From George Sand

I embrace you and I love you, when will you give me some Flaubert to read?

I have not the time to say anymore to you today. People are coming in.

after my little story, I shall do another,—for I am too deeply shaken to start on a great work.

If I should take your manner of looking at the whole of life I should become laughable, that is all

Well, dear master, and this is to answer your last letter, this is, I think what separates us essentially. You, on the first bound, in everything, mount to heaven, and from there you descend to the earth.

As for the servant who tells the story and who is evidently in love with Madame, I wonder why you did not show more plainly his personal jealousy.

Everywhere the interest is sustained and at the same time progressive. In short, what strikes me the most in these two novels (as in all yours, moreover), is the natural order of the ideas, the talent, or rather the genius for narrative.

I am sending you a volume of old things that have just been collected. I embrace you, and I love you.

Your old troubadour,

There are diamonds that sparkle brightly in this polychrome.

How are you? Tourgueneff wrote me that your last work was very remarkable: then you are not done for, as you pre- tend?

The honest people are not the minority, since society exists in a certain order and without too many unpunished crimes.

Life is not crammed with monsters only. Society is not formed of rascals and wretches only.

That does not change anything in my way of thinking, that art ought to be the search for the truth, and that truth is not the picture of evil.

Your play charmed me and made me weep like an idiot, while the other bored me to death, absolutely bored me to death; I longed to get to the end.

I should have started this morning for Pont-1'Eveque and Honfleur to see a bit of the country that I have forgotten, but the floods stopped me.

I have neither the time to go there, nor the wish to leave like that at a moment's notice, but I should have liked to send some of my friends there, and he does not offer me a single seat for them.

You have no vices to satisfy, nor ambitions to appease. I am sure that you will accommodate your life to your resources. The hardest thing for you to bear, is the chagrin of that young woman who is as a daughter to you.

Are you still in Paris in this lovely weather?

Do write to me, tell me that you are going out of doors, that you are walking, that you are better.

I am as yet, if not necessary, at least extremely useful, and I shall go on as long as I have a breath, thinking, talking, working for them.

I love you all the more because you are growing more un- happy. How you torment yourself, and how you disturb yourself about life! for all of which you complain, is life; it has never been better for anyone or in any time.

One feels it more or less, one understands it more or less, one suffers with it more or less, and the more one is in advance of the age one lives in, the more one suffers. We pass like shadows on a background of clouds which the sun seldom pierces, and we cry ceaselessly for the sun which can do no more for us.

It is for us to clear away our clouds.

When, then, shall you be able to say to yourself : Lo ! this is the time for rest,

I spend the evening with my children and I forget my little miseries which will pass; everything passes.

Ridicule the critics, they are blockheads. The present century does not like lyricism. Let us wait for the reaction, it will come for you, and a splendid one. Rejoice in your insults, they are great promises for the future.

No one indeed ever says anything to me: they know that I would not allow it.

Our two little girls cruelly ill with the grippe have taken up all my time, but I am following, in the papers, the course of your play.

Everything is going well, and you are satisfied, my troubadour.

You have no children, be therefore a litterateur, an artist, a master; that is logical, that is your compensation, your happiness, and your strength.

From Gustave Flaubert

Ah ! thank you from the bottom of my heart, dear master

Bromide of potassium has calmed me and given me eczema on the middle of my forehead.

Abnormal things are going on inside me. My psychic depression must relate to some hidden cause. I feel old, used up, disgusted with everything, and others bore me as I do my- self.

In short, your troubadour (not very troubadourish) has become a sad bonehead.

I have had several errands to do, various readings to finish up with, and a thing more serious than all that, the health of my poor niece worries me extremely and, at times, disturbs my brain, so that I do not know at all what I am doing! You see that my cup is bitter!

I remember having felt my heart beat violently, having felt a fierce pleasure in contemplating a wall of the Acropolis, a perfectly bare wall (the one on the left as you go up to the Propylaea).

You distress me a bit, dear master, by attributing esthetic opinions to me which are not mine. I believe that the rounding of the phrase is nothing.

One must write for all those who have a thirst to read and who can profit by good reading

Life is perhaps eternal, and therefore work is eternal.

The rest does not depend on me.

The string of the necklace (that is to say, the main idea) is still to seek.

Externally my life is scarcely changed: I see the same people, I receive the same visits.

Will you forgive my long delay, dear master.'' But I think that I must bore you with my eternal jeremiads. I repeat myself like a dotard ! I am becoming too stupid ! I am boring everybody. In short, your Cruchard has become an intolerable old codger, because he has been intolerant. And as I cannot do anything that I ought to do, I must, out of consideration for others, spare them the overflow of my bile.

I cannot decide about any- thing effective! Ah! I have eaten my white bread first, and old age is not announcing itself under gay colors.

Someone had told me that you were very ill. Your good handwriting came to reassure me yesterday morning, and this morning I have received the letter from Maurice, so the Lord be praised

In other respects, dead calm, France is sinking gently like a rotten hulk, and the hope of salvage, even for the staunchest, seems chimerical. You need to be here, in Paris, to have an idea of the universal depression, of the stupidity, of the decrepitude in which we are floundering.

The sentiment of that agony penetrates me and I am sad enough to die. When I am not torturing myself about my work, I am groaning about myself. That is the truth.

But one needs to be absolutely mad to undertake such a book. I fear that, by its very conception, it is radically impossible. We shall see.

But to do that you would have to move, to resign your habits, Nohant and the dear little girls. You will remain at home and you will he wrong. You ought to take care of yourself , . . for those who love you.

What surprises me, is that under several of these criticisms there is a hatred against me, against me personally, a deliberate slandering, the cause of which I am seeking. I do not feel hurt, but this avalanche of foolishness saddens me.

Farewell, dear good adored master, friendly regards to yours. Kisses to the dear little girls, and all my love to you.

Those people to whom I lent money or for whom I did favors call me an idiot. I have never had less nerves.

If I were not harassed by people who ask me for seats, I should forget absolutely that I am soon to appear on the boards, and to expose myself, in spite of my great age, to the derision of the populace.

Is it stoicism or fatigue?

Do you know what I am going to do to complete my ecclesiastical character? I am going to be a godfather.

I spent the month of August in wandering about, for I was in Dieppe, in Paris, in Saint-Gratien, in Brie, and in Beauce, hunting for a certain country that I had in mind, and I think that I have found it at last in the neighborhood of Houdan.

Why do you leave me so long without any news of yourself, dear good master? I am cross with you, there!

It is only five days since we parted, and I am missing you like the devil. I miss Aurore and all the household down to Fadette. Yes, that is the way it is, one is so happy at your house! you are so good and so interesting.

Why can't we live together, why is life always so badly arranged? Maurice seems to me to be the type of human happiness. What does he lack? Certainly, he is no more envied by anyone than by me.

I have come to Paris this winter with the idea of collecting some; but if my horrible cold continues, my stay here will be useless !

Why publish then? Is it to be understood, applauded ? But yourself, you, great George Sand, you confess your solitude. Is there at this time, I don't say, admiration or sympathy, but the appearance of a little attention to work so far? Who is the critic who reads the book that he has to criticise? In ten years they won't know, perhaps, how to make a pair of shoes, they are becoming so frightfully stupid !

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for this twofold reading. It has relaxed me. There is still something beautiful and good in the world.