanding all the obstacles which can be employed to prevent its disclosure.

Labour, incessant labour is necessary to the establishment of falsehood, whilst inactivity and the process of time never fail to discover the truth. Time is your sweet support; while so far is it from being favourable to me, that it daily confirms

confirms that censure which had been somewhat disarmed by the interest inspired by my early youth. I am now advancing upon thirty ; that time of life when consideration begins to become necessary ; yet I find it receding from my approach. I frequently attempt to make myself appear amiable, though with the most sorrowful heart, because I feel that I am justly exposed to censure, as the greater part of the females who still see me, justify their attentions to me by the charms of my conversation. In society I am not permitted to discover any signs of melancholy or uneasiness.

Nor is it the female sex that I most dread. They have no real animosity against me who give them no offence. Even prudes themselves do not make a full display of their severity but against those females who are decidedly superior—but men ! Did you but know what mischief they do me, without reflexion, and even without any ill-natured design ! What levity they show in their conversations with me ! How difficult it is to convince them that I have altered my sys-  
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tem of life, and that I now aspire only to those regards at which I formerly would have smiled!

You are the object of calumny when absent, but your presence never fails to subdue it into silence.—As to me, nobody takes the trouble to slander my reputation in my absence; but at the time in which I am addressed, every aspect of society, proves to me, not an intention of wounding my feelings—that I should prefer—but that involuntary sentiment which discloses itself, even without the consciousness of those who experience it. Should any man or woman venture to direct an offensive expression towards you, you could whenever you chose overwhelm them with your contempt. I have no right to exercise contempt. I am obliged to conciliate every one. I would not even act with severity towards the object of my complaint. I cannot run the hazard of quarrelling with any body. Thus, in an elevated rank of life, and possessed of a considerable fortune, I am compelled to exercise the most general complaisance. I am terrified at exciting the slightest degree of malignity, and at reminding

minding others that my existence in the world is precarious, and that it depends only upon a single enemy to deprive me of it anon.

Why, it may be asked, do you not live in retirement? Ah! Madam, can you suppose that after ten years of such a life as mine, I could support the gloom of solitude? Happily the benevolence of my heart still survives, but my natural sensibility exists no longer. I have no inward principle which can renovate my thoughts, and abandoned to my own efforts, I am pursued by melancholy recollections, against which I have neither arms nor resource. Among those whom I thought worthy of my attachment, there are some whom I regret, but without relying upon the possession of their esteem, not being able to take much interest in my own happiness. I feel that my heart is better than my conduct; but the latter has not left me sufficient strength of character to operate on myself a total change. I cease to commit any errors, but I shall never recover the happiness of which they have deprived me.

Separated for a long period from my  
M 2 husband,

husband, I have no children. I am deprived of the only blessing which confers an existence upon women after the age of thirty. I dread a state of langor; I dread reflexion, and I fly from one amusement to another, in order to lighten the load of life. But you, noble Delphine, you are still in possession of all the energies of your soul. Your affections are either completely virtuous, or more or less delicate. A comprehensive understanding presents you an ever reviving interest in your own reflexions. You have persons who envy and calumniate you; but there is not one of them who seriously believes what he utters; not one who would not be confounded, did you but deign to reply to him; not one who would not wish to have you for his wife or his friend, though he may attack your reputation in the name of those sacred ties; not one, in short, who, if he were miserable or forlorn, would not envy the lot of those who love you, and who would not, perhaps, address his supplications to you whom he had offended—to you a thousand times, sooner than to his most intimate friends.

Take

Take courage, therefore, Madam, take courage ! Are not the consciousness of the past, and the certainty of the future, sufficient to bear you through this storm ? Gratify not envy and malignity with the spectacle which affords them the greatest of pleasure—that of an elevated mind sinking under their attack. Rather exasperate still more their jealous fury, by shewing them that you are secure, and that you can be happy. Oh God ! If there were any thing on earth which could at once transfuse into me your recollections and your hopes, if I could enjoy them for a year, I would for that year give up all the rest of the time I have to live. Ah ! Madame, ah ! Delphine, believe me, those who have committed no errors, have never known pain !

I could not peruse what I have written, without experiencing an embarrasment too difficult to be supported. Incapable of farther reflection, I rely on the sentiment which has dictated it, and transmit to you without allowing myself a moment for hesitation.



## LETTER XXXI.

DELPHINE TO MAD. DE R.

SHE who is capable of writing the letter I have received, is not criminal. Sentiments the most pure and virtuous, cannot fail at last to triumph over every weakness. This generous conduct has afforded me much consolation. I experience the pleasure of giving my esteem where bitter reflections and distrust had made me withhold it. This is all the happiness which my situation permits me to enjoy.

I have nothing more to do with the world, but I shall never forget that sentiment of delicacy which has induced you Madam, to wish to console me, at the expense of personal considerations by which other women would have been deterred.

LETTER

## LETTER XXXII.

LEONCE TO DELPHINE.

YOU have for four days persisted in refusing to see me. At Paris I was told that you were at Bellerive, and at Bellerive that you were at Paris. Your friend has been treated at your gate like a stranger. But Delphine, you never were more unjust, for my passion for you never possessed more influence over me! It seems to have changed even my character. Deign to hear me; you will judge better than I can of this heart, which confiding intirely in you, awaits your approbation before it can rise in its own esteem.

On the day when that frightful scene occurred, when I found you almost distracted, my grief for what had happened, my anger at being obliged to seek a pre-

text for vengeance, threw me I own into a delirium of despair. I know not what words escaped me at that moment; but of this I can assure you, that when I recovered my reason, I experienced a sensation totally new to me: I began to entertain a profound contempt for the opinion of the world. I asked myself how I could attach, so much importance to false and malicious slanders, basely directed against the most perfect of created beings. I then reflected with sorrow on you my Delphine, on your destiny, which had it not been for my faults, and my unfortunate passion, would have been most happy and brilliant.

While I resigned myself to these melancholy reflections, which seem, my friend, to have entirely softened my character, since they have taught me to despise opinions which were formerly a constant source of irritation—I opened an English book which was given me by you: the first passage which attracted my attention

was,

was, by a happy accident, the portrait of a lady, which seems to have been drawn for you, and which I take a pleasure in transcribing :—

Made to engage all hearts, and charm all eyes,  
Though meek, magnanimous, though witty, wise ;  
Polite, as all her life in courts had been ;  
Yet good, as she the world had never seen ;  
The noble fire of an exalted mind,  
With gentle female tenderness combin'd :  
Her speech was the melodious voice of love ;  
Her song, the warbling of the vernal grove ;  
Her eloquence was sweeter than her song,  
Soft as her heart, and as her reason strong ;  
Her form each beauty of her mind express'd,  
Her mind was virtue by the Graces dress'd.

Such, Delphine, are you. No woman before you ever merited this portrait ; but the enthusiastic imagination of Littleton applied it to the object he adored. Still, how much could I add to this picture, though it seems to contain every thing that is amiable !

Shall I try to paint that pure, generous, upright character ; that soul, so easily



melted by the misfortunes of the humble, and so indignant at the insolent prosperity of the proud ! But how shall I express that indescribable charm you always diffuse around you ! that constant attention to please, that graceful ease, that unstudied politeness, in all the details of life, by which you always adopt the arrangements most agreeable to your friends : happiness dwells constantly with you, it seems to exist in the air you breath, and to be inspired by the sound of your voice : your excellent mind is displayed in your fine taste, in your talents, in all your amusements, and even in your dress ; every thing that belongs to you excites the most delightful sensations. There is so much pleasure in your presence, that I often fancy the inward satisfaction I feel could only be excited by some happy event that has happened to me ; but, on leaving you, I find it all arose from the delightful enjoyment your company affords ; I then perceive that your amiable conversation,

your

your sweet looks, your numberless graces, can charm my life even unknown to me; as Providence, by concealing its operations from us, sometimes allows us to suppose that we are the authors of our own happiness.

Angelic being! enchanting woman! shalt thou become the object of public malevolence, and I continue to attach any importance to such opinions! No—if I have given you pain by entertaining such sentiments; consider the scene at the concert as a fortunate circumstance. I am convinced it has greatly changed my character: I shall not, however, repeat to you, the reports which reach me through a thousand different channels: I need not tell you that all persons of distinction of both sexes express their indignation on hearing of the transaction, which took place at Mad. de St. Albe's; that she is generally accused of arrogance and folly; that all assert they were only prevented from speaking to you by the embarrassment

of the moment, and that if you had remained, every thing would have been changed. I hear these silly excuses without regarding them : I am convinced the respect of the world will soon return to you, but I shall not despise it the less.

Let us live, my Delphine, for each other—let us forget the rest of the universe ! but do not refuse to see me ; do not believe me unworthy ; I am now fortified against all the injustice of the opinions of the world ; against that evil which my mind had not before sufficient strength to endure. My friend, that day, which was, perhaps, the most unfortunate of our life, shall serve to renew our destiny. The wretches who wished to injure us, have produced a change in my character, which has emancipated it from the yoke it had too long borne, and have thus assured our happiness,

## LETTER XXIII.

DELPHINE TO MADAME DE LEBENZEI.

Paris, November 26.

I AM much better, my dear Eliza, than I was the last time you were here. Leonce has written me the kindest letter! I have read it over several times, and never did I discover more of love and sensibility in his correspondence. Sometimes, in his conversation, he still allows words to escape from him, which makes me fear he entertains projects of vengeance; but he disavows them, when he observes the terror they produce in me, and I hope that after my departure they will be entirely abandoned.

My departure! ah Eliza, you have heard me speak to Mad. d'Artenas and others who  
visit



visit me as if it had been my intention to pass the winter in Paris. I would not have them believe that I was grieved for what had passed at Mad. de St. Albe's, and I dreaded lest I should awaken the suspicions of Leonce; but alas! can I forget the promise I have given to Matilda?

Leonce will ascribe my departure to a pusilanimous sentiment. He will believe that I fly from a fear of my enemies and I must not undeceive him. He will remain ignorant of the real motive of the sacrifice I make. Matilda! what afflictions do I endure for you! After the terrible scene of the concert, I must confess, my mind was depressed and the firmness of my character seemed to abandon me. I felt a conviction that it was not for a woman to believe herself independent of the opinion of the world, and that she must at last always sink under the weight of malice and injustice: But, since I have seen Leonce again and have found him display more tenderness than ever towards me, my soul

has been disposed to resume once more the hope of happiness.

I cannot describe that langor which succeeds to the very strong impressions of pain I have experienced; but I never felt myself less capable of a courageous effort. The pleasure I derive from the company of Leonce is a thousand times more dear to me than it was before these sorrows occurred. My mind never was more weak, and I never was less able to perform the terrible task I have imposed on myself,

## LETTER XXXIV.

DELPHINE TO MADAME DE LEBENSEI.

Paris, Dec. 2.

MY mind had again sunk, my dear friend, into the most painful state of uncertainty. The affectionate tenderness which Leonce has constantly displayed, the inexpressible charm of his presence had captivated me more than ever; and though I durst not acknowledge my want of firmness even to myself, I could not summon up sufficient resolution for my departure.

The day before yesterday, I was informed that Matilda was sick, and Leonce himself appeared uneasy on account of her indisposition. I was greatly affected by this event, of which I believed myself the  
cause;

cause ; and I spent the whole night in mental agitation of the most painful nature. Wishing to deceive myself respecting my duty, I was animated by hope, when the arguments I held with myself appeared to set me free from its laws, but that hope no sooner arose in my mind than it was changed to despair by a sudden inspiration of conscience which overthrew the whole fabric of my most specious arguments.

Fatigued by this dreadful contest, I arose at eight in the morning, and stopped from my garden into the *Champs d'Elisées*, to try whether a walk in the open air would not calm my mind. I arrived at the house which was formerly occupied by Mad. de Vernon : You know that she was buried by her own desire in her garden, and that her daughter, displeased with this request which she considered irreligious, still keeps the house, but will not possess it. I reproached myself for having neglected to shed some tears over her deserted ashes, and I recollected that this day was the anni-



anniversary of her death. The key of my garden also opened that of Mad. de Vernon in consequence of an arrangement we had made during our intimacy. I tried, therefore to enter from the *Champs d'Elisées*, but had some difficulty in opening this door, which had remained shut for a whole year. At last I succeeded; I found myself in that garden, where Leonce first declared to me his love, in the most beautiful season of the year, when every tree was in its bloom, and each walk was enamelled with flowers; now every shrub was stripped of its verdure, and that house formerly so gay and brilliant, was silent and dismal, as a habitation, which the living had abandoned. A cold and sombre mist obscured the whole, and the recollections excited by each surrounding object, reached me through the gloom of nature, and the sorrows of my heart.

Ah! the past! the past! what links of sadness still attach us to it! Why do not our days pass away and leave no trace behind?

hind? Can the imagination be capable of supporting all the forms of misery which are denominated the different periods of life?

I searched some minutes among the decayed leaves which covered the soil for the paths of the garden, which I expected to lead me to the place where the remains of Mad. de Vernon were deposited: at last, I found the urn which is placed on her grave; and, on that urn, I found two verses of an Italian song, which she had often made me sing, because she was fond of the air:

E tu, chi sa se mai  
Ti sovverrai di me ‡.

This inscription seemed to accuse me of a long neglect, and I repented of having allowed a year to elapse without repairing to this monument. Ah! why, said I to myself, why was Sophia the cause

‡ And then, who can tell whether thou ever wilt remember me.

of

of all my misfortunes? This idea, which always troubled my mind in the midst of my regret for her, had with-held me from this spot. I feared to offend against her memory, by bringing with me all the feelings of my sufferings, and I chose rather to repress those recollections, which excited the alternate desire of visiting and avoiding her tomb.

"Adieu, Sophia," I said, in a flood of tears; "I am about to leave France for ever; I shall not return to it again even to behold its tombs! I break every tie that is dear to me to fulfil the promise that I made thee. The tears I shed at this moment attest that I still preserve the pleasing recollection of our friendship. Adieu." Then, after leaning a few moments over this urn, with affection and regret, I raised myself up, repeating with enthusiasm—"Yes! I will remember the oath I took before thee on thy death-bed; I will sacrifice myself to the happiness of thy daughter."—As I turned about, I beheld Ma-

tilda

Matilda, who had heard the words I uttered. She was pale, her countenance was altered, and her eyes overflowed with tears, which she endeavoured to restrain.—“ Ah! is what I hear true?” exclaimed she, throwing herself on her knees before her mother’s urn! Then looking at me—“ they would have deceived me,” she said, “ when they assured me that you were resolved to pass the winter here! Oh, God! what have I suffered since I believed that report!”—“ They have deceived you, Matilda,” I said, clasping both her hands in mine, as she raised them towards heaven: “ what you have asked is granted to you; it is only to me that all happiness in this life is denied. Adieu!”

I left Matilda at these words, allowing her no time to reply, and returned home, without once reflecting that I had now bound myself more solemnly than ever. When the profound emotion I had experienced was somewhat calmed, I shuddered to think that I had now irrevocably sealed my



my fate. Since that moment I have had no relief from sorrow. I have seen Leonce; and, doubtless, I should have betrayed myself, had he not attributed the state of affliction in which he observed me to what I told him respecting my visit to the tomb; but I did not mention that I found Matilda there. Were I once left alone with him, he would discover all; I must, therefore, fly; delay is no longer possible.

This morning I sent a messenger to Mondeville, to request Mr. Barton to come here. I would not that Leonce should be alone at the moment he hears of my departure, that he should be left without a confidant of our love, without the friend of his infancy: Left alone, alas! and I desert him! fly from him whose company has for a year afforded me so many delightful enjoyments, and who loves me with so sincere a tenderness! At this moment he believes I have no thought of separating from him. He awakes every morning

morning with that confidence which is so dear to him, and arranges his time that he may see me ; yet soon he will be told that I have abandoned him, that I am gone for ever ; and no one will be able to inform him of the place in which I have concealed the miserable remainder of my existence. I shall no longer exist for Leonce but as the dead whom we regret : he will call me, and I shall hear him not ; I, in whom his voice always produced the most profound emotions ; I, who always replied to him in accents of tender affection. Nothing belonging to me will he ever see around him, to tell that still I love him !

My dear Louisa, to you I make my last requests. After my departure, come and see him ; speak to him in the soothing language which love has doubtless taught you ! tell him all you know of my sorrows, every thing except the motive which has really determined my conduct. He will believe that I have fled from the  
malice

malice of which I have been the victim; and that the interest I take in his happiness could not give me the power to support it. Alas! he will then do me much injustice; but he will not accuse his wife, the mother of his infant. Tell him I shall judge of his respect for my memory by his conduct towards Matilda. You will write, Eliza, to my sister, and, through her, I shall learn all I desire to know; for even you, my friend, must not be told whither I go. Leonce will demand information; how could you conceal it from him? He would follow me, and I should have a third time endeavoured to escape, to be drawn back by the influence of the same charm: No! Duty has spoken with a loud voice, and must be obeyed.

In the asylum in which I mean to conceal myself, I do not hope to find an oblivion of my sufferings, nor yet to acquire more resignation in bearing them. I seek a solitary spot, where love may be indulged, without that sentiment of the heart  
injuring

injuring any one, and where there exists no other being tormented by the affliction I experience. But, alas! has not Leonce much to suffer? Can he be happy, while constantly distracted by his sense of duty, the opinion of the world, and his love? Shall I not be presented to his memory more pure, more interesting, than while in this world, in which he is always obliged to defend me, and always condemned to suffer for me? Ought not love, even that passion alone—ought it not to inspire me with the desire of renewing my image in his memory, during the pains of absence and affliction? What have I not still to fear from calumny? In vain does it appear appeased; in vain does Leonce assure himself that he has become insensible to its shafts! Ought I to rely on the continuance of this sentiment in his mind? Ah! who can foresee from what new sorrows the performance of a duty may still preserve us!



When I shall have left this place for ever, I should wish if it be possible that my friends completely should remove every unjust impression that has been made against me. Though I should learn that they have succeeded I would not return; but I should reflect with pleasure that Leonce no longer hears his friend's name mentioned, but with approbation. I beg of M. de Lebensei to preserve a strict intimacy with M. de Mondoville; notwithstanding the difference of their opinions, he is worthy of his friendship on account of the superiority of his mind and the rectitude of his character. I beseech him to use every means to prevent Leonce from taking any part in the war which the offended nobles are at present endeavouring to excite against France. I always fear that when far from me, the persons of his class will prevail on him to join them, if such a war should take place, in an enterprize which they would represent as a duty of honor. If he should be able to interest himself again in the studies,

to which he used to be attached, he will be benefitted by that employment of his time, and his bitter regret, I hope will at last change into a milder sorrow, into that pleasing sadness which is habitual to all feeling minds.

Oh! how ardently I wish, Eliza, that you and your husband, you two, who have so tenderly loved me, should be the friends of Leonce. Am I wrong in desiring still to preserve this connection with him! No more then, Great God! shall I ever desire while I live! except to see him once more, when the approach of death shall be certain, if I then have time to call for him! Eliza adieu? When shall we meet again? If I may place confidence in those forebodings, which my misfortunes have always justified, this must be a long farewell. Ah! what an effort! but why should I murmur?

## LETTER XXXV.

DELPHINE TO MATILDA.

Paris, Dec. 4.

TO-MORROW night, Matilda, I leave Paris, and in a few days after, France. Leonce shall not know the place to which I retire, and whatever may happen, he shall also be uninformed, that it is to your happiness I immolate my own. Allow me to observe to you, Matilda, that your religion requires no sacrifice which can surpass that I make for you; and that God who reads all hearts; God who knows the pain I experience, will in his bounty esteem this effort according to its value. Yes I must repeat it to you, though I would rather die than have to reproach myself with your sorrows. I have more than expiated  
my

my faults, and I believe myself superior to those who never knew the sentiments over which I triumph.

You are the wife of Leonce, you have rights to his heart which I respect : but I loved him : you know not perhaps that before you married him . . . . .

Let the dead rest in peace ! you have adjured me to depart in the name of every moral duty, in the name even of compassion. Could I resist that request even though it should cost me my life ! Matilda, you are about to be a mother : new bonds will attach you to Leonce : woman blessed by heaven ! listen to me. If he from whom I separate myself regret my absence, would not his heart with reproaches. You believe that duty is sufficient for controlling the affections ; your mind is thus formed ; but there exist more impassioned souls, capable of generosity, of kindness, of devotion, of bounty ; souls which would be virtuous in every thing if fate had not rendered it a crime for them to love ! De-



plore their unfortunate desiny, respect those characters of profound sensibility: they resemble not yours, but perhaps they are objects of the benevolence of the Supreme Being, the eternal source of all the affections of the heart.

Matilda, study with delicacy to promote the happiness of Leonce; you have removed from him his faithful friend: endeavour then to bestow on him no less love than that of which you have deprived him. Do not try to diminish the esteem and interest he may preserve for me, by doing so you would insult me most cruelly. I must already be reckoned among those who are no more. Does not then the last act of my life merit your regard for my memory?

Adieu, Matilda, you will hear no more of me; the companion of your infancy, the friend of your mother, she who married you, she who could not endure to see you suffer pain, exists no longer for you or any other being. Pray for her, not as if

she

she were criminal, for she never was less so, and never could your severity towards her be more unjust; but pray for an unhappy woman, the most unhappy of her sex, who consents to break her own heart, in order to save for you a small part of that for which she devotes herself to sorrow.

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## LETTER XXXVI.

MAD<sup>LLE</sup> DE ALBEMAR TO DELPHINE.

Lyons, Dec. 1, 1791.\*

I HAVE received no letter from you my dear Delphine, since my departure. I hasten to Montpellier, where I expect to find some—I saw the unhappy Valorbe as I passed through Moulins. He is still

\* This letter arrived on the morning of the 1st of December.

confined to his bed by his wounds, but when he recovers, his situation will be still more deplorable. He will not be able to remain in his regiment; the animadversions on his conduct have been carried to such a height, as to render his life insupportable. He will be obliged to abandon the service. To me his mind appeared gloomy and discontented. In speaking of you, he displayed an alarming combination of love and resentment. He repeated what he had done for you, seemed to consider his rights to your gratitude unbounded, and gave me to understand, that if you disregarded his claims, he would avenge himself on Leonce or you. In a word, he seemed to me to be seized with a blind fury of the most shocking nature. It might be said, that having suffered greatly, he is desirous of making others share in his misfortunes. He was not in the slightest degree affected by the fear of afflicting you, which formerly possessed such influence over him. I am  
afraid

afraid you may have much to apprehend from his persecution.

Withdraw from Leonce for a time, and come to me ; that is the only means of appeasing M. de Valorbe, and thus avoiding the greatest of evils. Ah ! my dear Delphine, what have I not suffered in Paris, in that city which I detest ! On approaching my retreat I feel my soul become more tranquil ; I shall not be happy, however, if I do not see you. During the few months we have just passed together, you have still added to the affection I entertain for you ! In the midst of so many pains, of so much injustice, no bitter sentiment, no emotion of hatred, has escaped you ; you supported the most revolting injuries, as necessities to which you submit, as common accidents of life, and not as subjects of anger or resentment.

My friend, I am certain that with so amiable a mind, it is easy for you to find calm, and perhaps happiness, in solitude. I hope to see you adopt such a resolution ;



I shall still expect you to join me, and I am with a heart entirely yours, &c.

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## LETTER XXXVII.

DELPHINE TO MAD<sup>LLE</sup> D'ALBEMAR.

Melun, Dec. 6.

The sacrifice is made; life is finished; pardon me for so long delaying to write to you; pardon me for not joining you, for rendering myself dead to you as well as him. Does not the information you have given me respecting M. de Valorbe, deprive me of every hope of repose I still might have preserved! What retreat shall I find sufficiently impenetrable to conceal me from him who pursues me, and him whom I love?

I have

I have abandoned him ! I have abandoned him ! I never shall see him more ! Can you suppose I have any reason, any vigour of mind left ! Alas ! this parting has completely exhausted me. At present I wander, with poor Isore, alone on the surface of that world on which I am cast ! Weep for me my sister ; you alone shall be henceforth informed of my name, my abode, and my existence ! What but you and Theresa's infant could induce me to live ?

M. Barton arrived the day before yesterday, in consequence of my letter. I entrusted him with all my thoughts, except the real motive of my departure. I experienced one more pleasing moment, when this respectable man, with tears in his eyes, took me by the hand and said, Madam, at my age, I can scarce be expected to abandon myself to that expression of tenderness your resolution is calculated to produce ; permit me however to say to you, that my heart was never before filled

with so much interest and admiration, for any woman?—Ah! Louisa, why has not the approbation of virtue been attended with more benefit to me?

It was agreed upon between M. Barton and me, that after my departure he should exert all his influence with Leonce to induce him to live with Matilda, with her, who in a few months must make him a father. I could not think of writing to Leonce; I do not know whether I should have had strength enough to support myself in the task: besides I could not disclose to him what had passed between Matilda and me, and how was it possible to reserve any thought when bidding for ever adieu to him I love! I however begged of M. Barton not to refuse Leonce the consolation of knowing how much pain it had cost me to depart. I recommended to him also, not to leave us alone at any time; for in the state in which I was, I could have concealed nothing from him. I determined to commence my journey on the  
day

day after this conversation; the same day which Leonce had fixed on for going to the country with Mad. de Mondoville. Thus I studied to avoid him I love, with the same sort of precaution that men would their persecutors.

Leonce came in the evening: he often appeared absorbed in thought, and did not seem to wish that M. Barton should leave us. After an hour of most painful conversation, frequently interrupted by long intervals of silence, Leonce arose to depart. At this moment a frightful trembling seized me, and I fell back on my chair as in a faint: he, however, being doubtless occupied with his own design, of which I was at this time ignorant, seemed entirely concentrated in his own feelings, and did not observe the emotions I had experienced. He pressed my hand to his lips with ardor, and went hastily away, calling back to me from the door of the room—"Delphine, never forget me!"—I believed he had discovered my design. I wished to follow him but I wanted strength. When he was  
gone



gone, the terrible idea that I had seen him for the last time in my life, entered my mind, and I could not endure it. In consequence of Leonce's leaving me, sooner than I expected, my feelings had been unexpectedly precipitated. My soul had not passed through those successive stages of grief which prepare it for the last. I had received a sudden wound in the heart, the pain of which was insupportable. I wished without changing my resolution, to see Leonce once more. In this last interview I had collected nothing for consolation in absence, I had not sufficiently contemplated his features, my voice had not pronounced a last accent which was worthy of dwelling in his heart.

I spent the whole night in contriving and rejecting a thousand different projects for seeing him once more, and diminishing the pain I experienced from his sudden departure. Lying immovable in my bed, I durst not venture during this cruel agitation, either to rise or change my position,

tion, as if the least motion had been calculated to give me new pain. At last day came, and I had sufficient strength to tell Anthony, recommending secrecy to him at the same time, that I should leave Paris at eleven in the evening. I appointed that hour because M. Barton was to come to me in the evening. At noon I received your letter, in which you informed me of the cruel disposition of M. de Valorbe. The terror which that intelligence excited, inspired me with new resolution for some moments. That persecution, that fury of which Leonce might become the object, made me sensible of the necessity of disappearing from a world in which I constantly attracted perils around the object of my affection. I felt also, that if I delayed my departure; or even if I repaired to you, that M. d'Valorbe would soon follow me there; and that Leonce, indignant to learn that he was near me, would hasten to punish him. I therefore hesitated no longer, and during some hours I gave orders

orders for my departure, with sufficient calm. At this moment Isore, who had discovered the preparations that were making, came to me singing, and threw herself into my arms, rejoicing that she was to go on a journey. Her gaiety occasioned an emotion which I could not repress, and after sending her away from me, I spent several hours in tears.

Alas! I shed tears then, while I still was near him, while it still was possible he might enter my chamber, and clasp me in his arms.

In this manner the time passed away until a little after six, when M. Barton arrived. He was extremely agitated, and I eagerly asked him what had thrown him into that state; whether he knew any thing of Leonce; if he feared he had discovered my design? "I know not," said he, "but I am not, therefore, the less uneasy." Leonce, without informing any person, returned an hour ago from the country, where he left Mad. de Mondoville. This evening

evening there is to be a grand masked ball, to which he means to go. I insisted upon knowing the reason of this haste, which is so little natural to him, and at first he made me no reply; but some words which he said to one of his servants as he went out, awakened my suspicions, and I obliged him to confess that at this fete, where the ladies are to be disguised, but the gentlemen unmasked he believed it easy to find an opportunity to quarrel, and that certain of finding there M. de Montalte, the cousin of M. de Valorbe, he had fixed on this day to avenge, without compromising your character, the insulting remarks which, ever since the concert of Mad. de St. Albe, "he has," said Leonce to me, "been repeating to your prejudice." "He set out for the ball," said I, "with this alarming design? What can we do?" How was I unable to foresee his resolution. Did not his sadness yesterday, on quitting me: did not the last words which he uttered,



tered, pronounce his fatal project? And the indescribable grief which I felt at his departure, was not that a pre-sentiment that I should see him no more. "He is gone," repeated I to M. Barton, "why have you not followed him?" "He would not have permitted me," replied M. Barton, "he told me that he was going to call on one of his friends, to accompany him to the ball." "Well, well," interrupted I, coming to an instantaneous determination, "there is still time to go to this masked ball: I shall not be recognized there: I shall, however, see Leonce; I shall speak to him, and prevent him from giving any provocation to M. de Montalte; yes, I will make this last effort. It is my duty to make it, and to make it is not beyond my power—and without waiting for the advice of M. Barton, I rung the bell, and told one of my servants to bring me a black domino, in which I meant to conceal myself. M. Barton, having vainly endeavoured to divert me from my design, proposed to accompany me, but I soon convinced

convinced him that Leonce, astonished at seeing him at the ball, would instantly suspect the truth, and would withdraw from the observation of both of us.

The moment that Isore saw this ball dress, which was quite novel to her, she was quite alarmed, and it was vain for the servants to set her mind at ease, by telling her, that it was a dress for appearing at an assembly. The infant, as if she had been apprised that this robe of outward gaiety, concealed despair, which corroded the heart, incessantly she repeated, at the same time, shedding tears, "is it my second mother going to do what the first has already done! shall I, then, see her no more?" "Alas! poor child," said I to myself, "this night will, perhaps, actually be the last of my life. Every moment of delay appeared to me to augment the danger of Leonce. I set out, and M. Barton went into the carriage with me, determined to continue there till my return: at length I arrived at the door  
of

of the assembly-room; I alighted, entered the room, and then that torture commenced which was to go on, encreasing the cruel contrast betwixt all the external symbols of joy which I beheld, and the dreadful misery which my heart endured.

I passed through the crowd of those, who, perhaps, at all times found themselves happy; but who were particularly elated in these gayer moments of existence, while I knew not whether I might not be even then hastening to destruction. I was a long time walking up and down the room, without discovering any appearance of Leonce, or M. de Montalte. Wandering about thus, without the possibility of being discovered, and in a state of the most dreadful anxiety that could be experienced, I was filled with the most extraordinary sensations.

I was afraid of my solitude, even in the midst of a multitude, of my existence incredible to the eyes of other men: none of my actions excited the smallest attention.

tion. It seemed as if my ghost walked among living beings, and I could form no better conception of the pleasures which agitated them, than if from the mansions of the dead, I had contemplated the interests of the world. I sought amongst the figures which I saw surrounding me, as in a distressing reverie, for a single man, for a single being, who still existed for me, and restored me to real impressions, in all their force, and in all their bitterness. I passed in silence through the midst of scenes, where nothing was to be seen, but dancing, nothing to be heard, but the sounds of joy, and in my bosom I experienced all the grief, with which nature can oppress human beings without uttering a cry of distress, without obtaining a single look of compassion. O moral sufferings! how are ye concealed in the bottom of that heart, which is doomed to experience you; in secret, ye devour it; often ye devour it in the midst of the most brilliant assemblies, and while




an accident or physical pain, excites the sympathy of even the most unfeeling souls; an iron hand locks up your breast, deprives you of the power of breathing, oppresses your bosom, without permitting you to excite by any external sign, the commiseration of others.

After having walked a considerable time, from one end of the room to the other, in the greatest uneasiness and agitation, Leonce at length appeared, in one of the boxes, looking over the room with a remarkable degree of impatience, as if in search of some one, whom he was anxious to discover. I advanced several paces for the purpose of going up to him, and as it was necessary for him to pass me in entering the room, I continued for some time leaning on the balustrade of the stair-case, to look at him. The pleasure I took in fixing my eyes on him, threw me in spite of every thing that surrounded me, into a profound reverie. And while I could thus behold him, my anxiety about him,

him, seemed to be suspended. As soon as he descended, I hastened to follow him, determined to watch his steps, and to make myself known to him, in case I discovered M. de Montalte. Leonce turned round, two or three times, astonished at my continuing to follow him, and his eyes were fixed on the mask, which importuned him with an expression of the most disdainful indifference. This look though it was not directed to me, penetrated my heart, and I put my hand on my eyes for a moment, to collect that strength which had for a moment deserted me.

I raised up my head; a croud of people had already separated Leonce from me, and I saw him at a considerable distance from me, elbowing M. de Montalte, who had turned round to demand an explanation of this conduct. I wished to advance; the croud prevented me from moving a single step. I took hold of the arm of a person, of whom I had very little knowledge, and entreated of him to  
give

give me his assistance in getting through the croud. This disgusting man, detained me, to examine minutely every part of my person, and addressed to me, all the insipid conversation, which he could think of respecting the fete; while at a distance of only ten paces from me, the life of Leonce was in danger.—Assist me, repeated I, to the person who accompanied me, for pity's sake, give me assistance!—and I dragged him with all my force, that he might force a passage through the croud, which alone I could not pass. I saw Leonce, who after speaking to M. de Montalte in a very spirited tone, proceeded with him to the door, which opened to the street. He went out, and I followed, but I was always at a distance of twenty paces, and this distance I never could overtake, as if by some power of enchantment, my progress had been retarded. At length turning round alone, by one of the windings of the gallery, I thought that I should reach the main door



do before Leonce. But when I arrived there, I found that he had gone out by another passage. I ran several steps; I stretched out my arms to him, I called him by his name. But whether it was, that my voice was too feeble to reach him, or whether he was solely occupied with the feelings which then animated him; he proceeded, and I lost sight of him in the middle of the street. There I found myself surrounded with horses and coachmen, who called out to me to go aside, with carriages which were driving against me, while I made no effort to get out of their way. One of my domestics at length discovered me, carried me away with almost no consciousness on my part, and placed me in my carriage. When I was seated in it for a few moments, the voice of M. Barton recalling my recollection, I still had strength sufficient to tell him to follow Leonce, and to shew him the side



of the street, on which he had passed with M. de Montalte. Hardly had I pronounced these words, when I fainted.

On opening my eyes, I found myself surrounded by my female servants who were in a state of the greatest alarm. I was formerly convinced that I had had a most horrible dream, and with this idea I endeavoured to dispel their apprehensions. In the meantime my recollection gradually returned. When the most powerful of all struck my mind, I relapsed into the swoon from which I had just recovered. At length fatal relief recovered me, and I passed three hours in such an agonizing state of mind as could hardly be compensated by years of felicity. I perpetually sent to the house of M. Barton and Leonce, to ascertain whether they had returned. I listened to every noise. I met each messenger, who constantly brought me back the sad answer, *No, Madam, they have not returned;*

as if they had been mere words of course ; as if I could hear them pronounced without the bitterest affliction. I had exhausted every means of discovering what had become of Leonce. I had sunk into the inactivity of despair, and stretched on a sofa, I sought to discover, I endeavoured to fix in my mind on the means of putting an end to my existence the moment I heard that Leonce was no more. When I heard the voice of M. Barton, I fell on my knees, and threw myself at his feet. "He is safe," said he to me ; " he is not wounded. His opponent is wounded, but not severely. All is well, all is over." Louisa, for an hour after I received this assurance, I was drowned in tears. My soul could not contain the emotions I experienced. I at last learned, that Leonce had fought with M. de Montalte, and had wounded him, but that he had displayed in this duel such a mixture of generosity

and courage, so total a disregard for his own safety, and such attention to the situation of M. de Montalte, that he had completely subdued his adversary, and that he had obtained every explanation which he desired, as far as I was concerned, with the promise of attributing their duel to a quarrel at the masked-ball, and seeking every opportunity which could, without particular observation be embraced, of justifying me in public with respect to every thing that concerned M. de Valorbe. M. Barton arrived in time to witness the duel, after ineffectually endeavouring for several hours to find Leonce, who waited till morning for M. de Montalte at the hour of one, of their mutual friends. M. Barton was animated with the most glowing enthusiasm, while he talked to me of Leonce. Indeed, during the whole of that night, his words and his actions were marked with a character of the utmost sublimity,

sublimity, and yet at such a moment was it necessary that I should separate from him. I felt more than ever the necessity of such a separation ; and I was filled with a degree of horror which I had never formerly felt. Of all the sufferings which on earth it is possible to endure, the most terrible of all is fear for the safety of the being who is the object of the tenderest attachment. I had not yet fully escaped from that fear. Every moment it was ready again to assail me. M. de Valorbe still continued to threaten the life of Leonce. This idea was united with a sentiment of duty which it was no longer in my power to control, and I set out without seeing any thing without hearing any thing in a state of distraction, from which I did not recover till the fatigue of Isore obliged me to stop at this place. You can form no idea of my sufferings, of the effort necessary to enable me to write to  
you.



you. Even when it shall no longer be necessary to conceal the place of my retreat from Leonce, and M. de Valorbe, it will be impossible for me to visit you. In the present state of my feelings, I must sustain the contest alone. The cool reflection of solitude, will give me new strength. I feel for you the strongest feelings of attachment, but I am unfit to bear your presence. Sensibility and affliction would be too powerful for me. They would destroy my feelings, and the least new emotion would destroy me. I am going to Switzerland. Leonce told me that in the course of his travels, that was the country to which he gave the preference; if but once he comes to shed tears over my tomb, it gives me pleasure to indulge the prospect that it will be near the places which captivated his imagination in the earlier years of his life. This hope is alone sufficient to decide my journey in this vast solitude of the world,

world, where I can fix my abode in that place, which is most agreeable to my wishes. Louisa, if a considerable time elapses before I write to you again, do not be uneasy. Life is become to me indispensable, since I have been entrusted with the care of Isore. I am about to write to her mother, that I undertake this task anew. I wish to occupy myself with the care of her education; for I wish at least to leave some one behind me to whom I have been the instrument of communicating happiness. Do you, my sister, write to me under the address which I send to you. Through the medium of Mad. de Lebensei, you will discover what effect my departure has produced on the mind of Leonce. But in communicating to me what this impression has been, pay some attention to my present state of mind. It is now terribly distracted, and must be addressed with a certain degree of delicacy and skill. My agitation  
has

has indeed proceeded so far that I almost tremble for the continuance of my reason. But still in those tedious hours of reflection, that await me, must I not contemplate my destiny with firmness? I have too long maintained a struggle for happiness. From the day that he became the husband of Matilda, why did I not convince myself that I was hereafter doomed to misery.

### LETTER XXXVIII.

DELPHINE TO MAD<sup>LL</sup>E. D'ERVINS, A NUN IN  
THE CONVENT OF ST. MARY, AT CHAILLOT.

Meline, Decem. 6.

CIRCUMSTANCES not less cruel than those which have decided your fate, my dear Theresa, force me for ever to quit  
Paris

Paul and the world. I bring your daughter with me. I will finish her education with care, and I will secure to her the half of my fortune. She will probably enjoy it at no distant period, if I adopt the same resolution that you have taken; if I bury myself for ever in a convent.

You will be astonished to hear that such a plan is merely possibly with me, knowing as you do the opinion I possess. They have undergone no change; but I would wish to place an eternal barrier betwixt me and the mournful anxieties which the passions ever create in the heart. Tell me whether you think that courageous resignation, and natural religion, are sufficient to ensure repose in an asylum similar to yours. You are the only person in the world who are acquainted with the melancholy views I indulge on this subject.

Isore writes you my address, with the name I have thought proper to assume.

There



There now no longer remains any traces of what I once was. Sometimes, indeed, I feel a desire, a strong desire, once more to enter into the world, and irrevokable vows can alone overcome its influence.

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.