

DELPHINE.

BY

MADAME DE STAEL-HOLSTEIN.

*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 Neckar's Miscellanies.*

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

London :

PRINTED FOR J. MAWMAN, IN THE POULTRY.

1803.

By T. Gillet, Salisbury-Square.

PREFACE.

OF all literary productions, novels have to encounter the most general and extensive criticism. Almost every reader is entitled to pass his judgment on them; even those who are most modest and most diffident as to their understanding, have a right to consult their own feelings with respect to such works. The popular success, therefore, which ought to be aimed at in compositions of this kind, is one of its greatest difficulties.

Another difficulty no less important arises from the number of indifferent novels which daily issue from the press. The multitude of these productions induces the common observer to believe that the novel is, of all species of writing, the most easy, whereas it is precisely the numberless attempts made in this career which render

every new essay more hazardous. In this, as in every other department of literature, the mind which is somewhat elevated dislikes the beaten path; and the importunate recollection of insipid productions, in which so much has been said about the affections of the heart, is a constant obstacle to the expression of genuine sentiment. Finally, this species of composition presents in itself difficulties which are sufficiently alarming, and which must be evident to all who reflect on the small number of novels that have attained the rank of eminent works.

Doubtless, a powerful imagination and a quick sensibility are requisite to enable an author to identify himself with all the various situations of life, and to preserve on all occasions that purity and simplicity of nature without which nothing can be great, beautiful, or durable. The concatenation of ideas may be subjected to invariable principles, of which it may always

ways be possible to give an exact analysis. But sentiments are inspirations more or less happy, and these inspirations are perhaps only granted to souls which have remained worthy of experiencing them. The example of some men of great talents whose conduct has been immoral will perhaps be urged against this opinion; but I am firmly convinced that, on examining their history, if they have been hurried away by strong passions, they have been punished by the most bitter remorse. To have led an estimable life is not enough for this task, but it is sufficient that the heart be not depraved.

A real terror would also prevail in society, were there not a language which affectation cannot imitate, and which no ingenuity can of itself call forth. This propriety of tone, if we may use the expression, ought to be particularly conspicuous in novels. Exaggerated sensibility, pride misplaced, the affectation of virtue,

and all those formalities which so often fatigue us in real life, are to be met with in novels. As in observing the character of an individual, it may be said that by such a word, such a look, or such an accent, he discovered, unknown to himself, the extent of his understanding, or the feelings of his soul ; so in works of imagination, we may point out the situation in which the author has been deficient in true sensibility ; in what parts talent has not been able to make up for the want of character ; and where the mind has vainly sought what the heart would at once have suggested.

Events, in novels, should always be made subservient to the unfolding of the passions of the human heart ; probability to a certain degree, must be preserved, that the illusion may not be destroyed ; but works which excite curiosity merely by the invention of incidents, captivate only men of that sort of imagination which authorises
the

the saying that the eyes are always children. The novels which we never cease to admire, as *Clarissa*, *Clementina*, *Tom Jones*, the *New Eloisa*, the *Sorrows of Werter*, &c. have for their object the exciting or recalling a multitude of sentiments which ought always to reside in the soul, and which form the happiness or misery of our existence. These sentiments we do not avow, because they are frequently connected with our secrets, or with our weaknesses, and because men pass all their lives with men, and mutually conceal their feelings.

History discloses to us only those striking features of human character which are rendered manifest by the force of circumstances; but it does not enable us to perceive the secret impressions which by influencing the will of some, decide the fate of all. The discoveries to be made in this science are inexhaustible. There is only

only one thing which is astonishing to the human mind, and that is itself.

“The proper study of mankind is man.”

All the resources of talent, all the developments of the mind are therefore to be sought for in the profound knowledge of the affections of the soul ; and novels deserve to be esteemed only when they appear what we may call a sort of confession, snatched from those who have lived as well as from those who are to live.

In an examination of the human heart, we discover at each step the influence of moral character on our destiny. There is but one secret in life, and that is the good or the evil we have performed. This secret is concealed under a thousand deceitful forms. Your sufferings have been long, though you did not merit them. You have prospered long by unworthy means, but your lot in life is suddenly determined ;

terminated ; the subject of your ænigma is explained, and that was a secret which conscience had often told you long before the irresistible course of events proclaimed it. In this manner the history of man ought to be exhibited in novels ; thus should fiction be employed to explain to us, by our virtues and our feelings, the mysteries of our fate.

Some will perhaps exclaim, “ Nothing, indeed, can be more a fiction than a work on such a plan ! ” Do you still believe in those moral influences, in love, in the elevation of the soul, in a word, of all the illusions of that nature ? In return, let me ask, if we discard this belief, what shall we put in its place ? Shall we substitute corrupt and vulgar pleasures, a frigid heart, or baseness and perfidy of mind ? This choice, hideous in itself, is seldom rewarded by happiness or success ; but though both should for a moment be its result, that spectacle would only serve to

inspire the virtuous man with a stronger sense of his own dignity. If history represented generous sentiments as always prosperous, they would have ceased to be generous. The speculators would soon have appropriated them to themselves as the best means of succeeding in the world. But the uncertainty as to what may lead to splendor, and the certainty of that which morality requires, is an excellent opposition, which honours the performance of duty, and the voluntary preference of adversity.

It appears to me then that the circumstances of real life, fleeting as they are, cannot so well instruct us in durable truths, as fictions founded on those truths; and that the best lessons of delicacy or of dignity are to be found in novels, in which sentiments and characters are so naturally depicted, that on the perusal we fancy a real scene passes before us.

.A common

A common or a refined style are equally removed from this natural expression. Refinement is suited only to ornament, to those affections which we would not feel if we did not wish to display them. Refinement, indeed, is so evident a proof of coldness, that it excludes the possibility of any powerful emotion; but common expressions are as distant from truth as those which are studied, because ordinary language never paints what really passes in our hearts. Every man has a mode of feeling peculiar to himself, which would produce originality if he gave way to it. Talent perhaps consists only in the power of easily transporting the soul into all the affections which the imagination can excite. Genius will never speak better than nature, but it will speak like her even in invented situations; while the man of ordinary mind can feel only the impressions which arise from his own situation. Thus, in every species of composition, to

paint with truth is of all things the most difficult, and the most simple, the most sublime and the most natural !

Ancient literature possessed no works of the kind we call novels. The country then absorbed all minds, and women did not enjoy so general an influence in society as to render it necessary for men to study all the delicate shades of love. The romances were much more indebted for their celebrity among the moderns to the marvellous nature of the adventures, than to the truth and delicacy of the sentiments. Madame de Lafayette, in her *Princess of Cleves*, was the first who succeeded in uniting the painting of the brilliant manners of chivalry, with the touching language of impassioned affections. But the best novels are those of the eighteenth century ! The English were the first who gave a moral object to these productions. They seek utility in every thing ; a disposition which is peculiar to a free people.

They

They require to be instructed rather than amused, because having to make a noble use of the faculties of the mind, they love to develope, and not to benumb them.

Another people no less remarkable for their enlightened views than the English are for their institutions, I mean the Germans, possess novels distinguished by their profound truth and exquisite sensibility: but an improper estimate is formed of German literature among us, or, to speak more properly, the small number of well informed persons who are acquainted with it, do not give themselves the trouble of replying to those who know it not. It is only since the time of Voltaire that justice has been done in France to the admirable literature of England. It will in the same manner be necessary for a man of genius to enrich himself with the fruitful originality of some German writers, to persuade the French that there are works in that language in which the ideas are profound,

and the sentiments expressed with a new energy.

It is doubtless very proper that the authors of the present day should constantly remind us of the respect which is due to the master-pieces of French literature. It is thus we can only expect to acquire a good taste, a severe, and I would say an impartial criticism, if in our times the latter epithet be entitled to its true application in France. The great evils which our literature has now to dread, are sterility, coldness, and monotony. The study of the perfect and generally known works which we possess instructs us very completely as to what we ought to avoid, but inspires us with nothing new ; while, by reading the productions of a people whose manner of thinking differs so much from that of the French, the mind is excited by new combinations, and the imagination is animated by the bold flights it condemns as much as by those it approves. In studying these
works,

works, our authors might succeed in adapting to the French taste, which is perhaps the purest in the world, some original beauties which would give to the literature of the nineteenth century a character entirely its own.

We imitate only the most perfect authors, and in imitation there is nothing illustrious ; but writers whose irregular genius has not permitted them to polish all the riches they possess, may be happily explored by men of taste and talent ; the ore of the mines can be rendered useful in all nations, but when coined it becomes proper to one only. We are not indebted for Zaire to Phedre, but to Othello. Though Racine derived great advantages from his intimate knowledge of Grecian literature, still much was left for his genius to perform. But would he have risen to such eminence had he only studied works which rendered, as his own now do, emulation
hopeless

hopeless, instead of encouraging it by opening to it a new field of exertion.

I am of opinion therefore that those national prejudices which induce the French to neglect the study of the authors of other countries, must present a great obstacle to their future success in the career of literature. But a still greater obstacle exists in the mode in which the progress of the human mind is proscribed under the name of philosophy. The fashion of the day, or the spirit of a party, constantly transports the calculations of the moment into the dominion of ages, and makes temporary considerations the ground of attacking eternal ideas. Were this system to prevail, the mind would no longer have the means of developing itself, it would be always confined to the fastidious circle of the same thoughts, the same combinations, and even the same phrases. Limited in its prospect of the future, it must be condemned to
look

look back, at first with regret, afterwards with a sense of inferiority, and would doubtless remain stationary at a point far below the eminent rank attained by those writers of the eighteenth century, who are presented to it as models. The writers of that age were men of rare genius; they possessed the dignity of true talent; and they sought for and disclosed truths which were concealed by the clouds of their own times.

The love of liberty glowed in the old blood of Corneille. In *Telemachus*, Fenelon gave severe lessons to Lewis XIV. Bossuet summoned the sovereigns of the earth before the tribunal of Heaven, whose decrees he pronounced with a noble courage. But Pascal, the boldest of all, notwithstanding the horrid terrors which troubled his imagination, and abridged his life, has infused into his detached thoughts, the germs of a number of ideas which succeeding writers have developed. The great
men

men of the age of Louis XIV. possessed therefore one of the principal requisites of genius, they outstripped the knowledge of their age ; but it is not to be expected that we, whose views are constantly retrograde, can ever equal those who first occupied the walk to which we confine ourselves, and who, were they to arise again, would start from another point, and soon leave all their new contemporaries behind them.

It has been observed, that the influence of religious opinions has contributed greatly to the splendour of the literature of the eighteenth century, and that no work of imagination can arise to distinction where those opinions do not prevail. A work, which even its adversaries must admire for the uncommon, brilliant, and original imagination it displays, *le Genie du Christianisme*, has strongly supported this literary system. I have also endeavoured to point out the favourable changes which christianity has introduced into literature ; but

as that religion has existed for eighteen centuries, and our best works have appeared only within the two last, I am fully convinced that some allowances ought to be made for the progress of the human mind in general, when we examine the difference between ancient and modern literature.

The grandeur in religious ideas, the belief of the existence of a God, and the immortality of the soul, and the union of those pleasing hopes with morality, are circumstances so inseparable from all elevation of sentiment, from all dignified and tender enthusiasm, that it seems to me impossible that any novel, any tragedy, or in short any work of imagination, could produce emotion without their influence. Considering, for a moment, then those sublime ideas in their relation to literature only, it will appear that what is in different works called poetic inspiration, is almost always that presentiment of the heart, that transport of genius,

genius, which extends hope beyond the bounds of human destiny. Nothing, however, can be more hostile, both to the imagination and the judgment, than the dogmas of any particular sect. The mythology of the ancients was distinguished by its images, not by its dogmas. The obscure, abstracted, and metaphysical character of dogmas seems to present an invincible obstacle to their admission into works of imagination:

The beauty we perceive in some religious works, is the result of ideas which are understood by all men, and apply to all hearts, even to the hearts of the incredulous. Those who do not believe cannot refuse their regrets, though they may still remain without hope. Finally, the sublimity of religion consists in all those secret, vague, and indefinite ideas which surpass, but do not contradict, our reason.

It has for some time been endeavoured to establish a sort of opposition between
the

the judgment and the imagination ; and a number of men, to whom the finer efforts of the imagination are totally unknown, try to recommend themselves to notice, in the first instance, by throwing reason aside. We must, however, distinguish that kind of imagination which is one of the highest faculties of the mind, from that gross imagination of which all imperfect and passive beings are susceptible. The first is a talent, the last is a disease ; the one sometimes anticipates the processes of reason, the other always opposes its progress. The former is acted on by enthusiasm, the latter by terror. I grant that, when it is wished to gain an ascendancy over weak minds, it may be desirable to inspire them with fears which reason would proscribe ; but tales of hobgoblins are better calculated to produce that effect than the beauties of literary composition.

The imagination which shines in the master-pieces of literature, is intimately connected

connected with the judgment : it demonstrates the necessity of soaring above the bounds of reality, but authorises nothing in opposition to it. There always exists in the mind a confused idea of an excellence beyond every model, of something better, something greater, than ourselves. This is what, in all works of genius, we denominate 'ideal beauty.' It is the object to which every soul, endowed with a portion of natural dignity, aspires ; but whatever is contrary to our actual knowledge, to our positive ideas, displeases the imagination as much as the judgment.

I shall illustrate this by an example taken at hazard. It is derived from the incoherence of images, but it is easy to apply it to contradictory ideas. When Milton magnifies vice and virtue by the most striking pictures we admire him ; he enlarges our ideas, and fortifies our sentiments : but when he describes angels firing cannon in the heavens, he is deficient in that judgment

ment which the nature of his subject requires. He departs from that consistency which ought to exist in fable as well as in truth; and the wound given to reason chills the imagination of the reader. In novels, in poetry, and in dramatic works, why do we condemn every thing which is not in harmony with recognized proportions, with the rules to which fiction is subject? It is precisely the admonitions of that same instinct, which disgust on observing an incongruity in the exercise of the reasoning faculty.

There resides within us a moral force which tends always to truth. By opposing sentiment, imagination, reason, and all the faculties of man, to each other, we should establish in human nature a division of powers, similar to that which, by weakening empires, facilitates their subjugation. These faculties have all the same direction, and one can ever succeed at the expence of the other. The writer, who, in the de-

lirium

lirium of imagination, fancies he has subdued reason, will always find that it becomes his judge, not only in cool examinations, but in the impressions of the moment which enthusiasm decide.

I know not whether these reflections will be regarded as forming the apology or the censure of the correspondence I now publish. I certainly should not have given it to the world had it not appeared consistent with the views and manner of thinking I have developed. The letters I have collected in these volumes were written at the commencement of the Revolution. I have studied to retrench from them, as much as the connection of the history would permit, every thing relating to the political events of the times. It will be obvious, however, that this was not done for the purpose of concealing opinions of which I think I ought rather to be proud; but it was my wish that the attention of the reader should be directed to the writers
of

of the letters only. I believe it will be found, on perusal, that these letters contain sentiments which must for a time, at least, inspire only pleasing ideas.

This wish I however fear will not be accomplished. The greater part of the literary judgments pronounced in France will still for a long time be only the adulations of party, or the censures of prejudice. But the writers who, desirous of expressing what they conceive to be right and true, brave these anticipated criticisms, have chosen their public. They address themselves to the silent but enlightened portion of their countrymen; to posterity rather than to their contemporaries. They aspire perhaps also, in their ambition, to the independent and impartial judgment of foreigners; but they will doubtless recollect the advice which Virgil is made to give to Dante, when he is supposed to pass with him through the residence of the men of mediocrity,

mediocrity, agitated as in life by hateful passions.

.
Fama di loro il mondo esser non lassa,

.
Non ragioniam di lor ; ma guarda e passa.*

* The world has not preserved even the recollection of their names : take a passing look, but do not let us stop to speak to them.

DELPHINE.

LETTER I.

MADAME D'ALBEMAR TO MATILDA DE
VERNON.

Bellerive, April 12, 1790:

NOTHING could give me so much happiness, my dear cousin, as to have it in my power to promote your marriage with M. de Mondeville. The ties of blood by which we are connected, give me the right of serving you, and I eagerly claim it. In case of my death, you would naturally succeed to the half of my fortune: shall it be refused to me during my life to dispose of a part of it in the same manner as the law would dispose of it after my death? At twenty-one it may appear ridiculous in me to offer an inheritance to you who are eighteen! I therefore speak to

you of the rights of succession, merely to convince you that you ought not to consider a gift of the estate of Audelys as an embarrassing act on my part, or one at which your delicacy ought to be alarmed.

M. d'Albemar has left me so much wealth, that I should feel it a duty to share it with one of his family, even though that person had not been, like you, my companion for three years, nor the daughter of Madame de Vernon, of all the women in the world the one whose mind and manners attach and interest me the most. You know that Louisa d'Albemar, the sister of my husband, is my most intimate friend. She has confirmed with joy all the legacies which M. d'Albemar left me. Living in retirement in a convent at Montpellier, all her wishes are more than gratified by the fortune she possesses. I am then at liberty, perfectly at liberty, to secure to you 20,000 livres a year, and I do
it

it with a sentiment of pleasure, of which you would not wish to deprive me.

After giving you the estate of Audelys, I shall still leave 50,000 livres a year to myself. I am therefore almost ashamed to think that a transaction, which cannot in the least derange the habits of my life, should assume the appearance of generosity. It is habit only which renders fortune indispensable to our happiness. When we are not obliged to remove from us inferiors who rely on our bounty for their support, and when no remarkable change in our manner of living excites the affected pity of superiors, there can be nothing painful in a diminution of fortune. Besides, I do not think I shall fix my residence at Paris. During the year I have lived here, I have not formed a single connection capable of making me forget any of the friends of my youth. The remembrance of these real friends is engraven on my heart with impressions so dear, and so

sacred, that all the new acquaintances I make, scarce leave any traces by the side of these profound recollections. I love nobody here but your mother; without her, I should not have come to Paris, and I aspire to nothing more than to take her back with me to Languedoc. During the whole of my life, I have been accustomed to enjoy the sincere affection of my friends; but the praises bestowed on me here, leave at the bottom of my heart a sentiment of coldness and indifference which no pleasure arising from self-love can possibly alter. Notwithstanding any amusement I may find in the society of Paris, I shall soon withdraw myself from that tumult in which we always receive some wounds, the smart of which we feel in our retreat.

I enter into these details, my dear cousin, to convince you that I have much more fortune than is necessary for the kind of life I wish to lead. It is to be
regretted

regretted that I am obliged to seek for all imaginable arguments to make you accept that which ought to be offered and received with equal ease ; but the differences in character and opinion which possibly may exist between us, make me apprehensive of some obstacles to the plans which have been concerted by your mother and me. I am therefore anxious that you should be informed of every thing calculated to tranquillize you respecting this affair, to which you appear to attach by far too much importance. It involves in it no acknowledgment which can impose any restraint upon you. If all I have said should not suffice to convince you, I must repeat that my friendship for your mother is so ardent, and so sincere, that your being her daughter, would even though I did not know you, be a sufficient inducement for me to do every thing in my power for your advantage. But enough has been said about this trifling service ;

assuredly I should not have dwelt on it so long had I not perceived that you have a secret repugnance to the proposition I have made.

It is probable also that you are displeased with the conditions which Madame de Mondeville requires on your marriage with her son. But do not forget, my dear Matilda, that she knew you only during your infancy, since she has not left Spain these ten years; and remember, above all, that her son has never seen you. Madame de Mondeville loves your mother, and wishes to form an alliance with your family; but you know what importance she attaches to every thing that may add to the consideration of her own. She wishes her daughter-in-law to have a fortune, as a means of creating a still greater distance between her son and other men. She possesses generosity and elevation of mind, but she is also tinctured with haughtiness and pride. Her manners may be said to be

be very simple, and her character very arrogant. Born in Spain, of a family attached to the ancient customs of that country, she has lived long in France with her husband, and there she has acquired the art of covering her defects with an amiable exterior, which produces the submission of all those that surround her. Every thing I hear of Leonce de Mondeville, persuades me that you will be perfectly happy with him ; and I believe that Madame de Mondeville, notwithstanding the imperfections of her character, possesses a great ascendancy over her son. I have frequently observed that it is by our faults we govern those by whom we are beloved. We first wish to respect them, we fear to irritate them, and at last submit completely to their influence : while those qualities, the principal advantage of which is to render life easy and agreeable, are frequently overlooked, and give us no power over others.

These observations ought to have no tendency to dissuade you from so distinguished, and so advantageous a marriage; their object is to convince you that it is absolutely necessary to fulfil all the conditions required on the part of Mad. de Mondeville. You must not enter into such a family with any inferiority whatever. When Madame de Mondeville is convinced that she has made a very suitable marriage for her son, the attentions you may bestow upon her will give her still greater pleasure. The more independent you are in fortune, the more agreeable will be every sacrifice which your sentiments or your duties may require.

Forget then, my dear Matilda, all the little altercations that have sometimes taken place between us, and let us unite our hearts by those affections which are common to us, and by the attachment which binds us both to your amiable mother.

DELPHINE D'ALBEMAR.

LETTER II.

MATILDA DE VERNON TO MADAME D'ALBEMAR.

Paris, April 14, 1790.

SINCE it is your opinion, my dear cousin, that delicacy requires you should share the fortune M. d'Albemar has left you with his relations, I consent, under the authority of my mother, to the donation you propose; and I have reason to consider that conduct on your part as satisfying a great deal more than equity could demand, and giving you just claims to my gratitude. I engage then to perform every thing which religion and virtue can exact from a person who has voluntarily contracted the obligation which connects me to you.

My mother is desirous that the service you render me should remain a secret to

all but ourselves : she supposes that the pride of Mad. de Mondeville would be offended, were she to learn that her daughter owes her fortune to a gift. I tell you what my mother's opinion is ; but I shall always be ready to make known what you have done for me, if you will permit me. Though the publicity of your benefits may humble me in the opinion of the world, it will raise me in my own : such is the spirit of the holy religion I profess.

I know that this sort of language has sometimes appeared ridiculous to you, and that, notwithstanding the sweetness of your disposition, a sweetness to which I shall always do justice, you have not concealed from me that you do not participate in my opinions relative to every thing connected with the observance of the catholic religion. I am really sorry for you, my dear cousin ; and the closer you, by your excellent conduct, draw the bonds which attach us to each other, the more I wish

wish it were possible for me to convince you that you take a wrong course, both for your own internal happiness, and for securing you the respect of the world.

Your opinions on every subject are singularly independent: you feel, and you feel justly, that you possess a mind of no common standard: but what is the advantage, my cousin, of such a mind in directing with prudence not only the conduct of mankind in general, but of our sex in particular? You are charming, and you are incessantly told of it; but how many enemies does that admiration procure you! You are young, and you would doubtless wish to marry again. Do you suppose that any prudent man would wish to unite himself to a woman who considers every subject only by her own information, who regulates her conduct entirely by her own judgment, and frequently rejects all received ideas? I know that there is an amiable simplicity in your character; that you do

not seek to govern others; that you have neither boldness in your manners nor in your conversation, but in truth, and you admit it yourself, it is not to the catholic faith, it is not to the respectable men who teach it, that you submit your conduct. It is your own manner of thinking, your own ideas of religion, that you take for your guide.

But what would become of us, cousin, if all women were in this manner to be guided by what they call their knowledge? Believe me, it is not by the faithful only that such an independence is blamed. The men who have the most completely discarded from their minds those great truths, which in the present language of the world are regarded as prejudices, do not wish to disengage their wives from any of the common ties of society. They are even well pleased that they should be devotees, because they expect that they will then not only perform all the duties of the married

ried

ried state, but even respect the very appearances of those duties.

You know I sincerely believe the religious opinions I profess. If there is sometimes too much severity in my character, it is at least always sincere. But were I capable of encouraging hypocrisy, I think it so essential for a woman to accommodate herself in every point to opinion, that I should advise her neither to brave superstitions (to use your language), nor customs, however insignificant they may be. Surely, however, it is much better to pay no regard to the suffrages of those who are devoted to worldly affairs, and to be disposed by religion itself to make all the sacrifices which its sacred dictates may require. •

If you would consent to see the Bishop of L. who, notwithstanding all the misfortunes which we have experienced within these ten months, still remains in France, I am certain he would change your opinions. My zeal is, perhaps, indiscreet,
for

for religion does not oblige us to interfere with the conduct of others ; but the gratitude I owe you inspires me with a new desire for your salvation. You acknowledge yourself that you are not happy : you have then a warning from heaven. Why are you not happy ? You are young, rich, and beautiful ; you are good and generous. Know you not then what affects you ? It is the uncertainty of your belief ; and if all the truth must be told you, it is because you also feel that the independence of opinion and conduct, which gives to your conversation and manners so much grace and spirit, begins already to subject you to slander, and will certainly, sooner or later, injure your character in the world. Do not be offended with this advice. It originates, I assure you, in friendship. You know I am not of a jealous disposition, and you have often done me justice in that respect. I have no wish to act a shining part in the world. I do not possess that sort of character

character which is necessary to obtain such a distinction, and I should blame myself much were I to wish it. I speak to you conscientiously, without any other motive than that which a christian heart would dictate. I shall do much more for you than you have done for me, if I can prevail on you to abandon your peculiar opinions, and submit yourself to the decisions of the church.

Adieu, my dear cousin ; I know I have not pleased you, I ought not to please you ; but of t his, am sure, you must be convinced that I never shall be deficient in those sentiments which you always merit from,

MATILDA DE VERNON.

LETTER III.

DELPHINE TO MATILDA.

I CAN with difficulty, cousin, controul the feelings which your letter has excited: I must not yield to them, since I expect a valuable mark of friendship from you; but it is impossible for me to refrain from entering once for all into a frank explanation with you. I wish to put an end to those insinuations which you constantly make respecting my opinions and my tastes: you esteem truth; you practise it. I hope, therefore, that you will not be offended with any strong expressions which I may use in my own justification.

In the first place you attribute to delicacy the present I have the pleasure of offering you, while that offer originates entirely in my friendship for you. Were it true that you are in any way entitled to a
part

part of my fortune, because your mother is one of the relations of M. d'Albemar, I should be ashamed to have kept it from you until now. To elevated minds delicacy is a duty still more imperious than justice. Such persons are much more punctilious with regard to actions which depend on themselves only, than to those which come under the dominion of the law. Are you ignorant that an unfortunate prejudice created a strong dislike on the part of M. d'Albemar towards your mother? It was the only subject of dispute we ever had between us. That prejudice was such that I had much difficulty in avoiding the promise he wished me to make of breaking off all correspondence with your mother. Knowing, as I do, the sentiments of M. d'Albemar, if I can take upon me to dispose of a part of his fortune in your favour, it is merely because he insisted upon my considering it entirely my own.

But why do you wish to diminish the
little

little merit which may belong to the service I am desirous of doing you ? Is it because you are afraid of the duties you believe to be attached to the sentiment of gratitude ? Why do you regard with so much importance an action which ought only to be considered as the expression of my friendship ? I have but one object, one desire, which is to be beloved by those among whom I live. You must surely feel yourself incapable of granting what I ask, since you are so much afraid of owing me any thing. But make yourself easy ; the friendship of your mother is sufficient for my happiness. The graces of her mind, the mildness and the gaiety of her disposition, diffuse numberless charms over my life. Sometimes, indeed, the inequality and the coldness of her manners vex me. I am anxious that she should constantly return the warmth of my attachment to her. Shall I not then be most happy if I find an opportunity of inspiring her with a new sentiment

sentiment of affection towards me? I do not seek, cousin, to raise myself in your esteem; you owe me nothing. My zeal for your interest will be most amply recompensed, if your mother more frequently testifies towards me that tender friendship which delights and tranquillizes my heart.

Now for the reproaches or counsels you have thought proper to address to me.

It is true, I have not the same opinions as you; but I confess I am far from thinking that my consideration in the world will suffer any diminution on that account. Should I be disposed to marry again, I believe my heart would be a present sufficiently noble not to be disdained by any man who might appear to me to be worthy of it. You fancy you have discovered an air of sorrow in my letter, but you are mistaken. I have at this moment no cause of pain: but with minds of sensibility, happiness is never without some mixture of melancholy. How should I avoid experiencing
that

that sentiment, I who have lost in M. d'Albemar so good and so tender a friend? When I attained my sixteenth year, he took the name of my husband only to secure to me his fortune. A protecting bounty and a delicate gallantry marked the whole of his conduct. His passion for me united all that is most amiable, all that is most pleasing in the affection of a father, and the attentions of a young man.

M. d'Albemar, who was entirely occupied with providing for the happiness of the remainder of my life, which his age could not permit him to witness, had inspired me with the utmost confidence, with that pleasing confidence which delivers as it were to another the responsibility of our fate, and relieves us from any anxiety about ourselves. Doubtless I shall ever regret him, and my heart will always melt at the recollection of those happy days of my youth which are past. But what other sorrow should I experience at this moment? What have

have I to fear from the world? In mixing with it, I indulge only feelings of kindness and benevolence. Were I destitute of every amiable quality, I perhaps could not avoid shewing some asperity towards those women who were so fortunate as to please. But, on the contrary, I every where meet with the most flattering encomiums. My situation enables me to perform some services to others, and never obliges me to ask any for myself. The connexions I have formed with those who surround me are of my own choice. I desire none but with those I love: I speak no ill of others, why then should any one wish to afflict a being so inoffensive, and whose mind, if it be true that the education I have received has given me that advantage, has, for its first object, to promote the happiness of those among whom I live?

You accuse me of not being so good a catholic as you are, and of paying too little regard to the arbitrary rules of society. In
the

the first place, my dear cousin, far from blaming your devotion, have I not always respected it? I know it to be sincere; and though it has not yet entirely softened all the asperities of your character, I believe it contributes to your happiness; and I never would allow myself to attack it either by reasoning or by pleasantry. But I have received an education altogether different from yours. My respectable husband, on his return from the American war, commenced, in the calm retirement of a country life, the examination of all those great moral questions which the human mind is capable of investigating. He believed in God, he hoped that his soul was immortal, and virtue, founded on beneficence, was the worship he paid to the Supreme Being. Left an orphan in my infancy, I have acquired no other religious ideas except those in which M. d'Albemar instructed me; and, as on all occasions, he performed every duty of justice and generosity, I believe

lieve that his principles are sufficient for every heart.

I begin to believe that M. d'Albemar must have had little intercourse with men of the world. In estimating human actions, he only considered whether they were good in themselves, and never regarded the impression his conduct might produce upon others. If to think thus is to be a philosopher, I avow that I hope I may be allowed some claim to that title: but if by philosophy you understand the slightest indifference for the pure and delicate virtues of our sex—if you even understand by the term that force of character which makes us inaccessible to the sufferings of life, I certainly merit neither such censure nor such praise: you well know that I am but a woman with the qualities and faults which belong to that weak and dependent condition.

I am entering the world with a good and upright heart; with youth, fortune, and
some

some undersanding. Why should not these gifts of Providence render me happy? Why should I torment myself for opinions that are not my own, or for rules of which I am ignorant? The morality and the religion of the heart have served to support men who have passed through a far more difficult career than that which even malice assigned to me.

These guides will, therefore, be sufficient for the regulation of my conduct.

As for you, my dear Cousin, permit me to tell you, that you have perhaps need of a more rigorous rule to repress a character which is less soft. But may we not love each other, notwithstanding this difference in our tastes and our opinions? You know how much I esteem your virtues, and that sentiment will afford me a lively pleasure in rendering your destiny happy: But, I beseech you, let each of us leave the other to seek in her own heart that support which is best suited to her character

character and her conscience. Imitate your mother, who never disputes with you, though your ideas and hers are often very different. We in common love one beneficent being, towards whom our souls are raised. This forms a sufficient relation of opinion. We are sufficiently connected by that bond which unites all sensible minds in the most exalted and most endearing of all sentiments.

In two days I shall return to Paris. I hope we shall then speak no more on the subject of our letters, and that you will grant me the happiness of being useful to you without interrupting it with reflections, which always give some displeasure, whatever efforts we may make to avoid being offended. I embrace you, my dear cousin, and assure you, that at the end of my letter I feel no trace of that painful disposition which dictated the first lines of it.

DELPHINE D'ALBEMAR.

LETTER IV.

DELPHINE D'ALBEMAR TO MADAME DE
VERNON.

Bellerive, April 16, 1790.

MY dear aunt, my dear friend, why have you involved me in a correspondence with my cousin on an affair which ought to have been settled with yourself? You know Matilda and I are seldom of one mind, but that you and I always agree! When I have had it in my power to do you a service, you always accepted the devotion of my heart with the most noble frankness, and rewarded it with a sentiment which renders my life delightful. Why then is it not with you, with you alone that I have to adjust this business?

Can it be possible that I have displeased you by my reply to Matilda; that you no longer

longer think me worthy of promoting the happiness of your daughter? No, you know the vivacity of my first emotions, and you will pardon them. This is to be expected from you, who always preserve that empire over yourself which tends still more to the happiness of your friends than to secure your own. I have nothing to fear from your generous and dignified character; you receive services as you would confer them, with simplicity. Satisfy me, however, before I see you. I know you do not love to write; but one word only is necessary to assure me that you will not withdraw the permission you have granted me.

I repeat it again; I know that you would not deeply afflict your friend. If you did I should be the first person in the world to whom you ever gave pain. But if I have done wrong, you know I shall be sufficiently punished by self-reproach, and I am sure you would not wish my error to be attended with consequences

too painful. I expect a few lines from you, my dear Sophia, with an anxiety I never before experienced.

LETTER V.

MADAME DE VERNON TO DELPHINE.

Paris, April 17.

MATILDA and you have acted like children; this is not the way in which serious subjects ought to be managed. We shall talk over the business together, but never be uneasy, my dear Delphine, when what you desire depends upon

SOPHIA DE VERNON.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

DELPHINE TO MADLLE D'ALBEMAR.

Paris, April 19.

A SLIGHT altercation, which arose a few days ago between Matilda and me, has vexed me, my dear sister. I send you copies of our letters, in order that you may be able to judge of what has passed: but how much do I wish you were near me. I endeavour incessantly to recollect every thing you have said to me. I once thought your excellent brother had, in our conversations, laid down rules of conduct which ought to guide me in every situation of life; but I now find that I am troubled by inquietudes, which are personal to myself, as if the general ideas I have acquired were not sufficient to enlighten me in particular cases. My destiny, however, is simple, and I never feel, I hope I never shall feel, any sentiment which may disturb it.

Mad. de Vernon, of whom you are not fond, though she loves you, Mad. de Vernon is certainly one of the most engaging, one of the most amiable, and one of the best informed women I know; yet I find it impossible for me to discuss my thoughts and sentiments fully with her. She takes no pleasure in a prolonged conversation; and it is impossible to develope completely any opinion in discoursing with her, because her mind looks always straight forward to results, and seems to despise every other consideration. The immediate effects and consequences of actions seem to have been more her study than their morality or their influence on the disposition. Though she is a person endowed with most excellent qualities, yet she seems to regard success as every thing, and to put little value on the principles of human conduct. This turn of mind renders her a better judge of the events of life than of its secret anxieties. There remain therefore always some sentiments in my heart which

I have

I have not expressed to her, some feelings which I reserve as unnecessary to explain to her, but which I however feel to have a powerful influence over myself. My confidence in her is unbounded ; but I am naturally inclined, even without perceiving it, to speak to her only on topics that interest her. I always refer to another day my design of speaking to her on the subjects which engage my attention, but which have no analogy with her manner of thinking and feeling. My desire of pleasing her is mixed with a kind of uneasiness which makes me study how to render myself agreeable to her ; thus there is often more of coquetry than of confidence in our friendship.

But, my dear Louisa, to you I can lay my whole soul open ; you formed my heart while you supplied the want of a mother to me. You have been always my friend : I still preserve in my intercourse with you all the pleasing confidence of early youth, of that age in which we fancy we have done

every thing for those we love, when we communicate our thoughts and disclose to them our feelings.

Tell me then, my dear sister, what is the obstacle which prevents you from leaving your convent, and living at Paris with me? Have you hitherto concealed your motives, and can you support the idea that there should be a secret between us?

On parting with you I promised to write to you every evening an account of what happened to me. You say you wish to watch over my impressions. O yes! you shall be my tutulary angel: the virtues which you have inspired into my soul you shall continue to protect. But should we not be much happier were we together? Can our letters even compensate for the loss of our conversations?

After receiving Mad. de Vernon's note, I set out immediately to see her. I left Bellerive at five in the evening, and was with her at eight. She was in her cabinet with her daughter. On my entrance she
made

made a sign to Matilda to withdraw. I was pleased, and at the same time embarrassed, to find myself alone with her. I frequently find myself under a sort of restraint when with Mad. de Vernon, which continues until the sprightliness of her wit makes me forget the reserve and affectation of the first impression of her manners. I know not whether this is not a fault ; but if it be, it serves to give more value to the demonstrations of her affection.

“ Well,” said she to me, smiling, “ Matilda, it seems, wished to convert you !”—“ I cannot express to you, my dear aunt,” replied I, “ what pain your letter has given me ! It provoked an answer, of which I soon repented. I am greatly afraid I have displeased you.”—“ In truth, I have scarcely read it,” said Mad. de Vernon. I discovered in it your goodness of heart and your errors of understanding ; in short, all that renders you a charming creature : I remarked nothing else. With respect to the affair itself, the lawyer who is drawing up
C 5 the

the contract, will insert what conditions you please; but you must allow him to state that this gift is a compensation for your inheritance of M. d'Albeinar's fortune; for if Mad. de Mondeville should suppose that my daughter owes her dowry to your generosity, her pride will be so much offended, that she will break off the match."

I confess I experienced a kind of repugnance at this proposition, and I was proceeding to resist it, when Mad. de Vernon interrupted me, and said, "M. de Mondeville knows not how proud we ought to be of receiving favours from such a friend. You have already rescued me from the ruin into which the perfidy of a merchant had nearly involved me;—you are now bringing about the marriage of my daughter, the only remaining object of my solicitude; yet such is the character of Mad. de Mondeville, that I shall be obliged to confine my feelings to my own breast, and to deprive myself of the pleasure I should receive
from

from a public acknowledgment of my gratitude. If you require the service you would render me to be known, I must be compelled to refuse it, because it would then become useless to me.—But you will be satisfied, I know you will be satisfied, my dear Delphine, with the sentiment I experience;—with that sentiment which disposes me to receive every obligation from you, because there is none which my heart does not feel eager to return.”

These last words were pronounced with that enchanting grace which belongs only to Mad. de Vernon. She appeared to have no doubt of my consent, and to excite such an idea would have been to chill all her feelings, which she so seldom allows to animate her, that I could not think of checking their impulse. The motives of my repugnance were pure; but I was ashamed to insist that my name should be proclaimed along with the gift I bestowed, and I was irresistibly impelled to yield to the request of Mad. de Vernon.

I said to her, however——“ I have some regret in using M. d'Albemar's name in a transaction so opposite to his intentions; but could he see the respect you pay to his virtues, if he heard you speak of him as I do, perhaps”——“ Doubtless,” said Mad. de Vernon, interrupting me, and this word ended our conversation on this subject.

A moment's silence followed; but, soon resuming her natural ease and gaiety, she addressed me thus:——“ A-propos, must I send the Bishop of L. to confess you, as Matilda proposes?”——“ I conjure you,” replied I, “ tell me, my dear aunt, why you have given Matilda an education almost superstitious, and which is so little conformable to the vigour of your mind and the liberality of your opinions?” She instantly became serious, and said,——“ This is a question you have often asked, and which I never wished to answer; but to you I owe all the secrets of my heart.

“ You know,” continued she, “ what
I suffered

I suffered with M. de Vernon, who, though a near relation of your husband, could not have resembled him less. His fortune and my poverty were the only motives of our marriage. I was long very unhappy. At last I became inured to M. de Vernon's defects, and succeeded in somewhat smoothing the roughness of his character. There is a way of managing every one, and women ought to find it out if they would live at peace in a world where Fate has decreed that they shall be entirely dependant on man. I could not, however, prevail on him to entrust me with the care of my daughter, whose education he superintended entirely himself. He died when she was eleven: having then an opportunity of paying attention to her myself, I observed that she possessed a singular harshness in her character, very little sensibility, and a mind more obstinate than comprehensive. I soon discovered that my instructions would not suffice to correct faults of such magnitude. I have much
indolence

indolence in my disposition, a vice which naturally results from habits of submission. Though steady in my resolutions, there is too little authority in my manner of expressing myself. Besides, I view with too much indifference some of the interests of life, to be capable of assuming that serious character which is necessary in the education of youth. I judged myself as I would have judged another, a task which you know is not very difficult for me, and at last I resolved to entrust my daughter to the care of the Bishop of L. After reflecting seriously on the subject, I was persuaded that religion, and a strict religion, was the only rein sufficiently strong to controul the resolute spirit of Matilda. In a man this sort of temper would contribute to his advancement in life; but to women, who in all situations are condemned to yield, the advantages as well as the defects of a vigorous character can only prove sources of misfortune.

“My plan has succeeded. Religion,
without

without entirely changing the disposition of my daughter, has removed some of its principal blemishes. As a sense of duty now influences all the resolutions she adopts, and even almost all the words she speaks, the natural defects of her character are only apparent in the coldness and aridity of her manners, but never produce any serious error. Her understanding, it is true, is very circumscribed ; but, as she respects all the prejudices, and submits to all the rules of society, she will never be exposed to the censure of the world. Her beauty, which is perfect, will not involve her in any danger ; for her virtue will always be supported by the unalterable austerity of her principles. She is disposed to make with equal ease the greatest and the smallest sacrifices ; and the severity of her character makes her love restraint as much as another would delight in freedom.

“ It would indeed be a subject of much regret, my dear Delphine, were a female, with your excellent understanding and
amiable

amiable manners, to impose upon herself a yoke which would deprive her of a thousand charms; but consider the character of my daughter, and you will find that the course I adopted was the only one which could protect her against all the evils with which she was threatened by her unfortunate resemblance to her father. To nobody except you, my dear Delphine, could I speak with so much confidence; but I could not permit the friend of my heart, who is about to secure the happiness of Matilda, to remain any longer ignorant of the motives which influenced me in one of the most important resolutions of my life, in that which related to the education of my child."

"You never can speak," my dear aunt, without convincing," replied I: "But, after all, why could you not have instructed your daughter yourself? Are not all your opinions conformable to reason."—
"Oh! my opinions!" said she, smiling and interrupting me: "nobody knows what
are

are my opinions; and as they have no influence on my sentiments, there is no necessity for your knowing them, my dear Delphine." — In concluding these words, she rose, took me by the hand, and led me into the saloon, where several persons were assembled.

On entering, she apologized for her absence with that inimitable grace which even you must acknowledge her to possess. Though she is at least forty, she still appears charming even among the young and beautiful of her own sex. The paleness of her complexion, the slight relaxation of her features, indicate the languor of indisposition, and not the decay of years; the easy negligence of her dress accords with this impression. Every one concludes, that when her health is recovered, and she dresses with more care, she must be completely beautiful: this change, however, never happens, but it is always expected; and that is sufficient to make the imagination

tion

tion still add something more to the natural effect of her charms.

In one corner of the room sat Mad. du Marset. I do not recollect whether I have told you that this lady has taken a dislike to me, though I never gave, and never wished to give her the smallest offence.

Ever since my arrival she has thought proper to testify her disapprobation of the kindness shewn me, as if she considered it a personal affront to herself: for sometimes I tried to conciliate her; but when I found she had formed a sort of public engagement to detest me, and that, incapable of procuring herself enjoyment by her friendships, she sought it in her hatreds, I resolved to despise all that is factitious as well as all that is real in her aversion to me. She pretends she cannot tell why to accuse me of loving and too much approving the revolution of France. I let her prate on. Fifty years of age, and a bad temper, are sources of vexation which may excuse a good deal of ill humour.

Beside

Beside her was M. de Fierville, who, notwithstanding her advanced age, is her faithful adorer. He has more wit but less character than his mistress, and this accounts for her completely governing him. He sometimes chuses to converse with me; but as, out of compliment to Mad. du Marset, he frequently censures me when I am absent, he always takes care to make some reservation in the compliments he pays me, in order that he may appear somewhat consistent. He is occupied with his own petty anxieties; to them I leave him; for I love nothing about him but his wit, and that he cannot prevent me from enjoying when he speaks to me.

In the midst of company Matilda never once thinks of amusing herself. The most indifferent actions of her life are always with her the performance of a duty. She places herself beside the least amiable persons, arranges every thing, prepares tea, rings for the servant to mend the fire, and is as busy in the parlour as if she were managing

naging the affairs of a kitchen ; as to conversation, she never suffers herself to be for a moment so engaged in it as to divert her from her course. This constant habit of obliging would merit admiration, if it occasioned any sacrifice of her own inclinations ; but she really takes a pleasure in this sort of methodical existence, and blames in her heart those who do not imitate her.

Mad. de Vernon is too fond of gaming. Though she might distinguish herself in conversation she avoids it, and it would seem that she wishes neither to develope her feelings or thoughts ; but her taste for play, and too great a prodigality in her expenses, are the only serious faults I observe in her. She chose for her party last night Mad. du Marset and M. de Fierville ; I slightly reproached her, because I had heard her at different times say a good deal to the prejudice of both of them. " Praise or blame," replied she, " is an amusement of the mind, but to live in society, management and civility.

vility are necessary.”—“ To esteem and despise,” I remarked, with warmth, “ is an emotion which the soul must experience: it is a necessary lesson ; an example which it is woeful to give.”—“ You are right,” said she, hastily, “ you are right, in a moral view ; but what I said was only in allusion to the interests of the world.”—She then pressed my hand, and left me with an expression perfectly amiable.

I stopped beside the fire to discourse with some gentlemen, whose conversation, particularly at the present moment, inspires the most lively interest in all minds capable of enthusiasm and reflection. I sometimes reproach myself with mixing too freely in this interesting conversation. There is perhaps some violation of propriety in my thus taking a part in discussions of the greatest importance. But when Mad. de Vernon and her female friends sit down to cards, I find myself almost alone with Matilda, who never speaks a word ; and the attentions which are always shewn me by the
the

the most distinguished men of the company induce me to listen to them, and join in their conversation.

However, it is perhaps true, that I often follow, with too much warmth, the impulse of my own sentiments : I do not sufficiently avoid the distinctions I obtain in company, though they may sometimes excite the displeasure of other ladies. How much do I want a guide ! Why am I alone ! I finish this letter, my dear sister, with a repetition of my request.—Come to me ; do not abandon your Delphine in a world so new to her. It inspires me with a sort of indefinite fear, which all the pleasures I experience never dissipate.

LETTER VII.

MISS D'ALBEMAR TO DELPHINE.

Montpellier, April 25, 1790.

My Dear Delphine,

I AM sorry you have been so generous to these Vernons. My brother liked the daughter better than the mother, though the latter is much more agreeable than the former. He believed Mad. de Vernon deceitful, perfidiously deceitful. Pardon me the use of these words: I know not how else to express their full force, and I trust in your kind friendship for my excuse.

My brother was of opinion, that Mad. de Vernon was destitute of principles and affection; that she interested herself in nothing except in promoting the success of herself and family in all the affairs of the world; and that wealth and aggrandisement were the great objects of her life. I know
that

that she endured with exemplary mildness a painful connection with the most odious of husbands ; that, though beautiful, she had no intrigues, and that slander has not had a word to say in that respect against her : but though you should believe me unjust, I must confess to you that it is precisely this regularity of conduct which appears to me inconsistent with the levity of her principles, and the indifference of her character. Why should she comply with every duty, while she appears to attach no importance to any ? Notwithstanding the motives she assigns for the education of her daughter, must she not be greatly wanting in sensibility, since she herself has neglected to form, according to her own character, the person most dear to her ; since she has not thought it necessary to infuse into her a portion of her own soul, but has rendered her a stranger to herself, in consequence of opinions which exercise the most powerful influence over the whole of life ?

Perhaps

Perhaps I may be wrong in judging thus unfavourably of a person to whom I can impute no blameable action : but her physiognomy, agreeable as it is, would be sufficient to prevent me from placing any confidence in her. I am firmly convinced that the habitual sentiments of the soul leave remarkable traces on the countenance : thanks to that index of nature, there is no complete dissimulation in the world. You know I am not distrustful, but I observe ; and though I may be deceived with respect to facts, I am seldom mistaken as to characters. This is sufficient to prevent me from misplacing my affections ; and it is of little importance to me what may become of my other interests.

As to you, my dear Delphine, you allow yourself to be seduced by the charms of wit, and I fear much, that if you give your heart to this woman, she will make you suffer most cruelly. Do her a service when you please. I am not particular as to the qualities of the persons we may oblige ; but

we entrust to those we love whatever is most delicate in happiness, and I alone, my dear Delphine, love you sufficiently to wish always to share your deep and lively sensibility. To rescue you from the seductions of this woman, I should wish to go to Paris; but I cannot find resolution to commence the journey. It is absolutely impossible for me to conquer the repugnance I feel to quitting my solitude.

I must at last explain to you the cause of this repugnance. I shall now endeavour to describe it to you in writing, though I never could have prevailed on myself to state it to you in conversation: but I earnestly beg of you to return no answer to this part of my letter, for the subject is too painful for me to discuss. You know that my person is one of the least agreeable in the world; my shape is awkward, and my figure destitute of every sort of grace. I never would marry, though my fortune attracted a number of suitors: I have lived almost alone, and should be a bad guide
for

for myself, as well as others, in the midst of the passions of life ; but I know enough to have long since discovered that a woman, whose appearance is disagreeable, must be the most unhappy of mortals if she live not in retirement. Society is so arranged, that, during the first twenty years of her life, she is neglected as a person in whom no other of her species can feel a lively interest. She is constantly humiliated without any one intending it, and scarce any conversation can occur in her presence which does not awaken in her soul some painful sensations.

I might, it is true, have enjoyed the happiness of being a mother ; but what must have been my feelings, had I transmitted to my daughter the disadvantages of my figure ! had I beheld her destined, like me, never to know the supreme happiness of being the first object of attachment to a man of sensibility ! I would not entrust the secrets of my heart to any but you, my dear Delphine ; but though I am

not formed to inspire love, it does not follow that my heart should be devoid of the most tender affections. I felt almost in infancy, that with my figure it would be absurd to fall in love. You can have no idea of the tormenting sentiments that have agitated me ! It was absurd for me to fall in love ! yet nature never had formed a heart to which that happiness was more necessary.

A man with the most striking exterior defects may still preserve the hope of rendering himself happy. Many have ennobled with laurels the deformities of nature ; but women have no existence except in love ; the history of their life begins and ends with love ! How are they to inspire that sentiment, if they possess none of those graces which are calculated to please the eye ! Society in this respect augments those evils, which have their origin in nature, instead of modifying their effects. The unhappy female, whom love and maternal affection never can bless, is rejected by the world.

world. How exquisite must be the secret torments of her heart !

I have been as romantic as if I resembled you, my dear Delphine ; but I have always been too proud not to conceal from all eyes the unfortunate contrast of my destiny and my character. How then have I succeeded in supporting the past years of my life ? I buried myself in retirement, centering in you all my interests, all my wishes, and all my feelings. I said to myself, that I would have been you, had nature granted to me your graces and your charms ; and seconding with all my soul the inclination of my brother, I conjured him to leave to you the portion of his property he intended for me.

What should I have done with riches ? I have enough to render those that depend upon me happy, and to comfort the unfortunate who surround me ; but what use could I make of money, which would not add to the painful sentiment that weighs down my soul ! Would I have employed it

in embellishing my house for myself, my gardens for myself? Alas! the gratitude of no beloved companion would ever have rewarded my care! Could I have made myself happy by entertaining numerous companies, whose conversation would most frequently have turned on what others possess, but which I want? Would I have been wise to expose myself to the hazard of propositions of marriage which might have been addressed to my fortune; or ought I to have condemned myself to encounter all the deceptions which interested men might have practised to flatter my vanity, and to deprive me at last of my own esteem?

• No—no, Delphine, my prudent resignation is the better course. There remained to me only one happiness for which I could hope: I have obtained it; I have adopted you for my daughter. Shut out from the world myself, it was my wish to procure you all the means of enjoying it. To be near you, to see you, to hear you, would doubtless

doubtless delight me ; but with you are the pleasures and splendours of that society in which you deserve to mix. My heart, which has never known the passion of love, is still too young not to feel pain in being cut off from all the delights of society, in a place where every object would constantly renew that sensation.

The pains of the imagination depend almost entirely on circumstances reviving them in the mind. They vanish of themselves when we neither hear nor see any thing calculated to bring them to our recollection ; but their influence is most terrible when the mind is, at every moment, compelled to struggle against new impressions. We ought to be able to divert our attention from importunate feelings, and to withdraw from them with address ; for it is necessary to use address with ourselves, if we would avoid tortures too great to be endured. I cannot pretend to estimate the character of others, my dear Delphine, but

I pretty well know myself; for that knowledge is the fruit of solitude.

With considerable difficulty I have succeeded in tracing out for myself a course of life which preserves me from any pungent griefs. Every hour has its occupations, though there is nothing which fills up my entire existence. I add one day to another, and this makes up, first one year, then two, and ultimately the whole of life. I dare not attempt to change my position, nor to unsettle either my condition or my mind. I dread lest I should lose the result of my reflections, and disturb those habits which are still more necessary to me, since they enable me to dispense even with reflection itself, and to pass my time without thinking of it.

Already will this letter have the effect of disturbing my repose for several days. I must not be tempted to speak, scarcely even to think, of myself. I live in *you*—Allow me to follow you with my prayers, and to aid

aid you with my advice, if I can presume to give you any as to the affairs of this world, of which I profess my ignorance. Apprise me, successively and regularly, of the wants in which you are interested. In your history I shall almost think that I have lived : I shall retain some remembrances ; and through you I shall enjoy sentiments which, of myself, I could neither feel nor inspire.

Would you think, that I am almost sorry that you have married Matilda to Leonce de Mondeville. I am told he is so handsome, so amiable, and so high-spirited, that I think him worthy of my Delphine. But I hope she will find the man who is to render her happy ; then, and not till then, shall I enjoy real tranquillity. Whatever distinction you may possess, what could you do without a protector? You would excite envy, and it would persecute you. Your mind, however superior, can do nothing in its own defence. Nature has decreed, that all the endowments of women

should be subservient to the happiness of others, and of little utility to themselves.

Adieu, my dear Delphine, I thank you for keeping up the habit of your infancy, in writing to me, every evening, what you have been employed in during the day. We will peruse, together, the secrets of your mind, and, between us we shall, perhaps, have sufficient energy to secure your happiness.

LETTER VIII.

ANSWER OF DELPHINE TO MISS D'ALBEMAR.

Paris, May 1.

WHY, my dear sister, have you forbidden me to answer you, with regard to the motives which keep you at a distance from Paris? How many reflections has your letter suggested, which I would wish to express! Ah! I shall soon set out to rejoin you, and to pass with you all the

the remaining years of my life. Believe me, this life of youth and love is not so happy as you imagine. My mind, for these several days, has been exclusively occupied with the fate of one of my friends Mad. d'Ervins. Her beauty, and the sentiments which it inspires, have been the only source of her errors and her troubles.

You know, that when I left you, about a year ago, I was taken dangerously ill at Bourdeaux. Mad. d'Ervins, who resided in the vicinity of that city, had come to spend a few days there, during her husband's absence. On learning my name and situation, she, with ineffable goodness, came to lodge in the same house with me, in order to take care of me. She watched by me, during a fortnight, and I am convinced, that it is to her I owe my life. Her presence calmed the perturbations of my frame, and when, at any time the fear of death occurred, a single look upon her lovely form was sufficient to make it give way to more sooth-

ing presages. When I began to recover, I was desirous to know the person who had already merited my entire friendship. I was informed that she was a native of Italy, and that her family resided at Avignon. At fourteen years of age she had been married to M. d'Ervin, who was five and twenty years older, and who had for ten years, confined her abode to one of the most gloomy seats in the creation.

Theresa d'Ervin is the most captivating beauty I have ever beheld. An expression, at once *naïve* and impassioned, sheds over the whole of her person an indescribable charm of love and innocence which is singularly attractive. She has not received the benefit of instruction; but her manners are dignified, and her language correct. Like the rest of the Italian ladies, she is devout and superstitious; but though frequently engaged in the offices of religion, she has never, seriously, reflected upon the subject of morality. Her disposition, however, is so perfectly good

and susceptible, that in none of the duties of life would she have been found deficient, had she been united to a man worthy of her love. The natural qualities of the heart are sufficient to preserve the purity of the person who is happily circumstanced; but when you are condemned, from chance, or society, to struggle against your disposition, principles, which are the offspring of reflection, then become necessary in order to protect you against yourself; and the most amiable characters in the habitual relations of life, are those which are the most exposed to danger, when virtue has to enter the lists with sensibility.

The features and manners of Theresa have so youthful an air, that one could scarcely suppose she was already the mother of a daughter nine years old. From this daughter she is never for a moment absent, and the extreme tenderness which she shews her, astonishes the poor child, which seems to evince a vague idea of gratitude

titude for protection, rather than that of a more exalted sentiment. Her infantile mind is surprised at the emotions which she excites; a rational affection and useful precepts would perhaps make a deeper impression.

For ten years, Mad. d'Ervins lived tolerably happy with her husband. Solitude and a regulated education prolonged her infancy; but it was to be feared the world would prove injurious to her repose; and, unfortunately, I was the first cause of the time which she passed at Bourdeaux, and the occasion that occurred of introducing her to the acquaintance of M. de Serbellane a Tuscan, about thirty years of age, who had left Italy three months before, and had been led to visit France in consequence of the Revolution. A friend to liberty, he wished to fix his abode in a country which was fighting for it. He came to see me, in consequence of former connexions between our families. I set off a few days after; but I, already, had
some

some reason to fear that he had made a deep impression on the heart of Theresa. In the course of the last six months, she repeatedly wrote to me that she was uneasy, that she was unhappy, but without explaining the cause of her affliction. M. de Serbellane arrived, a few days ago, in Paris, and immediately waited upon me; but not finding me at home, he left a letter for me from Theresa, which contains the whole of her story.

About six months after my departure, M. de Serbellane had been instrumental in saving her husband and herself from the dangers to which they were exposed from the hatred entertained by the peasantry against M. d'Ervins. The courage, coolness, and firmness evinced, on that occasion, by M. de Serbellane, made an impression upon the lofty vanity of M. d'Ervins, who begged he would make his house his home. There he resided for six months, during which time Theresa could not resist the sentiments of affection which he

he excited in her bosom. Remorse soon took possession of her mind, and, without abating the violence of her passion, served only to multiply her dangers, and to betray her secret. Her safety was equally endangered by her love, and the self-reproaches with which it was accompanied. M. de Serbellane was apprehensive lest M. d'Ervin's should perceive the partiality of his wife, and lest the same vanity which now served to blind him, should be inflamed to madness, if he ever came to discover the truth. Theresa herself was anxious for the departure of her lover; but the moment he set off, her regret became so excessive, that I am in daily dread of her soliciting her husband to conduct her to Paris.

It is necessary that I should give a description of M. de Serbellane, before you can conceive how, with so much judgment and even coolness in his affections, he has been able to inspire Theresa with so ardent an attachment. In the first place, I think

I think it will be generally found, that a man of a cold temperament easily conciliates the affections of a heart susceptible of passion. He captivates you, and sustains your interest, by making you suppose a secret beyond what he expresses; and even his defect of ardour, for a time at least, still more excites the anxiety and sensibility of a female. Connexions thus formed are, perhaps, not the happiest, nor the most durable; but they more powerfully agitate the heart which is weak enough to indulge them.

Theresa, solitary, romantic, and unhappy, was so hurried away by her own feelings, that M. de Serbellane cannot be accused of having seduced her. His countenance is engaging and dignified; his features have the expression common to the natives of the south of Europe, while, from his manner, he might be taken for an Englishman. There is something very striking in the contrast which his animated figure makes with his calm accent, and
the

the uniform circumspection of his deportment. His mind is grave and energetic. His principal fault, in my estimation, is that he never sufficiently familiarizes even those to whom he is most attached. He has so complete a command of himself, that there must always be felt a sort of inequality in one's intercourse with a man, who, during the whole of the day, does not utter a single involuntary expression. This reserve must not, however, be imputed to any sentiment of dissimulation or distrust, but to his constant habit of commanding himself, and of observing others.

A large fund of good nature, and a secret disposition to melancholy, excite the confidence of those who are attached to him, and create a desire to merit his esteem. A refined and delicate choice of words gives an occasional insight into his character. He seems to perceive, and even secretly to participate in the sensibility of others, and, in the recesses of his heart, to make a return to the emotion which is expressed

expressed towards him. But all that he feels in this way appears as behind a cloud, and in his company persons of a lively imagination are neither totally discouraged, nor entirely satisfied.

A man of this description must have necessarily acquired an extensive influence over Theresa; but from this she derives no increase of happiness, as to all her other troubles is to be added the continual alarm of losing even the esteem of her lover. Distracted by the most opposite sentiments, by the remorse of having loved, and the fear of not being sufficiently loved in return, her letters describe her as in such a state of agitation, that every thing is to be dreaded from a conflict too violent for her mind and her reason.

In the evening of the same day on which I received Theresa's letter, I met M. de Serbellane at Mad. Vernesis'. I went up to him, and said I wished to speak with him. He rose from his chair, and with his wonted expression of calmness, followed me

me into the garden. I told him, without entering into any detail, that I had been informed by Mad. d'Ervins of every thing which interested her, but that I shuddered at her project of coming to Paris.—“It is impossible,” continued I, “with the disposition which you know Theresa to possess, that her tenderness for you should not be speedily discovered by the idle penetrating observers of this country. M. d'Ervins will learn his own wrongs from treacherous pleasantries, and the wound which they will inflict on his pride, will be much more terrible. Write, therefore, to Mad. d'Ervins; it is for you to dissuade her from her designs.”—“Madam,” replied M. de Serbellane, “should I write to entreat her not to meet me again, she would see nothing in that conduct but an abatement of my tenderness for her, and the pain which I should thus occasion would be the severest of all. Does it become me, who am guilty of having seduced her, now to assume the language of friendship in

in order to direct her? I should shock her heart, I should afflict her, and my conduct would not be truly delicate, for there is no delicacy but in perfect goodness.”—“But,” said I, “you notwithstanding display, in all circumstances, such strength of reason.”—“Sometimes,” interrupted M. de Serbellane, “I do so, when I myself only am concerned; but I think there is a sort of barbarity in applying the principles of reason to the sorrows of others, and, upon such occasions, I never have recourse to it.”—“How then,” said I, “will you proceed, should Mad. d’Ervin actually come to town, ruin herself, and be abandoned by her husband?”—“It is my wish, Madam,” replied M. de Serbellane, “that Theresa should not come to Paris. I should consent to the painful sacrifice of seeing her no more, were that necessary to her repose; but should she arrive here, and a breach take place between her and her husband, I will devote my life to her interests, and, on the supposition that the laws

laws of France admit of divorce, I will marry her.”—“Is that your determination,” exclaimed I,—“marry her who is a catholic and a devotee!”—“I only inform you,” calmly resumed M. de Serbellane, “of what I am ready to do for her, should her happiness require it; but it is much better that both of us should remain as we are; and I hope that you will prevail with her not to come.”—“Permit me, Sir,” rejoined I, “to remark that your conversation displays a singular mixture of passion and coldness.”

“You have delivered your opinion, madam,” replied M. de Serbellane, “a little too hastily, that coldness forms any part of my character. From my infancy, timidity and pride, conjoined, have given me the habit of repressing the external signs of my emotions. Without detaining you too long with an account of myself, I will tell you, that, like most young men, I committed many faults on my entrance into the world; that these faults have,
from

from a combination of circumstances, been attended with fatal consequences, and that in all the sorrows which I have experienced, I have retained a sufficient degree of tranquillity as to my own impressions; but a profound interest in the destiny of those who are, in any respect, dependent upon me. The impetuous passions always have for their object personal gratification. These passions have lost much of their power over my heart; but I am not callous to my duties; and I can do nothing better than to avoid giving pain to those who love me, now that I can no longer have any lively relish for the pleasures of life, nor any ardent desire directed exclusively to my own happiness."

In uttering these words there was an expression of melancholy depicted in the countenance of M. de Serbellane. I felt for him that kind of sentiment which is excited in us by the misfortunes of a man of superior character. I grasped his hand as I would that of a brother; he conceived all that

that I felt, and thanked me; but his heart soon after closed: I thought I could even discern, that he was afraid of being led to talk much more of himself; and I followed him into the saloon, to which he returned of his own accord. I have seen him twice since this conversation; but he always avoided talking to me when alone; and there is a coldness in his manner which renders familiarity impossible. Yet he regards me with more interest, addresses himself to me in a general conversation, and I am inclined to think that he wishes to intimate, that the person to whom he has even once opened his heart, will ever be distinguished by him from the rest of the world. But, alas! my friend cannot, will not, be happy, and her bosom will continue to be torn at once by love and remorse. How ought I to thank Heaven for the principles of morality with which you have inspired me; and perhaps even also for those sentiments which may be called romantic, but which, by exciting exalted ideas

ideas of personal dignity and of love, guard one against the seductions of the world, as being too far beneath the chimeras that might have formed the object of terror.

I shall devote my life, I hope, to the interests of my friends, and make the promotion of their happiness my only occupation. I feel deeply interested in the marriage of Matilda; and I should take a still greater pleasure in it, if she made a warm return to my friendship. But all her measures are calculated, all her expressions are studied. I anticipate her answers; I am prepared for her visits. Though there is no deception in her character, there is so little met of easy carelessness, that with her you may divine the complection of your future life with as much precision as if it were already past.

I repeat to you, my dear Louisa, that I wish to return to you, since you are not disposed to come to Paris. How can I renounce the perfect pleasures of our intimacy! Adieu.

LETTER IX.

MADAME DE VERNON TO M. DE CLASIMIN,
AT HIS SEAT NEAR MONTPELLIER.

Paris, May 2.

STILL uneasy, my dear Clasimin, respecting the debt which I have contracted with you! Have I not repeatedly written to you, that the claims of Mad. de Mondoville upon the succession of M. de Vernon were adjusted by the marriage of her son with my daughter? I am to settle upon Matilda, as her dowry, the estate of Andelys, which produces a rental of twenty thousand livres, a sum much larger than her father's fortune. I therefore owe her no account of my guardianship. I had no other embarrassment than this account, and the different sums I had to pay Mad. de Mondoville out of the succession of M. de Vernon. But it is to be stipulated in the marriage

marriage contract, that these debts shall not be paid until after my death; and I am thus relieved from putting Matilda in possession of her father's property. I can, therefore, assure you, that your sixty thousand livres shall be remitted to you in less than two months.

To set your mind completely at ease, I shall add that I have not purchased the estate of Andelys: it is a present from Mad. d'Albemar to my daughter. I had, hitherto, thought this confidence unnecessary, and I entreat you will keep it a profound secret. Mad. d'Albemar is very rich, and I do not think there is any breach of delicacy in accepting from her a gift, which, considerable as it appears, is not one third of the fortune settled upon her by her husband. The greater part, you know, of that fortune will return to our family. I saw nothing to prevent me from turning the beneficence of Mad. d'Albemar to the advantage of my daughter and my creditors;

F 2

ditors; but there is no use in making the details of the transaction public.

Your man of business alarmed your fears, by stating to you as a fact, that I was immediately to repay Mad. d'Albemar the forty thousand livres which she lent me at Montpellier. The report is entirely groundless; she never thinks of demanding payment. You would send me twenty letters about your debt, before Mad. d'Albemar would write one upon the subject of her's. Do not be angry, my dear Clasimin, at this assertion. At twenty years of age, one has not the same ideas as at forty. Inattention to self-interest is sometimes engaging in a young person: a due estimation of it is a thing extremely natural at our time of life.

Mad. d'Albemar, the handsomest and most sprightly of women, never thinks that it is necessary for her to submit her conduct to any sort of calculation; hence she may do much mischief to herself, but never to
any

any body else. She sees every thing, knows every thing, when men and manners are to be considered only in a general point of view; but in her own affairs and affections, she is entirely actuated by the first impulse, and never applies her judgment to the regulation of her feelings; fearing, perhaps, that it would destroy those illusions which she delights to cherish. From her fantastic spouse, and a deformed sister, she has received an education altogether philosophical, and altogether romantic. But what is that to us! she is only the more amiable for it; and cool reflecting people are well enough pleased to meet with those giddy characters, upon whom they are always sure of having some hold. Leave the business, therefore, to me, my dear Clasimin; permit me to accomplish the marriage which occupies my attention, and which is necessary in order to satisfy your just demands; and regard this letter, the longest, I believe, I have written in the whole course of my life, as a proof of my

anxiety to dissipate all your fears, and of the confidence of an old and very faithful friendship.

SOPHIA DE VERNON.

LETTER X.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

Paris, May 3.

I YESTERDAY passed an evening at Mad. de Vernon's, which has singularly excited my curiosity. I know not whether it will make the same impression upon you.

The Spanish Ambassador, yesterday, introduced to my aunt an old Spanish Duke, M. de Mendoza, who is going in a diplomatic character, to Germany. Having just come from Madrid, and being related to Mad. de Mondoville, Mad. de Vernon asked him a few plain questions respecting
L once

Leonce de Mondoville, He seemed, at first, extremely embarrassed in his replies; and, the Spanish Ambassador happening to come up with him as he was speaking, he said, in a very loud tone, that he had not seen M. de Mondoville for six weeks, and that he had not returned to his mother's house. The studied manner in which he thus expressed himself gave me some uneasiness; and as Mad. de Vernon was equally affected by it, I employed every means of knowing something further upon the subject.

I entered into conversation with a Spaniard whom I had seen once or twice before, and whom I had remarked as a sensible, well-informed man, but somewhat sarcastic. I asked whether he knew the Duke de Mendoza—"Very little," replied he; "but this I know, that there is not a man in the whole court of Spain who is penetrated with such respect for power. It is truly curious to see him salute a minister. His shoulders bend, the moment

he discovers him, with a promptitude and activity altogether amusing; and when he raises himself, he continues to regard him with an air so obliging, so affectionate, I had almost said, so languishing, that I am persuaded he has been actually in love with all those who have had any credit at the Court of Spain for thirty years past. His conversation is no less curious than his external deportment. He begins sentences which he leaves the minister to finish; and he finishes those which the minister has begun. Upon whatever subject the minister speaks, the Duke de Mendoza accompanies him with a gracious smile, and with those petty terms of approbation which resemble a thorough bass, and which, though very monotonous to the ears of the by-standers, are probably very agreeable to him to whom they are addressed. When he finds an opportunity of accusing the minister of taking too little care of his health, and of being too attentive to business, it is difficult to conceive

with what energy he impresses those dangerous truths. From the tone in which he speaks, one would imagine he was running every risk for the satisfaction of his conscience; and it is only upon reflection one discovers that, in order to vary the stale forms of common adulation, he attempts that blunt species of flattery which is not so hackneyed. His heart is not naturally bad; he would prefer avoiding to do harm, and he is induced to do it entirely from motives of interest. He possesses, if one may use the expression, the *innocence of meanness*. He does not even surmise that there is any other principle of morals, or of honor, than that of succeeding with men in power. He looks upon every man as a fool, nay almost a knave, who does not imitate his conduct. Is any of his friends degraded, he that instant drops all connection with him, without any explanation, but merely as a matter of course. If, by chance, he is asked whether he has seen him, he answers, "You know well enough

that in the present circumstances I could not’—and here breaking off, he knits his brows, his never failing indication of the importance which he attaches to the displeasure of his master. But if you do not understand that look, he assumes a peculiar firmness of tone, and explains the servile motives of his conduct, with as much confidence as a man of integrity would shew in telling you that he had ceased to see a friend who had forfeited his esteem. He is not respected at the Court of Madrid, yet he always obtains important missions; for placemen have, by this time, certainly learnt to laugh at their flatterers, though not to give the preference to men of independent character; and flatterers attain every object, not, as formerly, by succeeding in the arts of deception, but by giving proofs of their pliancy, a quality which is always useful to authority.”

This portrait, the truth of which was confirmed in my mind, by the physiognomy and manner of the Duke de Mendoza,

doza, somewhat relieved me as to the embarrassment he had shewn, when speaking of M. de Mondoville. I resolved, however, to make some further enquiry; and, after thanking the witty Spaniard, I rejoined the company.

I detained the Duke under various pretences; and when the Ambassador departed, and there were but few persons present, Mad. de Vernon and I took the Duke aside, and I formally asked whether he did not know something respecting M. de Mondoville, which might prove interesting to the friends of his mother? He looked around, in order to be more completely assured that the Ambassador was gone, and then addressed me in these terms:—
“ I will speak plainly to you, Madam, since you take an interest in Leonce. His situation is bad, but I do not regard it as desperate, could he be brought to listen to reason. He is a young man of five and twenty years of age, of a charming figure, to which all Paris cannot produce a parallel;

lel; of lively parts, but extremely obstinate; jealous to madness, of what he calls reputation, that is, public opinion; and ready, for that opinion, or even its shadow, to sacrifice the most important interests of life. I will tell you what has happened. A cousin of M. de Mondoville's, a very good-hearted and a very handsome young man, paid his addresses this winter to Mad^{lle}. de Sorane, the niece of our present minister, his Excellency Count de Sorane. In a very short period he gained her affections, and seduced her. I must, indeed, confess to you, since we are talking confidentially on this occasion, that Mad^{lle}. Sorane, who is turned of five and twenty, and who lost both her parents at an early age, had, for several years before, mixed rather too freely with the world. Suspicions, whether just or unjust I will not pretend to say, were entertained of her conduct. But, in the present instance, it seems she was at last resolved to get married, and she made an explicit declaration to that

that effect of her own intentions, and those of her uncle the minister. There was no room for hesitation; Charles de Mondoville could not make a better match; there was fortune, credit, birth, every thing that could be desired, and I positively know that such was his own opinion. But Leonce, who exercises over the rest of the family an authority much above his age—Leonce, whom they all consult as the oracle of honour, declared, that it was unworthy of his cousin to espouse a woman whose conduct had been contemptible; and, what is the height of folly, added, that it was precisely because she was the niece of a man very high in power, that he must avoid marrying her—"My cousin," said he, "might make a bad marriage, were it evident that love is his only inducement; but as there may be grounds for suspicion, in this instance, that he is impelled by considerations of interest or of fear, I will never see him again if he gives his consent." *arad^{le}* de Sorane's brother fought

fought with the relation of M. de Mondoville, and was severely wounded. All Madrid thought that the marriage would take place, as soon as his cure was completed. It was reported that the minister had declared he would send Charles de Mondoville's regiment to the West Indies, if he did not marry Mad^{lle}. de Sorane, who, it is said, was uncommonly attached to her intended husband. But Leonce, with an infatuation which I abstain from calling by its proper name, despised the menace of the minister; sought every occasion of shewing that he braved it; instigated his cousin to an open breach with the family of Mad^{lle}. de Sorane; and told every one he met that he waited only for the recovery of her brother, in order to fight him, if he should be disposed to give him the preference to his cousin. The two families were involved in the quarrel. Charles de Mondoville received orders to set out for the West Indies; Mad^{lle}. de Sorane was left inconsolable,

able, and with a ruined reputation. To complete the catalogue of misfortune, Leonce gave so much displeasure to his Majesty, that he has never since made his appearance at court. You will of course understand, that since that time I have not seen him; and, having left Spain before the brother of Mad^{lle}. de Sorane was cured, I am not acquainted with the consequences of this affair, but I much fear that they will prove to be very serious, and of great injury to Leonce."

The Spaniard, of whom I had enquired respecting the character of the Duke de Mendoza, drawing near to us at this moment, and hearing the name of M. de Mondoville mentioned, said—"I am acquainted with him, and know all the details of the event of which the Duke has just informed you: permit me to add a few observations, which I think necessary. Leonce, it is true, conducted himself in that affair with a great deal of haughtiness; yet he was the object of general admiration,

tion,

tion, on account of those very motives which aggravate his guilt in the opinion of his Grace the Duke. The influence of Mad^{lle}. de Sorane's family was so great, the threats of the Minister were so public, and the conduct of Mad^{lle}. de Sorane so bad, that it was impossible for any man who should marry her to escape the imputation of imbecillity. M. de Mondoville ought, perhaps, to have entirely left his cousin to decide for himself; but he advised him as he himself would have acted; he took as prominent a part as he could, in order to turn the danger upon his own head; and perhaps the sequel will prove, that in this he has been but too successful. He gave a part of his own fortune to his cousin, as a compensation for his voyage to the West Indies. In short, the whole of his conduct demonstrated that he would shrink from no personal sacrifice, in order to preserve from the slightest stain the reputation of a man who bore the name of his family. The character of M. de Mondoville

doville combines, in the highest degree, dignity, courage, intrepidity; in a word, every thing which can inspire respect. His youthful companions, without his requiring it, and almost against his wishes, pay the most implicit deference to his counsels. His mind possesses a vigour, an energy, which, tempered by the goodness of his heart, every where inspires the highest consideration. When he has been passing, I have frequently seen a party make way for him, from an involuntary movement, at which his friends smiled upon reflection, but which, like every other natural impression, continued to be repeated the moment they were off their guard. It may be true, nevertheless, that Leonce de Mondoville carried, to too high a pitch, his respect for opinion; and it were to be wished, for his own happiness, that he could in some measure disengage himself from its fetters; but in the affair which the Duke has just mentioned to you, his conduct proves his general esteem; and, in

in my opinion, every one who is attached to him ought to be proud of it."

The Duke made no reply to the advocate of Leonce. There was no advantage to be derived from the contest; and those who make interest their only guide through life, do not argue with much warmth in support of the opinions which they profess, nor against those which they oppose. They practise the habits of concession and silence with their equals, that they may be better prepared to exercise them towards their superiors.

The result of all this discussion is, that I have conceived a very strong curiosity to become perfectly acquainted with the character of Leonce. M. Barton, his preceptor and best friend, and who has performed the part of a father to him for these ten years, is expected here to-morrow; and I may confide in what he shall say of his pupil. But is it not already a trait, which does honour to a young man, to have preserved not only a feeling of esteem, but

also of attachment and friendship, for one who must necessarily have frequently re-proved his faults, and even thwarted his inclinations? All the sentiments which spring from gratitude possess a religious character; they elevate the soul of him who feels them. Ah! how fervently do I wish, that Mad. de Vernon may have made a good choice. The peace of her inward life must depend upon the spouse of her daughter. Matilda herself will never be either very happy, or very unhappy; but it cannot be so with Mad. de Vernon. Let us hope that Leonce, who is so proud, so irritable, and yet so generally admired, will be found to possess that goodness, without which a man of strong feelings and superior understanding, instead of being a desirable companion, becomes rather an object of terror.

LETTER

LETTER XI.

DELPHINE TO MADAME D'ALBEMAR.

Paris, May 4.

M. BARTON arrived yesterday. I guessed it was he the moment he entered Mad. de Vernon's parlour. While the rest of the company were engaged in play or conversation, he was seated by himself on one side of the fire-place. Matilda, who was on the other side, did not attempt to say a word to him. He seemed embarrassed from his appearance among so many persons to whom he was entirely unknown. Of all societies, that of Paris is perhaps the society in which a stranger at first occasions the greatest restraint. We are accustomed to comprehend each other with such rapidity, to allude to so many received opinions, so many usages and pleasantries already understood, that the moment a new face is introduced,

introduced, we are afraid of being obliged to make a comment upon every word. I felt for the embarrassing situation of M. de Barton, and went and seated myself beside him without any hesitation. In my opinion, it is doing one a real kindness to relieve him from difficulties of this sort, however unimportant they may be in themselves.

M. Barton is a man of respectable physiognomy: he is dressed in a brown suit, and wears his hair without powder: his exterior is impressive, and he looks more like an Englishman or American, than a Frenchman? Have you never remarked, how easy it is, at the first glance, to perceive the rank which a Frenchman occupies in the world? His pretensions and anxieties scarcely ever fail to betray him, when he has reason to fear that he may be regarded as inferior; whereas the English and Americans display a calm and habitual dignity, which prevents one from judging of them, or classing them, upon a slight acquaintance.

acquaintance. I at first talked to M. Barton upon indifferent topics. He answered me very politely, but with a brevity, which soon convinced me that he was not anxious to make a display of his talents, and that he was not to be interested by addressing his vanity. I gave way, therefore, to my desire of making some enquiries respecting M. de Mondoville. His features instantly assumed a new expression; and I could easily perceive that, for a long time past, that name was the only topic which could enliven them. As M. Barton knew that I was a near relation of Matilda, he proceeded almost spontaneously to inform me of all the details which concerned Leonce. He told me, that Leonce had passed his childhood alternately in Spain, which was his mother's native soil, and in France, which was that of his father; that he spoke the languages of both countries with equal fluency, and that he always expressed himself with grace and facility. I learnt, in the course of our conversation, that Mad. de Mondoville

Mondoville had an almost insupportable haughtiness of manner, and that Leonce, by softening, with the most attentive and delicate kindness, whatever could tend to hurt the feelings of his preceptor, had inspired him with the most ardent affection. I endeavoured to draw M. Barton into conversation as to what we had been told by the Duke de Mendoza, but he declined answering me. I thought, however, that I could remark the truth of his account, that amidst all the rare qualities of Leonce, he might be reproached with too much vehemence of temper, and particularly with a dread of imputation, carried so far, that the approving testimony of his own mind was not sufficient to constitute his happiness and tranquillity: but this I rather conjectured, than was informed of by M. Barton. He expatiated in praise of the qualities of M. de Mondoville's head and heart, with an energy altogether persuasive. I took a pleasure in talking with him almost the whole of the evening. His simplicity
led

led me to remark, in the somewhat labour-ed graces of the most brilliant circle in Paris, a sort of ridiculousness which had never before struck me. We become habituated to those graces which are sufficiently adapted to the elegance of large societies; but when a natural character appears amongst them, the contrast renders permanent the slightest shades of affectation.

I conversed, almost all the evening, with M. Barton. He spoke of M. de Mondoville with so much warmth and interest, that I was captivated by the very pleasure which I gave him, in listening to him. Besides, a man of truth and simplicity, speaking of a sentiment which has occupied the whole of his life, always rouses the attention of a mind capable of entering into his feelings.

M. de Serbellane, and M. de Fierville, however, came to reproach me with not being what they termed so *brilliant* as usual. I grew angry with them, in consequence

of their teasing importunities, and got rid of them by returning home at an early hour.

How delightful will be the destiny of my cousin, my dear Louisa, if Leonce be such as M. Barton has depicted him ! She will not even receive pain from the only fault which it is possible to find in him, and which, perhaps, is greatly exaggerated. Matilda can run no hazard ; she never exposes herself to censure ; she will, therefore, perfectly suit Leonce. As to myself, I cannot. . . . but I am not now talking of myself, but of Matilda. She will be much happier than I ever can be. Adieu, my dear Louisa ; I must part with you. I feel this evening an indefinite sentiment of melancholy, which to-morrow will doubtless dissipate.—Once more adieu.

LETTER XII.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

Paris, May 8.

I AM dissatisfied with myself, my dear Louisa, and sentence myself, by way of punishment, to give you the recital of a blameable emotion with which I have to reproach myself. It was so transient, that I might almost deny it to my own mind; but to preserve the heart in all its purity, we must not decline self-examination; we must triumph over the repugnance which is felt at confessing the bad sentiments which long lurk in concealment at the bottom of the heart, before they usurp its empire.

For several days M. Barton had been incessantly talking to me of Leonce. He related to me some traits of his life, which stamps him as the noblest of beings. He
once

once shewed me a portrait of him, which Matilda has refused to see, with a refinement of prudery which was truly ridiculous; and with this portrait I confess that I was struck. At length, M. Barton, who daily took greater pleasure in my company, gave me to understand two days ago, towards the end of our conversation, that he did not think the disposition of Matilda calculated to make Leonce happy, and that I was the only woman who was, in his estimation, worthy of his pupil. With whatever ambiguity of manner this insinuation was conveyed, I quickly comprehended it. I was profoundly agitated by it, instantly left M. Barton, and returned home disquieted by the impression I had received from it. A moment's reflection, however, was sufficient to repel, to a great distance, some confused sentiments which it was my duty to banish, as soon as I could perceive them. I resolved to converse no more (in private) with M. Barton, and I imagined this decision had entirely dispelled the image

F 2

which

which had occupied my mind. But yesterday, the moment I entered Mad. de Vernon's, M. Barton came up to me, and said: "I have just received a letter from M. de Mondoville, acquainting me with his departure from Spain—have the goodness to read it;" and with these words he offered me the letter. What pretext had I to refuse it? Besides, my curiosity preceded my reflection; my eye caught the first lines of the letter, and it was impossible for me not to read it throughout. In truth, my dear Louisa, never did any style combine so much simplicity, dignity and goodness; expression always natural, and always demonstrative of sincerity of friendship, and originality of thought; none of those hackneyed phrases, which indicate only the vacancy of the heart; discretion without coldness; a confidence of that serious kind, which may be supposed to exist between a young man and his tutor; a thousand shades which in themselves appear of little importance, but which nevertheless characterize the

the

the habits of one's whole life ; and that elevation of sentiment, the first of qualities, which operates, as by magic, upon hearts of the same mould. The letter concluded with a soft and melancholy allusion to the futurity which awaited him, as connected with a marriage which had been decided upon without his having ever seen Matilda. His mother's inclination, he said, could alone have induced him to submit to it. I repeatedly read over these few words. This circumstance, I suppose, was remarked by M. Barton ; for, said he—" Do you think, madam, that the coldness of Mad^{lle} Vernon can give happiness to a man of such genuine sensibility?" I know not what answer I was about to make, when M. de Serbellane, scarcely giving himself time to salute Mad^{re} de Vernon, begged I would walk with him into the garden. There is so much evenness and reserve in the habitual manner of M. de Serbellane, that I was alarmed by this unaccustomed abruptness, supposing it betokened some extraordinary

F 3

event ;

event; and fearing that some misfortune had befallen Theresa, I precipitately left M. Barton, and followed her friend.—“She will be here in a week,” said M. de Serbellane; “there is no time for you to write to her; we must think only of the means of averting from her, if it be possible, the dangers of this proceeding.”—“Ah! my God!” replied I, “what do you tell me? how! have you not been able to” —“I have, perhaps, been too urgent,” interrupted he; “for I think, I can discover that the anxiety she feels as to my sentiments, is the principal cause of her journey.—I will relieve her from that anxiety,” added he, “for I am devoted to her for life; but when you have seen M. d’Ervines, you will easily conceive how much I ought to be alarmed. From the despotism and violence of his character I have every thing to dread for Theresa, should he discover her sentiments; and though he is not distinguished for quickness of apprehension, his vanity is ever so much

much upon the alert, that in many circumstances, it may supply the place of acuteness and sagacity."

M. de Serbellane continued this conversation for some time, and I was so warmly interested in it, that I was unconscious of its protraction. At length, however, I concluded it with recommending Theresa to the protection of M. de Serbellane.—
"Yes," said I to him, "I shall not fear to request the very man who has been her seducer to become her guide and her brother in this difficult crisis. Theresa is more impassioned than you; she loves you more than you love her; it is therefore your duty to direct her: of the two, the one who cannot live without the other, is the subject and vassal. In Paris, Theresa has neither relations nor friends; watch over her, therefore, as a generous and tender protector, and repair the wrongs you have done her, by those virtues of the heart, all of which originated in benevolence."—In uttering these words with

some warmth, I happened to place my hand upon the arm of M. de Serbellane: he seized it, and pressed it to his lips, with a feeling of which Theresa alone was the object. At this moment M. Barton entered the walk in which we were; but, on observing us, he turned suddenly round, as if to avoid giving us any interruption. I instantly comprehended his meaning, and overtook him before he regained the drawing-room.—“Why do you fly from us?” said I to him, with considerable animation. “From discretion, madam—from discretion!” repeated he, in a manner somewhat affected.—“I see it,” resumed I, “you think that I am in love with M. de Serbellane.”—Can you conceive, my dear Louisa, that I should have been so inconsiderate as to address myself, in this language, to a man with whom I was yet scarcely acquainted? But I had been a prey to such violent emotions for an hour before, and was so much agitated, that I had no time for reflection.—“I think of nothing,

nothing, madam," replied M. Barton ;
" what right have I to"—" Ah !
how I detest those evasions," said I, " with
a person of my character !"—" But per-
mit me, madam," interrupted M. Barton,
" to observe, that I have not long had the
honour of being acquainted with you."—
" True," said I, yet I should think it very
easy to form an opinion of me in a few
moments ; but I repeat to you, I do not
love M. de Serbellane, I do not love him ;
if I did, I would tell you so."—" That
would be improper," replied M. Barton ;
" I have not yet merited that degree of
confidence."—Still more disconcerted by
his reasoning, and yet still more uneasy at
the opinion he might entertain of my con-
nections with M. de Serbellane, with a
warmth of feeling which I cannot describe,
and for which I cannot forgive myself, I
was on the point of saying to M. Barton,
" I am not, I swear to you, the object of
M. de Serbellane's solicitude." But even
this sentence, unimportant as it might

F 5

have

have been, I did not finish ; I protest to you, my dear sister, I did not finish it. M. Barton could have learnt nothing, conjectured nothing, from it ; yet I was seized with sincere remorse at the first word which escaped me. I sought a pretence for retiring ; and, reflecting upon my conduct, I was indignant at the culpable motive which had excited in me so much emotion.

I dreaded, I cannot conceal it from myself, I dreaded that M. Barton would inform Leonce that my affections were already engaged : I was solicitous, therefore, that Leonce might prefer me to my cousin. It is I myself who made up the match ; I am bound by a feeling nearly as powerful as that of gratitude—by the services I have done, the acknowledgments I have received, and the rewards I have enjoyed from them ; my friend anticipates the happiness of her daughter, and thinks that to me she is indebted for it——Could I then be the very person who should snatch
the

the prospect from her view? What could have inspired such a thought? A bias of pure imagination for a man whom I have never seen, and who perhaps, if I knew him, might excite my dislike! But what if I really loved him! Would not the most imperious sentiments of delicacy, nevertheless condemn to silence even the sincerest attachment? Do not, however, my dear Louisa, form so bad an opinion of me, as this recital merits. Have you, yourself, never experienced, that we are sometimes conscious of fleeting emotions, the most repugnant to our nature? It is to explain these contrarieties of the human heart, that the expression is resorted to—*these are the workings of the Devil.*

Virtuous sentiments are interwoven with the native texture of the heart; while vicious sentiments seem to proceed from some foreign influence which disturbs the order and harmony of our reflections and our habitual disposition. I request you will fortify my heart by your

counsels : the voice which guides the steps of our infancy, is to us identified with the voice of heaven.

LETTER XIII.

MADemoiselle D'ALBEMAR'S ANSWER TO
DELPHINE.

Montpellier, May 14.

NO! my dear girl, I should not have condemned you, for cherishing a feeling of interest in Leonce; and if he were found worthy of your heart, and returned your affection, I should not easily conceive, why you should sacrifice your own happiness, not to the gratitude which you owe, but to that which you have merited. But be this as it may, alas! there is no longer time for these reflections. It is but too probable, that, at this moment, the unfortunate young man no longer exists for the happiness of any one! I have the melancholy commission

to transmit to you the enclosed letter. You must shew it to Mr. Barton, and acquaint Mad. de Vernon and her daughter with the extinction of their brightest hopes. This is the only occasion on which I have felt any warmth of feeling for Mad. de Vernon; but it is unnecessary to add any thing, on my part, to what you will express to her. The being who possesses your friendship, my dear Delphine, can never experience the want of the most tender consolations; and it is you whom I most lament when your friends are unhappy.

I have not the least doubt that it is the base brother of Mad^{lle} de Sorane who has been the perpetrator of this abominable crime.

“ Bayonne, May 10, 1790.

“ As you are a relation, Mademoiselle, of Mad. de Vernon's, you must certainly know her address at Paris; and you will transmit to M. Barton, who is supposed to be

be at present at her house, the intelligence of the melancholy accident which has befallen his pupil, whose only anxiety is to see his preceptor, whom, he says, is at this moment at Mad. de Vernon's in Paris. Poor M. Leonce de Mondoville was recommended to me by a merchant at Madrid, and I expected his arrival yesterday evening; but little did I imagine that he would have been conveyed to me in so deplorable a condition.

“ In crossing the Pyrenees he walked a little part of the way, while his carriage and his domestic went on before him. In the dusk of the evening he received two wounds of a poinard in the breast, from two men whom he knows, as far as I can learn, from some words which have escaped him, but whose names nothing can induce him to mention. His domestic not seeing him come up, turned back, and found him lying senseless in the middle of the road through the forest. He applied to some peasants, and with their assistance

Leonce

Leonce was conveyed to my house in the same state of insensibility. He was supposed to be dead; but, within this hour he has uttered a few words, to the effect which I have already stated, of requesting that his preceptor should be sent for with the utmost expedition, and that his mother should by no means be informed of his situation.

“The judge has been with me to take his deposition with respect to the assassins. But he refused to give any information; a conduct which I really think too generous. In all respects, however, it is impossible to conceive a more interesting young man; and it is with genuine sorrow, Mademoiselle, that I am compelled to inform you, that the surgeons have pronounced his wound to be mortal. He is so handsome, so young, and so good, that every body weeps at this decision; and my poor family, in particular, are deeply affected by it. Lose no time, I entreat you, Madam, in sending his preceptor.

He

He will arrive too late ; but, at all events, he will direct us how to act.

“ I have the honour to be, with respect, Mademoiselle, your most humble and most obedient servant,

“ TELIN, *Merchant at Bayonne.*”

LETTER XIV.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

May 19.

AH! my dear sister! of what do you inform me! I am in a state of inexpressible anguish; fearing to lose a moment in apprizing M. Barton, and shuddering at the sorrow which I am doomed to make him feel. I have also to inform Mad. de Vernon and Matilda. How strongly do I sympathise in their affliction! My poor Sophia! the son of her friend! the destined spouse of her daughter!—and Matilda! Ah! How do I reproach myself for
having

having blamed her excessive devotion! Never, perhaps, will she be happy; if her heart had ever opened to the hope of being loved, what would be her present sufferings? Still, she has never seen him—but I, likewise, have never seen him! yet I am bathed in tears, and have not strength enough left to discharge my melancholy duty! But I must submit to it—I go—adieu. In the evening I will give you the result of this cruel task.

At Midnight.

M. Barton, my dear Louisa, set out an hour ago. Worthy man, how much is he to be pitied! Ah! how truly heart-rending are the griefs of advanced life! Alas! old age itself is an habitual sorrow, which embitters all the other vexations to which it is exposed.

I went to Mad. de Vernon's at six o'clock. I asked for M. Barton at the gate. He instantly came to me with an alert and cheerful air, which gave me considerable pain. Nothing can be more affecting than

than the ignorance of a calamity which has already happened, and that tranquillity of countenance which a single word is to destroy. M. Barton stepped into my carriage, and I gave orders to drive us to some distance from Paris. I was contriving several methods of announcing to him this dreadful event: but he quickly remarked the change of my features, and feelingly inquired whether I had met with any misfortune? The very interest which he took in my happiness, prevented him from having the slightest idea that the cause of my pain was one in which he himself was so immediately concerned. I still hesitated as to what I should say; but at length, conceiving there was no possible preparation for such an affliction, I put into his hand the fatal letter.

——“Read it,” said I, with courage and resignation, and without forgetting the friends whom you have left, and whom your unhappiness will attach to you for ever.”—Scarcely did this excellent man

see the name of Leonce, when he grew pale. He twice read over the letter, as if he could not credit the intelligence which it contained.

At last he let fall the letter, covered his face with both his hands, and wept bitterly, without uttering a word. I accompanied him with tears, alarmed at his silence, and waiting for his first expressions, to discover from what source he should derive consolation. I prayed to Heaven for that utterance which can mollify the wounds of the heart. "Oh Leonce," at length exclaimed he, "glory of my life, sole interest of a man without rank, without name, without destiny, is it for me to survive you? Why should this aged blood circulate in my veins, when yours has ceased to flow? What death has fate in reserve for me? Ah! Madam," said he, "you are young and beautiful, you take pity on an old man; but you can form no idea of the closing sorrows of an existence without futurity, without hope! You knew
not

not my friend, my noble friend, whom the monsters have assassinated. Why would he not name them? But I know them, and will make them known. They shall not live, after having destroyed one of the noblest productions of heaven!" He then called to remembrance the most amiable traits of the infancy and youth of his pupil. He no longer described to me the handsome, proud, spirited Leonce; he no longer retraced those graces and talents which were calculated to please in the world: he dwelt only upon those affecting qualities, the recollection of which is so painfully united with the idea of an eternal separation.

I was agitated by a cruel uncertainty. Ought I, by reminding M. Barton that Leonce had sent for him, to fix his imagination on the possibility of his yet seeing him, and of contributing perhaps to his cure? M. Barton dropped not a single word which indicated such an idea. Was he afraid to entertain it? Did he dread a relapse

relapse of sorrow after a revival of hope? My dear Louisa, with what trembling anxiety do we address a person who is truly unhappy! How apprehensive are we of not selecting the expressions suited to the occasion, and of unskilfully touching the sorrows of a broken heart!

At length, however, I said to M. Barton that he should set off, and that he might, perhaps, still flatter himself with finding Leonce alive. This last expression, from which I expected so much, produced no effect. He listened to every word, but without indulging the hope which I presented to his view. At the age of M. Barton, the heart is not easily moved; its impressions are not speedily renovated; and the same feeling continues to oppress it without any interval of consolation.

Nevertheless, from that moment he spoke only of his departure. He requested I would return with him to Mad. de Vernon's, and I gave orders to that effect. It was agreed between us, that he should
set

set out that very evening in my carriage, and that one of my servants, who is younger than his, should go on before, in order to expedite his journey. He was somewhat revived by attending to these details. Whilst there remains any thing to be done for the being who interests us, our strength is supported, and our hearts do not sink under the pressure of sorrow. We had by this time arrived at my aunt's. Scarcely thinking of what she was doomed to feel, I myself was seized with the most violent emotion. I permitted M. Barton to enter Mad. de Vernon's chamber by himself, while I stopped a few minutes in the parlour to recover myself. At length, subduing the weakness which hindered me from offering consolation to my friend, I entered her apartment. I found her more tranquil than I expected. M. Barton remained silent; Matilda contained herself with some difficulty. Mad. de Vernon came and embraced me. I made an effort to approach Matilda; I observed her alternately

nately redden and grow pale ; she pressed my hand in a friendly manner, but instantly left the chamber, making it a point of conscience, I suppose, neither to feel nor to shew any lively emotion.

Mad. de Vernon then said to me—" Can you think that this very instant I have received a letter from Mad. de Mondoville, to inform me of her consent to the marriage, according to the new proposals I had made to her ! It at the same time announces the departure of her son." I clasped Mad. de Vernon a second time in my arms. " At length," said she to me, with her characteristic fortitude, " let us make every preparation to hasten the departure of M. Barton, and submit ourselves to the course of events."—" There is no preparation to make for my journey," said M. Barton, in a tone which I thought expressive of a displeasure, somewhat unjust, at the apparent tranquillity of Mad. de Vernon—" Mad. de Albemar has kindly provided every thing, and I am just setting

ting off.”—“It is all very well,” replied Mad. de Vernon, who perceived M. Barton’s dissatisfaction; and then addressing herself to me, said, in a sort of whisper—“What a degree of zeal and affection he shews for his pupil!”—You must have occasionally remarked, that Mad. de Vernon has a habit of thus directing her praises of any one to a third person, and expressing herself as if unconscious of his presence. But the unhappy Barton did not pay the least attention to her; he was far from thinking of what impression his grief might make upon others. Had he retained any presence of mind, it would have tended rather to conceal than to make an ostentatious display of it.

Absorbed in anxiety, he left the apartment, without saying a single word to Mad. de Vernon. I followed in order to bring him to my house, where he was to be furnished with every thing necessary for his journey. When we were seated in the carriage, he said, talking to himself—
“My

“My dear Leonce, your only friends—your unhappy preceptor, and your poor mother!” And then, turning towards me:—“Yes!” exclaimed he, “I will travel day and night, in order to see him once more; perhaps he may still be able to bid me a last adieu. I will pass the rest of my life near his tomb, to watch over his last remains, and thus shew myself worthy of being interred in the same grave.”—As he thus spoke, the unfortunate old man gave way to a fresh paroxysm of despair.—“Madam,” then said he to me, “in your presence I shed tears; a moment ago, I was calm; your goodness will not reject this mournful proof of confidence—I am convinced you will not reject it.”

On my arrival at home, I took every precaution, that I could think of, to render M. Barton's journey as comfortable and as expeditious as possible. He was sensible of my attentions, and, when just ready to step into the carriage, said to me—“Ma-

onne, in my absence, I dare not say from Leonce, but, should it so happen, even from Leonce himself, open them ; you will see what they may require to be done, and write to me at Bourdeaux.”—“ Is it not Mad. de Vernon,” said I, “ that ought to” —“ No !” replied he, “ Madam, permit me to repeat that it is you whom I wish to perform that office. Alas ! at this parting moment, when it is but too probable that I shall never again see you, permit me to declare to you a thought, perhaps an absurd one, which I had conceived for the benefit of my unfortunate pupil. I did not think that he could be, in any respect, happy with Mad^{lle} de Vernon, and in you I ventured to remark every thing that could best accord with his mind and his feelings.” I was about to answer him, but he pressed my hand with a kind of paternal affection, which reminded me of M. d’Albemar, and never exci-
cenced it without emotion.

“ Be not offended, Madam”

dom

dom of an old man, who cherishes Leonce as a son, and whom your kindnesses have touched to the heart. Alas ! these soothing chimeras are all dispelled by death ! Death ! O my God !"—He darted out of my chamber, and threw himself into the coach in an agony which redoubled my pity.

Being now left alone, I could give way to that sorrow which I also experienced. It was enough for me to sympathize in the sufferings of others, but that which I myself felt was not less painful, though the destiny of the unfortunate young man was totally unallied to mine. My aunt and my cousin regret him for their own sakes, and on account of the happiness he was to procure them ; I, whom fate has irrevocably torn from him, weep for a heart so excellent, a mind so liberally endowed, perishing in the dawn of life. Yes ! if he appears in worship him in my heart ; I of my attentions myself that I have loved him, step into the carriage with him ; and I shall prove him should any memory. This will be a

pleasing feeling—the object of a melancholy unmixed with bitterness. I will solicit his portrait from M. Barton ; and ever will I preserve the image as that of a hero of romance, whose prototype is no longer in existence. It is some time since I renounced the hope of ever meeting one who should possess all the affections of my heart ; I am now assured of it, and this certainty is all that is necessary to enable me quietly to descend into the vale of life.

But Leonce may live ; if he do, he will be the husband of Matilda ; then there will be more chimeras, but accompanied with more regrets. Adieu, my dear Louisa : it is possible, that I shall shortly rejoin you for ever. • •

LETTER XV.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

Paris, May 22.

I THIS evening found more attractions than ever, in the conversation of Mad. de Vernon, and yet, for the first time, has my heart made her a real reproach. In speaking of her to you, with so much frankness, my dear Louisa, I give you the greatest possible mark of confidence; but do not, I entreat you, make any inference unfavourable to my friend. I may be mistaken as to a fault which a thousand motives might excuse. But I am assuredly right, when I reflect that the inmost qualities of the soul can alone inspire that perfect delicacy in discourse, and even in the most trifling phrases, which renders so attractive the conversation of Mad. de Vernon.

I had been painfully agitated during the whole of the day. The image of Leonce still pursued me ; I could not shut my eyes without seeing him wounded, bleeding, and ready to expire. My imagination painted him in the most engaging features, and this picture incessantly drew forth my tears. About eight in the evening, I went to Mad. de Vernon's. Matilda had passed the whole day at church, and on her return had gone to bed, without testifying the slightest desire of conversing with her mother. I therefore found Sophia alone, and sufficiently pensive ; I myself was still more so. We sat down together on one of the seats in her garden, at first, without exchanging a word ; but she soon brightened up, and made me pass an hour in a state of mind much better than I could have expected. The mildness, and even softness of her conversation possess an indescribable grace, which suspended my sufferings. She followed my impressions in order to alleviate

ate

ate them; she did not combat any of my feelings, but imperceptibly modified them. I was less melancholy, without knowing to what to attribute the change; so it was, however, that in her society I felt somewhat relieved.

I directed our conversation to those grand topics to which the mind, when under the impression of melancholy, is irresistibly borne;—the uncertainty of human destiny, the ambition of our desires, the bitterness of our regrets, the fear of death, the fatigue of life, in short, all those wanderings of the heart in which feeling souls are most apt to indulge. She took a pleasure in listening to me, and whilst she encouraged me to proceed, occasionally introduced some just and apposite remarks, and sustained and reanimated my ideas as often as she found them beginning to flag. When I entered her house, I was dejected and dissatisfied with my feelings, without wishing to declare it. But she must, I should think, have divined every thing which occupied

G 4

cupied my thoughts, for she spoke precisely what my situation required. She raised me, by degrees, in my own esteem; I was better pleased with myself; and it was only upon reflection that I discovered it was she who had thus modified my most secret thoughts. In short, I felt considerable consolation in the inmost recesses of my heart, and, at the same time, was perfectly aware that, in quitting Sophia, I should again become a prey to anxiety and dejection.

This presentiment led me to exclaim with a degree of enthusiasm——“ Ah! my friend, let us not separate; let us pass many a long hour in conversing with each other; I shall experience a relapse, the moment you cease to talk to me!”—As I uttered these words, a domestic entered and informed Mad. de Vernon, that M. de Fierville wished to see her, though he was told at the gate that she was not at home to any body!—“ Refuse his visit, I conjure you, my dear Sophia,”

warmth.—“Do you know,” interrupted Mad. de Vernon, whether the nephew of Mad. de Marset has gained or lost the important process on which all his fortune depended ?”—“My God !” interrupted I, “I was told yesterday that he had gained it ; so that you have not to console M. de Fierville for the regrets of his friend ;—do not see him.”—“I must see him,” said Mad. de Vernon, at the same time making a sign to her domestic to shew him up stairs. I felt hurt, I must confess, and my countenance expressed what I felt. Mad. de Vernon remarked it, and said to me—“It is not on my own account, but that of my daughter”—“What !” exclaimed I with some animation, “do you already think of a substitute for Leonor ? Poor young man ! you have not been long lamented by your mother’s friend !”—I reproached myself for these expressions the moment I had finished them ; for Mad. de Vernon was embarrassed upon hearing them ; and, without any attempt

on her part to detain me, I stood a few minutes after the entrance of M. de Fierville, with my hand upon the key of the drawing-room door, and delaying to open it. Mad. de Vernon at last remarking my position, came up to me, and, without making me any reproach, dwelt much upon the importance which she attached to the union of her daughter with Leonce, and all the circumstances which would render such a marriage a thousand times preferable to any other. She then gradually resumed her accustomed gracefulness of manner, and, after embracing her, I took my leave; but I shall, nevertheless, long retain some traces of what has passed.

Can you conceive that I should be so foolish, my dear Louisa? What, perhaps, has so deeply wounded my feelings, is an expression of indifference for Leonce! Why should I wish that Mad. de Vernon felt a profound regret for him, and that should not look out another husband for her daughter? She has never seen hi

yet is it not true, my dear Louisa, that this would be to console one's self in too short a period, for the loss of so distinguished a young man? Ah! were it possible to preserve his life, it is Matilda who would enjoy the happiness of being loved by him.—She would not have suffered from his danger; yet it is for her he would be re-animated. The calmness of her imagination and her affections preserve her from the bitterest troubles of life. There is no resemblance, Louisa, between her and your

DELPHINE.

LETTER. XVI.

MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR TO DELPHINE.

Montpelier, May 20, 1790.

I LOSE not a moment to acquaint you, my dear Delphine, that M. de Mondoville is better. A skilful surgeon has attended him with much success. As soon as the bleeding was stopped, he was pronounced to be out of danger. He would already have resumed his journey, were it not to be feared that his wounds would be opened again by the motion of the carriage. He has written a letter to M. Barton, which Telin has sent under cover to me, in order to request that you will see it safely delivered. This letter you will find enclosed.

There must be something very
engaging in Leonce, to an old
merchant of Bayonne, Telin

life has been occupied only with the means of making money, to write letters filled from beginning to end with eulogies on the generous qualities of M. de Mondoville. In reality I begin to think that he has turned poor Telin's brain! seriously, it must be an extraordinary species of merit which makes so deep an impression even upon the vulgar class of mankind, and I should confide much more in qualities which produce their effect upon all the world, than in those mysterious superiorities which are recognized only by the adepts.

Dear Delphine, it is by this time very probable, that you will soon have an opportunity of seeing M. de Mondoville. Your imagination is singularly prepared to receive a strong impression from his presence. Guard yourself against this disposition, I conjure you, and repossess your mind of that complete independence, which will give you the power for the purpose of forming an independent judgment.

LETTER XVII.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

Paris, May 25.

THE letter from Leonce, which you have sent me, my dear sister, is extremely remarkable. As M. Barton had given me permission, I opened and read it. I have been perusing it these two hours, and, in that time, it has suggested to me a multiplicity of ideas entirely new to my mind. I shall communicate my reflections to you another time. The only thing I am anxious to tell you is, that the reading of this letter has entirely calmed those ideas which disturbed my repose, and I have no longer to fear that unjustifiable emotion which made me envy the fate of my cousin.

LETTER XVIII*.

LEONCE TO M. BARTON.

Bayonne, May 17, 1790.

I FEAR, my dear friend, that you have already set off, on receiving the intelligence of my accident, and as soon as you were informed that I expressed a desire to see you. I ought to have spared you the fatigue of such a journey, but you will forgive your pupil for the anxiety which he had of bidding you adieu at his last moment. If you are still at Paris, wait there for my arrival; I shall be able to travel in a few days. I am desired not to speak, for fear of the wounds in my breast opening again. But, at least, I have time to write to you all that relates to the event, with secret of which you alone are acquainted.

For ever &c. in Mademoiselle d'Albemar's

I know

I know the enraged adversary who made an attempt to assassinate me, and who attacked me in conjunction with his servant, without leaving me any means of self-defence. As he stabbed me with the poniard, he exclaimed in a furious tone, *I avenge the wrongs of my dishonoured sister.* I should have pronounced the author of this act infamous, did not the motives which have irritated him against me merit some degree of indulgence. You know these motives, and you can easily guess the assailant.

My cousin, in submitting to my counsels, followed them up, nevertheless in the manner most feeble and absurd. He has proved to me, that one should never attempt to make a man act in a direction opposite to his character. Nature furnishes remedies for all her evils. The weak man hazards nothing; the man of decisive character supports every thing which he advances; but when the former acts under the directions of the latter, he moves as it were by fits and starts, he undertakes more
than

than he can perform, distrusts his own powers, exaggerates what he is unable to imitate, and commits the most inconsistent blunders; he unites the inconveniencies of opposite characters, instead of skilfully combining their different advantages.

Charles de Mondoville allowed the family of Mad^{lle} de Sorane to discover that he followed my advice in some respect contrary to his inclinations. Thus all their hatred was directed at me. M. de Sorane was obliged to conclude a very indifferent match for his sister, to stifle as speedily as possible the rumour of her adventure. The fear of making the affair still more public prevented him from challenging me. He regarded assassination as a more secret and certain means of vengeance: he doubtless imagined that if I should be killed in the mountains of the Pyrenees, my death would be attributed to the French or Spanish robbers, who are so numerous on the frontiers of both countries.

I would

I would have made M. de Sorane answer for his crime to the laws of his country, had I not been convinced that he was really very unhappy in consequence of the loss of his sister's character, and that he had reason to blame me for the opposition of my cousin to his wishes. Being compelled, by an unfortunate concurrence of circumstances, to sacrifice the reputation of Mad^{lle} de Sorane to the honour of my family, I have thought it my duty not to disclose the name of a man who had become my assassin merely to avenge the cause of his sister. His hatred of me was natural; the injury I had done him proceeded perhaps from a defect in my character: you have frequently observed that opinion possessed too much influence over me. If it be true that M. de Sorane had reason to complain of my conduct, I owe to him secrecy respecting a crime which I have provoked. I have therefore concealed it, and with you it will be as sacred as with myself.

But, my dear Barton, I perceive, that tho' trembling for the danger I have encountered, you will not express yourself with any bitterness of displeasure respecting the conduct of your pupil, in exposing too lightly that life which you and my mother so much value. This idea, which arose in my mind when I thought myself dying, was not unaccompanied with regret.—Perhaps I ought to have left my cousin to himself, though he is related to me, and bears the name of my family. But let me ask you, whose sentiments are more moderate, and who attach less importance to the opinion of the world, this question—"Had I been in the situation of Charles de Mondoville, would not you have been the first to advise me against marrying a woman, generally disrespected, even though 'I had loved her?"

During two days I have passed between the hope of life and fear of death, I have reflected much on the advice you have kindly given me to regulate my conduct

duct only by the dictates of reason and conscience. You are at once a christian and a philosopher. You trust in God, and you account as nothing the injustice of man: you know I am little disposed to adopt any kind of religious belief, and still less that patience and resignation which we are told faith is capable of inspiring. Though I have received, thanks to you, an enlightened education, still however a sort of military instinct, prejudices, if you will call them so, but the prejudices of my ancestors, which perfectly accord with the ardour and impetuosity of my soul, are the most powerful motive of every action of my life. Were I to fancy for a moment that any man, even at the distance of a hundred leagues from me, dared to pronounce my name, or that of any of my friends, with disrespect, I should experience the strongest emotions of indignation, and an eager desire to be there to avenge myself. Most men, you will say, do not deserve that we should attach the least importance to their discourse.

discourse. Their hatred, indeed, may be nothing, but their insolence is always something. They equal you, they do more, they believe themselves your superiors when they calumniate you. Ought they to be allowed to enjoy, unmolested, this insolent pleasure?

Besides, have you reflected on the rapidity with which a man may be irrecoverably deprived of all consideration? If indifferent to the first slanders that are circulated against him; if his delicacy supports the more slight insults, what feeling will rouse him when the affront is of a nature not to be endured? False reports, which have had currency for a time, are implicitly believed as truths by many who are ignorant of the real character of the person accused. He is at last irritated, but it is too late. Though he should involve himself in twenty duels, will unseasonable traits of courage establish the reputation he has lost? All these violent efforts present the idea of tumultuous agitation, and we respect not him who is
thus

thus agitated; calmness and dignity can alone ensure respect. That which was the work of time cannot be reconquered in a few days. Anger permits no repose, and renders its victims incapable of finding tranquillity, or of waiting for the remedy of the evils which afflict them. I know not what may be reserved for us in another world; but the greatest torment of this to a man of spirit is, to have to endure the slightest diminution of that unsullied reputation for honour and delicacy which forms the richest treasure of existence.

I have ceased to combat these sentiments in my own bosom; I acknowledge them invincible; but if ever they should be found in opposition to true morality, I hope I shall triumph over them. To your instructions, my dear master, I am indebted for this hope: but in resolutions which regard only myself, I should be to blame were I to struggle against a fault which I cannot brave without sacrificing all my happiness. It is better to expose one's life a thousand times,

times, than to suffer the least stigma to be attached to our character.

I believe that I do not render those around me unhappy : why then should I torment myself by efforts perhaps useless, and certainly very painful? Must not the respect I am ambitious of obtaining in the world tend to honour all those who love me? Is not man naturally the protector of his mother, his sister, and, above all, of his wife? Ought he not to give to the companion of his life that example of respect for reputation which he would exact from her in her turn? Do you know why I have hitherto guarded against love, though I am fully convinced of the empire that passion would have over my heart? The reason is obvious; I dread lest I should love a woman less devoted to opinion than myself, but whose charms might still attract me, though her sentiments gave me much pain. I was afraid of being agitated by two opposite and contending powers; the one a feeling and
passionate

passionate heart ; the other a bold and irritable temper.

My mother was in the right in wishing me to espouse a woman who will have no great dominion over me, but whose conduct is regulated by the most rigid principles. Alas ! am I then, at the age of twenty, for ever to abandon the hope of uniting myself to a woman to whom I can be attached—to a woman who would fill up the void of my heart by all the endearments of mutual affection ? No ! life is not that enchanting scene which my fancy has sometimes drawn. It presents a thousand inevitable ills ; it abounds with numberless perils, to be dreaded for the destruction of our reputation and our repose ; numberless enemies constantly laying snares for us. Firmness and severity are therefore necessary to conduct us through this painful journey, and to guard us against censure, even at the expence of happiness.

After having read this letter, will you still be satisfied with me, my dear friend ?

Whatever

Whatever opinion you may entertain of me, you must be convinced, that you have a pupil who has no secret that he wishes to conceal from you, and that your counsels will at all times be requisite for the regulation of his conduct.

LEONCE.

LETTER XIX.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

May 27.

I HAVE repeatedly read the letter in which Leonce, with so much exactness, portrays his own character. You have not, however, concluded, I hope, from the few lines I hastily wrote you, that my esteem for M. de Mondoville is in the least abated. This is very far from being the case, I assure you: his letter to M. de Barton, on the contrary, indicates a great superio-

rity of mind, and such qualities as we seldom meet with in life : but what has struck me most forcibly, is the astonishing diversity of our two characters.

He regulates the most important actions of his life by the opinion of the world ; whereas I, on the contrary, can with difficulty allow it to influence me, even in circumstances the most trifling and insignificant. The ideas and motives which religion suggests he passes over unnoticed ; a necessary consequence, no doubt, of his attentive and implicit submission to public opinion ; whilst I, you know, thanks to the happy education which you and your brother have given me, look to God and my own conscience only for the approbation of my conduct. Far from courting the applause of the majority of mankind by the little punctilios which are necessary to procure it, I am almost tempted to believe, that the approbation of men would tarnish whatever is most pure and most estimable in virtue, and that the pleasure
derived

derived from this approbation would have a tendency to sully the natural and intuitive suggestions of a good heart.

Notwithstanding the irritability of Leonce, however, on every point in which the opinion of the world is concerned, it is impossible not to discover in him a soul at once virtuous and feeling: but do not regret, my dear sister, his engagements with Matilda: rather be glad that he can never be any thing to me but an object of indifference. The radical difference of our sentiments, and the opposite modes of life to which we have been accustomed, are precisely such as would render superlatively unhappy two individuals who ought to love one another without the possibility of a misunderstanding.

It would be impossible for me; whatever resolutions I might form, to guard all my actions so cautiously, that no room should be left for the false glosses and misrepresentations of society; and what would be my sufferings if the man whom I loved

were unable to bear, without chagrin, the false interpretations that might be given of my conduct ;—if constantly under the necessity of studying the opinions of those who are indifferent to me, only from their influence over the man who was the object of my fondest affections ;—of dreading every species of calumny, because he would equally suffer from all ;—and of yielding submissively to the empire of opinion, because I loved a man who was its most devoted slave.

No, Leonce, no, my dear Louisa, such a situation could not suit your Delphine. How much more did the sentiments of your generous brother, my noble protector, accord with mine ! He often repeated to me, that a generous and elevated mind had only one principle to observe in the conduct of life, always to do good to others, but never to injure them. What signify to her who believes in the protection of the Supreme Being, and lives under the constant impression of his presence ;

gence; to her who possesses an elevated soul, and enjoys within herself the conscious dignity of virtue: what signify to her, said M. d'Albemar, the sentiments or opinions of men? Sooner or later she will obtain their esteem; for it is on the basis of truth, at last, that public opinion will always be formed: It is necessary, therefore, to learn to despise those temporary commotions which calumny, which folly and envy often excite against the most worthy and distinguished characters. I must confess, he would add, that this independence of mind, this exertion of philosophy, is, perhaps, still more becoming in a man than in a woman; but he believed also, that women, being in much greater danger than men of being misrepresented, ought in the early period of life to fortify their minds against this inconvenience. As regard for opinion renders so many of our sex false and dissembling, and that the sincerity and simplicity of my character might not be in danger,

M. d'Albemar laboured with the greatest efforts of industry to emancipate me from this oppressive yoke; and, indeed, his efforts have been correspondent to his wishes, for I fear nothing on earth but the just reproaches of my own heart, or the unjust and ill-founded reproaches of my friends. But whether public opinion justify or condemn me, it will never be capable of either increasing or diminishing my happiness. My resources are within myself. I feel within my own bosom a consolatory hope, which shall never fail to animate me, as often as I raise my eyes towards heaven, and feel my heart aspire after true glory, and the perfection of virtue.

What would become, however, of this happiness and tranquillity, which I am anxious to enjoy, if by any unaccountable reverse of fortune, were it only a weak and helpless woman who had courage to despise the opinion of men, whilst he who ought to guide and direct me, he who
ought

ought to assist and protect me, would tremble at the least breath of slander? In vain I should endeavour to conform myself to all his wishes by adopting a conduct so repugnant to my natural character: I could not even by that means avoid the commission of inevitable mistakes, and our painful and wretched lives would thus, perhaps, terminate in some fatal disaster.

No; I cannot love Leonce; were he even disengaged, I would not love him. I have found it necessary frequently to repeat this to myself, to read his letter again and again, to efface, by long and serious reflection, the impression which the danger to which he has just been exposed had made upon my heart, and I have at last been successful. I have gained a victory; my soul is collected, and I could at this moment see him with the utmost indifference, and the most confirmed resolution to behold nothing in him henceforth but the husband of Matilda.

LETTER XX.

DELPHINE TO MADMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

May 31.

WHAT did I write you, my dear Louisa, in my last? I am afraid I must now unsay every thing: I have seen him: yes, I have seen Leonce, and I no longer remember the sentiments I entertained against him. How was it possible I could lay such emphasis on what I was pleased to denominate his faults? How unreasonable was it to form my opinion of him from a single letter only? His features—his countenance is a much better index of his heart.

I received a letter yesterday from M. Barton, who informed me that he had met M. de Mondoville at Bourdeaux, and that they were returning together. I went to Mad. de Vernon's to announce to her the agreeable intelligence: my heart

was easy, and my mind perfectly serene, Leonce's letter had produced a complete revolution in my sentiments; I cannot yet account for the impression it made, but on more mature reflection, I find it was foolish and absurd. Leonce, however, was really no longer an object of interest to me, otherwise than as the husband of Matilda and the son-in-law of my friend; and I conversed for two hours with Mad. de Vernon, on the different articles that related to the marriage, with an interest and feeling that gave her the highest pleasure. She did not entertain the smallest suspicion of those sentiments which had for some days given me so much uneasiness: the conversation, however, in regard to Leonce, was by no means protracted, for I involuntarily permitted it to drop, whereas yesterday, I know not from what ideas of security, on the very eve of danger, I was inexhaustible on the motives which ought to induce Mad. de Vernon to pursue her arrangements in favour of

her daughter. I am as yet unable to comprehend from what principle this strange and unaccountable sentiment could originate; I was anxious, I believe, to form engagements with my own heart, for this vivacity, I am persuaded, could not have been natural: it pleased Mad. de Vernon, however, who pressed me very warmly to spend the next day with her entirely.

After dinner M. Barton was unexpectedly announced. His aspect had the appearance of melancholy: my heart foreboded some unfortunate event, and I questioned him with apprehension and timidity. "M. de Mondoville," he replied, "arrived with me yesterday; but on the road his wound opened afresh, and I am much afraid that the loss of blood he sustained may endanger his life. He is in such a state of weakness and dejection as distresses me extremely. His fever also has returned for some days, and he is just now in a condition that not only disqualifies him for going abroad, but even renders him un-
able

able to sit up in his chamber. He wishes," added M. Barton, addressing himself to Mad. de Vernon, "to put into your hands, madam, some letters from his mother. He takes the liberty also of requesting you to come and see him; but dares scarcely flatter himself that Mad^{lle} de Vernon will condescend to accompany you: however, it appears to me, that at present, as the articles are signed by Mad. de Mondoville, there can be no impropriety."

Matilda interrupted M. Barton, and, rising, said to him in a tone of voice that appeared harsh and unfeeling, "I will not go, Sir: I am determined, I shall not go."

Mad. de Vernon never attempts to oppose the inclinations of her daughter when so positively expressed. She has something in her disposition so easy, that it even approaches to indolence, and makes her dread every species of discussion. It is never by forcible means of any description that she endeavours to gain the object of her wishes. Without replying to Matilda, therefore,

she addressed herself to me. "My dear Delphine," says she, "you will have the goodness to accompany me; we shall go and see Leonce immediately with M. Barton."—I excused myself at first; though, from a feeling which I am unable to explain, I was so much disgusted with the refusal of Matilda, that it gave me some pleasure to oppose my own frankness to her ridiculous prudery. Mad. de Vernon insisted: she was embarrassed, however, by that sort of timid reserve to which she is sometimes liable in the presence of the stranger. She was afraid of those first impressions, under the influence of which Leonce might abandon himself to emotions of tenderness. I have always observed Mad. de Vernon apprehensive of every circumstance that would necessarily lead her to employ the exterior forms of regard, even where her affection was sincere. They accuse her of being deceitful: she is, however, wholly incapable of affectation. Is it possible there can be a combination so singular

gular and extraordinary? I will not believe it.

At last, when I could no longer doubt that Mad. de Vernon was sincere in her desire that I should accompany her, I consented. When we had got into the carriage, however, I immediately recollected the letter of Leonce to M. Barton, and it forcibly occurred to me, that a man so nicely delicate in every article that respects the established forms of propriety, would regard it most probably as a thing very inconsiderate, that a woman of my age should thus visit him at his own lodgings without any previous acquaintance. This idea hurt me so much, that I ascended the staircase to Leonce's chamber with considerable chagrin. But the moment we entered, when I beheld him stretched on a sofa, pale, scarcely able to raise his head to welcome us; but still, even in this condition, preserving the most affecting and dignified image of distress and melancholy, I instantaneously

ously experienced the most lively and animated emotion. Love and pity at the same moment took possession of my heart: every feeling of my soul spoke at once in favour of this unfortunate young man. His elegant form had in it something enchanting, in spite of the extreme weakness, which did not permit him to support himself. There was not a single feature in his countenance that did not, even in the extreme weakness to which he was reduced, inspire my heart with the most seductive and flattering impressions. I continued standing behind M. Barton and Mad. de Vernon some moments. Leonce, in a soft but firm tone of voice, made some grateful acknowledgements to my aunt: his manners and accent communicated to his language, the plainest and most simple, an expression that was new and interesting; but at every word he uttered, his paleness seemed to increase, and by a movement altogether involuntary, I endeavoured
to

to retain my breath while he spoke, as if I had had it in my power to assist or diminish his efforts.

When we had taken our seats, he then observed me, and addressing my aunt, he asked if I was Mad^{lle} de Vernon. "No," replied my aunt, "she has not yet courage to visit you. This is my niece, Mad. d'Albemar." — "Mad. d'Albemar!" replied Leonce, in an animated tone, "she who was so anxious to lend her carriage to M. Barton, that he might be enabled to find me! she who has interested herself so much in my fate, even before knowing me! I am very much ashamed," added he, endeavouring to raise his voice, "I am very much ashamed of being in a condition so ill qualified to express to her my gratitude." I was just going to answer him, when, upon concluding these words, his head fell motionless upon his hand. I made an effort to rise and give him assistance; but immediately blushing at what my feelings had suggested, I again sat down, and was silent.

Leonce

Leonce also was silent for some minutes; but so much sweetness and sensibility was painted in his countenance, that I entirely forgot the opinion I had formed of him, and which alone could guard and protect the affections of my heart. Every moment it became more difficult to conceal my tenderness. The black eyes of Leonce, in spite of his efforts, were involuntarily closed; but the moment he looked up, he directed his attention to me. His eager looks, which seemed to solicit an interest in my heart, appeared to me to demand some favourable reply. I even imagined that he explained his thoughts, and felt myself as sensibly moved as if he had conversed with me for a considerable time.

Are you not ashamed of me, Louisa? You will certainly blame this sudden and deep impression; but it was pity, I am certain, that gave rise to it. Your Delphine could not, on a first interview, be so accessible to love. It was compassion, all-powerful compassion, that excited in my bosom
that

that sympathy which is the strongest, the most instantaneous, and irresistible affection of the heart.

Leonce, I am persuaded, saw the interest I took in his situation; for although I had not uttered a syllable he began to comfort me.—“It is nothing, madam,” said he; “the fatigue of my journey laid open my wound, but it is now closed, and in a few days I shall be perfectly well.”—I wished to make some reply, but I was afraid lest in speaking my voice should appear altered, and stopped short without concluding the sentence I had begun. Mad. de Vernon made some inquiries concerning Mad. de Mondoville, and very feelingly reminded him how impatient she was to see him. To her inquiries he answered with a feeble but agreeable tone. Mad. de Vernon, at last, afraid of fatiguing him, arose, affectionately took his hand, and gave her arm to M. Barton to depart.

I advanced to Leonce after my aunt wishing at last to express my concern also
for

for his present situation. He rose to thank me before it was in my power to prevent him, and wished to accompany me a few steps to the door: but a sudden and alarming giddiness immediately seized him: he made an effort to prevent himself from falling; I involuntarily presented him my arm,—and his head fell on my shoulder. I really believed he was going to expire. Oh! Louisa, who would not have been disressed at such a moment!—I lost every idea of myself and of others; wholly engrossed by this idea alone, I exclaimed—“ Oh! my aunt, come to his assistance, look at him, he is dying;”—and my face was covered with tears. M. Barton hastily returned, supported Leonce in his arms, and led him back to the sofa. Leonce revived; he opened his eyes before I had wiped off my tears; and his looks, full of acknowledgments and tenderness, informed me that he observed my emotion.

I then took my leave, and Mad. de Vernon followed me; it was dark when we returned: I don't think she could perceive the
the

the pain I had suffered; and even if she did, was it not natural I should feel distressed at the situation in which I had seen Leonce? When we reached Mad. de Vernon's door, I was informed that M. de Serbellane had been twice inquiring for me; and I availed myself of this pretence to return immediately home, where I shut myself up, to write you these particulars.

After the detail I have given you, my dear Louisa, you will no doubt tremble for my safety: do not forget, however, how much pity had a share in producing my emotions. The tenderness which distress and suffering inspires not unfrequently deceives a mind possessed of acute sensibility. It may happen that we believe ourselves in love when we are only animated by sentiments of compassion. But I am determined no more to accompany Mad. de Vernon to M. de Mondoville's; he will soon be acquainted with Matilda; her beauty will charm him, and I shall then be able to see him with those sentiments only that reason and delicacy ought to dictate.

My

My friend, my dearest Louisa, I am even already more tranquil ; but is it not a misfortune to have seen him surrounded with all the affecting circumstances that accompany danger and suffering ? Why was not the husband of Matilda at first presented to me in the midst of that prosperity and of those gay and flattering advantages that await him ? Why was it necessary he should interest my compassion ?

LETTER XXI.

LEONCE TO M. BARTON.

June 1st.

MY mother informs me, my dear Barton, she has written to you, in order to commit to your management some affairs at Mondoville, which it is necessary, she says, to arrange before my marriage. I request of you not to set out yet for that part of the country.

country. I know you are accustomed with the most scrupulous exactness to regulate all your measures; but my servant will bring you this letter to-morrow to your new lodgings: you will not then tell me, I hope, that you have already made your arrangements for your departure, and that you cannot now alter them. In a few days I shall be able to get out and see Mad^{lle} de Vernon. Can a marriage, my dear friend, be considered as positively determined, when the parties chiefly interested are yet unknown to each other? How much reason had you, alas! to talk to me of Mad. d'Albemar as the most lovely and engaging of her sex! You have boasted to me of the charms of her conversation, of the elevation and goodness of her heart, but you never could have painted to me the gracefulness of her figure, the enchanting ease, the elegance and freedom of her manner; those auburn locks which half conceal her eyes, so soft and sweet, but at the same time so piercing

ing

ing and animated; that varied physiognomy, and that air of freedom, much purer, much more innocent and modest than a ceremonious and austere reserve. I was between life and death when I heard her exclaim—“Oh! my aunt, come, come to his assistance; he is dying!” For a moment I could not help believing that I was in another world, and that it was the voice of an angel who was waiting to conduct my soul to the felicity of the immortals.

When I opened my eyes, Delphine looked only at me, and her whole countenance expressed a compassion that was more than mortal. She withdrew, but I shall never forget her physiognomy at that moment.

Oh! sweet and soothing pity! if thy emotion was sufficient to render her so enchantingly beautiful, what would she have appeared had love spread its charms over her divine countenance? Yes, my friend, every grace, every charm that distinguishes her figure is the amiable index of some quality

quality within. Her carriage is so free, and her movements so light and easy when she walks, that you would imagine her steps required support : her looks, which indicate a superior understanding, and at the same time a gentle and pliant disposition, are all so many proofs of that extraordinary assemblage of character you pointed out to me when you told me, on our journey, that she united understanding and a mind quite independent, with a heart the most susceptible and devoted, where she meets with an object of affection. It was upon this principle you explained to me her affectionate regard for Mad^{lle} de Vernon, approaching almost to submission. Do not blame yourself, however, my dear Barton, for the impression which Mad^{lle} d'Albemar has made upon my heart. From you I learned nothing ; it was her own looks only that told me every thing.

But do not flatter yourself, at the same time, that I reflect with unconcern upon the emotions with which she has inspired
me

me.—I know my duty to my mother; I even respect it to such a degree, that I have not hitherto examined the validity of those engagements which she has formed with Mad^{lle} de Vernon: but I will confess to you, that since I have seen Mad^{lle} d'Albemar, the idea of being no longer free would be odious to me. If it is impossible I can be any longer so, allow me at least some time to judge of my own feelings and sentiments.

My dear friend and master, if I am convinced that my mother's honour is interested, however indiscreetly, in my marriage with Mad^{lle} de Vernon, you may depend upon it, I shall comply. Why then are you afraid of granting me time? Adieu! I expect you this morning, but I am glad of having written what this letter contains; you know it now, and it would have cost me some efforts to have told you it.

LETTER XXII.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

June 3d.

LEONCE is much better, and will in a short time be so far recovered as to be able to come abroad: I have not seen him again. Mad. de Vernon has been once more at his house alone; I would have declined going with her, but she did not propose it. I have not had another opportunity of seeing M. Barton; he has left Leonce on account of some business, no doubt relative to the intended nuptials. The next time I see M. de Mondoville will probably be when I sign his contract as the relation of his future wife. My Louisa, to me the appearance of Leonce has been like a dream, which will soon vanish from my memory, without producing any change on the happiness of my life. Who thinks of the impression he has made upon me?

Surely neither he himself, nor any body else. But come, I must not enlarge further on this subject.

Besides, I have been busily employed to-day, in consequence of the arrival of Theresa. M. de Serbellane came to my house this morning, to tell me she was come; he was much dejected, and in spite of the habit he has acquired of concealing his emotions, his eyes were sometimes filled with tears. He entreated me, in the most earnest manner, to go and see Mad. d'Ervins. "Alas!" said he, "she will destroy herself! so violently is her mind distracted by love and remorse, that she is ready every moment to betray herself before her husband; a man the most irritable and the most violent. If she would consent to fly with me from his presence, there would be something reasonable even in the extravagance of her passion; but by a lamentable inconsistency, religion has no less power over her than love; and her weak and susceptible heart is exposed to all the dangers

dangers of the most opposite feelings. One day she could acknowledge her fault to her husband, and the next, poison herself if he should separate us. Unhappy, interesting woman ! why have I ever known her ?” —“ I will go and see her,” said I ; “ her friendly cares preserved my life ; and shall I do nothing to promote her happiness ?” I went to Mad. d’Ervin’s ; the poor creature threw herself into my arms with tears in her eyes. I had never before seen her husband, and his appearance confirmed the opinion I had been led to form of him. He received me with politeness, but with an air of importance, which made me feel not the value which he set upon me, but that which he attached to himself. He invited me to breakfast, during which the conversation was forced and constrained, as it must always be with a man who has no just sentiments on any subject, and whose talents are wholly exerted to gratify his self-love. He spoke to me continually of himself, without considering in the least

whether the interest which I felt corresponded with the liveliness of his own. When he had any thing to say which he thought sprightly, his little eyes sparkled with a joy which he could not conceal; he looked at me after he had spoken, to judge if I had been able to understand him; and when his selfish doubts were satisfied, he resumed an affected air of gravity, as if afraid he had descended from the proper dignity of his character, anxious at one time to display his wit, and at another to appear as a man of consequence, and secretly afraid of being too playful to be serious, or of being too serious to be agreeable.

After an hour devoted to breakfast, he rose and explained to me deliberately, that some affairs of indispensable necessity, which motives of benevolence had engaged him to undertake, and some visits to great men, whom he could not disappoint without the fear of offending them extremely, obliged him to leave me. I observed that he bestowed on me a look of complacency,

as if to soften the regret which he thought I must feel at his absence. I was inclined to undeceive him on this point, but not wishing to displease the husband of my friend, I returned his compliments with all the gravity he desired ; and the manner in which he took leave of me, proved that he was not dissatisfied with my behaviour.

When left alone with Theresa, I tried every argument which reason and friendship could suggest, to induce her to submit to prudent advice ; but, when all my endeavours were succeeded only by tears and complaints, and feeble resolutions, which were no sooner formed than they were instantly abandoned, my heart was wrung with pity for her melancholy state. She has not received that cultivated education which would enable her to reflect upon her own character ; she was ushered into life with a mind possessed of warm feelings, and imbued with the precepts of a superstitious faith ; her reading, I believe, has been wholly confined to romances, and

the lives of the saints ; she knows only the martyrs of love and devotion ; and it is impossible to tear her from her lover, without delivering her up to all the excesses of the most gloomy repentance. The fear of losing the sight of M. de Serbellane is the only consideration capable of restraining her ; if she were obliged to separate from him, she would reveal every thing to her husband. She is far from being destitute of natural understanding, but it serves to no other purpose but to enable her to find out reasons for justifying her conduct. She loves her daughter, but is incapable of employing herself with the care of her education. The poor child, seeing her mother constantly in tears, is kept in a perpetual state of tender solicitude, which weakens both her moral and physical powers ; and M. d'Ervins, in the midst of all these scenes, never entertains the slightest suspicion. When he surprises his wife and his daughter in tears, he asks their pardon for being so little in their company,

company, for spending so much of his time in his study, or in the society of his friends, and promises never to leave them in future. This blindness might have continued in the retirement of the country, but at Paris how many people will he meet with, who will be disposed to open his eyes, from a desire to humble his foolish pride, or to provoke his irritable temper.

I have represented to Theresa the dreadful situation to which she must be reduced, if she draw upon herself the fury and the despotism of her husband. What would become of her, without relations, without fortune, and without support? She tells me that in this case it is her design to shut herself up in a convent for the rest of her days; and if I hint to her that it ^{might} be better, perhaps, for M. de Serbellane to go and remain some time in Portugal, with one of his relations, according to the plan he laid down when he left Italy, the very idea throws her into a frenzy of despair, which makes me tremble. Ah! Louisa,

what anguish can be compared with the pangs of love!—Poor Theresa! while listening to her, my thoughts were not wholly occupied with the object before me; they were sometimes turned on Leonce, and the miseries which I myself might have to endure. What succour could I derive from a mind more enlightened than that of Theresa? Passion turns all our resources against ourselves: but let me banish these foreboding fears; it is of my unhappy friend that I ought to think. Heaven, as a recompence, will perhaps watch over my destiny.

M. d'Ervins returned, and M. de Serbellane came in a few moments after. Theresa detained us. I observed with pleasure, that during the rest of the day M. de Serbellane did not seek to attach himself to M. d'Ervins. The easier it was to gain the favour of such a man by flattering his vanity, the more I was pleased with the friend of Theresa for not becoming the friend of her husband. There are situations

situations which may render it necessary for us to conceal our real sentiments; but nothing, except the vilest degeneracy of character, can make us capable of expressing a regard which we do not feel.

My esteem, therefore, for M. de Serbellane was encreased by the coldness of his behaviour to M. d'Ervins. He interested me still more by the constant solicitude which he discovered to guard against the imprudence of Theresa. She blushed, and grew pale by turns, whenever Portugal was mentioned. M. de Serbellane immediately turned the conversation to some other subject, and thus saved Theresa from discovering her weakness, without at the same time wounding her feelings, by shewing himself indifferent to her love. I was much alarmed at the situation in which I found her; I took her aside before leaving her, and made her remark the delicacy which appeared in the conduct of her friend, and the folly of her own. "I know it," replied she, "he is the best and

the most generous of men. I am no doubt very troublesome to him; I should do better at once to deliver those who love me from their anxiety on my account, to go and throw myself at the feet of M. d'Ervin, and acknowledge my errors." While she uttered these words, her looks were disordered. I was afraid she would immediately put her design in execution, I locked her in my arms, and entreated her to give me her promise that she would leave herself entirely to my direction.

"Listen to me," said she: "I am haunted with a fear, which, I believe, is the principal cause of the disorder in which you see me. I am persuaded in my own mind that he will think it incumbent on him to leave me without letting me know his intention, or that my husband will unexpectedly separate me from him, before I have an opportunity of bidding him adieu. If you will obtain from M. de Serbellane an oath that he will not depart without previously informing me, and if
you

you will pledge your word that, whatever may happen, you will assist me in effecting an interview for one hour only, one short hour, before I quit him for ever, then I shall be more tranquil: I shall not think with myself, every time he speaks to me, these are the last words I shall ever hear from him; I shall not be perpetually harassed with the thoughts of all my heart would yet tell him: my mind will be at ease.”—“ Well then,” replied I, with warmth, “ this very moment you shall be satisfied.” M. d’Ervin was speaking to a man who listened to him with the most respectful condescension. He was not thinking of us. I called M. de Serbellane, and received his solemn promise that he would do as Theresa desired. I at the same time gave her the strongest assurances that I should find means somehow to bring about a parting interview with M. de Serbellane, if ever M. d’Ervin should forbid her to see him any more. In giving this promise, I felt some apprehensions

about the consequence, I know not how; but I am certain that before I knew Leonce I never would have once thought that such an engagement could at any time expose me to censure. I applauded myself, in the mean time, for having taken it, when I found how much it had restored the drooping spirits of Theresa. She heard me with resignation, when I spoke of the circumstances which might render it necessary for M. de Serbellane to take his departure, and when I left her, she seemed perfectly composed.

I did not go in the evening to Mad. de Vernon's: I was not at liberty to entrust her with the secret of Theresa's unfortunate ^{love}. I could not speak to her of Leonce; and how is it possible to converse with an intimate friend, and not to communicate the ideas that are predominant in the mind? This would be to discourse with a friend as with a person who held no place in our hearts; to seek out subjects of conversation, instead of abandoning ourselves

ourselves to those with which the imagination is occupied; and to be on our guard, if I may use the expression, against the ideas and the sentiments with which the soul is ready to overflow. I thought it better not to see Mad. de Vernon.

As for you, my dear Louisa, from whom I do not wish to conceal my most secret thoughts, I never feel the least constraint in communicating my sentiments to you. With you I examine my own conduct; I appoint you the judge of my heart; and my conscience never tells me any thing of which I leave you ignorant.

LETTER XXIII.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

I HAVE seen him, my dear sister, I have seen him once more: no, it is no longer pity which I feel for him, he has inspired me with esteem, with admiration, with all
the

the sentiments which would have ensured the happiness of my life. Alas ! what have I done ! By what indissoluble ties of friendship and mutual confidence have I bound myself ? But what are his sentiments ? what are his wishes ? Could he be forced to marry my cousin, should he not be able to bestow his affections on her, if. With what vain sophisms do I seek to buoy up my hopes ! if he should break off his marriage with Matilda, would it not be from a preference to me ? I should have the appearance of having encouraged his addresses by my munificence, and I should be said to have seduced him from his former engagements ! I am richer than Matilda ; it might be believed that I had made an improper use of this advantage ; and, above all, I should wound the feelings of Mad. de Vernon. She would accuse me of a want of delicacy, she whose esteem is so necessary to my happiness ! But to what purpose is all this reasoning ; does Leonce love me ? If he did, could he disengage himself

himself from the promise given by his mother? You shall judge presently to what slender proofs I have trusted, in order to discover his sentiments. Alas! too happy day, the first, and perhaps the last of this life of enchantment, which the marvellous power of sensibility has taught me to enjoy for some hours!

M. de Mondoville was announced yesterday at Mad. de Vernon's; he was less pale than when I first saw him, but his figure still preserved that interesting appearance which before so tenderly affected me, and the return of his strength heightened whatever there is noble and serious in the expression of his countenance. He saluted me first; and I felt proud at this proof of his regard, as if the most inconsiderable marks of favour pointed out to each individual his rank in society. Mad. de Vernon presented him to Matilda; she blushed; I thought her sufficiently handsome: but, Louisa, I am certain that when Leonce, after having observed her with a
good

good deal of indifference, turned towards me, his looks then only assumed their natural sensibility. M. Barton was seated beside me on the terrace in the garden, Leonce came to place himself near him; Mad. de Vernon asked him to pass the evening with her, and he accepted of the invitation.

At this moment my mind settled at once into the most pleasing tranquillity; there were three hours before me, during all which time I was certain of seeing him; his health no longer gave me any uneasiness, and there was nothing to disturb me but a too lively feeling of my own happiness. I conversed a long time with him, in his presence, and on his account; the pleasure which I received from this conversation was entirely new to me; till this time I had never considered conversation in any other view, but as a method by which I might shew the ingenuity or the extent of my ideas, but in the company of Leonce I sought for subjects which more
immediately

immediately concern the affections and the heart : we talked of romances, we ran over all those succesively which have laid open the secret griefs of characters distinguished for their sensibility. I felt an emotion within me which animated all my discourse : my heart did not cease to beat a single moment, even when our discussion became purely literary ; my mind possessed all its freedom and all its readiness, but I felt myself agitated, as if the occasion had been one of the most important in my life, and in the evening I could not persuade myself but that some extraordinary event had happened around me.

Every word which fell from Leonce heightened my esteem and my admiration. His manner of expressing himself was concise but energetic ; and even when he made use of language the most forcible and eloquent, it appeared to convey only the half of what he felt, and there seemed to remain, at the bottom of his heart, treasures of sentiment and passion which he refused
to

to lavish. With what promptitude, with what interest, did he stoop to listen when I spoke! No, I cannot form, in my imagination, the idea of a more delightful situation; the thoughts arising from the exertions of intellect, the emotions excited by the gratification of self-love, changed into the enjoyment of the heart. Oh! what happy moments! why should life be ever deprived of them!

I observed, in the mean time, that Matilda, by her looks and her gestures, shewed a good deal of displeasure. Mad. de Vernon, who generally takes delight in talking with me, spoke to the person who sat next her, without seeming at all interested in our conversation; she at last took Mad. de Marset by the arm, and said to her, loud enough to let me hear—"Will you not play, madam? their conversation is too fine for us."—I blushed extremely at these words; I rose to tell them that I would also be of the party; Leonce reproached me by his looks. M. Barton

came towards me, and said, with a good nature which charmed me—"I almost thought, madam, I heard you speak to-day for the first time; never did the charms of your conversation strike me so forcibly. Oh! how delightful was it to be praised in the presence of Leonce! He sighed, and supported himself on the chair which he had just left. M. Barton said to him in a half whisper—"Will you not go up to Mad^{lle} de Vernon?"—"For heaven sake, leave me where I am!" replied Leonce.—I heard these words, Louisa, and the accent which accompanied them shall never be forgotten.

When the party was arranged, Leonce, left almost alone with Matilda, went to speak to her, but their conversation appeared to me cold and embarrassed. Mad. de Marset took a good deal of interest in the game; I did not know all the time what I was doing: Mad. de Vernon excused my faults with the most charming goodness; she was perfectly agreeable during

ing this party, and I was so captivated with her behaviour, that I went no more near Leonce; ^{but} I thought that the good-nature of Mad. de Vernon required this of me. She wished to detain me for the purpose of conversing with her alone, but I refused to stay. I do not wish to conceal my sentiments from her: if she discover them, I shall not be displeased; perhaps I even wish that she may do so, but I cannot bring myself to the resolution of speaking to her first. Would not this be to point out the sacrifice which I wish her to make? If she had laid me under obligations, then I could use more freedom with her; I would frankly acknowledge my folly, and throw myself upon her generosity; but I am anxious, above every thing, to avoid taking the least advantage of the services I have been able to render her.

Consult, my dear sister, the delicacy of your own feelings, and not the prejudices which you entertain against Mad. de Vernon, and tell me what I ought to do if he should

should love me, if he should think himself at liberty to dispose of his affections. Alas! your advice will perhaps be necessary; perhaps I dread the difficulty, and trial to which he will never subject me.

LETTER XXIV.

LEONCE TO M. BARTON, AT MONDOVILLE.

Paris, June 6th.

YOU have gone to Mondoville in compliance with the request conveyed in a second letter from my mother; I beg, my dear Barton, that you will remain there for some time. Your stay will serve me as a pretext for delaying all explanation with Mad. de Vernon with regard to my marriage, and will give me an opportunity of writing to my mother, and perhaps of finding some means to deliver myself from the promise she has given. I believe you are sensible of it yourself, my dear friend, though

though you have refused to declare your opinion to me. I know Mad. d'Albemar, and I can never love Matilda.

Do you suppose that the impression which my heart received yesterday can ever be effaced? Matilda is undoubtedly handsome; you have told me so; I believe it; but is she the only woman I have seen? Yesterday, I saw, I listened to a woman, and such a woman as never before existed. If ever a human being was inspired, it is Delphine. Did you observe her while she was speaking to me? I was seated a few steps from her in the garden: her voice was animated; her ravishing eyes looked up to heaven, as if to call it to bear witness to the sublimity of her thoughts; her fine arms were placed naturally, in a manner the most easy, and the most elegant. The wind often blew her fair locks over her face; she removed them with a grace, with a negligence, which lent new charms to all her motions. Do you believe, my dear Barton, that she was more
deeply

deeply interested in the conversation because I was present? You told me, that you never before saw her so agreeable: did she wish to please me? Yet she left me so hastily! but this may be accounted for from her fear of distressing Mad. de Vernon. Oh! it is beyond a doubt, our souls would understand each other, if I were free from restraint, if I were at liberty to express, with all its force, what I feel and what I think! but it will be long before I can speak with freedom; and will she be able, amidst all my reserve, to guess the secrets of my heart? will she, whose greatest charm consists in the absence of all disguise, believe that there are sentiments which I conceal within my own breast? and will she discover that they prey upon the heart which cherishes them?

I did not think it possible, my dear Barton, that in the same person there could be united so various and so many charms, that it would seem they could only belong to beings whose nature is altogether

together different. Language always select, and thoughts always natural, liveliness of imagination, and tenderness of sentiment, elevation and simplicity, sweetness and energy! Adorable union of genius and candour, of softness and strength! possessing, in the same degree, every thing that can excite the admiration of the profoundest intellect, every thing that is calculated to please the most ordinary understanding, if it be accompanied with goodness of heart, if it love to find this interesting quality under all the forms of ease and dignity, of captivating grace and amiable simplicity.

Delphine enlivens the conversation by exciting an interest in what she says, and by attending with interest to what she hears from another; she has no high pretensions, she feels no constraint; she has a desire to please, but she does not wish to, succeed in her object by any other means than by discovering the perfections which nature hath given her. All the women

I have

I have ever seen before, seemed to arm themselves, more or less, with studied graces, in order to produce an effect upon those around them : Delphine alone has sufficient courage and sufficient simplicity to think that she will be the more agreeable, the more freedom she gives to the display of her natural feelings.

With what enthusiasm does she speak of the charms of virtue ! She loves it as the fairest object in the moral world ; she breathes only what is good, like a pure atmosphere, the only one in which her generous soul can live. If the extent of her understanding inspires her with independence of character, she yet stands in need of support. There is in her appearance something delicate and timorous, which seems to call for protection against the calamities of life ; and her soul is not made to resist alone the vicissitudes of fortune. O my friend ! what will be the happiness of that man, whom she shall choose to be the guardian of her happiness, whom she shall raise

to a level with herself, and who shall defend her against the villainy of mankind!

You see it is no slight impression which I have received; I have observed Delphine, I have judged her, I know her; my heart is no longer free. I am going to write to my mother; only promise, my dear Barton, that you will contrive incidents which may detain you for a month at Mondoville.

P. S. I have this moment received a letter from Spain, which gives me much uneasiness. My mother informs me, that Mad. du Marset, who you know often writes to her, has given her to understand, that Madm^{lle} de Vernon has a cousin of uncommon talents, but singularly sceptical in her principles and in her conduct, an enthusiast in her opinions upon the politics of the day, &c. and whose society is by no means proper for me. My mother advises, me to have no connection with Madm^{lle} d'Albemar: she has been led into an absurd prejudice, which I shall certainly find

some means to remove. In the mean time I feel the utmost indignation against Mad. du Marset, and I shall seize the earliest opportunity to let her feel it.

LETTER XXV.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

HE has spoken to me, my dear friend, with the deepest interest, with the most unreserved freedom! My God! how I felt myself honoured! Listen to me: this day some events have happened, in addition to those you already know, which may serve to hasten the decision of my fate.

I dined at Mad. de Vernon's with Mad. du Marset and her inseparable friend M. de Fierville; I know not by what accident it happened, but at the very hour at which Leonce is accustomed to come to Mad. de Vernon's, she led the conversation to political occurrences. Mad. du Marset

inveighed against all that is great and noble in the love of liberty, in language applicable only to the misfortunes which revolutions necessarily produce. I allowed her to speak for a considerable time, without attempting to oppose her; but some witticisms, which M. de Fierville threw out against an Englishman who was refuting the absurdities of Mad. du Marset, put me out of all patience. M. de Fierville always supports the foolish observations of his friend, by turning into ridicule every thing of a serious nature that may be advanced, whatever happens to be the subject; and frightens those who are not sufficiently confident in their own abilities, by telling them that whoever is not a wit must necessarily be a pedant. I felt a strong propensity to assist the Englishman, who has lately arrived in France, and who was intimidated by this stratagem, and I entered, in spite of myself, into the discussion.

Mad. du Marset has stored her memory with some abusive expressions against Rous-

seau, which she retails whenever any person chooses to provoke her : Mad. de Vernon provoked her, and I replied with a good deal of contempt. Mad. du Marset, thinking herself offended, turned to Mad. de Vernon, and said to her—"I assure you, madam, whatever your niece may say, this opinion, which she thinks so ridiculous, is not mine only ; Mad. de Mondoville, to whom I wrote again yesterday upon what is passing in France, thinks exactly as I do." The moment I heard that Mad. du Marset was in the habit of corresponding with Mad. de Mondoville, it occurred to me, that she might perhaps have spoken to her of me ; that she would probably relate to her the very conversation which had just happened, and that she would represent me as a mad creature to Mad. de Mondoville, who is particularly violent in her hatred against the French revolution. I felt such a sudden alarm in consequence of this reflection, that it was impossible for me to add a single word more.

Mad. du Marset said to me, with that smile which characterises self-love, when its object is to feign an assurance which it does not possess—"Well, madam, do you make no reply? Have I stumbled by accident upon the truth? have I reduced you to silence, with all your mighty genius?" Leonce was announced. How I wished that this fatal conversation might not be renewed! But Mad. de Vernon, without any pity, called M. de Mondoville, and said to him—"Is it true that your mother hates Rousseau? Mad. d'Albemar, who is an enthusiastical admirer both of his writings and his political opinions, defends him against Mad. du Marset, who appeals to the sentiments of your mother."

I trembled at this discourse, and waited without drawing my breath for the answer of Leonce. At the mention of Mad. du Marset, he immediately turned towards her; I did not see his face, but there was in the attitude of his head something which expressed contempt for Mad. du Marset,
and

and I felt my courage instantly renewed. Mad. du Marset, who received the look of Leonce full in the face, was no doubt moved by it, for she uttered the following words in a feeble voice:—"Yes, Sir, your mother is absolutely of my opinion; she has written to me repeatedly to that effect."—"I do not know, madam," said Leonce to her, in a tone of voice which I did not recognise to be his, but which struck me with awe and respect; "I do not know what my mother has written to you, but I should wish to be ignorant of your answer."—"Let us lay aside all this," said Mad. de Vernon, somewhat hastily, "and walk in the garden."

I wished extremely to procure an explanation of the words of Leonce; I delighted myself with the hope that his anger proceeded from his regard for me; but I wanted him to tell me so himself. I remained, without any object, a few paces behind in the walk; I thought I saw Leonce hesitate for a moment: however, he plucked a

leaf from the same tree from which I was plucking one, and I then began the conversation.

“Do I not owe you some acknowledgment,” said I, “for the assistance you have given me?”—“I shall always be happy to defend you, madam,” replied he, “even though I should take the liberty to disapprove of your conduct.”—“And what wrong have I done then?” said I to him with a good deal of emotion. “Why, lovely Delphine,” replied he, “why do you support opinions which awaken so many hateful passions, and from which persons of your sex are, perhaps, without reason, placed at so great a distance?” For the first time, my dear Louisa, I recollected that letter to M. Barton, which I had entirely forgotten from the time I saw Leonce; the accent of his voice, the expression of his figure, recalled it to my memory; and I replied to him with more coldness, perhaps, than I would have done, but for this recollection. “Sir,” said I,
“it

“ it is unbecoming in a woman to take any part in political disputes ; her destiny places her beyond the reach of the dangers with which they are attended, and her actions can never give importance or dignity to her words ; but if you wish to know what I think, I will not be afraid to tell you, that of all sentiments, the love of liberty appears to me the most worthy of a generous character.”—“ You have misunderstood me,” replied Leonce, with a look somewhat softened, and not without a mixture of sorrow ; “ it was not my intention to enter into any discussion with you on the propriety of opinions, with regard to which the character of my mother, and, if you will, the prejudices and the manners of the country in which I was educated, do not allow me to entertain any doubt : I should only wish to know, whether it be true, that you often indulge yourself in declaring your sentiments on this subject, and that no consideration of interest can prevent you from doing so ? These ques-

tions may appear very indiscreet, and very improper; but I give you credit for that superior understanding which can discover my motives in whatever obscurity they may be involved: you ought therefore to pardon me."

This last word called forth all my confidence; and, yielding to the impulse of this emotion, I said to him, with a good deal of warmth, "I solemnly assure you, Sir, that I have never taken any part in defence of these opinions, except what I have been induced to take by the current of conversation; it insensibly leads us to lay open our sentiments on any subject: that sort of conversation frequently recurs in the present day, and I have sometimes yielded to the interest which it inspires; but if I had possessed any friends who attached the least importance to my silence, it is a favour which they might easily have obtained."

Is it possible that a woman can be powerfully swayed by interests which can lay

no hold on the affections of the heart, or which can in no manner be connected with them? If I had a brother, a husband, a friend, or a father, who acted a distinguished part in public affairs, then my whole soul might be devoted to such objects; but the associations which I form, and which are wholly abstracted from selfish views, convince my understanding without touching my heart. I am free from every tie; my unpropitious fate has destined me to be free; there is no one to claim any duty from me; my opinions cannot influence the happiness of any one; my words have always expressed the thoughts which my mind suggested: it would have given greater happiness to be silent, if by this slight sacrifice I could have given pleasure to any human being.”

—“What,” said he, with inexpressible softness, “if you had a friend who desired declaring your society of his mother, who dreaded every thing that might oppose her wishes, would you comply with his advice?”

vice?"—"Yes," replied I, "friendship would go much farther than such a compliance."

He took my hand, and, after having raised it to his lips, before quitting it he pressed it upon his heart. Ah! this movement appeared to me the sweetest, the most tender of all: it was not the simple homage of gallantry.

Leonce would not have pressed my hand upon his noble heart, had he not wished to appeal to it as a witness of the ardour of his affection. We then quitted each other as if by mutual consent: I wished to retain in my soul the impression which it had just received, and I dreaded to hear a single word more even from him.

We were both silent during the rest of the evening. Mad. de Vernon detained me after all the company had retired; I thought she was going to put some questions to me. Although I should have wished to delay for some days the avowal which I could no longer withhold, I was deter-

determined not to conceal from her the feelings which agitated my bosom; but she appeared either to be ignorant of them, or to be desirous of checking the confidence that I wished to repose in her; and employing a method more cruel and more refined, she perhaps expected to bend my heart to her purpose, by the very security which she seemed to maintain. She applauded herself for the choice she had made of Leonce to be the husband of her daughter, and joining me with herself in every thing she said, she repeated several times the words—"We have secured her happiness; we have....." We! Alas! how ill did this word accord with my present feelings!

She reminded me several times, that it was to me only that she owed the establishment of her daughter. She recalled to my mind all the services I had rendered her on former occasions; and, returning to the mention of Matilda, she spoke to me of
the

the defects of her character with more confidence than ever she had done before.

“ I am sensible,” said she, “ although her beauty is striking, she could never contend with advantage against a woman who would study to please ; she would not even discover the efforts which another made to deprive her of the man whom she loved, and still less could she practise the arts necessary to retain his affections. If you had not ensured her happiness by the generous sacrifices which you have made, no man would ever have married her from inclination ; she could not have flattered herself with the hopes of ever obtaining a husband of the fortune and character of Leonce.” — “ Why,” said I to her, “ might not another have united similar advantages almost in the same degree ? This nephew of M. de Fierville, to whom you once thought ” — “ I did not know Leonce then,” interrupted she, “ how can a mother compare these two men when she
thinks

thinks of the happiness of her daughter? Besides, the nephew of M. de Fierville has lost the law suit which was at first determined in his favour; he is now reduced to nothing: a very large sum is owing to Mad. de Mondoville; and as I cannot pay it unless this marriage takes place, I shall be ruined if it fail. Do not seek, my dear, to diminish the merit of the service which you render me; it is invaluable, and the whole happiness of my life depends upon it."

I threw myself into the arms of Mad. de Vernon; I was going to speak, but she interrupted me hastily, by telling me that her lawyer had this morning brought her the deed, by which I was to give over the estate of Andelys, accurately made out according to our agreement; and she begged me to sign it, that every thing might be properly arranged, before the drawing up of the contract betwixt Leonce and Matilda. At these words I felt my blood grow cold; but a new emotion succeeding almost as instantaneously as the former, I felt

felt myself ashamed to lay open my sentiments to Mad. de Vernon, at the very moment when I was going to bind myself to the fulfilment of the promise which I had given, and I was afraid thus to expose myself to the suspicion of wishing to retract.

I rose, therefore, to follow her into her closet: happening to pass before a mirror, I was struck with the paleness which I observed on my countenance, and I stopped for some moments; but at last I triumphed over my reluctance; I took up the pen, and signed my name with the greatest promptitude, for I was extremely afraid lest I should betray myself; and, notwithstanding all my efforts, I cannot conceive why Mad. de Vernon did not discover my agitation. I took leave of her almost immediately; I wished to be alone, that I might reflect upon what I had done. Mad. de Vernon did not attempt to detain me, nor did she express the least uneasiness at the dreadful state in which I was.

When

When I entered my own house, I trembled ; I felt a secret dread, as if I had placed an insuperable barrier betwixt Leonce and me : I reflected, however, that the estate which I had just disposed of to Matilda might serve equally well to facilitate another marriage, if she could be brought to consent to it. Another marriage ! Alas ! can I persuade myself that there is a man in the world who can console any woman for the loss of Leonce ? What art has not Mad. de Vernon employed to bind my heart by those ties of delicacy and sensibility which are entwined with our whole frame ! How would she be astonished if I did not answer to her confidence ! She has the appearance of utterly rejecting any such fear ! Ah ! if she would only suspect me ! But nothing can induce her to do this : it will be requisite to speak to her, it will be absolutely requisite, and I am resolved upon it. Must I see every thing, and ought she to be ignorant of what it costs me ?

But

But the first word that I utter shall tell her all—What grief will it give me to pronounce it!

LETTER XXVI.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

June 20.

YOU are indeed very dangerous to my peace, my dear Louisa ; I requested you to encourage and support me amid those severe trials to which I am exposed, and you write me a letter in return, in which you carefully point out to me all those motives which my own heart have easily suggested to induce me to yield, without restraint, to the sentiments I feel. You wish to persuade me that Matilda will experience no unhappiness from the loss of Leonce : you remind me that Mad. de Vernon was disposed to make a choice elsewhere when the life of Leonce was supposed to be in danger.

danger. You pretend that I have done enough for my friend already, by lending her at once forty thousand livres, and in securing : by my own generosity, the fortune of her daughter : but you do not like Mad. de Vernon, and can form no estimate of the affection I have for her. The sensible and animated pleasure which I have always received from her temper and disposition would render me inconsolable, were I to be guilty of any thing that could give her uneasiness. I have loved her since I was fifteen; I owe to her the happiest moments of my life, every thing that engages most strongly the sentiments and feelings of my soul. I have been long accustomed to regard her happiness as preferable to my own : it appeared to me that my depressed and melancholy mind was destined to suffer, but that I should preserve at least from pain the happy and tranquil being who entrusted her destiny to my friendship. Must I lose six years of memory and affection for this new and temporary

rary feeling, which will, perhaps, be dissipated on the first moment of knowing Leonce's character? I am even already afraid you should be convinced of this by what I am now going to tell you.

Theresa yesterday was more distressed than ever: M. d'Ervins has received an idea that the political opinions of M. de Serbellane are very dangerous, and that it was improper for a supporter of the court to preserve an intimacy with a man of such a character. He receives him therefore very coldly, and almost never invites him to his house. Theresa is in despair, and has requested me to promise to receive M. de Serbellane and her every day at my house. I have denied this request—I cannot countenance a connection so contrary to her duty." I will give her all the assistance in my power, that can possibly have a tendency to soothe her affliction, but only on condition that she re the path of discretion and virtue. not obstruct the kind assistances w. re-

volent Providence affords her. She listened to my remonstrances with good nature, and only reminded me of the promise I had made, should M. de Serbellane be under a necessity to depart. I confirmed this promise, and felt myself embarrassed at appearing so cruelly severe. Alas ! have I a right to be so ? Theresa soon became more tranquil, after having described to me all those painful and uneasy sentiments which agitated her bosom. She did not know the pain and anxiety she made me feel : in a low voice I said a few soothing and consolatory words ; but I felt myself more inclined to throw myself into her arms, to mingle my own sorrows with her's, and to abandon ourselves together to the expression of those feelings which I was so anxious to relieve. I restrained myself, however ;—it was my duty ; it was necessary I should still support her, though with a weak and desolate hand.

At mid-day M. de Serbellane called upon me, and spoke of Theresa ; and it is
always

always impossible for me to witness, without the most sensible emotion, the regard and friendship of a brother, and the delicacy and affection of a lover, which unite so feelingly in his character. He had something yet more important to communicate to me ; but I was under the necessity of going at a certain hour to the concert which was given by Mad. de Vernon ; he therefore proposed accompanying me. I have several times made visits with M. de Serbellane. You know I never have been accustomed to give myself the smallest concern about those affected punctilios of society, to which one may so easily conform, if she has not really any interest to dissemble her conduct ; but it occurred to me that I might perhaps offend Leonce by coming in company with a young man, and I made some hesitation. M. de Serbellane observed it, and said to me—" You do not wish, I perceive, to go along with me." I was ashamed of my embarrassment ; I did not know what colour to give to this appearance of prudery,

dery, which is so unbecoming a natural character; and being neither able to tell the truth, nor willing to be suspected of affectation, I received the hand which M. de Serbellane presented me, and we set out together.

I was in expectation that Leonce would not yet have got to Mad. de Vernon's; but he was there before us. Upon entering the court-yard I observed his carriage—one of M. de Serbellane's friends detained him on the staircase; I entered therefore some minutes before him, and flattered myself I had avoided the suspicion I was so apprehensive of; but the very moment M. de Serbellane entered, Mad. de Vernon, I know not by what accident, asked him, quite aloud, if we had not come together. He answered very naturally that we had. On hearing this Leonce started up: he looked by turns at M. de Serbellane and me, with an expression of feature the most dissatisfied and severe, and for some moments I was uncertain if I had not every thing to fear.

M. de

M. de Serbellane, I am certain, observed Leonce's anger, and wishing to favour my situation, negligently took his seat beside another lady, with whom he affected to be very much engaged.

Leonce went and seated himself at the other end of the room, and immediately fixed his eyes on me with an air of disdain. I was extremely provoked, and this sentiment would have supported me, had not a mortal paleness, suddenly overspreading his countenance, brought to my recollection the condition in which he was when I first saw him. The remembrance of so deep and affecting an impression soon disarmed my resentment. Leonce perceived that I looked at him; he turned away his head, and appeared to make some efforts to recover his spirits.

Matilda sung very well, but without feeling. Leonce paid her no compliments; the concert continued with ear-
ing to hear it, and without
moment the stern and glo

of his features. For my own part, I was overwhelmed with melancholy: your letter, I confess, had weakened a good deal the idea which suggested to me the obstacles that must necessarily prevent my union with Leonce. I had gone with this pleasing thought, and Leonce, on my first entrance, presenting to me all the unfavourable parts of his character, seemed to create new obstacles that more positively than ever forbade our union. Perhaps he was jealous; perhaps he blamed, from the excess of his prejudices on this subject, a conduct which appeared to him giddy and inconstant. Both might be true, but I could find no opportunity for an explanation.

At the end of the concert every body rose. I twice attempted to converse with those who were in company with Leonce; and twice he quitted the party to whom I advanced, and withdrew in order to avoid me. My situation had again taken possession of me, and I was preparing to depart, when Mr. de Vernon, addressing me, said, "L
some

some ladies who still remained, invited them to the ball, which she said she proposed to give her daughter on the Friday following, in honour of the recovery of M. de Mondoville. Judge of the effect these last words produced on my mind; I really believed it was to be the nuptial feast; that Leonce had positively explained himself; and that the day was now fixed.—I was obliged to support myself on a chair, and had nearly fainted. Leonce looked at me with fixed attention, and raising his eyes instantaneously in a kind of transport, he advanced to the circle, and pronounced these words with an accent and voice that were distinct and animated:—"One might very well be astonished at the kindness which Mad. de Vernon expresses for me, were it not known that my mother is her most intimate friend, and that on this account only she is anxious to interest herself in my welfare."—When he had concluded these words, I began to breathe; I understood him; I was again myself. N

Vernon, smiling, said, with her usual grace and presence of mind—"Since M. de Mondoville does not wish my interest on his own account, I will then say that it is entirely on account of his mother; but I persist at the same time in the invitation I have given to the ball.

The company took their leave, and a few only staid supper. The nephew of Mad. de Marset, who has a tolerably good voice, asked me to accompany Matilda and him in that *trio* in Dido which your brother was so passionately fond of.—I declined it; but Leonce spoke a word only, and I immediately accepted. Matilda took her seat at the piano with a good deal of complaisance; she has acquired more sweetness in her manner since she has seen Leonce, without its having produced any other change. They prescribed to me the part of Dido: Leonce sat down opposite to us, ~~upon~~ upon the piano. I could scarcely attend to the first sounds; but, upon looking at Leonce, I thought I saw in his countenance

L. 2

tenance

tenance its natural expression, and every energy of my soul was awaked when I came to these words in a melody so affecting:

Thou know'st the passion that pervades my soul;

Oh! cease to give me pain:

Thou know'st the feelings that my heart controul;

Why doom me to complain?

The beauty of this air, and the palpitation of my heart, communicated, I am persuaded, to every accent of my voice an emotion, the exact copy of the passion I described. Leonce, my dear Leonce, reclined his head on the piano: I perceived his agitation from the difficulty of his breathing, while sometimes he raised his face, all bathed in tears, in order to look at me. Never, never did I feel myself so much elevated; I discovered in the music, in the poetry, charms and a power that was entirely new to me. It appeared to me that an enthusiasm for the fine arts had taken possession of my soul for the first time of my existence; and I experienced an enchantment,

chantment, an elevation of mind, of which love was the first and immediate cause, but which was even more sacred than love itself.

When we had finished the air, Leonce, struggling with emotion, went down into the garden to conceal his feelings. He remained there a considerable time, till I began to be alarmed; but as nobody spoke of him, I durst not begin: even to mention his name appeared to me sufficient to betray myself. Happily it struck the nephew of Mad. du Marset to shew us his skill in astronomy; he advanced to the terrace to point out the stars to us, and I eagerly followed him. Leonce returned; he seized me by the hand without being perceived, and said to me with the greatest eagerness—"No, you do not love M. de Serbellane; you did not sing for him, it was not at him you looked."—"No, certainly," I replied; "I call heaven to witness my heart!" Mad. de Vernon immediately interrupted us. I know not if she

heard what I said; but I was resolved to confess the whole to him: I was no longer afraid of any thing.

We returned to the drawing room.—Leonce was remarkably cheerful; never did I witness so much gaiety and expansion of mind: it was impossible not to discover, in him the joy of a man just relieved from excessive pain. His disposition became mine; we contrived a thousand pleasantries; we felt, both of us, an inward satisfaction, which required expansion and indulgence. He made, with some point, though indirectly, some epigrams upon what he called my philosophy, the independence of my conduct, my contempt for the customs of the world: but he was happy; and there seemed to exist between us that delightful familiarity which is the best and most decisive proof of mutual affection. I felt as if we had explained ourselves, as if every obstacle were removed, and every oath pronounced of affection and fidelity, though, at the same time, I knew nothing of his designs.

designs. We had not yet enjoyed a quarter of an hour's conversation together; but I was certain that he loved me; and nothing then appeared to me uncertain in the world.

I went to Mad. de Vernon, and requested of her an hour's conversation that very night. She excused herself, by saying she was indisposed. I proposed next day; she begged me to postpone, till after the ball, what I had to say to her; she assured me that till that period she had not a moment disengaged. I submitted, though it appeared evident that she studied pretexts to delay this conversation. Whatever she may conjecture on the subject, my resolution is taken; I am determined to speak to her: when she has known all, when I have offered to quit Paris, and to shut myself up for the remainder of my days in some retired and melancholy seclusion, to preserve there, without criminality, the perpetual remembrance of Leonce, let her decide my destiny; I will make her alone the arbiter of my fate, and whatever part she may act, I

shall no longer, at least, have to blush before her. My dear Louisa, I feel the greater tranquillity, since I do not hesitate to determine the line of conduct which it is my duty to pursue.

LETTER XXVII.

LEONCE TO M. BARTON.

Paris. June 29.

MY fate, my dear friend, is now decided; no other object but Delphine shall ever reign in my heart. Yesterday at the ball, yesterday she almost, she almost exposed herself to censure on my account. Ah! let me thank her for having permitted me to devote my attentions to her! I have no longer any doubt, no longer any uncertainty; I have nothing more to do but to put my resolution in execution, and I only consult you on the means of doing it with propriety.

On

On the fourth of July I shall be at Mondoville; we shall concert between us what I should write to my mother. Mad. de Vernon has not yet spoken a word to me of the proposed marriage; on my return from Mondoville, I will take the first opportunity to speak to her on this subject. She is a woman of understanding; she is the friend of Delphine: when she is fully assured of my resolution, she will save herself any farther trouble. I dreaded only the strength of those engagements which might have been formed. My mother has avoided any answer to my letter; she must think her own honour, therefore, not at all interested: had she thought, for a moment, that her honour or delicacy were compromised by my want of obedience, she would not have delayed a single day to send me the most peremptory injunctions. In her letters, she insists only on the pretended failings of Mad. d'Albemar: they have made her believe that she is giddy and imprudent; that she continually endangers

her character, and never loses an opportunity to advance opinions the most contrary to those we ought to cherish and respect. It will be your part, my dear Barton, to acquaint my mother with Mad. d'Albemar's real character: she will believe you much sooner than me.

Delphine, without doubt, permits herself to be too much directed by her own natural dispositions, and does not consider sufficiently the impression which her conduct may make upon others. She has much need to direct her attention to what is called *knowledge* of the world, and to guard herself from that indifference she entertains for public opinion, over which men of moderate talents have at least as much influence as those of superior abilities. It is not improbable, indeed, that we have both faults entirely the reverse of each other: well, we shall allow it to be so! At present I am persuaded that the happiness and virtues of both would be augmented by this very diversity of character.

racter. She will submit her actions, I am certain, to my wishes; and her mode of thinking will, perhaps, liberalize mine. She will diminish or modify, at least, that excessive sensibility that has already occasioned me so much suffering. All will be well, my dear friend, if I only can be her husband.

Yesterday, in short But how shall I relate to you the feelings of this day! It will again involve my soul in the labyrinth which bewilders and overpowers it. Is there any sentiment valuable but that of love; or any other life desirable in living? There are in my heart so many tender recollections, so many animated ideas of happiness, that I rejoice in my existence every moment I breathe. Alas! what mischief would my enemy have done me, had he killed me! My wound still gives me pain: I am sometimes afraid that it will again open, feelings so impassioned agitate my bosom. Would you, indeed, believe it, that I am afraid of dying before

L 6

to-morrow,

to-morrow, before a single hour, before the very moment when I shall again have the felicity of seeing her?

Do not imagine, however, that I describe to you the love of a thoughtless young man, or that love which it is the duty of a sensible friend to blame. Tho' you have engaged not to oppose the views of my mother, you wish, notwithstanding, that she would prefer Mad. d'Albemar to Matilda. Yes, my dear friend, your understanding corresponds with the choice of your pupil; do not deny it. Ah! if you knew how much more you were endeared to me on this account!

Before going to Mad. de Vernon's ball, I had received your answer respecting M. de Serbellane. You allowed that he was the man whom Mad. d'Albemar had always appeared to you most to esteem; and although you endeavoured to calm my anxiety, your letter had rather the effect of exciting it anew. I went, therefore, to the ball, in a disposition of mind sufficiently

ly

ly melancholy. Matilda was dressed in a Spanish robe, which remarkably added to the beauty of her shape and figure. She has never expressed any preference for me, but I could not help thinking I saw an amiable design to please me in her choice of this dress. I wished to speak to her, and I seated myself beside her, after having led her nearer the door by which we entered, to which I was continually directing my eyes. I was so much engrossed by my impatience to see Delphine arrive, that I could not even follow up with Matilda this ball conversation, which is in general so easily conducted.

On a sudden I perceived an agreeable and balmy odour, and immediately recognized the perfume of flowers which Delphine is accustomed to carry. I involuntarily started up. She entered without seeing me; but I did not go immediately towards her: I wished to taste the pleasure for a moment of knowing that she was in the same place with myself. I hus-
banded,

banded, with the anxiety of a voluptuary, the enjoyments of the happiest day of my life. I permitted Delphine to make the circuit of the ball-room before endeavouring to approach her. I observed only that she still sought some person, though every body was eager to surround her. She was dressed in a plain white robe, and her beautiful locks were bound up without any ornament, but with a grace and variety perfectly inimitable. Ah! how indifferent was I, when looking at *her*, about the fine attire of Matilda! It was that of Delphine only which I could approve and admire. What signify to me emblems calculated to revive the recollections of Spain. Ever since the day on which I saw Mad. d'Albemar, I have been capable only of one recollection.

She observed me in the embrasure of a window, where I had placed myself to look at her. She betrayed an emotion of joy which did not escape me. Immediately after, she perceived Matilda; but her dress struck

struck her so forcibly, that she continued standing before her, surprised and astonished, without being able to speak to her. A young handsome Italian lady, whom they call Mad. d'Ervin's, then made up to Delphine, and begged her to follow her into the side saloon. Delphine hesitated, and I am certain it was in order to speak to me. Mad. d'Ervin's, however, appeared distressed by her refusal, and Delphine no longer hesitated to comply.

This interview with Mad. d'Ervin's lasted pretty long, and I bore it with the utmost impatience, till Delphine returned to me, and said—"It is, perhaps, very ridiculous to give you an account of my actions, without knowing whether you are interested in them: in a word, should you consider this unusual step as imprudent, you will think of my character what you perhaps think of it already, but you will not conceive at least unjust suspicions of me. An interest, which I am forbidden to confide to you, obliges me to converse
a few

a few moments in private with M. de Serbellane; this interest is the most opposite in the world to my own personal affections. I should have a bad opinion of Leonce if he could mistrust the accents of truth; and if I were not certain of convincing him, when I request his esteem for me, from the sincerity of my words." The dignity and simplicity of this language made a deep impression on my heart—"Ah! Delphine, what would be your perfidy, were you to render subservient to falsehood so many charms, that seem only created to render more amiable the first and involuntary movements of the soul, and to unite, in short, in one woman the elegant graces of the world, with all the simplicity of natural feeling."

Mad. d'Albemar, after her conversation with M. Serbellane, returned into the ball-room, and M. d'Orsan, the nephew of Mad. du Marset, who is always in want of some employment for his talents, because they serve him instead of understanding, begged

Delphine

Delphine to dance a Polish dance, which a Russian had taught both of them, and which excited a good deal of curiosity in the ball-room. Delphine was compelled, in some measure, to yield to his importunity; but, in the looks that she directed to me, there was something so sweet and amiable that I cannot describe it: she seemed to complain to me of the *ennui* which M. d'Orsan occasioned her. Our correspondence was begun by herself; her engaging smile seemed to associate me in her observations, that were so sweetly malicious.

Both men and women mounted upon the benches to see Delphine dance. I felt my heart heave violently when I observed all eyes directed towards her; I suffered from the union even of their ideas with my own; I had been happier had I looked at her alone.

Never did grace and beauty produce upon a numerous assembly an effect more extraordinary. This dance, which operated
like

like a charm, and of which nothing that we have ever seen can give you the smallest idea, is a combination of indolence and vivacity, of melancholy and gaiety purely Asiatic. At times, when the air became more tender, Delphine walked some steps with her head reclined, and her arms across her bosom, as if some sad recollections, some melancholy regrets, had suddenly mingled with all the brilliance of a festival; but soon resuming the nimble and animated dance, she threw around her an Indian shawl, which gave a new expression to her shape, and flowing behind with her long hair, gave to her whole person the most charming and delightful effect.

This dance, so expressive, I had almost said inspired, exercises over the imagination an irresistible power; it represents to your ideas and sensations the most poetic, which, even under the mild sky of the East, the finest verses would in vain attempt to describe.

When Delphine had done dancing, the
applauses

applauses she received were so loud and enthusiastic, that you would have believed, for a moment, that every man in the room was her adorer, and every woman her slave.

Though I am still weak, and am forbidden every exercise which has a tendency to inflame the blood, I could not resist the desire of joining Delphine in an English dance, which was just now forming all along the gallery; I therefore asked Mad. d'Albemar to lead it down with me. "Can you do it," replied she, "without risking your health?"—"Do not fear that," replied I, "I shall take hold of your hand." The dance began, and several times my arms enclosed that pliant and light form which so much charmed my eyes. At one time, when turning with Delphine, I felt her heart beat under the pressure of my hand; that heart, in which all the powers above had united their bounties, was animated for me with an emotion the most tender.

I was

I was so happy, so transported, that I wished to begin a second time the same country-dance. The music was delightful beyond conception ; two melodious harps accompanied the wind instruments, and played an air at once affecting and lively. Delphine's dancing assumed, by degrees, a character more animated, and her eyes were fixed upon mine with greater expression. When the different figures of the dance led us towards each other, her arms I thought involuntarily opened to receive me ; and, notwithstanding her remarkable agility, she often seemed to take pleasure in leaning on me. The exquisite raptures that animated my whole frame, made me forget that my wound was not yet perfectly whole. When we had reached the last couple that terminated the dance, I suddenly felt a sensation of weakness, which made my knees even tremble. I drew Delphine, by a kind of involuntary effort, still nearer me, and said to her in a whispering voice—" Oh, Delphine ! if I should

should thus terminate my days, would you think me to be pitied!"—"Good God!" interrupted she, with a voice full of emotion; "God God! what ails you?" the alteration of my countenance so much alarmed her. We had got to the end of the dance: I supported myself against the chimney, and I put, without thinking, my hand on my wound, from which I suffered excessively. Delphine could not conceal her distress, but abandoned herself to her feelings to such a degree, that, notwithstanding my weakness, I saw the eyes of the whole company fixed on her. The dread of having her feelings wounded supplied me with new vigour, and I wished to go into the room adjoining that we were dancing in. It was only a few steps from us. Delphine, heedless of every thing but the condition in which I was, crossed the whole hall without noticing any person, followed me, and seeing me tremble as I walked, took hold of me in order to support me. I in vain assured her

her

her that I was better, and that, on breathing the free air, I should be well. She thought only of my danger, and never reflected that she was exposing to the whole company the excess of her uneasiness, and the unusual concern she felt for my situation.

Oh, Delphine! at that moment as if at the foot of the altar, I swore to be thy husband; I received thy vows, I received the valuable trust of thy innocent destiny, at the very moment a dark cloud was threatening, on my account, to obscure thy reputation!

When I had got near a window, I stopped to sit down: then Delphine, recollecting what had just passed, said to me with tears in her eyes, "I have acted the most extraordinary part that can possibly be conceived; your imprudence in persisting to dance has put my heart to this severe trial. Leonce! O, Leonce! is it necessary that you make me suffer, in order to know me?"—"Could you suspect me," said I to

I to her, "of voluntarily exposing to the view of others, with respect, with love in my heart, what I myself dare scarcely recollect? But if you dread the reproach of the world, I shall soon be able. . . ."—"The reproach of the world," interrupted she with an expression of indifference remarkably pointed, "I do not fear it; but my secret will be known before I have unbosomed myself to my friend, and you know not how culpable this will render me!"——She was going to proceed, when we heard some bustle in the saloon, and the name of Mad. d'Ervins several times repeated. Delphine left me hastily, to enquire into the cause of this disturbance. Mad. d'Ervins, M. de Fierville informed her, had just fallen senseless on the floor, and they were carrying her to her carriage by order of M. d'Ervins, who did not wish her to receive assistance any where but at home.

Delphine had scarcely heard these last words, when she darted into the staircase,

case, reached M. d'Ervins, ascended his chariot, without saying a word to him, and drove away that moment: this was all I could perceive. The instantaneous feeling of a good and benevolent heart, hurried her away involuntarily. She left me alone in the midst of that mirth and gaiety, for which I had no longer any taste. In vain I endeavoured to seek for pleasure, which in my heart could be mingled only with love; I was penetrated, however, with that tender but serious sentiment, which expands the heart of a virtuous man, when he has disposed of his own heart, and taken upon himself the care of the happiness and life of another.

I know not if I abuse your friendship, by confiding to you the sentiments and feelings I experienced; but why should the gravity of your age and character prevent me from describing to you that pure love which directs me in the choice of a companion for life? The details of your
pupil's

pupil's happiness, my dear tutor, will, I hope, be acceptable to you; they will remind you of your own youth; and this recollection will be unaccompanied by any painful regrets, as all the impressions which your memory suggests can relate only to one object, the triumphs and the rewards of virtue.

I shall delay any positive explanation with Mad. d'Albemar till I have received my mother's answer. In a few days I shall be with you at Mondoville, where you will then stand in need of me. I am anxious we should write together to my mother from that very place where she spent the first years of her marriage and of my infancy; those endearing recollections cannot fail to render her favourable to me.

LETTER XXVIII.

MADAME DE VERNON TO M. DE CLARIMIN.

Paris, June 30, 1790.

YOU have been informed that M. de Mondoville is very much attached to Madm^{lle} d'Albemar, and that he appears to prefer her to my daughter; you have therefore concluded that the marriage which I have projected cannot take place. You ought, however, to have a little more confidence in the dexterity which you know I possess. I am a witness of all that passes; Leonce and Delphine cannot take a single step without my perceiving it; and do you imagine that I cannot ultimately prevent this union, that would overturn all my projects of happiness and fortune?

I have occasionally availed myself of my address for very indifferent and trivial objects; but now I am called upon, by all the feelings,

feelings of a parent, to protect my daughter; and do you imagine I shall not succeed? You tell me that Madm^{lle} d'Albemar conceals from me her affection for Leonce. I assure you I shall have her confidence whenever I wish it: but I am just now studying how to avoid it, for she would lead me into engagements from which I am anxious at present to be free.

The characters of Leonce and Delphine are by no means similar: Leonce is haughty as a Spaniard, elated with his own importance, as much as Delphine is really lovely and amiable. It is absolutely necessary indeed to separate them for the interest of both, and an opportunity of doing so I hope will very soon present itself. Time only is necessary, and I defy either Leonce or Delphine to hasten events which I am determined to delay. Nobody knows better than I do how to avail myself of the apparent indolence and inattention of my character; they enable me to combat with greater ease the activity of others. I wish

for the marriage of Leonce with Matilda. I have hardly subjected myself to the trouble of wishing four times in my life; but since I have already interested myself so much in the accomplishment of this wish, nothing shall divert me from my purpose, and I shall accomplish it, you may depend upon it.

I thank you for the friendly concern you express for me, and the kind interest you take in my success; but when the destiny of my daughter is in question, when my own destruction or happiness, and, in a word, when every thing I consider as valuable is so nearly concerned, do you think I will lose any opportunity, or neglect any expedient? I take good care, however, to conduct myself in an affair of such importance with much greater vigilance and caution than I am accustomed to in things of trifling and inferior moment; for it is patience and secrecy only that give effect to every arrangement. Adieu then, my dear Clarimin; as I hope to see you soon
at

at Paris, I invite you thither to the nuptials of my daughter.

LETTER XXIX.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

THERESA is undone, my dear Louisa, and I know not what measures to adopt to alleviate the sorrows of her cruel destiny. I entertained some hopes of my own happiness two days ago at Mad. de Vernon's ball. Leonce and I had almost come to an explanation; but since this misfortune happened to Theresa, I have felt so much for her, and been so much agitated, that I have let two evenings pass without seeing Mad. de Vernon, or even going to her house. Leonce would have observed my melancholy, and I would not have been at liberty to avow to him the real cause of it. If there is any duty I hold more sacred than another, it is that of keeping inviolably

M 3

lably the secret of my friend; and how could I prevent its being discovered by the person whom I love? I therefore know nothing of Leonce, and Mad. d'Ervins alone engages my whole attention.

Mad. du Marset, so much the reverse of every thing that is feeling or sentimental, that she is as incapable of feeling tenderness as unable to inspire it, knew M. d'Ervins at Paris fifteen years ago, before his marriage with Theresa. The day before yesterday, Mad. du Marset being seated immediately next him at the ball, was incessantly whispering to him, while Theresa was dancing with M. de Serbellane. I cannot believe that Mad. du Marset could be capable of positively exciting suspicions in the bosom of M. d'Ervins. The most malicious characters are unwilling to confess that they are so, and always reserve some plausible means of excuse to others, as well as to themselves. But I thought I observed, from certain words that escaped M. d'Ervins in his fury, that Mad. du Mar-

set,

set, on learning that M. de Serbellane had passed six months at his chateau with his wife, was disposed to laugh at the ridiculous part which he must have acted in trio with those two young lovers; and of all the words which she could possibly select, the most perfidious and provoking must have been that of *ridiculous*, for M. d'Ervins repeated it incessantly in his rage; and when at any time he left off speaking, he had only to mutter it again to himself, to make her resume the subject with more violence than ever.

I passed M. d'Ervins some moments after his conversation with Mad. du Marset, and I was surprised at the seriousness of his countenance. As I knew nothing serious or thoughtful in his character, but what might be the offspring of self-love, I could not doubt for a moment that he had met with something that offended him. Theresa made the same observations to me; and, at the same time, whether, as she has told me since, an unhappy passion agitated

her bosom, or whether this kind of entertainment, entirely new to her, overpowered her senses, and deprived her of the capability of reflection; her partiality for M. de Serbellane was only too perceptible, and could not possibly escape the observation of the company. M. d'Ervins affected to keep at a distance from her; but I could easily perceive that he did not wish to lose sight of her. I gave a hint of this to M. Serbellane; I could depend, I knew, upon his prudence: and, in consequence of this, he industriously avoided speaking to Theresa. Had I not then quitted Mad. d'Ervins, perhaps I should have been able to calm the uneasiness she felt from the assumed coldness of M. de Serbellane. She did not know the cause, and was unable to support the idea of it. Wholly engaged with Leonce during the rest of the evening, I entirely forgot Mad. d'Ervins. It was this neglect, alas! which was perhaps the cause of her misfortune.

I was in conversation with Leonce, when

I was

I was alarmed by the intelligence, that they were carrying away Mad. d'Ervins in a faint. I ran to her husband, who was following her ; I got into his carriage almost in opposition to his wishes, and took into my arms the unhappy Theresa, who had fallen into so deep a swoon, that she exhibited no longer any signs of life.—“ Great God !” exclaimed I to M. d'Ervins, “ who has put her into this dreadful condition ?” “ Her own conscience, madam,” replied he—“ her own conscience !”—And he then related to me what had passed in a paroxysm of rage, with which there did not mingle a single sentiment of pity for this charming creature, apparently expiring before him.

Placed behind a door, at the moment his wife was passing from the one chamber to the other, he had heard her reproach M. de Serbellane, in a language that indicated the most intimate union : he then advanced, and taking his wife by the hand, said to her in a low voice, but with the

sternest resentment—"Look at him, this perfidious stranger—look at him, for you shall never see him more!" At these words Theresa fell motionless at his feet. M. d'Ervin was proud of the distress he had caused her, and only rejoiced in his cruel triumph.

When we arrived at Mad. d'Ervin's house, her daughter Isore, seeing her mother brought back in this melancholy condition, uttered the most lamentable cries, to which M. d'Ervin, however, did not deign to pay the smallest attention. We put Theresa to bed, dressed as she was with garlands of flowers, and all the other decorations with which she appeared at the ball: she had the appearance of having been struck with a thunderbolt in the midst of a festival of gaiety and joy.

My attentions recalled her to life; but she was in a state of delirium that every moment betrayed her fatal secret. I wished M. d'Ervin to leave me alone with her; but so far from consenting, he came to
tell

tell me my carriage was waiting, and that at present he desired to converse with his wife without any witnesses. "For the sake of your daughter," said I to him, "M. d'Ervins, for the sake of your daughter, take care of Theresa; do not forget ten years of happiness; do not forget. . . ."

—"I know, Madam," interrupted he, "what I owe to myself; do not fear that I shall ever forget my own personal dignity."—"And will you not," resumed I, "will you not forget the danger of Theresa?"—"Whatever is proper shall be done," replied he, "whatever it may cost: she has the honour to bear my name; I shall therefore take care of every thing that either her own duty or mine requires."

I left this detestable man, this man capable of seeing nothing in nature but himself alone, nor in himself any thing but his own pride. I returned once more to the unfortunate Theresa: I embraced her; I swore to her the most tender and disinterested friendship, and recommended to her

prudence and courage. She answered only in a faint and tremulous voice—"Let me see you again." I departed with a heart wrung with anguish.

Upon returning home, about two in the morning, I found M. de Serbellane waiting for me. You will easily imagine how I was affected by his grief! Those characters that are habitually cool, are sometimes overpowered by their passions, and are then susceptible of the strongest and most indelible impressions. He struggled, with the greatest efforts, to restrain his resentment against M. d'Ervin. These words, however, at one time escaped him—"Let him not make me apprehensive for the safety of his wife; let him not threaten her with unworthy and dishonourable treatment; for if he do, I shall then find it necessary to fight with him, to put an end to his existence, and thus deliver Theresa from his cruel persecution; and, if ever I am destined to act this part, which is certainly the most reasonable, with what joy

joy will I embrace it!" I calmed his resentment, by telling him that I would see Theresa again next day, and that I would relate to him faithfully the condition I should find her in. We parted, after his having promised to take no step of any kind before seeing me again.

I could not procure admission to Theresa till eight in the evening: I had been there ten different times, but to no purpose; her husband had shut her up. Her condition now alarms me, even more than it did last night. Oh! my God! what an unhappy destiny! M. d'Ervin's has not left her a single moment either night or day; he has loaded her with reproaches the most insolent and outrageous: he has extorted from her every confession which might have a tendency to criminate herself, by always threatening her, if she deceived him, to interrogate M. de Serbellane himself. At last he concluded, by declaring, that M. Serbellane must quit France in twenty-four hours—"I am ignorant,"

ignorant," said he, "of the means you will take to communicate to him this notice. You may write to him, if you please, a letter, which I shall not desire to see; but if, after ten to-morrow evening he be still in Paris, I shall make it my business to find him, and we shall then come to an explanation. I feel very much inclined, indeed, to this last measure, and it cannot possibly be avoided, unless he give me full satisfaction, by removing instantly from Paris at my first intimation."

Theresa had promised every thing, but what concerned her most, perhaps, was the promise I had made her, fifteen days ago, of procuring them a parting interview. Her imagination was less alarmed at the apprehension of a duel between her lover and her husband, than at the idea that she should no more see M. de Serbellane: she threw herself at my feet, to conjure me to preserve her from such a misfortune. Those dreadful words which M. d'Ervin had pronounced at the ball, those

those words, *You shall see him no more*, recurred always to her recollection: in repeating them, she was in such a state of agitation, that you would have imagined with these words alone she would have terminated her existence. She said, if this cruel hardship imposed upon her was not put in execution, if she were permitted once more to see M. de Serbellane, if she could be certain only that their separation would not be eternal, she would have courage to support his departure; but, if this last adieu was denied her, she could not answer for her life—she would be unable to survive it. I wished to abstract her attention from this subject; but she always repeated to me——“Shall I not see him—shall I not be even permitted to bid him adieu?” And my silence threw her into such an agony of despair, that I was obliged to promise I would consent to every thing that M. de Serbellane should think proper: “Well then! I shall be tranquil,” said she, “for I have written to
him

him the most pressing and irresistible entreaties."

You will think, perhaps, my dear Louisa, you who are an angel of goodness, that I ought not to have hesitated to satisfy Theresa, particularly after the engagement I had previously made with her. Is it necessary to confess to you the motive that made me hesitate to comply with her request? If Leonce hears, by any accident, that I have procured an interview at my own house, between a married woman and her lover, in opposition to the positive prohibition of her husband, will he approve of my conduct? Is Leonce then become the arbiter of my conduct, and am I no longer capable of judging for myself what generosity and pity require of me?

Upon leaving Theresa, I went to Mad. de Vernon's: Leonce had just left it; he had been inquiring for me at my own house, and complained, according to what Matilda very naturally told me, of the time that I spent at M. d'Ervins'. M. de Fierville
then

then made himself merry with me on the manner in which I passed my time. These sallies of pleasantry immediately led me to understand that he had seen M. de Serbellane leave my house at three in the morning, on the day of the ball. I felt inexpressible resentment and grief, but saw no way of justifying myself from this imputation. I was vexed at the idea that Leonce must have heard of it, and, to add to my confusion, M. de Serbellane at that moment entered the room. He had come, he told me, from my house, and M. de Fierville again smiled. It appeared to me a smile of the most infernal malice; but, instead of rousing me to self-defence, it freezed me only with horror, and I received M. de Serbellane with unusual coldness. He was so astonished at my manner, that he could scarcely believe it, and his looks seemed to say to me, "For heaven's sake, what is the matter with you—what has happened to you?" His surprise soon restored me to myself. "No, Leonce,"

Leonce," said I to myself, "you command my heart, you have every power over me; but I will not sacrifice for you goodness, that generous goodness, the cultivation of which has been the whole employment of my life." I then determined to take M. de Serbellane aside, and, communicating to him in a few words every thing that had passed, I told him that a letter from Theresa was waiting for him at home, and he immediately took his leave in order to peruse it.

After this exertion of courage and integrity, for it was of myself only I had made a sacrifice, I wished to make an attempt to rally M. de Fierville. I asked myself why I could not exert my spirit to dissipate their unmerited suspicions: but M. de Fierville was calm, and I was agitated: my words partook of the uneasiness that preyed upon my heart, whilst all his, on the contrary, were uttered with the utmost *sang froid*. I attempted to be cheerful, in order to shew how little I regarded

garded what he thought of so much consequence; but my attempts at wit were constrained, while the most perfect ease and tranquillity added to his pleasantry an additional poignancy. I again became serious, hoping to be able, by some means, to gain the victory; but he repelled by irony and ridicule the too keen sensations which I was unable to conceal. Never did I experience more truly that there are men on whom you throw away, to no purpose, language and sentiments that are even the best calculated to produce an impression. They are anxious only to exclude truth by jest and ridicule, and as their triumph consists in not hearing you, it is in vain that you endeavour to make yourself be understood.

I felt very much, however, from my embarrassed situation, when Mad. de Vernon kindly came to my assistance. She made some witticisms on M. de Fierville, which were even superior to his own, and took him aside to the window, whispering
me,

me, at the same time, that she was going to undeceive him in regard to every thing that gave me uneasiness, if I would permit her to speak with him alone. I cannot express to you, my dear Louisa, how much I was affected by this kind and generous conduct, by this relief given me at a time when I really stood in need of it. With tears in my eyes I grasped the hand of Mad. de Vernon, and promised to see her to-morrow, in order no longer to keep a secret which distresses me: you shall know, therefore, to-morrow, my dear Louisa, what is to be my fate.

LETTER XXX.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

July 14.

I HAVE spent a very busy day, my dear Louisa, though I have not yet succeeded in procuring an interview with Mad. de Vernon.

non. To-day I have experienced some moments of happiness, but the events that have passed impress my mind with feelings of the deepest anxiety. As soon as I rose, I wrote to Mad. de Vernon, requesting to be admitted alone at her usual breakfast hour; and though I did not mention directly the subject on which I wished to speak to her, I believe my language sufficiently disclosed the secret. She kept my servant waiting about two hours, and at last sent him back with a note, in which she made an apology for not receiving my visit; she concluded with these remarkable words: "In short, my dear Delphine, I can read the sentiments of your heart as plainly as you can do yourself; but I do not think the time is yet come when it would be proper for us to talk together." These words have cost me much reflection, and I am still at a loss how to understand them. Why, thought I, should she decline an interview? She told me herself, that for two days past she has not had any conversation

sation with Leonce on the subject of the intended nuptials. Is it possible that she has discovered my passion for him? Will she prove so generous, so warm a friend, as to break off this match to gratify my wishes, without even acquainting me with her design? How I should blush to be dealt with so nobly! What have I done to deserve such a sacrifice? But if these were her intentions, how could she be so unjust as to expose Matilda every day to the company of Leonce? In a word, to put an end to this state of uncertainty, so tormenting, I resolved to go directly to her house, and compel her to hear me.

: But what had I to say to her? That I loved Leonce, that I wished to oppose the happiness of her daughter, and to thwart the execution of the plans we had concerted? Ah! my Louisa, you are too indulgent to my weakness; I will not, however, flatter myself with hopes till Mad. de Vernon has heard me, till she has decided my fate.

M. de Serbellane arrived at my house just as I was going out. I was struck at the change which appeared in his countenance; it bore the marks of the deepest affliction. "I have read her letter," said he to me, "it has made me ill. I flattered myself that I should never be the cause of sorrow to any human being, and you see I have ruined the most amiable of her sex. Let us consider now," continued he, endeavouring to command himself, "let us consider what remains to be done. Although it is extremely painful to my feelings to shew any appearance of yielding to the pleasure of M. d'Ervins at parting, I give my consent in compliance with the wishes of Theresa, nor am I afraid that any person will imagine, that in doing so I have been guided by motives of personal safety. You, Madam," added he, "from whom I have received so many proofs of angelic goodness, you will not deny me when I request, as the last pledge of your friendship, that you will receive Theresa and me at your house

house in the evening of the day after tomorrow. I shall take leave ostensibly the same morning: M. d'Ervins will think himself certain that I am on my way to Portugal; some business requires his presence at Saint Germain; and while he is there Theresa will come secretly to your house. I know the request I now make would be refused by a woman of an ordinary cast of mind; that it would be granted without reflection by one of a light disposition; and that I shall obtain it from the goodness of your heart. I have not, perhaps, always participated in those lively emotions which have been excited in the breast of Theresa; but in the present state of my feelings this meeting is no less necessary to my happiness than to hers: the events which have lately happened have stamped upon my character an impression of which I did not think it susceptible; I wish that Theresa should hear what I have to say to her respecting the situation in which she is placed."

M. de

M. de Serbellane here stopped, astonished by my silence. What passed yesterday with M. de Fierville gave me still greater repugnance than before to take any farther steps in this affair; and I considered that malice or calumny, if I complied, might ruin me in the opinion of Leonce. I had not, however, the courage to refuse M. de Serbellane; for what excuse had I to urge? I was ashamed to rest my denial on scruples of morality, for that was not the real cause of my hesitation; and my heart detests the thought of laying claim to sentiments of esteem to which I have no title.

I do not know whether M. de Serbellane perceived the struggle which I felt; but, taking me by the hand, he said to me, with that calmness which always carries with it an appearance of superior understanding, "You promised it to Theresa; I was a witness to your promise; she trusts you will fulfil it; and will you betray the confidence which she reposes in you? will you be insensible to her despair?"

“No,” replied I, “if ever she be reduced to this unhappy condition, I shall not be the cause of her misery; employ this interview in endeavouring to restore her to tranquillity, to lead her back to those duties which her fate imposes on her; and, whatever unhappy consequences may result to myself from my compliance with your wishes, I shall at least avoid the imputation of an unfeeling heart, I shall have some claim to pity.”—“Generous friend!” cried M. de Serbellane, “you will be happy in the excellence of your own feelings: I guessed what they would be; I have no hesitation in putting them to the trial; and the warmest wishes of my heart are for your welfare. I shall take care to conduct this interview with such prudence and secrecy, as you may be assured will prevent any inconvenience which you may dread. I will avail myself of these few hours that remain, to fortify the mind of Theresa, and in your house not a word shall be uttered unbecoming the purity of your,

your character. The following night I must take my departure; I must bid adieu, perhaps for ever, to a woman who has loved me more than any other woman ever did; and to you, madam, to you, whose heart is so noble, so tender, and so sincere." This was the first time M. de Serbellane ever expressed his esteem for me with any degree of warmth. I was affected by his manner: the least word which he utters finds its way instantly to the heart. The courage with which he had inspired me supported me for some moments; but scarcely was he gone when I fell into a train of the most gloomy ideas while reflecting on the dangers to which the engagement I had just made would expose me.

If I had consulted Leonce, thought I with myself, would he not have disapproved of the step I have taken? Of this, at least, I am certain, he would not wish his wife to be guilty of such weakness. Alas! why do I not observe the same conduct

now which he would expect from me if I were his wife? But had I not before given my promise? Could I have supported the thought of being the voluntary cause of such heart-rending sorrow? No; but would to heaven this day had never passed!

I followed the plan which I had proposed of going to Mad. de Vernon's, although the distracted state of mind into which I was thrown, by the promise I had given to M. de Serbellane, made me very unfit for speaking to her. I found Leonce alone with Mad. de Vernon; he had come to take leave of her before going to Mondoville, where he intends to spend a few days. He lamented that he had not seen me, but spoke of my devotion to the cause of friendship in terms so affecting, that I must flatter myself he loved me the better for it. He supported the conversation without the least embarrassment. I imagined, on watching his looks, I could discern that his resolution was taken, before his manner discovered his inclination; but

but it was not determined ; his tranquillity inspired me with the most flattering hopes: had he sacrificed me to another, it would have been impossible for him to behold me with a look of undisturbed serenity.

Mad. de Vernon was going to the Thuilleries to wait on the Queen, and begged me to accompany her ; Leonce offered to attend us. I went home to dress myself, and in a quarter of an hour after Leonce and Mad. de Vernon came to fetch me.

We were waiting for the Queen in the saloon which leads to her chamber, with about forty of the most distinguished women in Paris, when Mad. de R. made her appearance : she is a careless creature, who has lost her reputation by real misconduct and an inconceivable levity of character. I have seen her three or four times at the house of her aunt, Mad. d'Artenas: I have always carefully avoided forming any intimacy with her ; but I have had occasion to remark in her conversation great sweet-

ness of disposition, and much goodness of heart. I know not how she could be so imprudent as to appear at the Thuilleries without her aunt, since she must know so well that no woman wishes to speak to her in public. The moment she entered, Mad. de St. Albe and Mad. de Tesin, who delight to execute rigorous punishment on every offender, and who gladly seize an opportunity of gratifying the natural haughtiness of their tempers, under the pretence of a tender regard for the interests of virtue, immediately quitted the place where they were seated on the side where Mad. de R. was; at the same instant all the other ladies rose, whether from affectation or timidity, and came to the other end of the room, to join Mad. de Vernon, Mad. de Marset, and myself. The gentlemen in a short time followed their example; for, while they seduce the women, they wish to retain the right of punishing them for their compliance.

Mad. de R. was left alone, exposed to
the

the observation of the whole company, seeing the circle retire as she approached it, and unable to conceal her confusion. The moment was come when the Queen was expected either to enter the saloon, or to come out to receive us. I foresaw that the scene would become still more distressing. The eyes of Mad. de R. were filled with tears ; she cast a look round us all, as if to implore the assistance of some one. I could not help pitying her unhappy situation. The fear of displeasing Leonce, that fear which is never absent from my thoughts, still kept me back ; but another look thrown at Mad. de R. so powerfully excited my compassion, that, by a motion altogether involuntarily, I crossed the saloon, and seated myself beside her. " Yes," I then said to myself, " once more let the forms of society be sacrificed to the genuine feelings of the heart, since once more they are at variance with its dictates."

Mad. de R. received me with as much

gratitude as if I had restored her to life : in truth, it is a kindness no less deserving of gratitude, to assuage those griefs which society can inflict, when it exercises all its power without being restrained by any motives of compassion. Scarcely had I spoken to Mad. de R. when I felt myself irresistibly inclined to turn my eyes to Leonce: I discovered some embarrassment in his looks, but I saw no marks of displeasure. His eyes seemed to run over the assembly to examine what effect my behaviour had produced upon others, but it did not appear to have made any unfavourable impression on his own mind.

Mad. de Vernon continued all the while to converse with M. de Fierville, and did not appear as if she observed what was passing. I supported tolerably well till the end whatever may be supposed painful in the part which I had undertaken to perform. On leaving the apartment of the queen, Mad. de R. said to me, with a warmth which repaid me a thousand times for the sacrifice I made

made, "Generous Delphine! you have given me the only lesson which is capable of making any impression on me; you have made me in love with virtue, with the courage and the superiority which it confers. You will learn in a few years, that from this day forward I shall be no longer the same. It will be long before I think myself worthy of seeing you; but this is the ultimate object of my wishes, this is the hope which will support me." When she had pronounced these words, I took hold of her hand, and pressed it closely in mine. A reproachful smile from Mad. du Marset, and a look from M. de Fierville, plainly showed their disapprobation: they were both speaking to Leonce, and I was persuaded I saw him deeply affected with what he heard. I looked every where for Mad. de Vernon, but she was still with the Queen. At this moment of suspense Leonce came up to me, and, with a degree of seriousness, asked permission to see me alone at my own house, as soon as he had conducted

Mad. de Vernon to her home. I gave my consent by a nod ; my agitation was too violent to allow me to speak.

I returned home, and attempted to read till Leonce should arrive ; but, having passed three hours without seeing him, I began to suspect that Mad. de Vernon had detained him ; that he had come to an explanation with her ; that she had prevailed so far over his delicacy as to persuade him to adhere to the engagements of his mother ; and that he was about to write to me to excuse himself from coming to see me. While I was making these reflections, a servant entered with a letter in his hand, and I had no doubt that this was the apology of Leonce. I took it without seeing any thing—a cloud had come over my eyes : but when I read the signature of Theresa, I felt a sensation of the most lively satisfaction. She wished to see me at her house in the evening ; and I replied that I would go with all possible haste. I believe I felt no small degree of gratitude to

to Theresa, because it was she that had written to me.

I sat down again more tranquil than before ; but in a short time my uneasiness returned. I had learned, in the course of an hour, to distinguish perfectly the noise of the different carriages. I knew at once those which came from the quarter where Mad. de Vernon's house is situated. When they approached, I held in my breath in order to hear more distinctly ; and when they had passed my door, my spirits relapsed into the most painful depression. At last one of them stopped ; I heard a rap at the door ; and as soon as it was opened, I discovered the blue coach of Leonce, which is so well known to me. I felt an emotion of shame at the condition in which I had been. I was afraid lest Leonce should discover it, and hastened to resume my book, and to prepare myself to receive, with all the ceremonies of a formal visit, the man whom I expected with a palpitation

of the heart which lifted the robe on my bosom.

Leonce at length appeared: the air became more light and more pure at his approach. He began by telling me that Mad. de Vernon had detained him in the most pressing manner, without speaking to him on any interesting subject, but by repeatedly calling him back to charge him with commissions of the most trivial nature. "It is her duty," said I, making an effort to speak, "to employ every method to gain your esteem; you cannot be surprised at her conduct."—"It is not she," replied Leonce in a tone of melancholy, "who can influence my fate; you alone hold this empire: I know not whether you will exercise it to promote my happiness." This doubt astonished me; I was silent; he went on:—"If I possessed the happiness of having gained an interest in your heart, would you not reflect on the opportunities which you afford to the censures of the malicious? would you forget the character

character of my mother, and the obstacles. . . .” He stopped and leaned his head on his hand.—“What do you reproach me with, Leonce?” said I to him; “I wish to hear it before I attempt to justify myself.”—“Your intimacy with Mad. de R. Ought Mad. d’Albemar to choose such a friend?”—“I saw her to-day for the third time in my life,” replied I; “I have not been once at her house since I came to Paris, and she has never come to mine.”—“What!” cried Leonce, “and Mad. du Marset has had the audacity to tell me. . . .” “You listen to her; you are still more culpable than she.”

“This is not all yet,” added I; “did you not disapprove of my placing myself beside her?”—“No,” replied Leonce, “I suffered, but I did not blame you.”—“You suffered!” replied I, with a good deal of warmth, “when I yielded to the impulse of a generous feeling; alas! Leonce, it was the misery of this unhappy woman which ought to have occasioned distress,

distress, and not the fortunate occurrence which gave me an opportunity of relieving her. Without doubt Mad. de R. has degraded her character; but do we know all the circumstances which led to her ruin? Did her husband act the part of a protector, or was he a man unworthy of being loved? Did her parents watch with care over her education? Was the first object of her choice the guardian of her destiny, or did he not blast every hope which love could cherish, every sentiment of delicacy which was planted in her breast? Alas! in how many ways does the fortune of the women depend upon the men! But I will not boast of having reasoned this morning on the conduct of Mad. de R. or the indulgence to which she may be entitled; I was drawn towards her by an emotion of pity, which was in nowise the result of deep reflection. I was not her judge, and I ought to have been something more than her judge, before I could have been justified for refusing to comfort her under so severe a punishment

nishment as public scorn. Do you imagine that these women, who committed this outrage on her feelings, would have fled from her had they met her alone in the country? No, they would have spoken to her; their virtuous indignation, finding itself without witnesses, would not have been roused. How much insignificant vanity and unfeeling cruelty is displayed in this ostentation of virtue, in this sacrifice of a human victim, not to morality but to pride! Listen to me, Leonce," "said I with enthusiasm; "I love you, you know it; I would not seek to conceal it from you, though you were yet ignorant of it; far be from me all stratagems to conceal the emotions of the heart, even the most innocent: but I will not sacrifice to my passion, strong as it is, those qualities which I owe to the beloved friends who took charge of me in my childhood; I will brave what is to me the greatest of all dangers, the danger of incurring your displeasure; yes, I will brave it, when I am called upon

upon to give consolation to the unfortunate."

Long before I had ended, I read on the countenance of Leonce that I had triumphed over all his severity; but he was pleased with hearing me, and I went on encouraged by his looks. "Delphine," said he, laying hold of my hand, "heavenly Delphine! I can no longer resist you. Of what consequence is it that our characters and opinions should accord in every thing? There is not in the universe a woman of the same nature with yourself! What features can display that divine assemblage of charms which heaven has pourtrayed upon your countenance, and which raises you above comparison with all other women? That soul, that voice, those looks, have taken possession of my soul. I know not what may be my fate if I am united with you; but without you there is nothing for me upon earth but faded colours, confused images, and fleeting shadows; nothing exists, nothing is animated, where you are not present.

sent. "Consent then," cried he, throwing himself at my feet, "consent to become the companion of my destiny, the angel who shall walk before me during the years I have yet to wander on the earth. Be the guardian of my happiness, which I commit to you with my life: be indulgent to my failings; they arise, like my love, from the warmth of my temper; and pray to heaven for me on the day of our union, that I may die young, still the object of your love, before I experience the least diminution of the tender attachment which your heart has so generously yielded."

Ah, Louisa! what sentiments did I feel! I locked his hands in mine; I wept; I was afraid to interrupt, by a single word, this enchanting discourse. Leonce told me he was going to write to his mother, to declare formally his intention, and entreated I would promise to marry him, whatever answer he might receive from Spain, the very moment it arrived. My heart consented with transport to a proposal in which
the

the happiness of my life was concerned, when, on a sudden, I reflected that this request was inconsistent with the resolution which I had formed, of confiding my secret to Mad. de Vernon before I entered into any engagement. Delicacy required me not to give any decisive answer without first acquainting her. I did not wish to inform Leonce of my resolution on this head, from the fear of irritating him; I replied, therefore, that I begged he would not exact any promise from me before his return. He started back with astonishment at these words, and his looks assumed an expression of the deepest disappointment. I was going to comfort him, when all at once the door opened, and I beheld Mad. de Vernon, her daughter, and M. de Fierville. I was extremely disturbed when they entered, and I regretted, above all, that I had not been able to explain myself to Leonce on the refusal which had given him so much uneasiness. Mad. de Vernon did not observe my confusion, but
sat

sat down without any ceremony, telling me that she had come to ask me to dine with her. Matilda was at first somewhat astonished at seeing Leonce with me, but her astonishment passed off without exciting the least suspicion; her slow settled ideas preserve her from the effects of jealousy.—“A-propos,” said Mad. de Vernon to me, “is it true that M. de Serbellane sets off the day after to-morrow for Portugal?” I blushed extremely at this question, being afraid lest it should expose Theresa, and answered hastily that he had gone this very morning. Leonce looked at me for some time with the most eager attention, and then fell into a reverie. I felt anew the misery of possessing the secret which I was condemned to keep, and my breast was agitated with as much violence as if my happiness had been exposed to the greatest danger. Mad. de Vernon proposed to me that we should depart: she insisted, though faintly, that Leonce should go to her house; but M. Barton was expecting him, and he refused.

refused. As I was going into the carriage, he said to me, in a low voice, but with a tone of the greatest solemnity—"Remember that, with a character such as mine, the least duplicity of heart, the least dissimulation, would irretrievably destroy both my happiness and my confidence." It being impossible to speak to him, surrounded as I was, I could only answer his suspicions with a look; he understood it, pressed my hand, and left me; but since that moment the sad impression which this scene left upon my mind has never been effaced.

It is at last agreed that Mad. de Vernon shall receive me alone to-morrow evening. Before that time, Theresa and her lover will have met at my house, so that to-morrow will be a busy day. I saw Theresa this evening. She had been informed of my promise by a word from M. de Serbellane; I could not have persuaded her, had I wished it, that I was capable of retracting. Her husband believes that M. de Serbellane is on his journey; he will go to-morrow

morrow to Saint-Germain; every thing is arranged in the most irrevocable manner: I am bound by a thousand ties, but I hope this is the last secret that shall ever exist betwixt Leonce and me. You, my sister, to whom I have told every thing, will think of your friend: my fate will soon be decided.

LETTER XXXI.

LEONCE TO HIS MOTHER.

Mondoville, July 6, 1790.

I AM in the midst of those scenes where you passed the happiest years of the married state: it was here, my excellent mother, that you nursed my infancy. Every place fills my mind with the sweetest recollections; and on looking round me I am again inspired with that confidence in the future which forms the happiness of our earlier years. Here also my affection
for

for you glows with unusual ardour, that affection which my heart would willingly bestow, though it were not enjoined by the most sacred of duties. The strong resemblance which my character bears to your own, will enable you the better to judge of my feelings; consider then, I conjure you, with all your attention, and with all that interest you have in my happiness, the request which I am now going to make.

I am exposed to misery in a thousand ways; the irritability of my temper is accessible to torments of every description: there exists for me only one source of comfort, and I shall never taste of happiness upon earth, if I am not married to a woman whom I love, and whose mind is capable of exciting an interest in mine. It is not the impetuous admiration of a young man for a handsome woman which I consider as necessary to ensure the happiness of my life; you know that reflection is always mixed with my warmest sentiments: it is true I am deeply enamoured of

Madm^{lle}

Madm^{lle} d'Albemar, but it is no less certain that reason has been my guide in the choice I have made of her as the ruler of my destiny.

Madm^{lle} de Vernon is handsome, prudent, and sensible; I am convinced she will never give her husband any reasonable ground of complaint, and that her conduct will be guided by the strictest principles; but is it the mere absence of misery that I look for in marriage? Were this my only view, might I not as well remain single? But I should not attain even this object by consenting to the union which you propose. With the affections and the understanding which nature hath given me, what happiness could I enjoy in the society of a woman whose character is altogether different? How often have you had occasion to remark in the intercourse of life, with what difficulty persons of moderate endowments unite with those whose minds are of a higher order? The most vulgar and the most exalted souls harmonize much more easily; but mediocrity is incapable of supposing
any

any thing above the standard of its own intelligence, and regards as folly every thing that surpasses it. The character and understanding of Madm^{lle} de Vernon are already formed, and are incapable of being either changed or modified; she has particular arguments on every subject, and the thoughts of others never enter into her consideration. She constantly opposes some common idea to every new thought that is started, and believes she has gained a triumph. What pleasure can be derived from the conversation of such a woman? and is not the mutual interchange of sentiment one of the chief sources of enjoyment in the married state? How many emotions, how many reflections, how many sentiments and observations would arise which I could never communicate to Matilda! and what should I do with all that I could not confide to her, with the one half of my soul to which she could never be united?

Alas! my dear mother, I shall be alone,
for

for ever alone with any other woman than Delphine ; and this solitude of the understanding and the heart, in the presence of the object who till the end of life ought to be the only happiness of my being, is an evil which would always increase with time. I could not support such an existence ; I would go elsewhere to seek that perfect society, that harmony of souls, without which the mind of man can never be satisfied ; and when I should grow old, I would return to spend my sad days in the company of her, on whose memory there could not dwell any tender recollections of my younger years.

What a prospect ! My dear mother, can you doom your son to such misery, when the most propitious fortune presents him with an object who would form the happiness of every period of his life, a woman the most beautiful of her sex, and at the same time one who, when stripped of all the charms of youth, would still possess the treasures of time, sweetness of temper,

excellence of understanding, and goodness of heart? By a bold education you have given great activity both to my virtues and my defects; do you think that such a character can be rendered happy at an easy rate?

If you had entered into engagements which could not be dissolved, engagements which were consecrated by honour, I should be content, I should sacrifice the happiness of my life to preserve the sanctity of your word; but certainly the consent which you gave was not of this description, since you never advanced such an objection in your answers to ten letters which I wrote to be informed on this very point. You brought nothing forward but the unjust prepossessions which you have been led to entertain against Madm^{lle} d'Albemar.

You have been told that she is giddy, imprudent, a coquette, and a free-thinker; every quality which you dislike has been heaped upon the head of Delphine. Will you refuse then, my dear mother, to listen to the report of your son, as willingly as you

you have done to that of Mad. du Marset. Delphine was educated in retirement, by people who were ignorant of the world, but whose minds were notwithstanding highly enlightened ; she has lived in Paris only for a year, and has not yet learned to be on her guard against the unfavourable judgments of mankind. She believes that moral rectitude is sufficient to guide her conduct, and that received opinions, and the ordinary forms of society, ought to be despised, when the interests of virtue are not concerned. But her solicitude to promote my happiness will correct this fault ; for goodness of disposition, and tenderness of heart, are the leading features of her character. She loves me ; what then shall I not be able to obtain from her, both for your sake and my own ?

You have been told of the superiority of her understanding ; and, as you have consented, at my entreaty, to live with me next year, you are afraid of finding in her a daughter-in-law of an overbearing character.

rafter. Matilda, whose understanding is limited, has an absolute will of her own^e in the most trifling circumstances of domestic life; Delphine knows no other interests in the world than sentiment and reason; she is as unconcerned, as she is ignorant, about the little details of ordinary affairs, and gives herself up with joy to the inclinations of others; she desires only to please and to be loved. You will be the constant object of her most assiduous care. I think I see her with Mad. de Vernon; never did filial affection, never did the fondest or the most devoted friendship, give rise to more amiable conduct. Ah! my dear mother, it concerns your happiness no less than mine, that I should accomplish my marriage with Mad. d'Albemar.

You have never reflected how difficult it would be for you to manage the self-love of a person of an ordinary character: with what delight, on the other hand, and with what facility, is every thing conducted when you have to deal with a being of truly superior

perior merit ! The very opinions of Delphine are a thousand times more easily modified than those of Matilda. Delphine is never afraid of being humbled ; she can feel none of those mortifications which are occasioned by vanity : accustomed as she is to the discovery of so many new truths, she is always ready to acknowledge an error, and her heart delights to yield to the superior knowledge of those whom she loves.

You have been farther told, I am ashamed to write it, that she is false and deceitful ; that I am ignorant of her past life, and the present state of her affections. Her past life ! All the world knows it. The present state of her affections ! What have you heard about M. de Serbellane ? why do you not name him ? No, Delphine has concealed nothing from me. Delphine false ! Delphine deceitful ! If that be true, then is her character despicable indeed, for she has profaned the most precious gifts which nature ever bestowed, to ensnare the heart and mislead the judgment.

In a word, I will dare to tell you, without violating that profound respect which my heart so gladly pays you, that I am resolved to marry Mad^{lle} d'Albemar, unless you can prove to me that the obligations of honour oppose the completion of my wishes. The sacrifice I should then be obliged to make would soon be followed by that of my life: honour might require this of me; but you, my dear mother, you surely could not be happy if its demands were satisfied at such a price!

LETTER XXXII.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

Bellerive, July 6.

My dear Sister,

THE dreadful apprehensions which pressed upon my spirits yesterday, were certainly presentiments inspired by Heaven to warn me of the danger which surrounded

ed

ed me ! Alas ! what an event has resulted from my fatal compliance ! I feel all that remorse which torments the guilty ; nor can I escape from such reflections but by giving way to feelings still more painful, by placing before me the spectacle of the despair of Theresa. And Leonce ! righteous Heaven ! what will he think of my imprudent conduct ? My Louisa, I repeat to myself every moment, if you had been near me none of these misfortunes could have befallen me. But the kindness and sympathy natural to my character lead me far from a guide, who to these qualities knows how to add a judgment more steady than mine.

Yesterday, at two o'clock, M. d'Ervin's went to dine at Saint Germain, at the house of a friend, thinking himself certain that M. de Serbellane was gone. Mad. d'Ervin's arrived at my house at five; she was alone, on foot, in a deplorable condition, and in a few moments M. de Serbellane came with the greatest secrecy to bid her

O 4

her

her an adieu, which, alas! will be much longer than they then imagined. I ordered myself to be denied to every body, and particularly to M. d'Ervins. I desired the servants to say that I was gone to Belerive, and to make this appear the more probable, all the windows were shut on the side next the court. I was witness for three hours to the most poignant distress. I shed abundance of tears with Theresa, and my spirits were already sufficiently depressed, when they were overwhelmed by the most dreadful calamity.

At the very moment I had prevailed on Theresa and M. de Serbellane to separate, one of my people entered, and told me that a servant of Mad. de Vernon's brought me a note from her, and wanted to speak to me. I went out to see him; judge of the terror which seized me when I beheld M. d'Ervins! He was already in the next room, and, throwing off a great coat in Mad. de Vernon's livery, in which he had wrapped himself for the purpose of disguise,

guise, he suddenly rushed forward in spite of my efforts to prevent him, threw himself upon the door of the parlour, opened it, and found M. de Serbellane on his knees before Theresa, with his head resting upon his hand. Theresa first recognized her husband, and fell senseless on the floor; M. de Serbellane raised her in his arms before he perceived M. d'Ervins, thinking that the condition in which he saw Theresa was the effect of her agitation at the thoughts of parting with him. M. d'Ervins seized his wife from the arms of her lover, threw her on a chair, and abandoned her to my assistance; he then turned towards M. de Serbellane, and drew his sword, without observing that his adversary was unarmed. The shrieks which I uttered soon brought my servants about me. M. de Serbellane ordered them to leave the room, and, addressing himself to M. d'Ervins, he said to him, "You appear, Sir, to suspect Mad. d'Ervins of wrongs which she has not committed; I

was on the point of leaving her; I was begging her to receive my last farewell."

Upon this, M. d'Ervins fell into a fit of passion, which he expressed in a manner at once insolent, contemptible, and extravagantly. Through all his discourse, however, it was easy to see the most determined resolution of fighting M. de Serbellane. I endeavoured to persuade M. d'Ervins that what had passed might be concealed from all the world. From his answers I gathered some circumstances, which I have since been informed of more particularly, that M. de Fierville, who knew the secret, had disclosed the whole affair, and that this more than any other cause stimulated the courage of M. d'Ervins.

M. de Serbellane suffered extremely: I saw in his countenance a conflict of all the generous and all the angry passions which belong to human nature. He stood motionless before a window, biting his lips, listening in silence to the foolish insults of

M. d'Ervins,

M. d'Ervins, and only casting his eyes now and then on the pale and lifeless countenance of Theresa, as if there he wanted to find motives for restraining his anger.

After having exhausted every effort to pacify M. d'Ervins, I thought of turning his resentment against myself, and endeavoured to persuade him that it was I who engaged Mad. d'Ervins to agree to this interview. Scarcely had I began to speak, when recollecting what he had before forgotten, that the interview had taken place in my house, he indulged himself in the most insulting reflections on the part I had acted. M. de Serbellane was unable to contain himself any longer, and laying hold of M. d'Ervins by the hand, he said to him, "It is enough, Sir, it is enough, you have now me only to deal with; I will give you satisfaction." At this moment Theresa recovered her senses. Great God! to what a scene did she open her eyes! A drawn sword, the fury which was painted on the looks of her lover and of

her husband, soon discovered the awful catastrophe with which she was threatened; she threw herself at the feet of M. d'Ervin to implore his mercy.

Upon this, whether being prepared to fight he was the more exasperated against his wife who had reduced him to that necessity, or whether his natural disposition inclined him to take delight in menaces, he declared to her that she might expect the most rigorous treatment; that he was determined to separate her from her daughter; that he intended to shut her up for the rest of her days in a dungeon; and that her shame would be published before the whole universe, since he was about to vindicate his honour by the blood of her lover. This threatening and insolent language threw M. de Serbellane into a paroxysm of rage, the very recollection of which yet makes me shudder: his lips were pale and trembling, and his whole countenance was convulsed. Approaching me, he said, in a low voice, "Observe this man,

man,

man, his doom is fixed ; he has just pronounced his own condemnation : I shall lose Theresa for ever, but I shall preserve her liberty, and secure to her the possession of her daughter." At these words, with a motion quicker than thought, he seized M. d'Ervins by the arm, and left the house.

Theresa and I both followed them ; they were already in the street. Theresa hurrying down stairs fell a few steps ; I raised her, and assisted to carry her to my bed. I then gave orders to Antony, the intelligent valet whom you gave me, to join M. d'Ervins and M. de Serbellane, and to bring us immediate intelligence of what happened.

During the time we were kept in this state of anxious suspense, I held the unhappy Theresa locked in my arms. Her mind was occupied with only one idea ; she had no other fear in the world but of the safety of M. de Serbellane.

Antony at length arrived, and informed us

us that in the fatal rencounter M. d'Ervins was killed on the spot. Theresa, on hearing it, threw herself on her knees, and exclaimed, "My God! condemn not to eternal torments the guilty Theresa; grant her time for repentance; her life shall be a continual sacrifice to expiate her crimes, and her last days shall be devoted to the sole object of rendering herself worthy of thy compassion!" And, indeed, since that moment all her ideas seem to be changed: repentance and devotion have taken entire possession of her troubled spirit; she has not permitted me even once to mention the name of her lover.

Antony, after having told us the alarming result of the duel, informed us that it had taken place in the Champs-Elysées, almost before Mad. de Vernon's garden. After M. d'Ervins had fallen, M. de Serbellane observed Antony, and having called him, charged him to tell me, as he was afraid to mention the name of Theresa, that in consequence of what had happened he was obliged

obliged to set out instantly for Lisbon, but that he would write to me immediately on his arrival. These words were overheard by some people who were assembled round the body of M. d'Ervins, and my name only was repeated in the crowd. Antony, if called as an evidence before a court of justice, will give no testimony which can injure the character of Theresa; and my name, if necessary, will be mentioned, and no other. I hope, therefore, I shall save Theresa from the dreadful misfortune of being considered as the cause of the death of her husband.

M. d'Ervins has a brother, who, to deprive Theresa of her daughter and of the management of her fortune, may, it is not improbable, from the villainy and cruelty of his disposition, accuse her publicly of having incited M. de Serbellane to the murder of her husband. Theresa imparted to me her fears on this subject, which were wholly on account of Isore. We agreed to spread a report that a misunderstanding

standing on politics, which I had endeavoured in vain to reconcile, was the cause of the duel. I only begged Mad. d'Ervin's to allow me to entrust Mad. Vernon with the whole circumstances, because she was better able than any other person to direct the public opinion on an affair of this nature, and because she had great influence over M. de Fierville, who seemed to be the only person acquainted with the truth. I at the same time entreated Theresa to give her consent, as a particular proof of friendship for me, that Leonce also should be made the confident of her secret; I avowed my attachment to him, and upon this Theresa readily yielded to my proposal.

I perhaps encroached too far on her friendship, but dreading the noise which the fatal event might occasion, and afraid that my name might, on the first report, be mentioned in it from malicious motives, I had not the courage thus to hazard the good opinion of Leonce. I fear, I have too many reasons to fear, he will condemn my conduct;

conduct; but I wish, at least, that he should be fully apprized of the motives which led to it. It was also agreed that Mad. d'Ervin should go with me the same evening to my country house, and that we should both remain there for some days, without seeing any person till she received some intelligence from the relations of her husband. A servant entered to tell me that Mad. de Vernon waited on me, and I went to receive her in my closet. I have often observed that, amidst the evils to which human life is exposed, some beneficent care is always at hand to bring support and comfort to the soul when its own strength is ready to fail; and the condition in which I now was, rendered it necessary that, at the close of this melancholy day, my spirits should be soothed by some consoling ~~idea~~. What affection discovered itself in the behaviour of Mad. de Vernon! With what interest did she question me on all the circumstances of this shocking event!

She

She related to me herself the original cause of all our misfortunes.

Yesterday, in the evening, Mad. du Marset saw a person in the street, whom she believed to be M. de Serbellane, wrapped up in a cloak, and related what she had seen to M. de Fierville; the latter happening to dine with M. d'Ervins at Saint Germain, asserted that M. de Serbellane had not departed for Portugal that morning as he supposed. It appeared that M. de Fierville said this at first without any bad intention; but he supported it afterwards, notwithstanding the emotion which he observed in the countenance of M. d'Ervins, because he is never restrained by the fear of doing wrong, and delights to set others at variance when he expects to come in for a share in the quarrel.

M. d'Ervins proposed to depart ~~instantly~~ instantly: his eagerness excited the curiosity of M. de Fierville, and he asked leave to accompany him. M. d'Ervins went first to his

his own house, and not finding his wife at home, he proceeded to my door, where he was refused admittance, being told that I was at Bellerive. But M. de Fierville, having pretended that he had seen my waiting maid, through a lattice, who was working in the house, suggested to M. d'Ervins that it would be a pleasant scheme to go secretly to Mad. de Vernon's, and to give a louis to prevail upon her servant to lend him his great coat. "And will you not shut your door against M. de Fierville?" said I to Mad. de Vernon, with indignation. "Heavens! I assure you," replied she, "he had no thought of the consequences of what he was doing."—"And are not," said I, "an existence without an object, a life without good actions, a heart without feeling, and a head without ~~employment~~ employment, sufficient to condemn him? Is he not the pest of society, which he pries into without ceasing, and embroils by his mischievous projects?"—"Alas!" said Mad. de Vernon, "we ought to have some

some indulgence for old age and idleness ; but let us leave this alone, and think of your affairs :”—and beginning to talk to me of Leonce, she met with the same confidence which I wished to repose in her.

What generosity, what feeling did she display in this conversation ! She assured me, that for a long time she had been no stranger to my sentiments, but that she wished to know if Leonce really preferred me to her daughter ; and that being now fully convinced that this was the case, she would not oppose his inclinations. She did not deny that this breach was extremely painful to her, and she expressed her regret for the disappointment of her daughter with the most affecting sincerity. But the warmth of her friendship soon recalled to her mind the consideration of my interest, and she appeared to console herself with the prospect of the happiness which awaited me. I could not find language warm enough to express my gratitude ; I disclosed to her my fears of the unfavour-

unfavourable reports that might be circulated; and told her how anxious I was to know what effect they would produce on the mind of Leonce. She listened to me with the greatest attention; and, after reflecting a considerable time on what I had said, she added—"I must undertake to speak to him on his arrival, before he has heard the stories which will certainly be told to your disadvantage. He knows that I understand better than any other person how to calm those tempests of a day; I shall be able to quiet his suspicions."—"What!" said I, "will you defend me before him with those unrivalled talents which I have sometimes seen you exert?"—"Do you doubt it?" replied she. The accent with which this was uttered penetrated my heart.

"I wish to write to him," said I, "you will deliver my letter to him."—"Why write to him?" asked she, "your horses are ready for your departure; it is now late; you will not have time to relate the history

"history of all that has happened."—"I feel some repugnance," I replied, "to hazard in a letter the secret of my friend; I will only tell Leonce that I have opened my mind to you, and that you will be able to satisfy him on every particular; and if he express any desire to go to Bellerive, you will have the goodness to tell him that I shall be ready to receive him there."—"Yes," replied she cheerfully, "you are right; that is better."

I took up the pen, but felt some restraint in writing to Leonce in the presence of Mad. de Vernon. My letter was shorter and more cold than I could have wished it; such as it was, I delivered it to Mad. de Vernon: she read it attentively, sealed it, and observed, that I had expressed myself extremely well, and that I had preserved the dignity which became ~~my~~ character. It belonged to her, she observed, to supply what I had omitted: she endeavoured to banish my doubts; she seemed convinced that she would be able to justify

justify my conduct in the opinion of Leonce; she almost pledged herself to do so; and, appearing to delight in repeating to me what she would say to him, she spoke of me in this indirect form, in a manner so graceful and so winning, and at the same time with so much address, that I blessed Heaven for having inspired me with the idea of entrusting her with my defence. No, there is not a woman in the world who knows better how to promote the interest of those whom she loves. She alone has sufficient knowledge of the world to remove the doubts which may arise in the mind of Leonce, in consequence of the noise occasioned by the fatal event in which my reputation is concerned. Were his first impressions of me unfavourable, the powerful feelings of ~~love~~ and generous pride, which at once would swell my bosom, would deprive me of the power of asserting my innocence.

I concluded the conversation with entreating Mad. de Vernon to be careful of
the

the reputation of Theresa; not to name any human being but myself; to expose me a thousand times rather than her; and to relate the history of the duel as we had agreed to represent it. She promised to obey me; I embraced her, and we parted. I carried Theresa and her daughter with me, and arrived at Bellerive at three o'clock in the morning. What a day and what a journey! My dear Louisa, I will send this letter to Paris to-morrow, lest the news of the death of M. d'Ervin's should arrive before, and alarm you on my account.

This evening the unhappy Theresa desired to be alone. I walked by the side of the river, and wished to indulge myself with the thoughts of Leonce; but, I know not how, a disquietude, which it gives me pain to acknowledge, made it impossible for me to surrender my mind ~~to these~~ charming illusions. I recollected some stern features in his character, which he painted himself in his letter to M. Barton. I thought I now saw in Leonce not a lover
but

but a judge; and on thinking of him, I felt a mixed sensation of sadness and dislike. At last, having recollected all that Mad. de Vernon had said to quiet my apprehensions, I persuaded myself that an action which proceeded from a benevolent motive, even though indiscreet, could not destroy the sentiments of esteem which he had expressed for me, and I returned home somewhat comforted by this opinion.

Alas! Theresa, the unfortunate Theresa, she alone is to be pitied! My worthy, my excellent Louisa, how deeply you will be interested in her sorrows, how much you will be disposed to pardon what I have done for her! You at least will not judge with severity even of the errors which spring from pity.

LETTER XXXIII.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

Bellerive, July 9th.

FOR three days, will you believe it, my dear Louisa, I have not once heard from Mad. de Vernon, nor have I received the least intelligence of Leonce; perhaps he has not yet returned from Mondoville. I have only received a letter from Mad. d'Artemas, the aunt of Mad. de R. She informs me, that the death of M. d'Ervins is much talked of in Paris, and that many people disapprove of my conduct. She requests me to acquaint her with the real state of the transaction, that she may be able to defend me. But why should I regard what the rest of the world say of me? It is the opinion of Leonce that I wish to know.

I had a mind to go to Paris and speak again to Mad. de Vernon, but I cannot
leave

leave Theresa ; she has been seized with a fever, accompanied with violent delirium ; she wishes to see me every moment ! Yesterday I went out of her chamber for a few minutes ; she called me, and not finding me beside her, she fell into tears. You cannot conceive how much pain this gave me. No, I will not leave her.

LETTER XXXIV.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

Bellerive, July 10th.

ANOTHER day has passed without any news, and yet Leonce has arrived ; a servant of mine, who returned this evening from Paris, accidentally met one of his. I have descended twenty times in the course of the day into the avenue before my house to look if I could see any person coming. I could only discover the postman at a distance. I at first ran to meet him, but was

soon forced to support myself against a tree, and to wait till he approached: the agitation with which I was seized deprived me of the use of my limbs.

I have exhausted every source of information within my reach on the various modes of conveying letters, and the possibility of their being lost. I was ashamed to ask so many questions in the presence of the servants, and at last desisted in despair of learning any thing further.

It is plain that Mad. de Vernon has not succeeded with Leonce according to her wishes, otherwise she would have informed me as soon as she had spoken to him. She expects she will yet be able to recall his estranged affections; but I will not write to him; no, I will not enter into any justification with him; I will not go to Paris to anticipate his coming hither, and humbly sue for pardon. I may have done wrong, as he thinks; but when I explain to him my motives, when I almost solicit his forgiveness, by employing the intercession

sion of my friend; and when I am here alone, oppressed with grief, beside the couch of an unfortunate, who sinks under the anguish of repentance and love, it belongs to Leonce to come and seek me.

LETTER XXXV.

LEONCE TO HIS MOTHER.

Paris, July 11th.

IT is four days, I believe, my dear mother, since I wrote to you from Mondoville, a letter containing sentiments which my heart now entirely disclaims. You were right in choosing Madm^{lle} de Vernon for my wife. Mad. de Vernon has transmitted to me a letter from you, which has decided the course I am to pursue; the contract was signed yesterday evening, and I still live; you can desire nothing more.

I shortened my stay at Mondoville; but it was not with a view to this object. On

my arrival I was informed that M. de Serbellane had killed M. d'Ervins in a duel, in consequence of a quarrel on politics at Mad. d'Albemar's house. All Paris resounded with the report of this scandalous transaction. On the very spot where the affair happened M. de Serbellane mentioned the name of Mad. d'Albemar; he was concealed in her house for twenty-four hours before the duel took place, although she told me, on my leaving Paris, that he was on his way to Portugal. In eight days she will set out for Montpellier, from whence she will go to Lisbon, if M. de Serbellane cannot return to France to marry her. She wrote to me herself that Mad. de Vernon would inform me of her whole history. After all, why should I complain? she is free to act as she pleases; but I ought to have known her character. Did you not tell me, my dear mother, that it could never suit with mine? Pardon me that I have ever spoken to you on the subject: forget that I have done so.

I know

I know it, it is unlawful for me to put an end to my own existence ; you have a right to dispose of the life which you have given me. I experience no slight emotion at the sacrifice which I am obliged to make ; but it is not in vain, that from your blood I have derived the qualities of courage and high spirit ; I will shew that I possess them ; in two days I shall be the husband of Matilda. What will Mad. d'Albemar say to this ? what will she think of it ?—But why should I ask ? It is of no consequence what she thinks ; you, madam, shall be obeyed.

Poor Barton has dislocated his arm by a fall from his horse, and is obliged to remain at Mondoville for some time longer : as well as I, he has been cruelly deceived. But can the disappointment be of any consequence to his happiness ? Surely not. Adieu, my dear mother.

LETTER XXXVI.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

Bellerive, on the night of the 12th July.

THOSE endearing prospects of happiness which I so fondly indulged are now no more. At six o'clock this evening my unfortunate destiny was determined, and at nine I received the fatal letter which informs me of it. Good God! do I still live? Yes, I flatter myself I shall not die. I shall hasten to join you, however, as soon as Mad. d'Ervins shall be fully re-established in her health. For some hours I have experienced the most painful uneasiness, and have believed myself remarkably ill; but it is one of those illusions only that accompany disappointment and melancholy. Death now can be no addition to my sufferings: life only is necessary to increase my anguish, and to add to my despair.

Only

Only read this letter : I have just made a copy of it for your perusal, but I cannot part with the original ; were it removed from my sight only for one moment, I should no longer be convinced of its contents ; I should go in quest of Leonce. Yes, I would go and tell him, that I still love, that I still adore him ! And is it possible ! Shall I no more see him—no more converse with him !

MADAME DE VERNON TO MADEMOISELLE
D'ALBEMAR.

July 10.

“ The pain which I must necessarily give you, my dear Delphine, is to me extremely distressing. I have returned you your letter to Leonce. I spoke to him with the greatest earnestness, and, as you will easily believe, with all the zeal of which friendship is capable ; but, alas ! he was already so much prejudiced by the noise which this unfortunate adventure has occasioned, that I could make no impression. He pretends

that your characters are so very different, that it is impossible either of you could be happy ; that you would continually wound his feelings in a point which he reckons the most sacred and important, a regard for the opinion of the world ; and that you could not possibly fail to add to the unhappiness of each other by the opposite feelings and discordant sentiments which would mutually prevail. He had received, besides, a letter from his mother, which positively forbade his marrying you, and called upon him at the same time to fulfil his engagements with my daughter.

“ In this respect, however, I wished to leave him at perfect liberty, and to cancel every engagement which his honour might suggest it his duty to fulfil ; but he had formed his resolution, and positively refused. As I saw him, therefore, determined never to unite himself to you, I thought it most natural to resume the plans which we had originally formed. In consequence of this arrangement, therefore,

fore, the contract between Matilda and Leonce was signed to-day, and the day after to-morrow, at six in the evening, is fixed for the celebration of their nuptials. I could wish to see you before this event takes place, an event which you will easily conceive must be so interesting to the feelings of a mother and a friend. Come to Paris, therefore, to-morrow, and I shall be ready to wait upon you at your own house. Adieu ; and be assured, my dear Delphine, that I sincerely sympathize with you in a disappointment so afflicting and so contrary to your wishes."

" SOPHIE DE VERNON."

This letter came to me by post, but ought to have reached me two days sooner. Is it fate, or did Mad. de Vernon wish to spare my tears ? Oh ! now I am convinced of it, she has coldly espoused my cause. I trusted to the warmth of that friendship which she always professed for me ; but, alas ! I was mistaken : her affection for her

daughter has triumphed over every other sentiment ; her arguments in my favour must have been weak and unsupported. But, oh Leonce !—Righteous heaven ! was it necessary to justify my conduct to Leonce ? Was not the truth alone sufficient to remove every scruple which he could entertain ?

This morning, alas ! I waked, animated with all the hopes which the tenderest of passions can inspire : nature seemed to me to wear the same pleasing aspect ; every object inspired me with pleasure. I could reflect, I could think ; my heart was warm with love ; I was myself ; and he at the same time was hastening to conduct another woman to the altar. He did not even bestow upon me a single sigh ; he believed me unworthy of his name ! I had even proposed to go this very evening to Leonce ; Yes, to the husband of Matilda, to ask him the cause of his cruelty, to ask him what motives had induced him to break our union. But, great God ! what shame,
what

what degradation !—To implore him !—to implore a man who believes me degraded in the opinion of mankind ! The thought is distracting ! It is worse than a thousand deaths ;—Let me die then, but let me die immoveably fixed to the spot where I received the fatal blow !

But what have I done that could inspire Leonce with such a sudden, such a deep-rooted aversion ? I yielded, it is true, to the compassion which I felt for Theresa ; but was this criminal, or is he destitute of feeling ? Is he incapable of those emotions which warm the heart with sentiments of pity ? or can he be certain that he himself shall never stand in need of the same support ? I am sensible that my attentions to that unfortunate woman may be blamed ; but is it possible I could have loved with that ardour with which I loved Leonce, and not have a heart accessible to compassion ? Are not love and pity derived from the same source !

No, my dear friend, it is not from the
motives

motives that actuate my conduct that he forms his opinion ; it is from what others say of it : it is the opinion of the world he consults, in order to know what idea to form of me. It is impossible he could ever have made me happy. Impossible !—ah ! Louisa, what do I say ! no woman on earth would act as I would have done ; I would have studied his temper, and conformed myself to his disposition ; I would have consulted him upon every occasion ; his wishes, his very thoughts would have been mine. I am certain he loved me, and unless for this unfortunate Oh ! Theresa, you have unhappily destroyed us both !

I have taken care to conceal from her, however, that she is the cause of my disappointment. Has she not already misfortunes enough of her own, without the additional pang which a consciousness of her being the cause of my despair would occasion her ? But of the man whom she loves she has at least no reason to complain ; it
is

is fate only which separates them. But, Leonce, is it this fate No, it is your own caprice ; it is you yourself, Leonce, who art the cause of our separation. Oh ! Louisa ! is it certain they are at this moment married ? Is it possible ? I wish I had positive information. Yes, it is beyond a doubt ; they must have been married some hours ago ; my destiny is determined, and all is irrevocable.

I am determined to set out for Paris to-morrow ; however, I shall see nobody there ; I will not even wait upon Mad. de Vernon—What can she have to say to me ? —but she will inform me of the hour, the place, the circumstances. Yes, I wish to be able to represent to my imagination an event which will hereafter be the only impression with which my memory will be conversant. This letter is not enough to complete my wretchedness—I must have other sources of grief, other thoughts, not less distressing indeed, but which may relieve in some measure my present painful anxiety.

anxiety. I have this fatal letter before me at this moment—I examine it incessantly, as if I thought it animated, and capable of answering my eager inquiries.

Indeed, Louisa, you had good reason to be afraid of the world for your unfortunate Delphine: you see how my soul is overwhelmed with distress: my peace, my tranquillity is fled for ever. The tempest has proved superior to my utmost exertions. You, who I am persuaded still love me, will pardon my weakness: but really I believe that I can no longer survive. I tremble at the very idea of society, and solitude appears to me still more painful. No more shall this vain world inspire me with joy; no more shall it afford me any place to enjoy repose.

LETTER XXXVII.

DELPHINE TO MADEMOISELLE D'ALBEMAR.

Paris, July 13, at midnight.

MY dear Louisa, he was not married yesterday: No, he is not yet married!—Merciful heaven! at this moment alone, abandoned by all that I held dear, shall I tell you what my despair will scarcely yet permit me to believe? Listen to my story.—If I recollect what I have seen, what I have suffered, my reason, my understanding is not yet quite gone.

It was impossible for me to remain longer at Bellerive; the inactivity of the body, when the soul is tortured by a diversity of passions, is a punishment which nature is unable to support. I therefore got into my carriage, and gave orders to drive me to Paris, without having formed any positive design, and without any determinate idea which it was possible for me
to

to avoid, even to myself. I still felt, not hope indeed, but a something however which is very different from those sensations which positive information is calculated to create. In spite of reflection my ideas were fluctuating, and I had even got the length of doubting the veracity of my information.

In the course of our journey I contemplated the various objects that passed before me with that fixed but indiscriminating attention which enables us to distinguish nothing. An old man upon the road, however, attracted my notice: I made the carriage stop, in order to give him some money. This exertion of charity did not proceed, I am persuaded, from benevolent motives only—it was inspired, I believe, by the confused and indistinct idea that a charitable action might perhaps avert the calamity with which I was threatened. I could not help sighing upon the discovery that there still remained in my bosom some gleams of hope, and upon perceiving that I
had

had not yet reached the summit of my affliction. I fell prostrate in my carriage ; but I had neither strength nor courage to pray ; and in this situation I reached the end of my journey, with an anxiety and anguish I cannot possibly express.

Antoine was at home, but I had not courage to put any direct question to him ; I spoke something, however, concerning Mad. de Vernon ; a word which I knew would necessarily lead him to talk of her.—“ My lady, no doubt,” answered he, “ is come to town to be present at the marriage of Mad^{lle} Matilda to M. de Mondoville—it is at six o’clock, at St. Maria’s, near Chaillot, at the farther end of the suburbs, in the church of the convent where Mad^{lle} de Vernon was educated.—It is not five ; my lady has time enough to dress.”—Oh, Louisa ! he was not yet her husband ! I was not even more than fifty paces from him. I could have gone and thrown myself at his gate, where his carriage might have passed over my heart before

fore the celebration of his marriage could have been accomplished.

Never did an hour give birth to such a diversity of thoughts, to so many different schemes, that were no sooner adopted than instantly rejected. Twenty times I felt myself inclined to hazard every thing, in order to speak to him once more before he had pronounced the fatal, the eternal vow; and twenty times my pride or my timidity damped the ardour of my resolution, and confined within my own bosom the passion that consumed me. "What will Leonce," said I to myself, "whom my folly and imprudence have alineated from me, what will he think of an action so rash and inconsiderate? Why should I subject myself to the painful humiliation of having my entreaties, my tears, rejected, and of afterwards beholding him approach the altar to crown another with that felicity for which I was so anxious.

This melancholy reflection prevented me from putting in execution what I had resolved;

solved; but, alas! the recollection of those days when he fondly loved me strongly resisted this temporary impression. During this severe conflict I beheld the hour rolling away, and the hand of time ready to decide my irrevocable destiny.

I know not from what motive, I formed all at once a fixed determination, the idea of which afforded me at first considerable consolation. I determined myself to go incognita to this church where the marriage ceremony was to be performed, and thus to be a witness of their vows. What could be my motive for this conduct I am as yet unable to conceive: I had no design, I am certain, to oppose their marriage, nor, even had I had this design, had I courage enough to entail upon myself the shame and disgrace which a measure so extraordinary would necessarily occasion. I thought, I believe, that I should fall a victim to the internal conflict to which this spectacle would give rise, and thus terminate at once both my life and sorrows.

It

It is more probable, however, that reflection had no share in the direction of my conduct: grief pursued me, and I was eager to fly from its incessant persecution.

I went out without attendants, without giving any notice, and so disguised by a veil and white robe, that it was not possible I could be known even at my own gate. I was surprised at the rapidity with which I moved along the streets; I cannot even conceive how I acquired so much strength; but there was certainly something convulsive in the efforts I made; for I saw the people who passed me turn suddenly, and gaze at me as an object that appeared to them remarkable. The agitation of my mind, however, continued to support me. I was afraid I should not arrive in time to witness the ceremony; I was eager in the pursuit of feelings which could add only to my distress; I imagined that by reaching the summit of my misery, either my head or heart would fail me, and that thus I should terminate my sorrows, and bury
my

my restless and painful anxiety in perpetual oblivion.

In this uneasy and distracted condition I entered the church. The coolness and solemnity of the place for some moments calmed my agitation. Very few people had assembled; I had it, therefore, in my power to select what place I thought most convenient for my purpose, and accordingly seated myself behind a pillar, which, while it prevented me from being seen, permitted me at the same time to have a full view of any thing that passed. I observed some old women in the body of the church, who were praying with recollection and fervour, and was involuntarily led to contrast the calm tranquillity of their situation with the agitation and turbulence that were the painful inmates of my bosom. I looked with horror on the youth I enjoyed, and which served only as an easy vehicle to communicate to my heart that restless and uneasy sensibility that accompanies early misfortune.

The instruments of joy were now heard from without; their animating echoes announced the arrival of Leonce. Soon, also, the organs of the church began to welcome his approach, while my heart alone seemed to mingle despair with this tumult of joy. This combination of music produced upon my senses an effect that appeared to me wholly supernatural. At one place, where I understood distinctly the air they were playing, imagination represented to me that this was my last, my funeral song. I listened with the most exalted enthusiasm, and burst, at last, into a torrent of tears. This deep emotion, I believe, was a merciful relief sent me from Heaven. I instantaneously experienced an elevation of soul which supported and re-animated my dejected spirits. The idea of the Supreme Being took possession of my whole soul; I felt myself relieved from self-accusation, and proudly gloried in my own integrity and innocence. "No," said I to myself, "I am not criminal; and, though deprived

deprived of every blessing, the approbation of my own conscience, the aids of a merciful Providence, will still afford me consolation. I shall spend my days in grief; but no self-reproach, no remorse, shall mingle with my tears, and in death I shall behold only a relief from my woes." Ah, Louisa! how much do I stand in need of such repose!

I had not yet had courage to raise my eyes! but when the sounds of the music had ceased, my elevation, my enthusiasm, were no more. That distracting grief, which they had only suspended for a moment, again returned with renewed violence. By the blaze of the flambeaus I beheld Leonce—Gracious heaven! it was for the last time! He gave his hand to Matilda: she appeared charming, for she was happy, while I, alas! overwhelmed in tears, could inspire no sentiment but those of compassion.

Leonce appeared to me—it was perhaps an illusion, suggested by my disordered

fancy; but he really appeared to me to be plunged in the deepest melancholy: his features seemed to be altered, while his eyes wandered unmeaningly over the church, as if anxious to avoid those of Matilda. The priest began his exhortations; but when he turned to Leonce, to address him upon the love and affection due to a wife, Leonce heaved a deep sigh, and his head fell motionless upon his bosom.

Yes—I will venture to tell you it. A moment after this, I thought I saw his eyes eagerly in quest of my figure, as I supported myself under the shade of the column, and I pronounced, in my delirium, these words, in a whispering voice: “ Oh Leonce ! it was to Delphine that this affection was promised: yes, Leonce owes it to Delphine, and she has never yet ceased to deserve it.” He certainly could not hear me, and yet he was visibly disturbed. Mad. de Vernon arose to speak to him; she interrupted my view of him; he

he still advanced, however, to look towards me, and his shadow was once more described upon the column.

I heard the solemn question which was about to decide my fate; an icy coldness seized my whole frame; I bent forward; I extended my hand; but, soon overawed by the sanctity of the place, by the awful and universal silence, and by the noise and consternation that my appearance would create, I made an effort to withdraw, and fell senseless behind the column. From that moment I was ignorant of what passed; I did not hear the fatal, the irrevocable *yes*; the cold hand of death saved me that intolerable anguish.

At ten o'clock, the keeper of the church, at the very moment he was going to shut it up, beheld a female lying extended on the marble pavement. He approached, and raised me; he carried me to the open air, and at last restored to me this painful and melancholy fever, which they denominate life. I was carried home, and found my

domestics in the utmost anxiety and impatience; and, good heavens, when I consider for what!—They wept for joy at my return.

After a stupid insensibility of three hours, I have at last found strength enough to write to you. Oh, Louisa! my only friend, send for me, and snatch me from this tormenting place. All here is gaiety and happiness: what have I to do in this region of joy, so different, so discordant with my feelings? Perhaps the air which you breathe, the place which you inhabit, will recall those delightful ideas that so long constituted my happiness. Could one year only be erased from my life!—one single day only! Ah, Louisa! it is that day only which shall never be erased from my memory.

LETTER XXXVIII.

LEONCE TO M. BARTON.

Paris, July 14.

I INFORMED you of my resolution; I was irrevocably determined. Know, then, that I am now married—yes, married yesterday to Matilda. I spared you the uneasiness which a relation of my sufferings would have caused you; for why mingle with your own disquietudes those that arise from sympathy and friendship? But I must, however, unless I am completely lost to feeling, avow to you one circumstance, which will certainly astonish you; and what will you say of me, if this secret, which I find it impossible to keep, be only a dream, a mere phantom, the child of a disordered imagination? Alas! what is become of your wretched friend? You see

see into what a gulf of misery she has plunged me by her baseness and perfidy.

I knew yesterday that Madm^{lle} d'Albemar was at Bellerive, busy in preparing for her departure for Lisbon. Well, I have told you that I knew it. In the midst of that disgusting ceremony, however, which was about to determine for ever my destiny ; in this church, where pride, where duty, where the inclination of my mother had forcibly dragged me, I imagined that I saw behind a pillar Madm^{lle} d'Albemar, covered with a white veil, but so altered and so pale, that death alone could have produced such a change. The more eagerly I fixed my eyes on this pillar my illusion became the stronger, till I actually believed that I heard my own name and her's pronounced in conjunction by her voice ; a voice, it is true, which I often fancy I hear when solitary and alone.

Mad. de Vernon came up to me, and gently reminded me of my duty to Matilda ; I arose to pronounce the irrevocable oath,

at the same moment I beheld this shade advance: it stretched forth its hand, and my distress was such, that a dim cloud overspread my eyes, and deprived me of every sensation but those of astonishment and horror. I made another effort, however, to examine this column, from which I imagined the persecuting image had proceeded; but I no longer perceived any thing. The effect of the lights in this wide and open church, together with my disordered imagination, must, no doubt, have given birth to this visionary phantom.

My silence and distress, however, embarrassed Matilda; I hastened to pronounce the important and emphatic *yes*, lost as I was in the mazes of a wild and deep reverie. My whole soul was otherwise engaged; but it is of no consequence, the knot is tied, and I am now the husband of Matilda. Were it even true, that Delphine for a few moments really loved me, yet she has seen, I make no doubt, after what has happened, the propriety of marrying

M. de

M. de Serbellane. Could I only be assured that she regrets me !—Oh, Barton ! what unworthy, what unmanly weakness ! Delphine has deceived me ; and shall I henceforth believe that there is any such thing as truth in nature ?

You can now judge if it be possible for me to recollect those last days, without madness, without sorrow. You now know all that has passed. But this visionary—this white phantom ; what could *it* be ? I still see it. Oh, my dear friend ! come to me as soon as you are well ; I have now more need of you than in the weak and feeble days of my infancy. My reason is quite enfeebled, and I possess nothing that characterizes man but the violence of his passions.

END OF VOL. I.