

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

JULIE,
OR THE NEW HELOISE

LETTERS OF TWO LOVERS
WHO LIVE IN A SMALL TOWN
AT THE FOOT OF THE ALPS



THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF ROUSSEAU

Vol. 6

*TRANSLATED AND ANNOTATED BY
PHILIP STEWART AND JEAN VACHÉ*

*ROGER D. MASTERS AND CHRISTOPHER KELLY,
SERIES EDITORS*

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[St. Preux refuses the stipend offered to him by Julie's father]

LETTER XXII

From Julie

At last the first step has been taken, and your name has come up. Despite the disdain you manifest for my erudition, my father was surprised by it: he showed no less admiration for my progress in music and drawing,* and to the great astonishment of my mother, prejudiced by your calumnies,** and aside from heraldry, which to him seemed neglected,³⁸ he was quite satisfied with all my talents. But these talents are not acquired without a master; we had to name mine, and I did so with a pompous enumeration of all the sciences he was good enough to teach me, save one. He recalled having seen you several times on his previous journey, and it did not seem he had retained a disadvantageous impression of you.

He then inquired about your fortune; he was told it was modest; about your birth; he was told it was honest. This word *honest* is highly equivocal to a gentleman's ear,³⁹ and elicited suspicions which clarification confirmed. As soon as he learned that you were not noble, he asked what you were paid per month. My mother speaking up said that such an arrangement could not even be proposed, and that on the contrary, you had constantly rejected all the slightest presents she had tried to make you of a sort that cannot be refused; but this show of pride only provoked his, and how

* There, it seems to me, is a twenty-year-old sage who knows prodigious numbers of things! It is true that Julie congratulates him at thirty for no longer being so learned.

** This relates to a letter to the mother, written in an equivocal tone, which has been suppressed.

could one bear the idea of being in a commoner's debt? It was therefore decided that you would be offered a stipend, the refusal of which, notwithstanding all your merit, which is acknowledged, would get you relieved of your duties. There, my friend, is the gist of a conversation that was held on the subject of my very honored master, and during which his humble pupil was not much at ease. I figured I could not make too much haste to notify you of this, so you would have time to reflect on it. As soon as you have come to a resolution, do not fail to notify me of it; for this item is in your province, and my rights do not extend so far.

It pains me to learn of your excursions in the mountains; not that you do not obtain thereby, in my opinion, an agreeable diversion, and that the detail of what you see will not be quite agreeable to me also: but I fear you will undergo exertions that you are hardly in a condition to sustain. Besides, the season is quite advanced; from one day to the next everything can become covered with snow, and I expect that you have even more to suffer from the cold than from exertion. If you were to fall ill in the country where you are I should never be consoled for it. Return therefore, my good friend, to my neighborhood. It is not time yet to return to Vevey, but I would have you live in a clime less harsh, and for us to be close enough to have news of each other more easily. I leave you master of the choice of your temporary location. Simply take care no one here knows where you are, and be discreet yet not mysterious. I shall have nothing to say on this matter; I shall trust your own interest in being prudent, and even more my own that you should be so.

Farewell my Friend; I cannot converse with you longer. You know what precautions I require to write to you. That is not all. My father has brought with him a venerable stranger, an old friend of his, who once saved his life in battle. You can well imagine what pains we have taken to receive him well! He departs tomorrow, and we are hastening to procure him in the day we have remaining, every sort of entertainment that could best express our zeal for such a benefactor. I am being called: I must finish. Farewell, once more.

*LETTER XXIV**To Julie*

I am replying right away to the item in your letter concerning the stipend, and have, thank God, no need to ponder it. My sentiment on this point, my Julie, is as follows.

I distinguish in what is called honor, that which is drawn from public opinion, and that which derives from self-esteem. The former consists in vain prejudices more tossed than a windblown wave; the latter has its basis in the eternal truths of morality. Worldly honor can be advantageous to fortune, but it does not penetrate into the soul and has no influence on true happiness. Genuine honor on the contrary constitutes its very essence, because only in it can that permanent sentiment of inner satisfaction be found which alone can make a thinking being happy. Let us, my Julie, apply these principles to your question; it will quickly be resolved.

Were I to set myself up as a master of philosophy and, like that fool in the fable, take money for teaching wisdom,⁵² such employment will seem lowly in the eyes of the world, and I admit there is something inherently ridiculous about it: however since no man can gain his subsistence entirely from himself and there is no way to do anything approaching that except by labor, we will classify such disdain among the most dangerous of prejudices; we will not be so foolish as to sacrifice felicity to this senseless opinion; you will not esteem me the less on that account and I shall not be the more an object of pity, when I shall live off the talents I have cultivated.

But at this point, my Julie, we have other things to consider. Let us leave aside the multitude and look into ourselves. What shall I really become for your father, by accepting from him recompense for the lessons I have given you, and selling a portion of my time, that is to say of my person? A mercenary, a man to whom he pays wages, a sort of footman,⁵³ and from me he will have as warrant of his confidence, and as security for what is his, my implicit good faith, like that of the meanest of his servants.

Now, what more precious possession can a father have than his only daughter, were she even another than Julie? What will he do then who sells

his services? Will he silence his sentiments for her? ah! you know whether that is possible! or indulging his heart's penchant without scruple, will he offend in his most vulnerable part the man to whom he owes fidelity? Then I no longer consider such a schoolmaster as anything but a double-crosser who tramples under foot the most sacred of rights,* a traitor, a seducer in his own house, whom the laws quite justly condemn to death. I do hope she to whom I speak can understand me; it is not death I fear, but the shame of deserving it, and contempt of myself.

When the letters of Heloise and Abelard fell into your hands, you remember what I told you about reading them and about the Theologian's conduct. I have always pitied Heloise; she had a heart made for love: but Abelard has never seemed to me anything but a wretch deserving of his fate,⁵⁴ and as little acquainted with love as with virtue. Having judged him, must I imitate him? Woe to whoever preaches a moral he is unwilling to practice! He who is blinded to that extreme by his passion is soon punished by it, and loses the taste for the sentiments to which he has sacrificed his honor. Love is deprived of its greatest charm when honesty abandons it. To appreciate its full value, the heart must delight in it and raise us up by raising up the loved one. Take away the idea of perfection and you take away enthusiasm; take away esteem and love is reduced to nothing. How could a woman honor a man who dishonors himself? How will he himself be able to adore her who did not shrink from delivering herself to a vile corrupter? Thus they will soon disdain each other; love will be reduced for them to a shameful traffic; they will have lost honor and will not have found felicity.

But such is not the case, my Julie, with two lovers of the same age, in love both with an equal flame, when they are joined by a mutual attachment, unconstrained by any particular bond, both in the prime of their freedom, and no law prohibits their mutual engagement. The sternest of laws can impose no other penalty on them than the very prize of their love; the sole punishment of having been in love is the obligation to love each other forever; and if there be unhappy climes in this world where barbaric man breaks those innocent chains, he is punished for it, no doubt, by the crimes which such constraint occasions.

These are my reasons, wise and virtuous Julie, they are but a cold commentary on those which you set forth with such energy and vivacity in one

* Unhappy youth! who does not see that in allowing himself to be paid with gratitude for what he refuses to accept in money, he violates even more sacred rights. Instead of teaching he corrupts; instead of nourishing he poisons; he garners thanks from a deluded mother for having ruined her child. Yet one can sense that he sincerely loves virtue, but passion leads him astray, and if his excessive youth did not excuse him, with his fine speeches he would be no better than a scoundrel. The two lovers are to be pitied; the mother alone is inexcusable.

of your letters⁵⁵; but they are enough to show you how deeply I have absorbed them. You remember that I did not insist on my refusal, and that despite the reluctance that prejudice had left in me, I accepted your gifts in silence, not indeed finding in genuine honor any solid reason for turning them down. But here duty, reason, even love, all speak with an unmistakable voice. If I must choose between honor and you, my heart is prepared to lose you: it loves you too much, O Julie, to preserve you at that price.

LETTER XXV

From Julie

The relation of your travels is enchanting, my good friend; it would make me love the person who wrote it, even if I did not know him. I must however chide you about one passage you can easily guess, although I couldn't help laughing at the ruse by which you shielded yourself behind Tasso, as if behind a rampart. Really, how could you fail to sense that there is quite a difference between writing for the public and writing to one's mistress?⁵⁶ Does not love, so timorous, so scrupulous, demand more deference than does propriety? Could you be unaware that such style is not to my taste, and were you trying to annoy me? But this is perhaps already too much for a topic it was better not to resume. Besides, I am too preoccupied with your second letter to respond in detail to the first. And so, my friend, let us leave the Valais for another time, and limit ourselves to our own concerns for now; we shall have enough to do.

It was clear to me what decision you would take. We know each other too well still to be learning the fundamentals. If virtue ever forsakes us, it will not be, you can take my word for it, in instances that call for courage or sacrifices.* The first reaction when attacked vigorously is to resist; and we will win, I hope, as long as the enemy warns us to take up arms. It is in the midst of sleep, in the lap of sweet rest that we must be wary of surprises: but it is, above all, the persistence of sufferings that makes their weight unbearable, and the soul bears sharp pains more easily than prolonged sadness. That, my friend, is the hard sort of battle we shall henceforth have to wage: it is not heroic actions that duty requires of us, but a still more heroic resistance to unrelenting sufferings.

I had only too well foreseen it: the time for happiness has passed like a lightning flash; the time for trials is beginning, with nothing to help me tell when it will end. Everything alarms and discourages me; a mortal lan-

* We shall soon see that the prediction could not square more poorly with what happens.

guor is taking possession of my soul; without any particular reason for tears, involuntary tears stream from my eyes; I do not read inevitable woes into the future; but I was cultivating hope and see it withering every day. What use is it, alas, to water the leaves when the tree is felled at the base?

I sense, my friend, that the weight of absence is crushing me. I cannot live without you, I can sense that; this is what frightens me the most. A hundred times a day I roam the places where we dwelt together and never find you there. I wait for you at your regular hour; the time goes by and you do not come. Every thing I perceive brings me some idea of your presence to warn me that I have lost you. You have not this awful torture. Your heart alone can tell you that you miss me. Ah, if you knew how much worse a torment it is to stay behind when lovers separate, how much you would prefer your state to mine!

Even then if I dared to murmur! if I dared to talk about my sufferings, I should feel relief for the woes of which I could complain. But except for a few sighs breathed out secretly into my cousin's bosom, I must stifle all the others; I must repress my tears; I must smile when I feel like dying.

*Sentirsi, oh Dei, morir;
E non poter mai dir:
Morir mi sento!*⁵⁷

Ye gods! to feel oneself dying
and not dare say:
I can feel myself dying.

The worst is that all these woes constantly exacerbate my greatest one, and the more your remembrance dismays me, the more I like recalling it. Tell me, my friend, my sweet friend! can you feel how tender is a languishing heart, and to what extent sadness is the ferment of love?

I intended to talk to you about a thousand things; but besides the fact that I had better wait until I know positively where you are, I cannot possibly continue this letter in the state I am in as I write. Farewell, my Friend; I quit my pen, but be assured that I do not quit you.

[Saint Preux misjudges his situation]

LETTER XXVI

To Julie

Julie! O Julie! O you whom I once dared to call mine, and whose name I today profane! the pen slips from my trembling hand; my tears drench the paper; I can barely trace the first characters of a letter that should never have been written; I can neither keep silent nor speak! Come, honorable and cherished image, come purify and fortify a heart defiled by shame and broken by repentance. Shore up my failing courage; give my remorse the strength to confess the involuntary crime your absence allowed me to commit.

What scorn you are going to have for a guilty man, yet far less than I have myself! However abject I may become in your eyes, I am a hundred times more so in my own; for seeing myself such as I am, what still humiliates me the most is to see you, feel you in the depths of my heart, in a place now so little worthy of you, and remind myself that the memory of love's truest pleasures was not able to preserve my senses from a trap without bait, and a crime without charms.

Such is the excess of my mortification that in appealing to your mercy, I even fear to sully your eyes with these lines with the confession of my evil deed. Forgive, pure and chaste soul, a tale I would spare your modesty were it not a means of expiating my distractions; I am unworthy of your goodness, I know; I am vile, base, despicable; but at least I shall be neither false nor deceitful, and I would rather you took your heart from me than to mislead you a single moment. For fear of being tempted to look for excuses that would only make me more criminal, I shall limit myself to giving you a detailed account of what has befallen me. It will be as sincere as my regret; that is all I will allow myself to say in my defense.

I had made the acquaintance of some Officers of the guard, and other

young men from among our countrymen,¹⁸⁰ in whom I found a natural merit, which I regretted seeing spoiled by the imitation of I know not what false airs that are not right for them. They in turn mocked me for retaining in Paris the simplicity of ancient Helvetic manners. They took my maxims and my manners as indirect remonstrances that shocked them, and resolved to make me change my tone at whatever cost. After several attempts that met with no success, they made one better contrived that worked only too well. Yesterday morning, they came and proposed that we go have supper at the home of a Colonel's wife whose name they cited, and who, from the report of my good behavior, was, they said, desirous of making my acquaintance. Dumb enough to be taken in by this persiflage, I objected that it would be better first to pay her a call, but they mocked my scruple, saying that Swiss candor did not call for such formality and that such ceremonious manners would succeed only in giving her a poor opinion of me. At nine o'clock we therefore went to this Lady's place. She came to receive us in the staircase; which I had not yet seen done anywhere. Upon entering I saw in chimney sconces old candles that had just been lit, and overall a certain affected air that pleased me not at all. The mistress of the house seemed pretty to me, although a bit over the hill; other women of about the same age and of similar appearance were with her; their rather showy finery was more flashy than tasteful; but I have already remarked that this is a point by which in this country one can hardly judge a woman's condition.

The first greetings took place as almost everywhere; with experience of the world one learns to foreshorten them, or turn them to cajolery before they become boring. It was not quite that way once the conversation became general and serious. It seemed to me I could detect in these ladies a constrained and uneasy air, as if this tone were not their customary one, and for the first time since I have been in Paris, I saw women hard pressed to sustain a reasonable discussion. To find an easy topic, they launched into their family affairs, and as I knew not one of them, each said of hers whatever she wished. Never had I heard so much talk about Monsieur the Colonel; which astonished me in a country where the custom is to call people more by their names than by their titles, and where men who bear that particular title usually possess others too.¹⁸¹

This false dignity soon gave way to more natural manners. They began to chat in low voices, and resuming unawares a familiar and not very decent tone, they whispered, they smiled, looking my way, while the Lady of the house questioned me on the state of my heart in a resolute tone that was hardly conducive to winning it. We were served, and the liberties taken at table, which seem to lump all the estates together, but in fact put each

one in his place without his realizing it, confirmed my suspicion about the sort of place I was in. It was too late to back out. Therefore taking security in my repugnance, I devoted this evening to my function as observer, and decided to apply to learning about this order of women the only opportunity I would have in my life to do so. I drew little profit from my observations; they had so little notion of their present state, so little thought for the future, outside the jargon of their trade, they were so stupid in every respect, that scorn soon cancelled the pity I first felt for them. In discussing pleasure itself, I saw they were incapable of feeling any. They seemed to me to have a tremendous craving for anything that could tempt their avarice: aside from that, I heard not a single word leave their mouths that came from the heart. I wondered at how honest people could bear such disgusting company. It would have been imposing a cruel punishment on them, in my opinion, to condemn them to the kind of life they themselves chose.

Meanwhile the supper went on and was getting noisy. For want of love, wine excited the diners. The talk was not amorous, but immodest, and the women tried to arouse through the disarray of their attire the desires that should have caused it. At first, all that had only the opposite effect on me, and all their efforts to seduce me succeeded only in repelling me. Sweet modesty! said I to myself, supreme attraction of love; what charms a woman loses, the moment she renounces thee! how careful they would be, if they knew thine empire, to preserve thee, if not out of honesty, at least out of coquetry! But modesty cannot be feigned. No artifice is more ridiculous than the one that tries to imitate it. What a difference, I was also thinking, from the coarse impudence of these creatures and their licentious jokes to those timid and passionate glances, those words full of modesty, of grace, of sentiment, with which.... I dared not go on; I blushed at these unworthy comparisons.... I reproached myself as so many crimes those charming memories that pursued me despite myself.... In what a place was I presuming to think of her.... alas! Unable to remove this too dear image from my heart, I attempted to veil it.

The noise, the things I heard said, the objects that met my eyes gradually heated my senses; the women on either side of me continually addressed provocations to me which finally went too far for me to remain cool. I could feel my head starting to swim; I had all along drunk my wine very diluted, I put in still more water, and finally decided to drink straight water. Only then did I notice that this supposed water was white wine, and that I had been fooled the whole meal long. I did not make objections which would only have made me a laughing stock; I stopped drinking. It was too late; the damage was done. Drunkenness quickly took away what little consciousness I had left. I was surprised, when I came to, to find my-

self in a distant chamber, in the arms of one of those creatures, and at the same instant I experienced the despair of feeling as guilty as I could possibly be....¹⁸²

I have come to the end of this awful narrative; may it never again sully your eyes or my memory. O you from whom I await my sentence, I implore you to make it harsh, I deserve it. Whatever my punishment may be, it will seem to me less cruel than the memory of my crime.

LETTER XXVII

Reply

You may rest easy on your fear of having vexed me. Your letter has caused me more pain than anger. It is not I, but you whom you have offended through a disorder in which the heart had no part. I am only the more afflicted for that. I would rather see you commit an outrage against me than defile yourself, and the harm you do to yourself is the only kind I cannot forgive you.

To consider only the fault for which you feel ashamed, you find yourself far more guilty than you are; and I see little more than imprudence to blame you for on this occasion. But this goes further back and stems from a deeper root which you do not perceive, and which friendship must expose for you.

Your first error is to have taken the wrong path on entering the world; the further you go, the further you go astray, and I tremble to observe that you are lost if you do not retrace your steps. You are allowing yourself to be led insensibly into the trap I had feared. The coarse lures of vice were unable to seduce you at first, but bad company has begun by deluding your reason in order to corrupt your virtue, and is already making on your morals the first test of its maxims.

Although you have told me nothing particular about the relationships you have formed in Paris, it is easy to get an idea of those you frequent from your letters, and of those who show things to you from your manner of seeing them. I have not disguised how little I approved of your friends; you have continued in the same manner, and my displeasure has only grown. In truth one would think these letters were the sarcasms of a coxcomb,^{*183} rather than the relations of a philosopher, and it is hard to believe they come from the same hand as those you used to write to me.

* Sweet Julie, for how many reasons will you make them hiss you! How is this! your tone is not even up to date. You are unaware that there are coquettes, but there are no more coxcombs. Good Lord, what then do you know?

What! you presume to study men in the dainty manners of a few coter-ies of précieuses¹⁸⁴ or people with nothing to do, and this superficial and changeable veneer which should have been scarcely worth your notice, forms the basis of all your commentaries! Was it worth your trouble to collect with such care practices and etiquettes that will no longer exist ten years from now, whereas the timeless motives of the human heart, the secret and lasting play of the passions evade your inquiry? Let us consider your letter on women, what would I find there that can teach me to know them? Some description of their finery, of which everyone is informed; some malevolent observations on their manner of dressing and carrying themselves, some idea of the disorder of a small number, unjustly generalized; as if all honest sentiments were extinct in Paris, and all women there travelled in carriages and sat in the first loges. Have you told me anything in the way of solid information about their tastes, their maxims, their true character, and is it not quite strange that in speaking of a country's women, a wise man should have neglected what has to do with domestic cares and the education of children?*

The only thing that seems to be your own in that whole Letter, is the pleasure with which you praise their good natural disposition and which does yours honor. And even then you thereby have done no more than justice to the sex in general; and in what country on earth are gentleness and commiseration not women's endearing portion?

What a different tableau if you had painted for me what you had seen rather than what you were told, or at least, had you consulted only reasonable people! Must you, who have taken such pains to preserve your sense of judgment, lose it as if on purpose in the frequentation of thoughtless youth, who in the company of the wise seek only to seduce them and not to imitate them. You heed false conformities of age which do not befit you, and you forget those of enlightenment and reason which are intrinsic to you. Despite all your impetuosity you are the most malleable of men, and despite the maturity of your mind, you let yourself be led to such a point by those whose company you keep that you are unable to mingle with people of your age without decreasing in age and becoming a child again. Thus you degrade yourself while thinking you are well matched, and not to choose friends wiser than you is to demean yourself.

I do not reproach you for being led unknowingly into a house of disrepute; but I reproach you for being led there by young Officers with whom you should not have been acquainted, or at least to whom you should not

* And why would he not have neglected it? Are such cares a concern of theirs? Oh illustrious Authors, brilliant Academicians, what would become of the world and the State, what would become of you all, if women were to give up the government of literature and business, to take up that of their homes?

have left the conduct of your entertainment. As for your ambition to lead them back to your principles, to me that indicates more zeal than prudence; if you are too serious to be their comrade, you are too young to be their Mentor, and you should undertake to reform others only when you have nothing more to achieve within yourself.

A second, still graver fault and much less forgivable, is to have been able to spend the evening willingly in a place so little worthy of you, and not to have fled from the first instant you knew what house you were in. On that score your excuses are pitiful. *It was too late to back out!*¹⁸⁵ As if there were some sort of etiquette in such places, or etiquette should ever win out over virtue, and it were ever too late to avoid doing wrong! Of the security you took in your repugnance, I shall say nothing, the outcome has taught you how well founded it was. Speak more frankly with her who can read what is in your heart: it was shame that held you back. You feared they would mock you on your way out; a moment's jeers frightened you, and you preferred exposing yourself to remorse rather than to derision. Do you realize the maxim you observed on this occasion? That one that first introduces vice into a well-born soul, muffles the voice of conscience with public clamor, and represses the boldness to do right with fear of disapproval. One man who would overcome temptations succumbs to bad examples; another blushes at being modest and becomes impudent out of shame, and this false shame corrupts more honest hearts than do false inclinations.¹⁸⁶ This above all is the reason you should preserve your own heart; for whatever you do, the very fear of ridicule which you scorn nonetheless overpowers you despite yourself. You would rather brave a hundred perils than derision, and such timidity coupled with so intrepid a soul has never before been seen.

Without expounding against this weakness precepts of morality that you know better than I, I shall be content to propose a means of protecting you from it, simpler and surer, perhaps, than all the reasonings of philosophy. It is to perform in your mind a slight transposition of time, and anticipate the future by a few minutes. If at this wretched supper you had steeled yourself against an instant of mockery on the diners' part, with the idea of the state your soul would be in as soon as you reached the street; if you had imagined the inner contentment of escaping from the traps of vice; the advantage of adopting from the outset the habit of overcoming that facilitates the power to do so; the pleasure that awareness of your triumph would have given you, the pleasure of describing it to me, the pleasure I myself would have taken in it; can it be believed that all this would not have won out over a moment's repugnance, to which you would never

have yielded if you had thought about the consequences? Moreover, what is this repugnance that places a value on the derision of people whose esteem can have no value at all? Unfailingly this reflection would have, for a moment of false shame, spared you a shame much more just, more lasting, the regrets, the danger, and to disguise nothing from you, your friend would have shed a few less tears.

You desired, you say, to use that evening to advantage for your function as observer? What curiosity! What a role! How ashamed of you your excuses make me! Will you not one day be just as eager to observe thieves in their Dens, and see how they go about robbing passers-by? Are you not aware that there are objects so hateful that a respectable man is not even allowed to look on them, and that the indignation of virtue cannot bear the spectacle of vice? The wise man observes the public disorder he cannot prevent; he observes it, and reveals by his sad countenance the grief it causes him; but as for individual disorders, he opposes them or averts his eyes, lest his presence be taken for approval. Was it necessary, moreover, to see such companies in order to acquire a notion of what goes on in them and the kinds of things that are said there? For my part, from their very topic more than from the little you have told me about it, I easily guess all the rest, and the thought of the pleasures to be found there tells me enough about the people who seek them.

I do not know whether your convenient philosophy already adopts the maxims which are said to prevail in the large cities in favor of tolerating such sorts of places; but I hope at least that you are not among those who think so little of themselves that they will indulge in their use, under the pretext of some putative necessity known only to loose-living people, as if the two sexes were on this point of different natures, and as if in absence or celibacy, the honorable man needed resources the honorable woman did not. If this error does not lead you to the prostitutes, I greatly fear it may continue to lead you astray yourself. Ah! If you insist on being contemptible, do it at least without pretext, and do not compound boozing with lies. None of those pretended needs has its source in nature, but in the willful depravity of the senses. The very illusions of love are purified in a chaste heart, and corrupt only the heart that is already corrupted. Purity on the contrary is self-sustaining; desires constantly repressed become accustomed to not returning, and temptations are multiplied only by the habit of succumbing to them. Friendship has twice made me overcome my repugnance to treat such a subject, this time will be the last; for by what right might I hope to obtain from you what you would refuse to honesty, love, and reason?

I return to the important point with which I began this letter. At twenty-one you wrote me grave and judicious descriptions from the Valais; at twenty-five you send me frilly little letters from Paris, in which sense and reason are everywhere sacrificed to a certain light turn, far removed from your character. I do not know how you have done this; but ever since you have been living in the land of talents, yours appear diminished; you had improved among the peasants, and you regress among the wits. It is not the fault of the country you are living in, but of the acquaintances you have made there; for nothing requires so much discernment as the admixture of the best and the worst. If you would study the world, then cultivate the reasonable people who know it from long experience and tranquil observation, not young scatterbrains who see nothing but its surface, and absurdities they themselves invent. Paris is full of learned men accustomed to reflection, for which that great theater affords them a subject every day. You will not make me believe that those grave and studious men run like you from house to house, from coterie to coterie, to entertain women and young men, and turn all philosophy to babble. They have too much dignity so to degrade their station, prostitute their talents, and support by their example manners they should correct. Even if most of them did, surely many do not, and these are the ones you should seek out.

Is it moreover not odd that you should yourself give in to the same flaw with which you reproach modern comic authors, that for you Paris should be populated solely by people of condition; that those of your own estate should be the only ones you do not even mention; as if you had not paid dearly enough for the vain prejudices of the nobility to despise them, and you thought you would be degraded by frequenting the honest bourgeoisie, who are perhaps the most respectable order in the Country where you are? No use trying to put the blame on Milord Edward's acquaintances¹⁸⁷: with them you would soon have made others of an inferior order. So many wish to climb, that it is always easy to descend, and by your own admission the only way of knowing the authentic manners of a people is to study its private life among the most populous stations; for to rest content with people who are forever playing a role, putting on airs, is to see nothing but Comedians.

I would wish your curiosity went yet further. Why in a City so rich is the populace so miserable, whereas extreme misery is so rare among us where there are no millionaires to be found? This question, it seems to me, is entirely worthy of your inquiry; but it is not with those whose company you keep that you must expect to resolve it. Gilded apartments are where a schoolboy goes to learn the airs of the world; but the wise man learns its

secrets in the poor man's cottage. It is there that are conspicuously to be found the obscure maneuvers of vice, which it covers over in social circles with prettified words; it is there one learns of the secret iniquities with which the powerful and rich snatch a remnant of black bread from the oppressed they publicly claim to pity. Ah, if I am to believe our veterans, what things you would learn in sixth-floor attics that are buried in deep secrecy in the palaces of the Faubourg St. Germain, and how many fast talkers would be confounded with their feigned humanitarian maxims if all the wretched they have created turned up to give them the lie!

I know that we dislike the spectacle of misery we cannot relieve, and that even the rich man averts his eyes from the poor man he refuses to succor; but it is not simply money that the unfortunate need, and it is only those lazy about doing good who do not know how to do it without purse in hand. Consolations, counsels, attentions, friends, protection are so many resources that commiseration accords you for want of wealth, for the relief of the indigent. Often the oppressed are oppressed merely because they lack a voice to make their complaints heard. Sometimes it is just a matter of a word they cannot say, a reason they know not how to proffer, the door of a Grandee through which they cannot enter. The bold support of disinterested virtue is enough to lift a multitude of obstacles, and the eloquence of a man of honor can frighten Tyranny amidst all its power.

If then you wish to be truly a man, learn to come back down. Humanity flows like a pure and salutary stream, and goes on to fertilize lowlands; it always seeks its level, it leaves dry the arid rocks that threaten the countryside and yield nothing but harmful shade or fragments to crush their neighbors.

That, my friend, is how one can benefit from the present while taking instruction for the future, and how kindness profits in advance from the lessons of wisdom, so that even if no use were found for the understanding acquired, we should not for that have wasted the time spent in acquiring it. He who must live among the highly placed can never use too much prophylaxis against their poisonous maxims, and only the continual practice of beneficence can protect the best hearts from the contagion of the ambitious. Take my advice, give this new kind of study a try; it is worthier of you than those you have embraced, and since the mind shrinks as the soul becomes corrupt, you will soon sense, on the contrary, how much the practice of sublime virtues elevates and sustains one's genius; how much a tender interest in others' misfortunes serves better to discover their source, and to keep us far in every way from the vices that have produced them.

I owed you all the candor of friendship in the critical situation in which

to me you seem to be, lest a second step in the direction of disorder finally plunge you in irrevocably, before you have time to get hold of yourself. Now I cannot hide from you, my friend, how much your prompt and sincere confession has moved me; for I sense how greatly the shame of this admission has cost you, and consequently how much the shame of your fault weighed on your heart. An involuntary error is easily forgiven and forgotten. As far as the future is concerned, remember this maxim from which I shall not deviate: Whosoever can twice deceive himself in such a case, was not deceived even the first time.

Farewell, my friend; look carefully to your health,¹⁸⁸ I implore you, and bear in mind that there must remain no trace of a crime I have forgiven.

...

LETTER XXVIII

From Julie

All is lost! All is discovered! I no longer find your letters in the place where I had hidden them. They were still there yesterday evening. They could only have been taken today. Only my mother can have discovered them. If my father sees them, my life is finished!¹⁹⁰ Oh, what would be the use of his not seeing them, if I must give up.... Ah God! My mother sends for me. Where shall I flee? How shall I bear her looks? If only I could hide in the bosom of the earth!.... My whole body quakes, and I am unable to take a single step.... shame, humiliation, stinging reproaches.... I have deserved it all, I will bear it all. But the grief, the tears of a weeping mother.... O my heart, what anguish!.... She awaits me; I cannot delay further.... she will want to know.... I will have to tell everything.... Regianino will be dismissed. Write me no more until you hear from me.... who knows if ever.... I could.... what, lie?.... lie to my mother.... Ah, if I must save us by lying, farewell, we are lost!

END OF PART TWO.

[Read the letter below if you have time, it will give you a good overview of the story that Rousseau tells in his novel *Julie, or the New Heloise*.]

LETTER XVIII, from Julie to her Friend (St. Preux)

Recapitulation of their love story. Julie's intentions in her trysts. Her pregnancy. Her hopes dashed. How her mother was informed of it all. She insists to her father that she will never marry Monsieur de Wolmar. The means her father employs to overcome her resolve. She allows herself to be led to the Church. The complete change in her heart. Solid refutation of the sophisms seeking to excuse adultery. She enjoins her former Lover to content himself, as she will, with feelings of faithful friendship, and asks his permission to confess her past conduct to her husband.

LETTER XVIII

From Julie

You²¹ have so long been the trustee of all my heart's secrets that there is no way it could now forsake such a lovely habit. On the most important occasion in my life it desires to pour itself out to you. Open yours to it, my gentle friend; take friendship's lengthy discourse into your breast; although friendship may sometimes make the speaking friend prolix, it always makes the listening friend patient.

Tied to a husband's destiny, or rather to a father's intentions by an indissoluble bond, I enter upon a new career which is to end only with death. As I set forth, let us for a moment have a look at the one I am relinquishing; for us it will not be painful to recall so dear a time. Perhaps I will find in it lessons for making good use of the time I still have left; perhaps you will find in it illumination to explain what you always perceived as obscure in my conduct. At least by examining what we once were to each other, our hearts will appreciate all the better what they owe each other until the end of our days.

It was about six years ago that I saw you for the first time.²² You were

young, well built, appealing; other young men have looked to me handsomer and better built than you; none has given me the slightest emotion, and my heart was yours from first sight.*²³ I thought I saw in your face the features of the soul mine required. It seemed to me that my senses were serving merely as the organ of sentiments more noble; and I loved in you, less what I saw there than what I thought I felt in myself. As recently as two months ago I still believed I had not been mistaken; blind love, I said to myself, was right; we were made for each other; I would be his if man's order had not perturbed nature's affinities, and if anyone were allowed to be happy, we should have been so together.

My sentiments were common to us both; they would have deceived me had I alone felt them. The love I have known can arise only from a mutual suitability and a harmony of souls. One does not love without being loved; at least one does not love for long. Those unrequited passions which, it is said, make so many victims are based on the senses only, if some of them reach as far as the soul it is because of false affinities which soon appear for what they are. Sensual love cannot do without possession, and with it dies out. Genuine love cannot do without the heart, and lasts as long as the affinities that have given rise to it.** Such was ours in the beginning; such it will be, I hope, until the end of our days, once we have put it in better order. I saw, I felt that I was loved and ought to be. The lips were silent; the glance was controlled: but the heart made itself heard; we soon felt between us that ineffable something that renders silence eloquent, makes lowered eyes speak, confers a bold timidity, manifests desire through fear, and says all it dares not express.

I felt my heart and esteemed myself lost at your first word. I saw the embarrassment in your reserve; I approved of that respect, and loved you the more for it; I sought to compensate you for a painful and necessary silence, without any cost to my innocence; I forced my natural disposition, I imitated my Cousin; I became jocular and frolicsome like her, in order to avoid too serious explanations and pass off a thousand tender caresses under the guise of that feigned playfulness. I wanted to make your present state so pleasant that fear of a change would make you even more guarded. All of that worked out poorly for me; one does not with impunity stray from one's natural disposition. Like the madwoman I was, I hastened my ruin instead of preventing it, I used poison as a palliative, and what should

* Mr. Richardson makes great fun of these attachments born of first sight and based on undefinable correspondences. It is all very well to mock them; but as there are nonetheless only too many of this sort, instead of playing at denying them, would it not be better to teach us to triumph over them?

** When these affinities are born of fancy, love lasts as long as the illusion that makes us imagine them.

have made you hold your peace was precisely what made you speak out. In vain did I affect coldness to keep you at distance when we were alone together; that constraint itself betrayed me: you wrote. Instead of throwing your first letter into the fire, or taking it to my mother, I made so bold as to open it. Therein lay my crime, and all the rest was inevitable. I meant to refrain from answering these fatal letters which I could not refrain from reading. That frightful struggle impaired my health. I saw the chasm into which I was about to plunge. I was horrified with myself, and could not bring myself to let you leave. I fell into a sort of despair; I would have preferred you cease to exist rather than not be mine: I even reached the point of wishing for your death, to the point of requesting it of you.²⁴ Heaven has seen my heart; that effort must redeem a few faults.

Seeing you on the verge of obeying me, I had to speak up. I had received lessons from Chaillot that made me all the more aware of the dangers of that admission. The love that wrested it from me taught me to elude its effect. You were my last refuge; I had confidence enough in you to arm you against my weakness, I believed you worthy of saving me from myself and I was right about you. When I saw that you respected such a precious trust, I understood that my passion was not blinding me as to the virtues it made me find in you. I surrendered to it with all the more assurance that it seemed to me our hearts were sufficient to each other. Sure that I would find within mine nothing but honest sentiments, I tasted without precaution the joys of a sweet intimacy. Alas! I did not see that the disease was becoming chronic through my negligence, and that frequentation was more dangerous than love. Touched by your restraint, I thought I could without risk lessen mine; in the innocence of my desires I believed I was encouraging virtue itself in you, through the tender caresses of friendship. I learned in the bower at Clarens that I had been too sure of myself, and that one must concede nothing to the senses if one hopes to deny them anything.²⁵ An instant, a single instant ignited mine with a flame nothing could put out, and if my will still held firm, from that moment my heart was corrupted.

You shared my distraction; your letter made me shudder.²⁶ The peril was twofold: to protect me from you and from me, you had to be sent away. That was the last effort of a dying virtue; by fleeing you consummated your victory; and as soon as I no longer saw you, my languor drained me of what little strength I had left to resist you.

Upon leaving the service my father had brought Monsieur de Wolmar home with him; the fact that he owed him his life as well as a twenty years' relationship made this friend so dear to him that he could not part with him. Monsieur de Wolmar was advancing in years and although rich and of high

birth, he found no wife to suit him. My father had spoken to him of his daughter like a man who wished to make a son-in-law of his friend; the idea of seeing her was broached, and it was with this purpose that they made the trip together. It was my fate to please Monsieur de Wolmar who had never loved anyone. They secretly gave each other their word, and Monsieur de Wolmar having much business to attend to in a Northern court²⁷ where his family and fortune resided, he requested time for that, and left with this mutual commitment. After his departure, my father declared to my mother and me that he had destined him to be my husband, and ordered me in a voice that allowed my timidity no reply to prepare myself to receive his hand. My mother, who had only too well perceived my heart's penchant, and felt a natural inclination for you, tried several times to shake this resolution; without daring to propose you, she spoke in such a way as to give my father some consideration for you and the desire to know you; but the quality you lacked²⁸ made him insensible to all those you possessed, and although he conceded that birth could not substitute for them, he pretended that it alone could set them off to advantage.

The impossibility of finding happiness stirred flames it should have extinguished. A flattering illusion had sustained me in my sufferings; with it I lost the strength to bear them. As long as some hope had remained for me to become yours, I would perhaps have mastered my desires; I would have found it less difficult to resist you my whole life long than to renounce you forever, and the very thought of an endless struggle snatched away my courage to overcome.

Sorrow and love were consuming my heart; I fell into a dejection that affected my letters. The one you wrote to me from Meillerie was the last straw; my own sufferings were compounded with the sentiment of your despair. Alas! it is always the weaker soul that bears the pains of both. The proposition you were bold enough to put to me made me more indecisive than ever. My days' misfortune was assured, the unavoidable choice still before me was to add to it my parents' or yours. I was unable to bear this horrible alternative; nature's strength has a limit; such turmoil exhausted mine. I wished to be delivered from life. Heaven seemed to take pity on me; but cruel death spared me the better to undo me. I saw you, I was cured, and I was lost.²⁹

If I found no happiness in my faults, I also never had expected to. I felt my heart was made for virtue and could not be happy without it; I yielded out of weakness and not error; I had not even the excuse of blindness. I had no hope left; all I could be at this point was unfortunate. Innocence and love were equally necessary to me, being unable to preserve them to-

gether and seeing your distraction, I took only you into account in my choice and ruined myself to save you.

But it is not as easy as people think to renounce virtue. It long persecutes those who relinquish it, and its charms, which are the delight of pure souls, are the first punishment of the wicked, who still love them and can no longer enjoy them. Criminal and not depraved, I could not escape the remorse in store for me; I cherished honesty, even after losing it; my shame was no less bitter to me for being secret, and had all of creation witnessed it I would not have felt it more. I took comfort in my suffering like a wounded man who fears gangrene, and in whom the sentiment of his pain sustains the hope of recovery.³⁰

At the same time this state of infamy was hateful to me. By having to attempt choking off remorse without renouncing the crime, I experienced what every honest soul experiences that is distracted and is content in its distraction. A fresh illusion sweetened the bitterness of repentance: I hoped to derive from my fault a means of repairing it, and dared devise the plan to force my Father to unite us. Our love's first fruit was to confirm this tender bond. I begged it of Heaven as token of my return to virtue and of our common happiness; I desired it as another in my stead would have feared it; the spell of tender love, tempering the murmur of conscience, consoled me for my weakness through the result I was expecting from it, and made of such a cherished expectation the charm and hope of my life.

As soon as I was to bear clear indications of my condition, I had resolved to make a public declaration of it to Monsieur Perret* in the presence of my whole family.³¹ I am timid it is true; I could feel how hard it would be for me, but honor itself sparked my courage, and I preferred to endure once the mortification I had deserved, rather than to nurture an everlasting shame within my heart. I knew my father would give me death or my lover; to me this alternative was not at all frightening, and, one way or the other, I anticipated that this step would put an end to all my woes.

Such, my good friend, was the secret that I tried to hide from you and you were attempting to discover with such curious anxiety. A thousand reasons obliged me to be so guarded with a man as extreme as you, besides the fact it was essential not to arm your indiscreet insistence with another pretext. It was especially apposite to remove you from so perilous a scene, and I knew well that you would never have agreed to abandon me in such a danger if you had known about it.

* The local pastor.

Alas, I was again deluded by such a flattering anticipation! Heaven rejected plans conceived in crime³²; I did not deserve the honor of becoming a mother; my expectation still remained vain, and I was denied the possibility of expiating my fault at the expense of my reputation. In the despair where this left me, the reckless tryst that placed your life in danger was a foolhardy act which my mad love veiled from me with such a sweet excuse: I blamed myself for the ill success of my wishes, and my heart deluded by its own desires could see in the eagerness to satisfy them, only the care taken to make them legitimate some day.

For an instant I thought they had been realized; this error was the sharpest of my regrets, and love fulfilled by nature was only the more cruelly betrayed by destiny. You have learned* of the accident that destroyed, along with the seed I bore in my womb, my hopes' last foundation. This misfortune occurred exactly at the time of our separation; as if Heaven had wanted to crush me then under all the woes I had deserved, and cut at once all the ties that could unite us.

Your departure put an end to my errors as well as my pleasures; I recognized, but too late, the illusions that had deceived me. I beheld myself fully as despicable as I had become, and as unhappy as I was always to be having a love without innocence and desires without hope, which it was impossible for me to stifle. Tormented by a thousand vain regrets I gave up reflections as painful as they were futile; I was not worth bothering myself with, I dedicated my life to thinking of you. I had no honor left but yours, no hope but in your happiness, and the sentiments I received from you were the only ones by which I thought I still could be moved.

Love did not blind me to your shortcomings but it made them dear to me, and such was its illusion that I would have loved you less if you had been more perfect. I knew your heart, your impetuosity; I knew that while possessing more courage than I you had less patience, and that the woes that overwhelmed my soul brought despair to yours. It is for this reason that I always carefully hid from you my father's commitments, and at our separation, wanting to take advantage of Milord Edward's zeal for your fortune, and inspire an equal one in you, I flattered you with a hope I did not possess. Further still, knowing the danger that threatened us, I took the only precaution that could shield us from it, and engaging my freedom with my word to you insofar as was possible, I tried to inspire confidence in you, firmness in me, with a promise I would not dare break and that could placate you.³³ It was a puerile obligation, I admit, and yet I would never have deviated from it. Virtue is so necessary to our hearts, that once genuine virtue has been abandoned, we invent ourselves another after our

* This supposes other letters we do not possess.

own fashion, and cling to it all the firmer, perhaps because it is of our own choosing.

I shall not tell you what turmoil I fell prey to once you had gone. The worst of all was the fear of being forgotten. Your place of residence made me tremble; your manner of living there increased my anxiety: I thought I already could see you vilified to the point of being nothing better than a rake. That ignominy hurt me more than all my woes; I would rather have known you were unhappy than despicable; after so many pains I was accustomed to, your dishonor was the only one I could not bear.

I received reassurance with respect to fears that the tone of your letters was beginning to confirm; and it came by means that could have exacerbated the alarms of another woman than myself. I am referring to the disorder you allowed yourself to be drawn into, the prompt and free confession of which was of all proofs of your candor the one that affected me most. I knew you too well to be unaware of what such a confession must have cost you, even if I had ceased to be dear to you; I saw that only love overcoming shame could have wrested it from you. I concluded that a heart so sincere was incapable of disguising an infidelity; I found less offense in your fault than merit in owning it, and when I recalled your earlier commitments, I cured myself forever of jealousy.

My friend, I was not the happier for it; for one less torment, a thousand others endlessly arose, and I never better understood how mad it is to seek in the distraction of one's heart a peace one can find only in proper conduct. For a long time I had secretly been weeping for my most excellent mother who was insensibly being consumed by a mortal languor. Babi, in whom I had been obliged to confide by the fatal result of my fall, betrayed me and revealed to her our embraces and my faults. I had scarcely retrieved my letters from my Cousin's house, when they were discovered. The evidence was overwhelming; sorrow drained every bit of strength my mother's illness had left her. I almost expired of remorse at her feet. Far from exposing me to the death I deserved,³⁴ she veiled my shame, and was content to grieve for it: even you, who had so cruelly deceived her, she was unable to hate. I witnessed to the effect your letter had on her tender and compassionate heart. Alas! She desired your happiness and mine. She attempted more than once.... what purpose is served by recalling a hope forever dead? Heaven had decided otherwise. She ended her sad days in the sorrow of being unable to bend a stern husband, and leaving a daughter so unworthy of her.

Crushed by such a cruel loss, my soul had only enough strength left to feel it; the voice of groaning nature stifled the murmurs of love. I took a sort of horror for the cause of so many evils; I finally wanted to stifle the

hateful passion that had brought them upon me and renounce you forever. That was doubtless what I should do; had I not enough to weep over for the rest of my days, without endlessly seeking out new subjects for tears? Everything seemed to favor my resolution. Although sorrow melts the soul, a deep affliction hardens it. The memory of my dying mother overshadowed yours; we were far apart; hope had forsaken me; never was my incomparable friend so sublime nor so worthy to occupy my whole heart alone. Her virtue, her reason, her friendship, her tender caresses seemed to have purified it; I believed you were forgotten, I believed I was cured. It was too late: what I had taken for the coldness of spent love was but the dejection of despair.

Just as a sick man who ceases to suffer when he passes out awakens to more acute pain, I soon felt all mine revive once my father had notified me of Monsieur de Wolmar's impending return. It was then that invincible love restored to me the strength I thought I no longer possessed. For the first time in my life I dared to defy my father face to face. I flatly protested that Monsieur de Wolmar would never be anything to me; that I was determined to die a maiden; that he was master of my life,³⁵ but not of my heart, and that nothing would make me change my will. I shall not tell you either of his anger, nor of the treatment I had to suffer. I was unshakable: my timidity once overcome had carried me to the other extreme, and although my voice was less imperious than my father's, it was fully as determined.

He saw that my mind was made up, and that he would obtain nothing from me by authority. For a moment I thought I was delivered from his persecutions. But what became of me when I suddenly beheld at my feet the sternest of fathers moved and melting into tears? Without letting me rise he grasped my knees, and fixing his damp eyes on mine, he told me in a touching voice I can still hear within me: My daughter! Respect your unhappy father's white hair; do not send him in grief to the grave, like her who bore you in her womb. Ah! Do you want to inflict death on the entire family?³⁶

Imagine my shock. That posture, that tone of voice, that gesture, those words, that terrible thought so unsettled me that I slid half-dead into his arms, and it was only after many sobs that were choking me, that I was able to answer him in a broken and faint voice: O my father! I had defenses against your threats, I have none against your tears. It is you who will be the death of your daughter.

We were both so shaken that it took us a long time to compose ourselves. Yet in reviewing to myself his last words, I surmised that he was better informed than I had thought, and, resolved to avail myself against

him of things he knew anyway, I was preparing myself at the risk of my life to make to him a confession put off too long, when cutting me short, as if he had foreseen and feared what I was about to tell him, he spoke to me thus:

"I know what fantasy unworthy of a wellborn daughter you are entertaining in the depths of your heart. It is time to sacrifice to duty and honesty a shameful passion that dishonors you and that you will never fulfill save at the cost of my life. Listen for once to what a Father's honor and your own demand of you, and be your own judge.

"Monsieur de Wolmar is a man of lofty birth, distinguished by all the qualities that can sustain it; who enjoys public consideration and deserves it. I owe him my life; you know the commitments I have made with him. What remains for you to learn is that, having gone to his country to put his affairs in order, he found himself caught up in the latest revolution, lost his properties there, only escaped exile in Siberia through a singular happenstance,³⁷ and returns here with the sorry remnants of his fortune, upon the word of his friend who never failed to keep his word to anyone. Prescribe for me now the kind of reception we must have for him upon his return. Shall I say to him: Monsieur, I promised my daughter to you while you were rich, but now that you have nothing left I retract my promise, and my daughter wants no part of you? If that is not the way I formulate my refusal, that is the way it will be interpreted: your alleged love will be taken as a pretext, or will be for me just one more affront, and we will pass, you for a maiden undone, and I for a dishonest man who sacrifices his duty and his troth to his own vile interests,³⁸ and compounds disloyalty with ingratitude. My daughter! it is too late to finish an unblemished life in disgrace, and sixty years of honor are not abandoned in a quarter of an hour.

"So you see," he continued, "how much everything you can say to me is now beside the point. Decide for yourself whether a preference that modesty disavows and some passing, youthful flame can ever be placed in the balance against a daughter's duty and a father's compromised honor. If the only thing at stake were for one of us to immolate his own happiness to the other, my tenderness would vie with you for so sweet a sacrifice; but my child, honor has spoken and in the blood you come from, that is always what decides."

I was not wanting for a good reply to this speech; but my father's prejudices give him principles so different from mine, that reasons which to me seemed categorical would not even have shaken him. Moreover, without knowing either how he came by the knowledge he seemed to have acquired about my conduct, nor how extensive it was; fearing because of the point he had made of interrupting me that he had already made up his mind about what I had to tell him, and, more than all that, held back by a shame I have never been able to overcome, I preferred to invoke an excuse that seemed to me more dependable, because it was more in keeping with his manner of thinking. I declared to him frankly the commitment I had made with you; I protested that I would never betray my word to you, and that, come what may, I would never marry without your consent.

Indeed, I perceived with joy that my scruple did not displease him; he sharply reproached me my promise, but he made no objection to it; such a

high opinion does a Gentleman imbued with honor naturally have for the faith of commitments, and such does he consider a pledge as something forever sacred! And so, instead of wasting time arguing over the nullity of that promise, which I would never have conceded, he obliged me to write a note with which he enclosed a letter that he instantly dispatched. In what turmoil did I not await your reply! How many times I wished that you would prove less principled than could be expected of you! But I understood you too well to doubt your obedience, and I knew that the more painful the sacrifice demanded of you, the more quickly you would assume it.³⁹ The reply came; it was kept from me while I was ill; after my recovery my fears were confirmed and I had no more excuses. At least my father declared to me that he would entertain none, and with the sway he had acquired over my will by the terrible word he had used with me, he made me swear that I would say nothing to Monsieur de Wolmar that could dissuade him from marrying me: for, he added, that would look to him like a scheme we had concerted, and at whatever cost, you must go through with this marriage or I must die of grief.

You know very well, my friend, that my health, so robust against fatigue and exposure to the elements, cannot hold out against the inclemency⁴⁰ of the passions, and the source of all my soul's and body's ills is to be found in my too sensible heart. Whether because prolonged worries had corrupted my blood; or because nature had chosen that time to purify it of some deadly leavening, I felt most indisposed at the end of this conversation. Upon leaving my father's chamber, I made an attempt to write a word to you,⁴¹ and was taken so ill that I went to bed hoping never to arise again. All the rest you know too well; my imprudence precipitated yours. You came, I saw you,⁴² and I thought I had simply had one of those dreams that so often made you appear before me during my delirium. But when I learned that you had come, that I actually had seen you, and that intending to share the disease of which you could not cure me, you had caught it deliberately; I could not bear this last trial, and seeing such a tender love survive hope, mine which I had taken such care to contain had nothing more to restrain it, and quickly revived more ardent than ever. I saw I was doomed to love in spite of myself; I could tell I was doomed to be criminal; that I would be able to hold out neither against my father nor against my lover, and that I would never reconcile the rights of love and blood except at the expense of my honor. Thus all my good sentiments utterly died out; all my faculties were perverted; crime lost its horror to my eyes; I felt entirely different inside; finally, the unleashed transports of a passion made furious by obstacles cast me into the most awful despair that can overwhelm a soul; I dared to despair of virtue. Your letter more prone to revive

remorse than prevent it, consummated my distraction. My heart was so corrupt that my reason could not resist the arguments of your philosophers. Horrors the thought of which had never sullied my mind dared to suggest themselves. The will still fought them, but the imagination got used to seeing them, and although I did not harbor crime beforehand in my heart, I no longer harbored those generous resolutions that alone can resist it.

I can scarce continue. Let us pause for a moment. Remember those happy and innocent times when the powerful and gentle flame that burned in us purified all our sentiments, when its holy ardor* made us cherish modesty and love honesty even more, when desires themselves seemed to arise solely to afford us the honor of overcoming them and thus being worthier of each other. Reread our first letters; recall to mind those fleeting and scarcely savored moments when love to our eyes was decked in all the charms of virtue, and when we loved each other too much to form ties between us that virtue would disavow.

What were we then, and what have we become? Two tender lovers spent an entire year together in the strictest silence, they dared not vent their sighs; but their hearts understood each other; they thought they were suffering, and they were happy. Because they understood each other, they eventually broke their silence; but satisfied to know they could triumph over themselves and offer each other honorable testimony to that effect, they spent another year in a reserve no less severe; they told each other their sufferings, and they were happy. These long struggles were ill sustained; a moment's weakness led them astray; they lost themselves in pleasures; but if they ceased to be chaste, at least they were faithful; at least Heaven and nature sanctioned the bonds they had formed; at least they still held virtue dear; they still loved it and knew how to honor it; they had less corrupted than abased themselves. Less worthy of being happy, yet they still were.

What are those tender lovers doing now, who burned with a flame so pure, who so appreciated the price of honesty? Who will hear it without lamenting for them? They are given over to crime. Even the thought of defiling the marriage bed no longer fills them with horror.... they contemplate acts of adultery!⁴³ Could these be the same persons? Have their souls not changed? How can that ravishing image that the wicked never glimpsed ever fade from hearts in which it has shone? How can the appeal of virtue in those who have once known it fail to disgust them forever with vice? How many centuries can it have taken to produce this strange trans-

* Holy ardor! Julie, ah Julie! what a word for a woman as completely cured as you think yourself!

formation? What length of time did it take to destroy such an enchanting memory, and efface the true sentiment of happiness in people who were once able to savor it? Ah, if the first disorder is painful and slow, how quick and easy are all others! Mirage of the passions! thus dost thou bewitch reason, waylay honesty and change nature before we perceive it. One strays for a single moment in life, deviates by a single step from the straight path. At once an ineluctable slope drags him down to his ruin. He finally falls into the chasm, and awakens horrified to find himself covered with crimes, having a heart born for virtue.⁴⁴ My good friend, let us lower this veil. Need we see the awful precipice it hides from us in order to avoid coming too close to the edge? I return to my narrative.

Monsieur de Wolmar arrived and was not discouraged by the change in my face. My father left me no time to breathe. My mother's mourning was coming to an end,⁴⁵ and my grief was proof against time. I could invoke neither of them to elude my promise: I had to fulfill it. The day that was forever to take me from you and from myself seemed to me like the last of my life. I would have watched the preparations of my sepulchre with less apprehension than those of my wedding. The nearer I came to the fatal moment, the less I could uproot my first affections from my heart; they were stirred up by my attempts to quell them. Finally, I wearied of struggling in vain. At the very moment when I was ready to swear everlasting fidelity to another, my heart still swore an everlasting love to you, and I was led to the Temple⁴⁶ as an impure victim, who defiles the sacrifice where it is to be immolated.

When I reached the Church, I felt as I entered a sort of emotion I had never before experienced. I know not what terror seized hold of my soul in that simple and august place, filled through with the majesty of the one who is served therein. A sudden dread made me shiver; trembling and almost falling into a swoon, I could hardly drag myself to the foot of the pulpit. Far from regaining composure I could feel my turmoil increasing during the ceremony, and insofar as it allowed me to make out objects, it was only to be terrified by them. The dim light in the building, the profound silence of the Spectators, their modest and meditative demeanor, the procession of all my relatives, the imposing sight of my revered father, all these things lent to what was about to take place an atmosphere of solemnity that summoned me to attention and respect, and would have made me shudder at the very thought of perjury. I thought I saw the instrument of providence and heard the voice of God in the minister's grave recitation of the holy liturgy. The purity, the dignity, the holiness of marriage, so vividly set forth in the words of Scripture, those chaste and sublime duties so important to happiness, to order, to peace, to the survival of

mankind, so sweet to fulfill for their own sake; all this made such an impression on me that I seemed to experience within me a sudden revolution.⁴⁷ It was as if an unknown power repaired all at once the disorder of my affections and re-established them in accordance with the law of duty and nature.⁴⁸ The eternal eye that sees all, I said to myself, is now reading the depths of my heart; it compares my hidden will with the reply from my lips: Heaven and earth are witness to the sacred engagement into which I enter, as they will be as well to my faithfulness in observing it. What right can anyone respect among men who dares violate the foremost of them all?⁴⁹

A fortuitous glance in the direction of Monsieur and Madame d'Orbe, whom I saw side by side with compassion in their eyes, moved me even more powerfully than had all the other objects. Amiable and virtuous couple, are you the less united for knowing less of love? Duty and honesty bind you; tender friends, faithful spouses, though you do not burn with that devouring flame that consumes the soul, you love each other with a pure and sweet sentiment that nurtures the soul, one that wisdom sanctions and reason directs; for that you are only the more dependably happy. Ah! would I could in such a bond recover the same innocence and enjoy the same happiness; if I have not merited it as you have, I shall make myself worthy of it following your example. These sentiments reawakened my hope and courage. I envisaged the holy union into which I was about to enter as a new state that was to purify my soul and restore it to all its duties. When the Pastor asked me if I promised obedience and absolute fidelity to the man I was taking as my husband, my mouth and my heart made the promise. I will keep it unto death.

Back at the house I longed for an hour of solitude and meditation. I obtained it, not without difficulty, and however eager I was to put it to use, I at first examined myself only with repugnance, fearing I had merely experienced a momentary ferment with my change of status, and would prove just as unworthy as a wife as I had been misbehaven as a maiden. The test was sure but dangerous: I began by thinking of you. I could bear myself witness that no tender memory had profaned the solemn engagement into which I had just entered. I could not conceive by what wonder your obstinate image could have left me so long in peace with so much cause for recalling it; I would have been wary of indifference and forgetfulness, as a misleading condition, which for me was too unnatural to last. That illusion was hardly to be feared: I felt that I loved you as much as and more, perhaps, than I ever had; but I felt it without blushing. I saw that in order to think of you I had no need to forget that I was another's wife. Telling myself how dear you were to me, my heart was moved, but my conscience and my senses were tranquil, and I knew from that moment that I was re-

ally changed. What a torrent of pure joy then flooded my soul! What a sentiment of peace so long forgotten revived this heart branded with ignominy, and filled my whole being with a new serenity! I seemed to feel myself being reborn; I seemed to be beginning another life. Sweet and consoling virtue, I begin it for thee; it is thou that wilt make me cherish it; it is to thee I want to dedicate it. Ah, I have learned too well what losing thee costs to abandon thee a second time!

In the bliss of a change so great, so sudden, so unhopèd-for, I ventured to think back on the state I was in the day before; I shuddered at the shameless abasement my lapse of honor had reduced me to, and at all the dangers I had incurred since my first transgression. What felicitous revolution had just let me see the horror of the crime that had tempted me, and rekindled in me the taste for propriety? What rare good fortune had made me more faithful to love than to the honor I so cherished? By what good fortune had your inconstancy or mine not made me a prey to new inclinations? How could I have opposed to another lover⁵⁰ a resistance over which the first had already triumphed, and a sense of guilt accustomed to yielding to desires? Would I have better respected the rights of a spent love than I had those of virtue, when they still enjoyed their full sway? What assurance had I had of loving you alone in the world, except for an inner sentiment all lovers think they have, when they pledge everlasting constancy to each other, and blithely perjure themselves every time it pleases Heaven to change their heart?⁵¹ Each defeat would thus have prepared the next; the habit of vice would have muted its horror in my eyes. Carried along from dishonor to infamy without finding anything to hold onto to stop myself; from betrayed lover I turn into a wanton woman, the disgrace of my sex, and the despair of my family. Who protected me from so natural an effect of my first fault? Who held me back after the first step? Who preserved my reputation and the esteem of those I cherish? Who placed me under the safeguard of a virtuous, wise husband, endearing for his character, and even for his person, and full of such undeserved respect and attachment for me? Who, finally, allows me to aspire still to the name of honest woman and gives me the courage to become worthy of it? I can see, I can feel, that the helping hand that has guided me through the shadows is the same one that lifts the veil of error from my eyes and restores me to myself in spite of me. The secret voice that had never ceased to murmur in the depths of my heart arose and thundered with greater force at the moment I was about to perish. The author of all truth did not suffer me to leave his presence guilty of a base perjury, and preventing my crime through my remorse he has shown me the abyss into which I was about to hurtle. Eternal Providence, who makest the insect crawl and the heavens turn, thou watchest over the

least of thy works! Thou recallest me to the good thou hadst made me love; I pray thee accept from a heart thou hast cleansed the homage that thou alone makest worthy of being offered thee!

At once, acutely sensing the danger from which I was delivered and the state of honor and safety to which I felt restored, I prostrated myself on the ground, I lifted toward heaven my supplicating hands, I invoked the Being whose throne it is and who when it pleases him sustains or destroys by means of our own strength the freedom he grants us. I will, said I, the good that thou wilt, and of which thou alone art the source. I will love the husband thou hast given me. I will be faithful, because that is the first duty which binds the family and all of society.⁵² I will be chaste, because that is the first virtue which nurtures all the others. I will everything that belongs to the order of nature thou hast established, and to the rules of reason thou gavest me. I place my heart under thy protection and my desires in thy hand. Make all my acts conform to my constant will which is thine, and no longer allow the error of a moment to prevail over the choice of my entire life.

After this short prayer, the first I had made with true zeal, I felt myself so firm in my resolutions; they seemed to me so easy and so pleasant to follow that I clearly saw where I must henceforth seek the strength I needed to resist my own heart, and which I could not find within myself. I drew from this sole discovery a new confidence, and deplored the sad blindness that had kept it from me so long. I had never been completely wanting in religion; but perhaps it would be better to have none at all, than to have one that is only external and affected, which without touching the heart assuages the conscience; to limit oneself to formulas; and to believe punctiliously in God at certain hours so as to think no more about him at all others. Scrupulously devoted to public worship, I was unable to get from it anything for my daily life. I felt I was born good, and followed my inclinations; I was fond of reflection and trusted my reason; unable to reconcile the spirit of the gospel with that of the world, nor faith with works, I had taken a middle way that satisfied my idle wisdom: I had maxims for believing and others for acting; I forgot in one place what I had thought in the other, I was devout in Church and a philosopher at home. Alas! I was nothing anywhere; my prayers were but words, my reasonings Sophisms, and I followed as sole light the false glow of wandering lanterns⁵³ which guided me to my perdition.

I cannot tell you what scorn this inner principle which I had heretofore lacked has given me for those which have so ill guided me. What, I ask you, was their original cause, and on what basis were they founded? A favorable instinct inclines me toward the good, a violent passion arises; it is

rooted in that same instinct, what shall I do to destroy it? From the consideration of order I derive the beauty of virtue, and its goodness from the common utility; but what effect has all that over against my particular interest, and which really is the more important to me, my happiness at the expense of the rest of mankind, or others' happiness at the expense of mine? If the fear of shame or punishment prevents me from doing wrong for my own advantage, I have only to do wrong secretly, there is nothing virtue can reproach me with, and if I am caught in the act, it is, as in Sparta, not the crime that will be punished, but the ineptness. Finally, if nature has imprinted the character and love of the beautiful in the depths of my soul, so long as it is not disfigured I will have my rule; but how am I to be assured I shall always preserve in its purity that inner effigy which among perceptible beings has no model to which it can be compared? Do we not know that disordered affections corrupt the judgment as well as the will, and that conscience is imperceptibly perverted and altered in each century, among each people, in each individual in function of the variability and diversity of prejudices?

Worship the Eternal Being, my wise and worthy friend; with a breath of air you will destroy those phantoms of reason, which have but a vain appearance and flee like a shadow in the face of immutable truth. Nothing exists but through him who is.⁵⁴ It is he who gives a purpose to justice, a basis to virtue, a value to this short life spent pleasing him; it is he who never ceases to cry to the guilty that their secret crimes have been seen, and who causes the forgotten just man to hear: thy virtues have a witness; it is he, it is his inalterable substance that is the true model of perfections an image of which we each bear within us. However our passions may disfigure it, all its features associated with the infinite essence always reappear before reason and help it re-establish whatever portion of it has been distorted by imposture and error. These distinctions seem easy to me; it takes nothing but common sense to make them. Whatever one cannot separate from the idea of that essence is God; all the rest is the work of men. It is by observing this divine model that the soul purifies and raises itself up, learns to despise its base inclinations and surmount its vile penchants. A heart imbued with these sublime truths resists the petty passions of men; that infinite grandeur disgusts it with their pride; the enchantment of meditation plucks it from earthly desires; and even if the immense Being on which it dwells did not exist, it still would do well to dwell on it endlessly the better to be master of itself, stronger, happier, and wiser.⁵⁵

Do you want a palpable example of the vain sophisms of a reason that relies on itself alone? Let us consider coolheadedly the arguments of your philosophers, worthy apologists of crime, which never seduced a heart that

was not already corrupted. Would you not say that by attacking directly the most sacred and most solemn of engagements, these dangerous reasoners have determined to obliterate all of human society in a single blow, which is founded only upon the faith of covenants? But just look how they disculpate a secret adultery!⁵⁶ The point is, they say, that no harm results from it, not even for the husband who is in the dark. As if they could be sure he would always remain in the dark? as if it were enough, to justify perjury and infidelity, that they harm no one else? as if the harm done to those who commit it were not enough to make us abhor crime? How then! It is not wrong to break faith, to do everything possible to annul the force of the vow and the most inviolable contracts? It is not wrong to oblige oneself to become a cheat and a liar? It is not wrong to form ties that make you desire the harm and the death of another? The death of the very person one ought to love most and with whom one has vowed to live? A situation whose fruit is always a thousand more crimes is not wrong? Any good that produced so many evils would for that reason alone itself be an evil.

Would one of the two think himself innocent, because he is perhaps free from his standpoint, and breaks faith with no one? He is dreadfully mistaken. It is not solely in the interest of the Spouses, but the common cause of all men that the purity of marriage not be tainted. Whenever two spouses are united by a solemn bond, the entire human race enters into an implicit commitment to respect this sacred bond, to honor in them the conjugal union; and that is, it seems to me, a very strong argument against clandestine marriages,⁵⁷ which, manifesting no sign of that union, expose innocent hearts to burning with an adulterous passion. The public is in a sense the guarantor of a covenant signed in its presence, and it can be said that the honor of a chaste wife is under the special protection of all good people. Thus whoever dares to corrupt her sins,⁵⁸ first of all because he causes her to sin, and one always shares the crimes one causes to be committed; further he directly sins himself, because he violates the public and sacred faith of marriage without which nothing can subsist in the legitimate order of human affairs.

The crime is secret, they say, and no harm results from it for anybody. If these philosophers believe in the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, can they call secret a crime that has as its witness the one principally offended and only true Judge? The strange secret that is hidden from all eyes but those from which it is of the utmost importance to hide it! Even were they not to recognize the presence of the divinity, how dare they maintain that they harm no one? How do they prove it is indifferent to a father to have heirs who are not of his blood; to be burdened, perhaps

with more children than he would have had, and forced to distribute his property to the tokens of his dishonor without feeling for them a father's affections? If we suppose these reasoners are materialists, we are all the more entitled to cite against them the sweet voice of nature, which protests in the depths of every heart against a prideful philosophy, and was never attacked with good reasons. Indeed, if the body alone produces thought, and sentiment depends solely upon the organs, must not two Beings born of the same blood have a more intimate analogy between them, a stronger attachment for each other, and resemble each other in soul and countenance, which is a considerable reason for loving each other?⁵⁹

It is then to do no wrong, in your opinion, to obliterate or disrupt this natural union through an alien blood, and corrupt in its principle the mutual affection that must bind all the members of a family together? Is there on earth an honorable man who would not be horrified at exchanging another's child at nurse, and is it a lesser crime to exchange it in the mother's womb?

If I consider my sex in particular, what harms do I perceive in this disorder which they pretend does no harm! Were it but the defilement of a guilty woman whom the loss of honor soon deprives of all the other virtues! So many all too certain indices to a tender husband of a connivance they think they can justify by secrecy! Were it only to be no longer loved by his wife. What will she accomplish with her wily attentions other than further to prove her indifference? Can the eye of love be deceived by feigned caresses? And what torture alongside one's beloved, to feel that the hand embraces us and the heart rejects us? I grant that fortune may favor a prudence it has so often betrayed; provisionally I count for nothing the brashness of entrusting one's so-called innocence and another's peace of mind to precautions which it pleases Heaven to confound.⁶⁰ How many falsehoods, how many lies, how many double-dealings to cover up a criminal traffic, to betray a husband, corrupt servants, deceive the public! What a scandal for accomplices! What an example for children! What becomes of their education amidst so much attention given to gratifying criminal passions with impunity? What becomes of the peace of the household and the union of its heads? How! in all this the husband is not injured? Who then will compensate him for a heart that was meant to be his? Who will restore to him a wife worthy of respect? Who will give him peace and security? Who will cure him of his just suspicions? Who will give a father confidence in the sentiment of nature when he embraces his own child?⁶¹

With regard to the supposed bonds that adultery and infidelity are said to form between families,⁶² this is less a serious argument than an absurd and brutal joke which for sole reply deserves but scorn and indignation.

The betrayals, the quarrels, the fights, the murders, the poisonings with which this disorder has covered the earth in every era, sufficiently show what must be expected for the peace and union of men from an attachment born of crime. If some sort of society results from this vile and despicable traffic, it resembles that of thieves which must be destroyed and annihilated in order to secure legitimate societies.

I have tried to suspend the indignation these maxims provoke in me so as to discuss them calmly with you. The more insane they seem to me, the less I must disdain to refute them, to shame myself for having perhaps listened to them with too little aversion. You see how poorly they stand up to the scrutiny of sound reason; but where is sound reason to be found if not in him who is its source, and what must we think of those who make use for men's ruin of that divine torch which he gave them to guide them?⁶³ Let us be wary of a philosophy of words⁶⁴; let us be wary of a false virtue that undermines all virtues, and attempts to justify all vices in order to entitle itself to have them all. The best way to discover what is good is to seek it sincerely, and one cannot thus seek it for long without going back to the author of all good. It seems to me I have been doing this since I have been busying myself correcting my sentiments and my reason; you will do it better than I once you decide to follow the same road. It comforts me to remember that you have often nurtured my mind in the great ideas of religion, and you whose heart hid nothing from me would not have spoken thus if your sentiments had been other. It seems to me that those conversations had their charms for us. The presence of the Supreme Being was never unwelcome to us; he used to make us more hopeful than terrified; he never frightened any soul but the wicked man's; we were happy to have him as witness of our conversations, to lift ourselves conjointly toward him. If we were sometimes humiliated by shame, we would say to ourselves while deploring our weaknesses: at least he sees the bottom of our hearts, and we were the more tranquil for it.

If that sense of security led us astray, it falls to the principle on which it was founded to bring us back on track. Is it not quite unworthy of a man never to be able to be at one with himself, to have one rule for his acts, another for his sentiments, to think as if he had no body, act as if he had no soul, and never to relate to his whole self anything he does his whole life long? As for me, I find that we are quite strong with our age-old maxims when we do not restrict them to vain speculations. Weakness is man's lot, and the God of mercy who created him will doubtless forgive him for it; but crime is the wicked man's lot, and will not remain unpunished before the author of all justice.⁶⁵ An unbeliever, in other respects born good, abandons himself to the virtues he loves; he does good by inclination and

not by choice. If all his desires are righteous, he follows them without being forced; he would follow them just the same if they were not; for why should he give himself the trouble? But he who recognizes and serves the common father of men believes he has a higher purpose; the desire to fulfill it inspires his zeal, and following a rule more sure than his inclinations, he is able to do the good that costs him something, and sacrifice his heart's desires to the law of duty. Such is, my friend, the heroic sacrifice to which we are both called. The love that united us would have charmed our lives. It survived hope; it defied time and separation⁶⁶; it endured every kind of trial. So perfect a sentiment was not destined to perish of itself; it was worthy of being immolated only to virtue.

I shall tell you something more. All is changed between us; your heart must necessarily change. Julie de Wolmar is no longer your former Julie; the revolution in your sentiments for her is inevitable, and the only choice you have left is to attribute the honor of this change to vice or to virtue. I have in memory a passage from an Author you will not impugn. "Love," he says, "is deprived of its greatest charm when honesty abandons it. To appreciate its full value, the heart must delight in it and raise us up by raising up the loved one. Take away the idea of perfection and you take away enthusiasm; take away esteem and love is reduced to nothing. How will a woman honor a man she must scorn? How will he himself be able to honor her who did not shrink from abandoning herself to a vile corrupter! Thus they will soon scorn each other. Love, that heavenly sentiment, will be reduced for them to a shameful traffic. They will have lost honor and will not have found felicity."* That is our lesson, my friend, it was you who dictated it.⁶⁷ Did ever our hearts love each other more delightfully, and did they ever cherish honesty more than in those happy times when that letter was written? See then what a criminal passion would lead us to today, entertained at the cost of the sweetest transports that enrapture the soul. The horror of vice which is so natural to both of us would soon extend to the accomplice of our faults; we would hate each other for having loved each other too much, and love would die out in remorse. Is it not preferable to purify a sentiment so dear in order to make it durable? Is it not preferable to preserve at least as much of it as can be reconciled with innocence? Is that not to preserve all that was most charming in it? Yes, my good and worthy friend, in order to love each other forever we must renounce each other. Let us forget all the rest and you shall be the lover of my soul. This thought is so sweet that it consoles for everything.

Such is the faithful tableau of my life, and the candid story of all that has taken place in my heart. I love you still, have no doubt of that. The senti-

* See part one, Letter xxiv.

ment that attaches me to you is still so tender and so intense that another woman would perhaps be alarmed by it; for me, I once knew one too different to mistrust this one. I can tell it has changed in nature, and in that at least, my past faults ground my present security. I know that strict decorum and ostentatious virtue would require even more and would not be content until you were entirely forgotten. I believe I have a surer rule and abide by it. I listen to my conscience in secret; it makes me no reproach, and never does it mislead a soul that consults it sincerely.⁶⁸ If that does not suffice to justify me in the world, it suffices for my own tranquillity. How did this felicitous change come about? I do not know. What I do know, is that I have eagerly desired it. God alone has done the rest. I would think that a soul once corrupted remains so forever, and never returns to the good on its own; unless some sudden revolution, some quick change of fortune and situation changes its relations, and with a violent shock helps it get settled again. All its habits being broken and all its passions modified, in the general confusion one sometimes returns to one's native character and becomes like a new being freshly emerging from the hands of nature. Then the memory of its former baseness can serve as prophylaxis against a relapse. Yesterday one was abject and weak; today one is strong and magnanimous. By observing oneself in two such different conditions, one better appreciates the value of the condition that has been recovered, and in consequence one becomes more attentive to maintaining it. My marriage has made me experience something similar to what I am endeavoring to explain to you. This bond so dreaded delivers me from a much more dreadful bondage, and my husband is the dearer to me for having restored me to myself.

We were too united, you and I, for our union to be destroyed by changing in kind. If you are losing a tender lover, you are gaining a faithful friend, and whatever we may have said during our illusions, I doubt this change is to your disadvantage. Derive the same benefit from it that I do, I beg you, in order to become better and wiser, and purify through Christian morals the lessons of philosophy. I shall never be happy unless you too are happy, and I feel more than ever that there is no happiness without virtue. If you genuinely love me, give me the sweet consolation of seeing that our hearts are not less attuned in their return to the good than they were during their distraction.

I do not think I need apologize for this long Letter. If you were less dear to me, it would be shorter. Before ending it I still have a favor to ask of you. A cruel burden weighs on my heart. My past conduct is not known to Monsieur de Wolmar; but an unreserved sincerity is part of the fidelity I owe him. I would already a hundred times have admitted everything; you

alone have held me back. Although I know Monsieur de Wolmar's wisdom and moderation, to name you is nonetheless to compromise you, and I have not wished to do so without your assent. Would it displease you to have me ask it of you, and would I have presumed too much of you or of me in flattering myself I should obtain it? Bear in mind, I beseech you, that there is no way this reticence can be innocent, that it becomes more cruel to me each day, and that until I receive your reply, I shall not have a moment's tranquillity.

LETTER XIX

Reply

So you are no longer my Julie? Ah! say not so, worthy and respectable woman. You are more than ever. You are she who deserves the tribute of all creation. You are she whom I worshipped when I was beginning to perceive genuine beauty; you are she whom I shall not cease to worship, even after my death, if my soul retains some recollection of the truly heavenly charms that enchanted it when I lived. That feat of courage that restores you to the fullness of your virtue only makes you even more like yourself. No, no, whatever torture I experience in feeling and saying this, you were never more my Julie than at the moment you renounce me. Alas! it is by losing you that I have found you once more. But I whose heart shudders at the very suggestion of imitating you, I, tormented by a criminal passion I can neither endure nor overcome, am I the person I thought I was? was I worthy to appeal to you? What right had I to importune you with my complaints and despair? How dared I presume to sigh for you! Oh! what was I to love you?

Madman! As if I were not experiencing enough humiliations without seeking out new ones! Why count differences that love effaced? It raised me, put me on a plane with you, its flame sustained me; our hearts had fused, all their sentiments were common and mine shared in the greatness of yours. And here I am fallen back into all my baseness! Flattering hope which fed my soul and deluded me for so long, art thou then gone forever? She will not be mine? I am losing her for ever? She is bringing happiness to someone else?... O fury! O hellish torment!.... Unfaithful woman! ah! were you ever to.... Forgive me, forgive me, Madame,⁶⁹ take pity on my rantings. O God! You said it all too well, she is no more.... that tender Julie is no more to whom I could lay bare my heart's every movement. What, I imagined myself unhappy, and I had it in me to complain?... she had it in her to listen to me? I was unhappy?... then what am I today?... No, I shall