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SENANCOUR'S OBERMANN.



OBERMANN. BY ÉTIENNE PIVERT  
DE SENANCOUR. TRANSLATED  
BY J. ANTHONY BARNES, B.A.

VOL. II.

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This volume of the "Scott Library" forms a complete edition of Senancour's "Obermann." The first half of the delightful "Letters" have already been published as Volume 126 of the "Scott Library." Therein will be found J. Anthony Barnes' illuminative Introduction and Notes—a labour of love (by one since passed away) that will not fail to lend an additional interest for every English reader of this graceful masterpiece of French literature.



# OBERMANN.

SIXTH YEAR.

LETTER XLVII.

LYONS, *August 28th* (VI.).

In a couple of sentences you dismiss all my suggestions to the region of dreams. Presentiments, hidden properties of numbers, the philosopher's stone, interaction of stars, cabalistic sciences, high magic, are all pronounced to be chimeras with the same infallible assurance. You are the autocrat; the high pontiff himself could not improve on you. Nevertheless, I am stubborn like all heresiarchs; and further, I am suspicious of your positive knowledge, for I suspect you of being happy.

Let us imagine for a moment that everything is going wrong with you, for then you will tolerate my laying bare to you the full scope of my doubts.

It is said that affairs are guided and controlled by man, and that chance is nothing. That may be, and yet see whether chance does not count for some-

thing. I admit that man has the shaping of all human affairs, but he employs means and faculties; whence come they? The physical energies, health, balance and breadth of mind, wealth and power mainly constitute those means. It is true that wisdom and moderation can maintain health, but chance bestows and sometimes renews a strong constitution. Prudence evades some dangers, but chance is all the time guarding us from wounds and mutilation. Practice improves our moral and intellectual powers, but chance deals them out, and often develops them, or protects them from innumerable accidents, any one of which would wreck them. Wisdom exalts to power one man in a century; chance bestows it on all the other rulers of the masses. Prudence and character slowly build up a few fortunes; chance makes them suddenly every day of the week. The story of human affairs is very like that of the porter who scraped up a hundred louis in twenty years by odd jobs and economies, and then put a single crown into a lottery and won seventy-five thousand.

Everything is a lottery. War is nothing but a lottery for nearly all but the commander-in-chief, and even he is far from being exempt from it. In modern warfare an officer on the high road to honours and promotion sees by his side a fighter quite as brave, and even more capable and robust, who is lost to fame for ever amid the heaps of the dead.

If so many things happen by chance and yet chance can do nothing, there must be in Nature either one

great hidden force or a number of unknown forces obeying laws which are incapable of demonstration by human sciences.

One can *prove* that the electric fluid does not exist. One can prove that a magnetised substance cannot act on another without contact, and that its tendency to turn towards a fixed point of the compass is an occult and utterly vagarious property. It used to be proved that aerial navigation, burning bodies at a distance, bringing down lightning and provoking volcanic eruptions were all impossible. To-day we are still sure that man cannot make gold, though he can grow an oak. We know that the moon causes the tides, but cannot affect vegetation. It is proved that all the effects of maternal experiences on the unborn child are old wives' fables, and that all the races who have seen them were mistaken. It is recognised that the theory which made thought a fluid is profane and ridiculous, but that certain men have authority to manufacture before breakfast a kind of universal soul or metaphysical nature, which can be broken up into as many universal souls as necessary, so that every one can assimilate his share.

It is *certain* that a native of Chatillon received, as St. Bernard<sup>1</sup> promised, a hundred times as much arable land in heaven as he had given down here to the monks of Clairvaux. It is certain that the empire of the Great Mogul is flourishing when its ruler weighs a couple of pounds heavier than he did **the year** before. It is certain that the soul survives

<sup>1</sup> First Abbot of Clairvaux, A.D. 1115.—TR.

the body—unless it is crushed by a sudden fall of rock, in which case it has not time to escape,<sup>1</sup> and of course dies on the spot. Everybody knows that comets usually breed monsters, and that there are excellent recipes for warding off the infection.

Everybody agrees that an inhabitant of this little globe on which we immortal geniuses grovel has discovered the laws controlling the motion and position of billions of worlds. We are wonderfully certain about things, and it must be sheer malice if all ages and races mutually accuse each other of error.

Why should we try to poke fun at the Ancients for regarding number as the universal principle? Do not all the properties of natural objects—dimensions, forces, duration—obey the laws of numbers? Does not that which is both real and mysterious carry us furthest into the heart of Nature's secrets? Is not Nature herself a continual expression of the manifest and mysterious, being visible and inscrutable, calculable and infinite, proved and unthinkable, comprising all the foundations of being and all the vanity of dreams? She reveals herself to us and we see her not; we have analysed her laws and cannot imagine her processes; she has allowed us to prove that we could shift the globe, but the movement of an insect is an abyss in which she forsakes us. She gives us an hour of existence in the surrounding blankness; she displays and then extinguishes us; she produces

<sup>1</sup> This opinion, which was prevalent among the Stoics, is stated in the fifty-seventh Epistle of Seneca, along with the no less curious arguments by which Seneca refutes it.

us simply that we may have had our being. She fashions us an eye that can see everything; she sets before it the whole mechanism and organisation of things, all the wonders of infinite being; we look, we begin to understand, and then she shuts for ever the eye so marvellously prepared.

Why, then, O men of a day, do you want certainties? How long will you keep expecting us to state our dreams as realities just to give your vanity the satisfaction of saying "I know"? You are less paltry when you are ignorant. You want us to say of Nature as positively as your scales and figures—"This is; this is not." Well, well; here is a novel; there is knowledge and certainty for you, if you like.

*Number*: our dictionaries define number as a collection of units; thus the unit which is the essence of all numbers is excluded from the term which denotes them. It is a pity our language has no word to denote both the unity and all its multiples of varying directness and complexity. Let it be assumed between us that the word number means that, and as I have a cogitation to unfold to you I will adopt the style of the great truths I mean to send you by to-morrow's post.

Listen; it goes back to antiquity, though innocent of differential calculus.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Obermann cannot have intended to ridicule the sciences he admired but did not possess. No doubt he was simply anxious that the great advances of recent times should not lead the half-educated so hastily to despise antiquity.

Number is the basis of every dimension, harmony, property, and combination; it is the law of the organised universe.

Without the laws of numbers, matter would be a crude and shapeless mass; it would be *chaos*. Matter arranged according to those laws is *cosmos*; the necessity inherent in those laws is *destiny*; their power and properties make *Nature*, and the all-pervading consciousness of those properties is *God*.

The fixed relations of these properties constitute magical doctrine, which is the secret of all initiations, the essence of all dogmas, the basis of all religions, the source of moral relations and of all duties.

I pass on, and you will thank me for my discretion; for I might trace the development of all cabalistic and religious ideas. I should refer fire-worship to numbers; I should prove that the very idea of pure spirit is the result of certain calculations; I should include in the same connection everything that has tyrannised over or cajoled the human imagination. This bird's-eye view of a mysterious world would not be without interest, but it would not be worth the multiple fragrance of seven jasmine flowers strewn by a breath of air on the gravel of your terrace at Chessel.

And yet without numbers there would be no flowers and no terrace. Every phenomenon consists of numbers or proportion. Form, space, and duration are effects and products of number; but number

is only produced, modified, and extended by itself. Music, in the sense of the science of all harmony, is an expression of numbers. Music in its every-day sense, the source perhaps of the deepest impressions man can feel, is based on numbers.

If I were well up in astrology, I would tell you much more; but is not the whole of life, in short, governed by numbers? Without them, who would know the time of a service or a funeral? Who could dance? Who could tell when his nails were long enough to cut?

The unit, as the symbol of unity and hence of every complete result, is certainly the essence of every idea and plan, and also of perfection and wholeness. Thus every complex number is one; all perception is one; the universe is one.

One is to derivative numbers what red is to colours, or Adam to the generations of mankind. Adam was the first, and the word Adam means red. That is why the substance of the Great Quest<sup>1</sup> should be called Adam in its red stage, because the red quintessence of the Universe is like Adam, who was made of that quintessence by the Almighty.

Pythagoras said: "Cultivate assiduously the science of numbers; our vices and crimes are nothing but mistakes in calculation." This profoundly true and serviceable maxim is no doubt the highest tribute

<sup>1</sup> The philosopher's stone, supposed to be a red powder.  
—TR.

that can be paid to numbers. But here is something that Pythagoras left unsaid.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In all sects the disciples, or many of their number, fall short of the greatness of their master. They distort his thought, especially when superstitious fanaticism or the ambition to be original are added to intellectual errors.

Pythagoras, like Jesus, wrote nothing. The so-called followers of them both have shown that they fully appreciated this advantage.

Let us look for a moment at number as Pythagoras seems to have understood it.

If from some commanding elevation one discerns down in the plain between the tall forests certain erect-walking creatures, and if one recalls the fact that forests are cleared, rivers turned, pyramids built, and the landscape transformed by them, one is literally astounded. Time is their great instrument, and time is a sequence of numbers. All the incidents, vicissitudes, combinations, and definite productions of the universe are wrought by the simultaneous or successive association of numbers. Force, organisation, space, order, and duration are nothing without numbers. All the processes of Nature are dependent on the properties of numbers, and the concurrence of these processes is Nature herself; that all-pervading harmony is the infinite principle in virtue of which everything is what it is. The genius of Pythagoras is well worth the minds that do not understand him.

Pythagoras seems to have said, that everything was fashioned according to the properties of numbers, but not by their agency.

For the sayings of Porphyry, Nicomachus, etc., about numbers, see *De Mysteriis Numerorum* by Bungo.

See also the "Laws of Pythagoras," 2036, 2038, etc., in the "Travels of Pythagoras." In perusing the three thousand five hundred sentences called "Laws of Pythagoras" in this volume of ancient wisdom, one is struck with the small space devoted to numbers.



Without one there would be neither two nor three, so that the unit is the universal principle. One is infinite in virtue of its derivatives; it produces co-eternally two and even three, whence come all the rest. Though infinite, it is irreducible; it is certainly in everything; it cannot cease to be, it was never made; it cannot alter; further, it is neither visible, nor blue, nor large, nor thick, nor heavy; if it were it would be more than a number.

Two is quite different. If there were no two, there would be nothing but one. Now when everything is one, everything is alike; and when everything is alike there is no discord, and in the absence of discord you have perfection. It is two then that jumbles everything. That is the evil principle; Satan, in fact. Hence of all our figures two has the weirdest shape, the most acute angle.

Nevertheless, without two there would be nothing compound, no relations, no harmony. Two is the element of everything composite as far as it is composite. Two is the symbol and mode of all reproduction. There were two cherubim on the Ark, and birds have two wings, hence two is the principle of elevation.

Three combines the ideas of totality and complexity; it is perfect harmony. The reason of this is obvious; it is a compound number divisible only by one. From three equidistant points results the simplest of plane figures. That three-fold figure is still only one like the perfect harmony. In oriental wisdom, Brahma the creative power, Vishnu the

preserving power, and Siva the destructive power, combine to form the Triad, which is Brahma the unique principle.

In mundane affairs, thirty-three, a number expressed by two threes, is it not the age of man's perfection? And was not man, the highest work of Brahma, formerly credited with three souls?

Three is the principle of perfection; it is the number of complexity resulting in unity of an aggregate completed by unity. Three is the mystic number of the first degree; there are three Kingdoms in terrestrial things, and three stages for every organic compound—formation, life, decomposition.

Four is very like the body, because the body has four faculties. It also possesses all the sacredness of an oath. Why that is so I cannot say; but as an authority has stated it, no doubt his disciples will explain it.

Five is sacred to Venus, for she presides at marriages, and the very shape of five has an indefinable suggestion of happiness. Hence we have five senses and five fingers. Further reasons are needless.

I know nothing about the number six, except that a cube has six faces. Everything else seemed to me unworthy of the great things I have collected about the other numbers.

Seven, however, is of supreme importance. It represents all creatures, and is all the more interesting because they belong to us; a divine right long since conferred, and attested by bit and bridle, whatever bears, lions and serpents may say against it. This

authority was nearly lost through sin, but by putting two sevens together one will counteract the other; for as baptism is also a seven, seventy-seven denotes the abolition of all sins in baptism, as St. Augustine showed the academies of Africa.

In seven we have evidently the union of two threes or perfect numbers, two principles of perfection; a union completed as it were and consolidated by that sublime unit which rounds it off and makes the difference between seven and six. It is the mystic number of the second degree, or, one might say, the principle of all highly complex numbers. The different phases of the moon are a proof of that, and consequently the seventh day has been chosen as the day of rest. Religious festivals thus made this number sacred in popular estimation, and hence arose the idea of septenary cycles, associated with that of the great Flood. "God has impressed the sacred character of the number seven on the Universe everywhere," said Joachites. In the starry sky everything goes by sevens. All ancient mysticism is full of the number seven; it is the most mysterious of apocalyptic numbers, and of those of the Mithraic cult<sup>1</sup> and of the mysteries of initiation. Seven brilliant stars, seven Gâhanbards,<sup>2</sup> seven Amschaspends or Angels of Ormuz. The Jews have their week of years, and the square of seven was the

<sup>1</sup> Mithras or Mithra was the supreme god of the Ancient Persians, the minister or personification of Ormuz, the principle of light and goodness.—TR.

<sup>2</sup> Extra days added to the Persian year; equivalent to the *Sans-culottides* of the French republican year.—TR.

real number of their jubilee period. It is noteworthy that for our planet at least, and even for our solar system, the number seven is specially prominent in natural phenomena. Seven primary spheres;<sup>1</sup> seven metals;<sup>2</sup> seven odours;<sup>3</sup> seven tastes; seven rays of light; seven tones; seven simple vowel sounds.<sup>4</sup>

Seven years make a week of life, and forty-nine the great week. A seven-month child can live; at fourteen days he sees; at seven months he has teeth; at seven years new teeth, and he then begins to distinguish good and evil. At fourteen man can beget; at twenty-one he reaches a kind of maturity which has led to the fixing of that as the age of political and legal majority. Twenty-eight is the time of a great change in human affections and in the aspects of life. At thirty-five youth ends. At

<sup>1</sup> Apparently this was written prior to the latest modern discoveries; besides, nine is a sacred number as well as seven. Four quarters only make one whole.

<sup>2</sup> As seven were requisite, and it was impossible not to include platinum, mercury was left out, because it seems to have a special character, and to differ from other metals in several of its properties, amongst others that of remaining in a fluid condition even at a degree of cold long thought to exceed the normal cold of our era. Unfortunately modern chemistry recognises a far greater number of metals, but it is now probable that there are forty-nine, which is still a case of seven.

<sup>3</sup> Linnæus divided vegetable odours into seven classes. De Saussure admits an eighth; but clearly there should only be seven for the scale.

<sup>4</sup> The Greeks had seven vowels. French grammarians also recognise seven, three *e*'s and four others.

forty-two, our powers begin to decline. At forty-nine, the best life is half over in length, and in the autumn of its sensations; the first physical and moral wrinkles appear. At fifty-six premature old age begins. Sixty-three is the earliest period of natural death. (It occurs to me that you object to that epithet, so we will call it necessary death; death brought on by the general causes of declining life.) I mean that if one dies of old age at eighty-four or ninety-eight, one dies of simple age at sixty-three; it is the earliest period at which life ends through diseases of decay. Many celebrated people have died at seventy, eighty-four, ninety-eight, and a hundred and four (or a hundred and five). Aristotle, Abelard, Héloïse, Luther, Constantine, Shah-Abbas;<sup>1</sup> Nostradamus,<sup>2</sup> and Mahomet died at sixty-three; and Cleopatra fully realised that she must wait twenty-eight days before dying after Antony.

Nine! If one credits the Mongol hordes and several tribes of Central Africa, that is the most harmonious of numbers. It is the square of the only number divisible by unity alone; it is the source of indirect effects; mystery multiplied by mystery. The *Lend-Avesta* shows how nine was revered in a large part of the East. In Georgia and Iran, everything goes by nines; the Avares<sup>3</sup> and the Chinese are

<sup>1</sup> Schahharbarz, King of Persia, fought successfully against Romans in Syria.—TR.

<sup>2</sup> French astrologer and physician, 1503-1566. The other names are well known.—TR.

<sup>3</sup> Asiatic race, once very powerful, now tributary to Russia.—TR.

specially fond of it. The Mussulmans of Syria enumerate ninety-nine attributes of Deity, and the races of Eastern India recognise eighteen worlds, nine good and nine bad.

The figure 9 has its tail downward, like a monster-breeding comet; and nine is the symbol of every fatal experience. In Switzerland, for instance, the destructive north winds last nine days. Eighty-one, or nine multiplied by itself, is the number of the grand climacteric;<sup>1</sup> every order-loving man should die at that age, and Denis of Heraclea<sup>2</sup> gave a noble example of this to the world.

I admit that eighteen is considered a delightful age, and yet it is destruction [9] multiplied by the evil principle, [2] but there is a way of accounting for it. In eighteen years there are two hundred and sixteen months; a very complex and fatal number. To begin with it includes eighty-one multiplied by two, which is terrible; and in the remaining fifty-four there is Venus [5] and an oath [4]. Four and five combined strongly suggest matrimony, a very attractive state at eighteen, but of no use to either sex at forty-five or fifty-four respectively, while at eighty-one it is ridiculous, and at all ages by its very delights can spoil, desolate, and degrade human nature with the horrors associated with the cult of number five [Venus].

<sup>1</sup> The climacterics of Hippocrates are every seventh year, thus corresponding with what has been said about the number seven.

<sup>2</sup> Greek philosopher of third century; none of his work survives.—TR.

What is worse than to poison one's life by indulging in five? It is at eighteen that these dangers are most powerful; there is therefore no age more fatal. There you have something that only numbers could reveal, and thus it is that numbers are the foundation of morality.

If you are inclined to be sceptical about all this, repress the doubt and redouble your faith, for here is a statement by the leading light of the primitive church.

Ten is justice and blessedness derived from the union of the creature seven, with the Trinity, three. Eleven is sin because it transgresses ten, or justice. Now you see the highest point of the sublime, and there is nothing more to be said. St. Augustine himself could not go beyond that.

If my paper would hold out I would convince you of the existence of the philosopher's stone; I would satisfy you that all those learned and celebrated men were not crazy, and that the phenomenon is no more surprising than the mariner's compass, and no more inconceivable than the oak derived from the acorn you planted. But no matter; let the rattle-pates who are finishing their education with a madrigal pronounce Stahl,<sup>1</sup> Becher,<sup>2</sup> and Paracelsus<sup>3</sup> fit for Bedlam.

Well, well; take a turn among your jasmynes, and never mind my doubts and demonstrations. I play

<sup>1</sup> German physician, 1660-1734.

<sup>2</sup> German chemist and physicist, 1635-82.

<sup>3</sup> Remarkable Swiss scholar and physician, 1493-1541. See Browning's poem.—TR.

the fool sometimes so that I may at least make fun of myself. There is a kind of repose, a whimsical pleasure, in regarding everything as a dream. It serves a diversion from more serious dreams, and makes our uneasy ones less vivid.

You would not have us give reins to imagination, because it leads us astray, but from the standpoint of the personal pleasures of thought is not our everyday life a going astray? All men have dreamed, for all have had need of it; when their evil genius gave them life their good genius gave them sleep and dreams.

## LETTER XLVIII.

MÉTENVILLE, *September 1st* (VI.).

However languidly we drag out our days, we must sometimes be impressed by the sky on a cloudless night. We see the mighty stars; it is no trick of imagination, there they are before our eyes. We realise their enormous distance, and see those suns that seem to hint at worlds where beings unlike ourselves are born and feel and die.

The stem of a young pine tree rises into the air beside me straight and firmly fixed, as though devoid of life and motion; and yet it lives; and if it is conscious, its secret and its life are within it; it grows imperceptibly. It is the same by night and by day,



the same beneath the cold snow and the summer sun. It revolves with the earth, passive amid all these worlds. The cicada shrills while man sleeps; it will die, the pine will fall, the worlds will change. Where then will be our books, our reputations, our fears, our prudence, the house we meant to build, and the corn not laid by the hail? What epoch are you saving for? On what distant century have you set your hopes? One more revolution of a star, one more hour of its duration, and all you are will cease to be, more utterly vanished and extinct than if it had never been. He whose misfortune grieves you, and she who is beautiful, will alike be dead. The son who survives you will be dead too.

You have multiplied scientific instruments; you see the moon as if it were at the end of your telescopes;<sup>1</sup> you look for movement on it, but there is none. There once was, but it is dead. And the place where you are, this very planet, will soon be as dead as the moon. Why do you loiter? You might have made a note for your brief, or finished an ode that would have been the talk of a day. Spheric intelligence! How vain are the cares of men! How absurd their anxiety for the events of an hour! What mad struggles to arrange the details of a life that a breath of time will blow out! To gaze, to enjoy the passing hour, to imagine, to let

<sup>1</sup> The apparent distance of the moon has at last been reduced to less than that of mountains perfectly distinguishable by the naked eye in certain atmospheres, though more than a day's march away.

oneself go, should be our cue; but to control, to establish, to know, to possess—what madness!

Nevertheless, he who will not prepare for a rainy day will not have the rest that leaves a man in peace, nor the relaxation that can divert him from the annoyances he has preferred to a quiet life; he will lack when he wants it the full cup of coffee or wine to banish for a moment his deadly dulness. He will be driven to do things without order and sequence, he will make no provision for his family. Because his thought has grasped the world in its lofty flights, in the long run his genius will flag with languor and fail to soar so high; because his thought has too keenly sought for truths in the nature of things, it will at last be unequal to meeting the requirements of its own nature.

Men talk of nothing but subduing their passions and having strength to do right; but when so much is inscrutable, how know what is right? I for one cannot tell, and I am bold enough to suspect that many more are ignorant too. All the sectaries have pretended to announce it and produce evidence for it, but their supernatural proofs have left us more in doubt than before. Perhaps positive knowledge and a recognised end are neither suited to our nature nor our needs. And yet we are bound to use our will. It is a dire necessity, an intolerable anxiety, to be always doomed to have a will without knowing by what to regulate it.

I often take refuge in the idea that the accidental course of events, and the immediate results of our

endeavours, are a mere semblance, and that every human action is necessarily determined by the resistless progress of things as a whole. This seems to be an intuitive truth with me, but when I lose sight of abstract considerations, I worry and scheme like anybody else. Sometimes again, I set myself to get to the bottom of it all, to see whether my will has any foundation, or my opinions any correspondence with a settled scheme. You can well conceive that in this impenetrable darkness everything eludes me, even probabilities themselves; I soon grow weary and lose heart, and am certain of nothing unless it be the inevitable uncertainty of all that men would like to know.

Those far-reaching ideas which make man so proud, and so greedy of power, of hope, and of long life, are no vaster than the skies reflected from the surface of a tiny pool of rain that will dry up in the next breeze. Polished metal takes the image of half a Universe, and we take it in the same way. "But the metal has no consciousness of taking it," you say. That consciousness has an unaccountable element that it pleases us to call divine. But has not the dog at your heels a consciousness of the woods, the beaters, and the gun whose images are impressed upon and reflected by his eye? And yet, after having chased a few hares, licked the hand of his masters, and unearthed a few moles, he dies; you leave him to the crows, whose instinct is keen for carcasses, and you admit that there is an end of his consciousness.

Those ideas whose vastness takes our weakness

by surprise, and fills our fettered hearts with enthusiasm, are perhaps worth less to Nature than the poorest mirror is to human industry, and yet man shatters the mirror without regret. You may say that our soul shudders at the idea of having but one casual existence, and that it is sublime to hope for reunion with the source of inviolable order, but beyond that you can assert nothing.

The man who struggles to rise is like those evening shadows that lengthen out for an hour, becoming vaster than the objects that cast them, seeming to grow greater as they fade, and taking but an instant to vanish.

I too have my moments of forgetfulness, of energy, and of greatness; I have my boundless yearnings, *sepulchri immemor!* But I see the tombs of past generations; I see the stone, so plastic to the hand of man, which will exist a hundred centuries after him. Then I resign the cares of the passing hour and the thought of the already futile present. I pause bewildered; I listen to what still exists, and would fain hear the murmur of what will exist for ever; I seek in the stir of the forest and the southing of the pines for some accents of the eternal tongue.

Living Force! Lord of the World! I rejoice in thy work, if man is meant to endure, but I am crushed by it if he is not.

## LETTER XLIX.

MÉTÉRVILLE, *September 14th* (VI.).

And so because I have no horror of your dogmas, you think I am next door to revering them! My opinion is just the opposite. You must have been planning to convert me.

Tell me, pray, what possible interest could I have in not accepting your religious views? Even if I have neither interest nor prejudice, nor passion, nor yet dislike to set me against them, on what pretext can they enter a head without systems and a heart that remorse will never prepare for them!

“It is indulgence towards his passions that keeps a man from becoming a Christian.” I tell you frankly that is a very pitiful argument. I address you as an enemy; there is war between us, for you threaten my liberty. If you accuse unbelievers of not being pure in conscience, I will accuse believers of not being sincere in their zeal. The result will be mutual bandying of idle words *ad nauseam*, without proving anything.

Suppose I were to make the assertion that all Christians are scoundrels because they are the only people who need baseless fancies to keep them from theft, murder and treason. There are Christians whose mind and heart have been so perverted by

their pietist temper and grotesque belief that they are always in a strait between the desire for crime and the dread of the devil. Thereupon, by the prevailing fashion of judging others by themselves, they are horrified at the sight of a man who does not cross himself; "he is not one of us, he is against us," they say; "he does not believe what we believe, so he believes nothing, and therefore is capable of anything; he does not clasp his hands in prayer, so he must be hiding them; you may be sure there is a stiletto in the one and poison in the other."

I bear no grudge against these good people; how can they believe that order itself is a sufficient rule of life when their own ideas are in chaos? Others among them will say to me, "Look at all I have suffered; whence have I derived strength to do it if not from on high?" My friend, others have suffered even more, without receiving anything from on high; there is just this difference, that they did not make so much noise about it or reckon themselves anything extraordinary because of it. Suffering is like walking. Who is the man who accomplishes twenty thousand leagues? Is it not the man who does a league a day and lives to be sixty? Every morning brings fresh supplies of strength, and when assurance fails a vague hope still survives.

"The laws of the land are clearly inadequate." You think so. I will show you creatures stronger than you are, and mostly untamed, living in your midst, not only without religious checks but even without laws; their wants are often poorly satisfied;

they make no effort to snatch what is denied them when it is within their reach; and thirty-nine at least out of forty of them will die without doing any mischief, while you extol the effect of grace, if as much can be said of three out of four among you Christians. "Where are these miraculous creatures, these sages?" you ask. Keep cool, my friends; they are neither philosophers, nor miraculous creatures, nor even Christians; they are just those unmuzzled, uncontrolled, and uncatechised mastiffs that you are continually meeting without expecting their terrible jaws to make a sacred sign to reassure you. "You are fond of joking." Well, in all honesty, what else would you have me do?

All religions anathematise each other for not bearing a divine character. Of course I know yours possesses that character, though the rest of the world is unaware of it, because it is hidden; I am like the rest of the world, very bad at seeing the invisible.

I do not say the Christian religion is pernicious, but to believe in it one must believe it divine, and that is no easy matter. It may be very noble as a human production, but a religion must not be human, however earthly its ministers are.

Wisdom, now, is human; it has no fancy for soaring into the clouds and coming down with a crash; it tends less to conceit, but it does not provoke neglect of duty in contempt for its unmasked laws; it does not forbid enquiry or dread objections. There is no room to misunderstand it, depravity of heart alone could oppose it; and if human wisdom were the basis

of moral institutions, its sway would be almost universal, because no one could evade its laws without making in the very act a deliberate confession of turpitude.

“But we disagree with you there; we do not approve of wisdom.” You are logical. At any rate, I will ignore those partisans who pretend to be sincere, and even make friends for the mere sake of parading them as converts, and will come back to you as being one who is in earnest, and who would like to give me the peace of mind I do not possess.

I have no sympathy with intolerance either against religion or for it. Its declared opponents are almost as distasteful to me as its fanatical upholders. I do not assert that one should always be in a hurry to undeceive a people with genuine faith, just because they have passed the stage of sacred wars and are no longer in the fervour of conversions. But when a cult is disenchanted it seems to me absurd to try to buttress its prestige; when the ark is worn out and the Levites in distress round the ruins exclaim, “Stand off; your profane breath will tarnish them,” I am compelled to examine them to see if they are in earnest.

“In earnest? Of course they are; and the Church, which will never perish, is going to restore to the faith of the nations that ancient fervour whose return seems to you so incredible!” I am not sorry you are making the experiment; I will say nothing against its success, but should be glad if it did succeed; it would be quite a curiosity.



I seem all the time to drift into arguing with *them*, so it is time to end a letter that is not meant for you. We will each keep our own opinions on this topic and understand each other thoroughly on others. For a really good man superstitious crazes and excesses of zeal no more exist than the exaggerated perils of what they absurdly call atheism. I do not want you to give up your faith, but it is an advantage not to regard it as indispensable to man's heart; for if one assumes there is no morality without it, to be consistent one must rekindle the faggots.

## SEVENTH YEAR.

### LETTER L.

LYONS, *June 22nd* (VII.).

Now that fashion no longer has the local rigidity which made it for many people an unalterable rule of life and almost a law of nature, every woman can choose the style she likes, and every man therefore sets up as a critic of what is becoming.

People who are reaching the age at which one is disposed to find fault with everything modern think it very bad taste not to wear the hair drawn over the forehead, and dressed high with pomade behind, the lower limbs free beneath an ample vault, and the heels tilted on high supports. These venerable customs ensured great purity of morals, but since women have perverted their taste to the extent of imitating the only nations who ever had any taste, they have ceased to be broader than long, and by gradually giving up their steel and whale-bone casings, they have outraged Nature by wearing clothes in which they can breathe and eat.

I suppose an improved style jars on those who

liked the ancient stiffness and Gothic manner, but I cannot excuse them for attributing such ludicrous importance to changes that were inevitable.

Tell me whether you have found anything fresh to account for what both of us have already observed in these declared foes of existing morals. They are almost without exception immoral men. Others, even if they criticise, do it without suspicious vehemence.

It will surprise nobody that men who have trifled with morals afterwards talk loudly of good morals; that they exact them so strictly from women, after spending their lives in trying to corrupt them; and that they despise all women because some of the sex have had the misfortune not to despise these men. It is a bit of hypocrisy of which I really believe they are unconscious. To a greater extent, and far more frequently, it is a result of the depravity of their tastes, of their licentious habits, and of the secret desire to minister to their vanity by overcoming serious resistance; it arises from the suspicion that others have probably taken advantage of the same frailties, and from the fear that they themselves will be defrauded, as they have succeeded in defrauding others.

As soon as increasing years make it no longer their interest to sneer at all rights, the interest of their passions, which was always their one law, begins to warn them that these same rights will be violated in their own case. They have helped to get rid of the strict morals that chafed them, and now

they denounce the loose morals that disquiet them. Their preaching is very futile; good things recommended by such men sink into contempt, instead of receiving fresh sanction.

Just as futile is it for some to say that they protest against licentious morals because they have seen the danger of them. That explanation, though sometimes true, will not be credited, because we know that as a rule the man who was unjust when it suited his passions will only become just at a later age from selfish motives. His justice is more infamous than his licentiousness, and far more despised, because less spontaneous.

But that young people should be scandalised at first sight and without previous reflection by things naturally pleasing to the senses, and in a normal state of affairs only reprehensible after due consideration is to my mind the strongest proof of real depravity. I am surprised that there are sensible people who regard it as the last protest of outraged Nature, affirming to our inmost hearts her slighted laws. Corruption, they allege, cannot overstep certain limits, and the phenomenon in question reassures and comforts them.

My own view is exactly the opposite. I should like to have your opinion and to know whether I stand alone. I do not set up my view as the truth; nay, I even admit that appearances in many respects are against me.

My attitude in the matter cannot well be the outcome of anything but personal experience; I am no

student or systematic observer, and should be but slenderly qualified for the task. I reflect in random fashion, recalling my own experience. If that leads me to examine anything outside my personal knowledge I do it by seeking my data in what is better known to me, that is to say, in myself, and as these data are neither conjectural nor paradoxical, they give me considerable light on things analogous or contrary to them.

I know that for the common run of men there are disadvantages in anything liable to be tainted by the stupidity of their ideas, by the brutishness of their sensations, and by a shallow conceit that takes advantage of everything that is not a warning to stand off. I do not mean to say that women who dress with too little reserve are wholly free from blame; those of them who deserve no further condemnation do at least forget that we live in a crowd, and such forgetfulness shows lack of prudence. But I am not concerned with them; my point is the effect their inadequate drapery may have on men of different temperaments.

What I want to have explained is the case of men who go all lengths themselves, and far from respecting what they call modesty, betray by their very conversation an utter ignorance even of the laws of taste, men who do not live by rule but give themselves up to the fancy of the moment, and yet forsooth find immodesty where I see nothing of the sort, and where even after reflection would only condemn a shade of impropriety. How can they find it in

things which of themselves and in their right place seem quite simple to others, and calculated even to afford pleasure to those who care for real modesty and not for the hypocrisy or the superstition of it.

It is a fatal mistake to assign so much importance to words and externals, for no sooner are we familiarised with these phantoms by some habit, in itself legitimate, than we lose our respect for the realities behind them.

Take the case of a religious girl who at sixteen could not bear to be kissed in a game of forfeits, and as a bride of twenty-two shrank with horror from the wedding-night, and yet, at twenty-four receives the embraces of her spiritual director. I do not think it is altogether hypocrisy on her part. It is to my mind much more a revelation of the absurdity of the precepts by which she was trained.

There may be some inward disloyalty, all the more because false morality always corrupts candour of soul, and long repression leads to simulation and duplicity. But if there is disloyalty in her heart there is far more stupidity in her head. Her mind has been warped; she has been kept in constant dread of fancied duties, but has not been trained to the slightest appreciation of real ones. The habit of relating everything to an imaginary end has been substituted for instruction as to the true end of things. Relations are no longer perceptible; proportions become arbitrary; causes and effects count for nothing; the fitness of things is past discovering. She cannot

conceive of the existence of a reason for good and evil outside the rule of life imposed upon her or based upon other relations than those obscure ones which exist between her habits of private devotion and the inscrutable will of intelligences who always will otherwise than man.

Her instructions were—"Shut your eyes, and go straight on; that is the way to happiness and glory; there is no other; loss, horror, the pit and eternal damnation fill all the rest of space." So she goes on blindly and strays into a devious course. It was bound to happen. If you walk with closed eyes in an open space you can never recover your original direction when once you have lost it, and often you will never know that you are losing it. If then she does not discover her mistake, she diverges more and more, and loses her way with a light heart. If she does discover it, she is panic-stricken and gives up in despair; she recognises no degrees in evil; she thinks she has nothing more to lose as soon as she has lost that first, and in her opinion, only innocence, which she can never recover.

One has seen simple-minded girls conduct themselves in their ignorance with strictest prudence, and dread a kiss like sacrilege; but if one is obtained, they think there is nothing else to guard, and yield themselves absolutely because they fancy themselves already betrayed. They have never been enlightened as to the more or less important consequences of diverse things. The object has been solely to save them from the first step, as if one were certain that

that step would never be taken, or that one would always be there to restrain them from the next.

The religious person to whom I referred did not steer clear of indiscretions, but she feared a shadow. The natural consequence was that when she was bidden at the altar to share the couch of her husband she resisted at first, and some time after surrendered to another whose talk was of salvation, and the mortification of the flesh. She was instinctively alarmed when her hand was kissed; but having got over that, she no longer shrank from yielding herself utterly. Her ambition was to find a place in heaven among the virgins; but she is a virgin no longer; that is irremediable, what matters the rest? She owed her all to a heavenly bridegroom, and to the example set her by the Virgin, but now she is no longer a follower of the Virgin, no longer a heavenly bride; a man has possessed her; if another man does the same what great difference will it make? The rights of a husband make very little impression on her; she has never thought of such worldly matters; very likely she is quite unaware of their existence, and in any case it is certain she is not impressed by them, for she does not grasp the reason for them.

True she received the command to be faithful, but the impression it made passed away, for it belonged to an order of things to which she gave no attention, and about which she would blush to ponder. When once she has yielded to a man, that which embarrassed her most is done, and if by chance,



in the absence of her husband, a man more saintly than he has skill enough to stifle her scruples in some crisis of desire or need, she will surrender as she did in marriage; there will be less terror in her joy than in her first pleasures, because the experience is no longer strange and does not so completely revolutionise her condition. As she is not disturbed by mundane prudence, and would be horrified to take precautions in sinning, or to deliberate and reflect on an act whose stain her soul repudiates, though she permits it to her senses, she will next find herself pregnant and will often be ignorant or uncertain whether her husband is the father of her unborn child or not. Even if she knows he is not, she will prefer to leave him in error, so long as she does not actually utter a falsehood, rather than run the risk of putting him in a passion which would offend Heaven, or of slandering her neighbour by naming her seducer.

It is quite true that religion, better understood, would not permit her to act thus, and I am not finding fault with any form of religion. Morality, if fully grasped by all, would make men strictly just, and consequently very good and happy. Religion, which is morality on a less rational basis, less demonstrated, less enforced by direct reasons, but maintained by the marvellous, confirmed and made authoritative by divine sanction—religion, properly understood, would make men perfectly pure. If I have taken the case of a religious person it is because moral aberration is nowhere greater or more

remote from the true needs of the human heart than in the errors of the religious. I admire religion as it ought to be; I admire it as a great achievement. I do not believe in attacking religions by denying their beauty, and by slighting or disowning the good they were meant to do. Men who take that stand are wrong. Is a good thing accomplished less good because it was done in a fashion they did not approve? Let them try to do better with less; but let them acknowledge the good already done, for surely there is plenty of it. I have given you a few articles from my profession of faith;<sup>1</sup> I think we both felt we had been too reserved on this topic.

Now if you insist on my returning to where I started by a regular transition you will place me in an awkward fix. But I give you warning that though my letters are too much like treatises, and though I write as a recluse who talks with a friend as he muses with himself, yet I mean to keep all the freedom of a letter when that suits my purpose.

Men whose indiscriminate or ill-chosen enjoyments have perverted their affections and brutalised their senses fail to see anything in physical love but the coarseness of their own habits; they have lost the refined anticipation of pleasure. The nude scandalises them because in their case there is no longer any interval between the impression they receive from it and the mere animal appetite to which all their enjoyment is degraded. That hunger when

<sup>1</sup> Had Obermann been older he would have been more consistent with himself in spite of his doubts.

aroused within them could still afford gratification by suggesting those indefinable pleasures craved by wanton rather than ardent senses, but by not holding fast genuine modesty they have let loathing mingle with their pleasures. As they were unable to distinguish propriety from impropriety, even in the abandon of the senses, they resorted to those women who corrupt morals by renouncing manners, and who deserve contempt, not for giving pleasure, but for making it savourless and destroying it by substituting licence for liberty. As such men, by indulging in things repugnant to refined feelings and by confusing things of totally different characters, have let slip all enchanting illusions, and as their follies have been punished by deadly and repulsive consequences, they have lost both the frankness of pleasure and the uncertainties of desire. Their imagination is only kindled as a matter of habit; their sensations are more indecent than eager; their ideas more coarse than voluptuous; their contempt for women is a clear enough proof of the contempt they have merited themselves; and all this suggests to them the unpleasant and perhaps dangerous aspect of love. Its pristine charm, its grace and power over pure souls, everything in it that is lovely and attractive is not for them. They have reached the point when they can only tolerate girls who will gratify their uncurbed and contemptuous desires, or women modest enough to over-awe them even when all delicacy has ceased to influence them, and who, not counting as women at all from their

standpoint, do not arouse in them an urgent consciousness of what they have lost.

Is it not obvious that if they are annoyed by some trifling freedom of dress, it is because their debased imagination and jaded senses can only be stirred by a kind of surprise. The ground of their irritation is mortification at not being able to feel at all in ordinary and familiar circumstances. They are incapable of seeing anything but what has been concealed and then suddenly exposed; just as a man almost blind only becomes aware of a light by passing abruptly from darkness into a bright glare.

Whoever understands anything about morals will agree that the really contemptible woman is one who is externally strict and scrupulous, and yet who spends days in devising a plan to impose on a husband whose honour or whose satisfaction is centred in having her all to himself. She laughs with her lover, and jokes with her husband, and to my mind stands lower than a prostitute who preserves something of dignity, of discrimination, and above all, of loyalty, in her over-freedom of morals.

If men were simply and solely sincere, in spite of their selfish interests, their antagonisms, and their vices, the world would still be beautiful.

If the morality preached to them were true, consistent, and never exaggerated, if it showed them the reason of their duties, while keeping a sense of proportion, if it tended solely to the true end of life, the only thing left to do in each nation would be to

restrain the mere handful of men whose defective intelligence could not recognise justice.

Abnormalities like these might be shut up with imbeciles and lunatics; their number would not be great. Most men are open to reason, but many are at a loss to discover the truth amid those widespread errors that assume its name; even if they light upon it they fail to identify it, because it is presented in such an awkward, repellent, and misleading fashion.

Futile gain, and fancied loss, high-flown virtues, and absence of security swallow up our time, our talents, and our wills, just as in a flourishing country so many needless and conflicting cares and labours hinder the performance of tasks that would be profitable and tend to a definite result.

When principles have vanished from the heart, men are extremely scrupulous about external appearances and conventional duties, and that misplaced strictness is an unrecognised evidence of inward self-accusation. "When I reflect," says Jean-Jacques, "on the folly of our maxims, which always sacrifice true propriety to decorum, I understand why language grows more chaste as hearts become more corrupt, and why the strictness of etiquette increases with the uncivility of its votaries."

Rarity of gratification is perhaps an advantage; it is extremely difficult for pleasures so often repeated to keep free from alloy and satiety. When thus spoiled, or simply attenuated, by the familiarity which dispels illusions, they no longer afford that element of surprise which hints at a happiness

beyond belief or expectation; they no longer transport man's imagination beyond his conceptions. They cannot uplift him step by step when the climax is already stale; his baffled hope leaves him painfully conscious of an ecstasy which eludes him, and of the reaction which has often come to quench it. He knows too well that there is nothing beyond, and the happiness he once so greatly enjoyed in imagination, in hope, and in reality, is now but the sport of an hour and the pastime of his listlessness. Jaded or satisfied senses do not kindle at the first provocation; the presence of a woman no longer thrills them; her unveiled beauties do not set their pulses throbbing; the alluring manifestation of her desires ceases to inspire with incalculable rapture the man she loves. He knows just what enjoyment he will get; he can foresee the end of it; his delight has nothing in it that is transcendent; what he gains is but a woman, and he himself has lost everything; he can love no longer save with the mere powers of a man.

It is quite time to stop, for daylight is appearing. If you returned to Chessel yesterday, you will just now be taking a look at your crops of fruit. As I have nothing of the sort to do, and am little gladdened by a fine morning when I am at a loss how to spend the day, I am going off to bed. I am not at all sorry to have my whole night still before me at daybreak, for then I can reach the afternoon without effort, and the rest of the day gives me little trouble.

## LETTER LI.

PARIS, *September 2nd* (VII.).

A certain St. Felix, once a hermit at Franchard in the Forest of Fontainebleau,<sup>1</sup> is said to be buried near the monastery of that name, at the foot of the Weeping Rock, a sandstone boulder about the size of an ordinary room. Water oozes from it or falls drop by drop, according to the season, upon a flat and slightly hollowed stone, and as the depression has been formed by its constant and imperceptible action through long ages, the water has remarkable properties. Taken for nine days it cures eye diseases in young children. Those whose eyes are affected, or even threatened, are brought hither, and at the end of nine days many of them are all right.

I scarcely know what prompted me to mention just now a place I have not thought of for ever so long. I am writing from sheer melancholy. When I am in a happier mood I can get along without you, but in gloomy hours I turn to you. I know plenty of people who would resent such a remark; they are welcome to their opinion; I will take good care they do not have to complain of me; I will not turn to them in my sadness. To resume: I left my window open all night, and the morning is still mild and

<sup>1</sup> Letter XXII.—TR.

cloudy;<sup>1</sup> I begin to see what brought to mind that monument of a melancholy religion amid the sand and heather of the forest. The heart of man, fleeting and perishable as it is, attains a kind of immortality in any embodiment of popular feelings which disseminates and magnifies them, and seems to make them eternal. A coarse, dirty, stupid hermit, possibly a rogue as well, and of no use to anybody, summons all succeeding generations to his tomb. By professing to devote himself to utter privation on earth, he gains everlasting veneration. He declares to men: "I renounce all your objects of desire, I am not worthy to be one of you"; and this abnegation sets him at the altar, between the Supreme Power and all the hopes of men.

He who would win glory must do it with a flourish of trumpets or by some sneaking stratagem; by massacring his fellows or by hoodwinking them. The man who tramples on them is sublime, he who befools them is venerable. It all comes to the same thing so far as I am concerned. I am strongly disposed to rate the opinion of wise men higher than that of the populace. To have the esteem of my friends and general good will would be a necessary of life with me, but a great reputation would only be a toy; at most I might have a fancy for it, never a passion. What happiness could it add to my days to have a renown insignificant while I live, but expanding when I am gone? It is the pride of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Letter XXII. p. 80. vol i. "Not a cry, not a bird, not a movement, broke the silence." etc.—TR.



living which pronounces with so much respect the great names of the dead. I see no substantial benefit in ministering a thousand years hence to the passions of conflicting parties and to the caprices of opinion. It contents me that no true man can defame my memory; all the rest is vanity. Too often it is a mere matter of chance, and oftener still the means displease me. I have no desire to be either a Charles XII.<sup>1</sup> or a Pacôme.<sup>2</sup> To aim at glory and miss it is too humiliating; to deserve it and lose it is sad perhaps, and to gain it is not the chief end of man.

Tell me whether the greatest names are those of upright men. Let us do good when we can for its own sake, and if our lot in life excludes us from greatness, let us not therefore neglect those things for which glory cannot compensate; let us relinquish precarious aims and be good in obscurity. There are plenty of men in quest of renown for its own sake to supply the energy that is perhaps essential to great states; we will seek only to do what is worthy of glory, and be indifferent to the freaks of destiny, which often bestows it on luck, refuses it sometimes to heroism, and awards it so rarely to purity of intention.

For some days past I have felt a great yearning for simple surroundings. I am already weary of Paris; not that the city is wholly uncongenial, but I

<sup>1</sup> Charles XII. of Sweden, whose ambition led to the fall of his country.—TR.

<sup>2</sup> Pachomius (?) an Egyptian, who founded the first monastery A.D. 340.—TR.

never can feel at ease in places where I am only a passing visitor. And then, too, this is the time of year which always reminds me how delightful home life would be if two friends, at the head of two small and united families, lived neighbours to each other amid wood-encircled meadows, within reach of a town, yet far from its influence. The morning would be devoted to serious occupations, and the evening to those small concerns which are quite as interesting as great ones, unless the latter are too distracting. I have outgrown my fancy for a life of utter obscurity and isolation among the mountains; I no longer want things quite so simple. Since I could not get that minimum, now I want more. The persistent frustrations of my lot have multiplied my needs. The simplicity I used to seek was one to rest the heart; now I cannot be content unless the mind also is provided for.

I want to enjoy peace, and at the same time to have the satisfaction of arranging its details. In the mountains, where its sway is universal, it would be too easy. If I had everything essential to the requirements of a sage, I should be at a loss how to fill the time of a restless mind. Nowadays I begin to make plans, to look forward to the future, to think of my coming years; possibly I may even become eager to live.

I am not sure whether you pay enough attention to those trifles which draw together and unite all the members of a household and its circle of friends; details which cease to be insignificant because we

grow fond of them, find zest in them, and eagerly meet to enjoy them. When winter is over, and on the first dry day the sun warms the grass on which we are all seated, or when the women-folk sing together indoors before the lamps are lighted, while the moon shines through the oak trees, are we not as well off as if ranged in a circle making conversation with insipid phrases, or wedged in a box at the opera, where the breath of two thousand people of more or less doubtful health and cleanliness keeps us in a bath of perspiration? And then those recurring and delightful occupations of a life of freedom! If, as we grow older, we no longer seek them for ourselves, we share them all the same; we see the fondness of our wives for them, and watch our children revel in them. Violets so eagerly sought and found with so much rapture! strawberries, blackberries, nuts; gathering wild pears and fallen chestnuts; fir-cones for the autumn hearth! Sweet habits of a life more true to nature! Ah me! the happiness of simple men, the simplicity of happy scenes! . . . But I can just fancy I see you, wet blanket that you are! You say "I was expecting a pastoral eulogy." Would it be better to make one on the trills of a professional songstress.

No, no; you are too matter-of-fact. What pleasure have you got from it? And yet I am sadly afraid I shall very soon be as matter-of-fact as you.

He has arrived. "Who?" *He*. He is striking enough not to need mentioning by name. Some day I think he will be one of ourselves; the shape of his

head. . . . Perhaps you laugh again at that; but really the profile of his nose and forehead is so nearly a straight line! As you like, we will not dispute the point. But if I concede you that Lavater<sup>1</sup> is a faddist you will concede in turn that he is no fool. I hold that to discover the disposition, and still more, the talents of people in their features is a stroke of genius and not a freak of imagination. Look at the head of one of the most remarkable men of modern times. You know him, and I guessed who it was when I saw his bust, though I had nothing to go by but the correspondence between what he had done and what I saw. I was not alone in my inference, and that is a fact in my favour. However, there are perhaps no investigations less susceptible of the certainty of the exact sciences. Centuries hence we shall be able to determine pretty well a man's character, inclinations, and natural aptitudes, but we shall always be in danger of making a mistake about that part of his character which accidental causes have modified without having time or power to make any perceptible change in his features. Of all the works on this difficult subject, the fragments of Lavater are, I think, the most curious; I will bring them for you. We skimmed them too superficially at Méterville; we must read them again. I will say no more to-day, for I am looking forward to the pleasure of discussing it with you in detail.

<sup>1</sup> The celebrated physiognomist, 1741-1801.—TR.

## LETTER LII.

PARIS, *October 9th* (VII.).

I am very pleased with your young friend. I think he will prove a good fellow, and I feel sure he will not be a weak one. He starts to-morrow for Lyons. You may remind him that he has left here two people by whom he will not be forgotten. You will easily guess the second; she is worthy enough to be able to love him as a mother, but she is too attractive not to evoke love of another kind in return, and he is too young to foresee and avoid that charm which might steal into an attachment in other respects so legitimate. I am not sorry he is leaving; you are forewarned, and will speak to him with due caution.

In my opinion he justifies all the interest you take in him, and I should congratulate you if he were your son. He is exactly the age your son would have been, and as you were bereft of son, so was he of father. Your son and the mother who bore him were prematurely snatched away. I do not shrink from speaking of them. Long past sorrows touch the heart with sadness but do not rend it; the bitterest grief, when softened and made bearable by time, becomes a kind of second nature to us; it carries us back to days gone by; it meets the craving of our hearts for deep feeling, and for a sense of the infinite

even in our regrets. You still have your daughter, as good, as winsome, and as interesting as those who have gone, and she can take their place. Great as your losses have been, your misfortune is not that of the luckless, but simply that of man. Had those whom you have lost been spared to you, your good fortune would have exceeded the due allowance of the happy. Let us cherish their memory as it so well deserves, without being too absorbed in the consciousness of irreparable sorrows. Guard that peace and moderation of which nothing should wholly rob a man, and pity me for coming so far short of you in that respect.

To return to him whom you call my *protégé*. I might call him yours rather, but as a matter of fact, you are more than a protector to him, and I do not see what more his father could have done for him. I think he fully realises that, and am confirmed in my opinion because he is not effusive about it. Though in our country ramble we talked of you at the corner of every wood and the edge of every meadow, he scarcely told me anything of his obligations to you; he had no need to tell me, I know you too well. It was better not to tell me; I am not *one* of your friends. All the same I know what he said about it to Madam T——, with whom, as I said before, he was greatly charmed, and who is herself very devoted to you.

I told you that we should spend all our time exploring the surroundings of Paris, so I must give you an account of the expedition, if only for the sake of let-

ting you have at least one long letter before I leave for Lyons, and then you will not be able to keep on saying that my letters this year<sup>1</sup> are only hasty scrawls like those of a regular society man.

He soon tired of Paris. Though curiosity is strong at his age, it is with him not just the sort of curiosity that can long be gratified by a large town. He takes less interest in a badge of rank than in some ruined castle in the woods; though his manners are agreeable, he would leave the most select society for a well-stocked game forest, and in spite of his growing taste for art, he would gladly forsake a sunrise by Vernet for a fine morning, or the truest landscape of Hue for the vales of Bièvre or Montmorency.

You are growing impatient to hear where we have been and what happened to us. I may tell you at once that nothing happened to us, and the rest you will hear in due time—I am fond of digressions. Do you know he might very possibly come to like Paris, though now he cannot endure it? “Possibly,” you say in an indifferent tone, and want to pass on; but stop a moment, I want you to be convinced.

It is not natural for a young man of any depth to care for a capital, for a capital is not absolutely natural to man. What he needs is pure air, clear skies, a wide stretch of country available for rambles, explorations, hunting, freedom. The tranquil toil of farms and woods is more congenial to him than the whirl of dissipation in these our prisons. Hunting tribes cannot imagine how a free man can stoop to

<sup>1</sup>A reference to some suppressed letters.

till the soil, but our friend cannot understand how a man can shut himself up in a town, still less how he himself can ever come to like what is now so distasteful. A time will come, however, when the most beautiful landscape, though still beautiful to his eyes, will be a thing external to him. A new order of ideas will engross his attention; other sensations will naturally take the place of those which alone were natural to him. When the taste for artificial things has become as familiar to him as the taste for simple things, the latter will gradually fade from his heart; not because the former will give him more pleasure, but because it will excite him more. The relations of man with man arouse all our passions; they are accompanied by so much turmoil, and keep us in such continuous excitement that the calm which follows overwhelms us, like the silence of those bare deserts where there is neither variety nor movement, nothing to seek, nothing to hope for. The occupations and inward feeling of country life quicken without distracting the soul; they make it happy. The cares of social life excite, engross, elate, and stimulate it on all sides; they bring it into bondage. Thus the great game keeps a grip on man while it wearies him; its fatal sway makes necessary to him those alternatives of hope and fear which enrapture and consume him.

But I must return to what I have to tell you, though you may reckon on other digressions; I have a great weakness for unseasonable argument.

We decided to go on foot. This method suited



him exactly, but fortunately was not at all to the taste of his servant, so, to avoid having with us a malcontent who would have accepted our very simple arrangements with a bad grace, I found some commissions for him in Paris, and we left him there, though he liked that no better.

I am glad to pause here to inform you that valets are fond of lavish expenditure. They share its conveniences and benefits without any of its worries; yet their enjoyment of it is not so direct as to make them sick of it and cease to value it. How can they help liking it? They have found the secret of making it flatter their vanity. When their master's carriage is the finest in the city, it is evident that the lackey is a person of some importance. Even if he is naturally modest he cannot deny himself the pleasure of being the first lackey in the district. I know one who was heard to remark: "A servant may be vain of serving a rich master, just as a noble counts it an honour to serve a great king, and proudly talks of 'my master the king.'" That man must have frequented the antechamber, and he will come to a bad end.

I simply engaged a trustworthy porter. He carried our small stock of linen and other requisites; he was a help to us in many ways and a hindrance in none. He seemed quite pleased to trudge along untiringly after people who fed him well and treated him still better, and we were not sorry in an expedition of this kind to have at our service a man with whom we could drop the tone of master without

being compromised. As a travelling companion he was very obliging and discreet, and yet one who would venture at times to walk alongside of us, and even to express his curiosity and his observations, without our feeling bound to check him, or to dismiss him to the rear with a kind of dignified stare.

We set out on September 14th; it was lovely autumn weather, and remained so with little interruption to the end of our ramble. Calm sky, mild and often hidden sun, misty mornings, fine evenings, moist earth and clean roads; in a word the best of weather, and everywhere plenty of fruit. We were in good health and reasonable spirits; he, eager to see and quite ready to admire; I, quite content to be taking exercise, and above all to be roaming haphazard. As for money, plenty of characters in fiction manage without it; they go on and on, carrying out their plans, living everywhere nobody knows how, often when they are manifestly without means; it is a delightful privilege, but there are innkeepers who are not in the secret, so we thought it advisable to take some cash. Thus there was everything essential for one of us to enjoy himself thoroughly, and the other to make a pleasant excursion in his company; and several poor folk were honestly surprised to find that people who were spending a little gold for their own pleasure could spare a few coppers for the wants of the needy.

Look up our route on a map of the environs of Paris. Imagine a circle with its centre at the fine bridge of Neuilly near Paris on the west. This circle

is twice cut by the Seine and once by the Marne. Leave out the part between the Marne and the little river Bièvre; take simply the great segment which starts from the Marne, intersects the Seine below Paris and ends at Antony on the Bièvre; that will give you very nearly the route we followed in order to visit, without going too far away, the most thickly wooded places, the prettiest or the most passable in a district that cannot be called beautiful, though sufficiently attractive and varied.

So twenty days were well spent at a cost of barely eleven louis. If we had gone the same round in a style outwardly more convenient, we should have been under restraint and often thwarted; we should have spent much more, and it would certainly have afforded us less amusement and good temper.

It would be much more uncomfortable in matters of this kind to be too rigidly economical. If at every inn one dreads the appearance of the bill of fare, and is under the necessity, when ordering dinner, of contriving to order as little as possible, it would be much better never to leave home. Any pleasure that cannot be enjoyed with some indulgence and freedom ceases to be one at all. It becomes not only uninteresting but irksome; the anticipations it evokes are unrealised; it is not what it ought to be, and however little it has cost in trouble or money, even that is all so much thrown away.

In that fraction of France with which I am acquainted, Chessel and Fontainebleau are the only places where I would consent of free choice to settle

down, and Chessel the only one where I would really like to live. You will see me there soon.

I have told you before that the aspens and birches of Chessel are not like other aspens and birches; the chestnut trees and the pools, and the boat, are not as they are elsewhere. The autumn sky is there like the sky of one's homeland. Ah! those muscat grapes, those pale asters that you once did not care for, but now love as I do, the scent of Chessel hay, in that fine old barn where we played when I was a boy! What hay! What cream-cheeses! What lovely heifers! How delightfully the chestnuts pouring from the sack roll upon the floor above my study! It seems like a sound of one's youth. Well, be ready for me.

Ah, my friend, our days of happiness are over. You have your business and position; your judgment ripens; your heart does not change, but mine is narrowing. You have no time now to put chestnuts in the ashes, somebody must do them for you. What have you done with our pleasures? In six days I shall be with you; that is settled.

## EIGHTH YEAR.

### LETTER LIII.

FRIBOURG,<sup>1</sup> *March 11th* (VIII.).

I do not know what I should have done if this windfall had not come in my way; I was certainly not expecting it, and yet I was not so much worried about the future as tired of the present. Amid the dreariness of being alone I had at least the advantage of inapprehensiveness. The fear of destitution scarcely entered my head; and now that it is wholly removed I realise how blank is the prospect for a heart without passions, of having nothing congenial to do, and of only living with strangers, when one has all that is needful for a comfortable life.

It was high time for me to leave; I was both favourably and very miserably situated. I was enjoying those easy circumstances which many seek and feel the want of, and which others enviously depreciate. In society their absence would be painfully felt, but the possession of them adds little to

<sup>1</sup> Frei-burg, Free-town.

one's enjoyment. Not that I am one to undervalue wealth. Without a settled home, without occupation, equally independent and unencumbered, I had what suited me well enough in a town like Lyons—decent rooms, horses, and a table at which to entertain a few friends. To live in any other style in a large town would have bored me still more, but even that failed to satisfy me. It might have imposed on me if I had shared it with someone who really enjoyed it; but I am doomed always to have the shadow without the substance.

We often used to say that a sensible man is not as a rule unhappy so long as he is free and has a little of the power that money ensures. Yet here I am in Switzerland, devoid of pleasure, steeped in ennui, and not knowing what resolution to come to. I have no ties and nothing to keep me here; you will not come to see me, I am quite isolated. I have some vague hope this state of things will not last. Since I am at last in a position to settle down I must turn my attention to that; possibly other things will follow.

It is still snowing; I will wait at Fribourg till the season is further advanced. You know that the servant I brought with me comes from here. His mother, who lives in Fribourg, is very ill and he is her only child; she will have the consolation of having him near her, and for the next month or so I shall be as well off here as anywhere else.

## LETTER LIV.

FRIBOURG, *March 25th* (VIII.).

You think it was not worth while leaving Lyons so soon to stay in a town, so I am sending you a view of Fribourg by way of reply. It is not an exact representation, and the artist has thought fit to invent instead of giving a faithful copy, yet you will see from it that there are rocks on all sides. To be at Fribourg is also to be in the country: the town is among rocks and upon rocks. Nearly all of its streets are very steep, but in spite of its inconvenient situation it is better built than most of the small towns in France. In the neighbourhood, and at the very gates of the town, the scenery is often picturesque, with a touch of wildness.

The hermitage called La Madeleine does not deserve its celebrity. It is occupied by a crazy kind of fellow who has become half a saint for lack of any other fool's trick to perform. The man has never had wit for his part; on the bench he was not a magistrate, and in the hermitage he was not a hermit; he wore a hair shirt under the officer's uniform, and the trousers of a hussar under the garb of the wilderness.

The rock was well chosen by the founder. It is dry and has a good aspect; the perseverance of the

two men who excavated it unaided is really very remarkable. But this hermitage, which all sight-seers visit, is one of those things that it is waste of time to go and see, for it is quite enough if one simply knows its dimensions.

I have nothing to tell you of the townsfolk, for I have not the knack of getting to know the people of a place by short interviews with two or three of them; Nature never intended me for a traveller. The only thing I have noticed is something old-fashioned in their ways; the old style is here slow in dying out. Both men and places still keep the Helvetic type of feature. Travellers seldom come here; there are no lakes or large glaciers, no monuments. Nevertheless, those who are only going into the Western division of Switzerland ought at least to cross the canton of Fribourg at the foot of its mountains; the lowlands of Geneva, Morges, Yverdon, Nidau, and Anet are not distinctively Swiss; they are like lowlands elsewhere.

#### LETTER LV.

FRIBOURG, *March 30th* (VIII.).

My judgment perceives as of old the beauty of a lovely scene, but I feel it less keenly, or else the way in which I feel it no longer satisfies me. I might almost express it by saying—"I remember that this



is beautiful." Formerly too I used to leave beautiful places from the impatience of desire, the unrest of a lonely pleasure that might be more fully enjoyed. Now I leave them because I cannot endure their silence. They no longer speak loud enough for me; I do not see or hear in them what I want to see and hear, and I realise that as the result of no longer finding myself in things without, I have reached the point of no longer finding myself within.

Physical beauties begin to wear the same aspect to me as moral illusions; everything is imperceptibly fading, and that one must expect. The consciousness of external congruity is simply the indirect perception of an inward intellectual harmony. How can I find in outward things those inspirations which no longer exist in my heart, that eloquence of passion I do not possess, those sounds that haunt the silence, those gleams of hope, those outpourings of a joyous soul, the glamour of a world already resigned? <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Our days, which nothing can bring back, consist of tempestuous moments that uplift but rend the soul; of protracted anxieties that exhaust, enervate, and degrade it; and of periods of indifference that give rest if they come seldom, but sink us in ennui or slackness if perpetual. There are stray gleams of pleasure too, while the heart is young. Peace is the heritage of one man in ten thousand. As for happiness we long for it, we seek it and wear ourselves out in the quest. True, we still hope for it, and perhaps might win it, if death or decrepitude did not first overtake us.

Yet life as a rule is not irksome. It has its charms for a good man; it is simply a question of teaching one's

## LETTER LVI.

THUN, *May 2nd* (VIII.).

Everything is doomed to extinction; slowly and by degrees man's life expands, and in the same way also it must fail.

I am only stirred now by what is extraordinary. It takes romantic sounds to make me hear, and fresh scenes to bring to mind what I loved in former days.

## LETTER LVII.

THE BATHS OF SCHWARZ-SEE,

*May 6th, morning* (VIII.).

The snow has disappeared early from the lower slopes of the mountains. I am roaming about trying to select a house. I reckoned on spending a couple of days here; the vale is level, the mountains

heart the same peace which the soul has retained by its uprightness. We dread the absence of all illusions; we want to know how we shall fill our days. That is a mistake; it is not a question of occupation where the heart is concerned, but of distraction without dissipation; and when hope is dead, a little curiosity and a few habits will keep us going to the end. We need no more for awaiting the night; sleep is natural when the mind is at rest.

precipitous from their base; it is all pasture-land, pine-woods, and water, a solitude such as I love, and the weather is fine; but the hours are long.

We spent some very pleasant ones on your tarn at Chessel. You used to think it too small, but here where the lake has fine surroundings, and is very convenient in size, you would be wild with the man who keeps the baths. He takes in during the summer a number of invalids to whom exercise and a way of passing the time might be considered a necessity, and yet he has no boat, though the lake is full of fish.

## LETTER LVIII.

*May 6th, evening (VIII.).*

Here as elsewhere—perhaps even more than elsewhere—there are heads of households absolutely convinced that if a woman is to act with propriety she should barely know how to read, since those who fancy they can write forthwith begin writing to lovers, while those who write very badly never have any lovers to write to. They believe, too, that if their daughters are to become good housewives they should know nothing beyond how to make soup, and keep a record of kitchen linen.

And yet the husband of a woman whose only gift is that of cooking fresh and salt beef becomes bored

and tired of home, and gets into the habit of staying away from it. He goes out still more when his wife, thus deserted and left at the mercy of household worries, grows irritable to live with. He ends by never being there at all after she has turned thirty, and the money which would have made everything comfortable at home, he spends in various ways outside, in the effort to escape from boredom. The pinch begins to be felt; ill-temper increases; the children, alone all the time with their peevish mother, only wait till they are old enough to escape, like their father, from the sordid miseries of home life; though children and parents might have been equally fond of it if a womanly charm had kept things working happily from the start.

The heads of households who condemn the education of women admit these disadvantages, but what is there without them? Besides—to be quite fair—they have this compensation, their pans are always well scoured.

These good housewives know exactly how many loops their daughters ought to knit in an hour, and what length of candle should be burnt after supper in a respectable household; they are quite equal to the requirements of the sort of men who spend two-thirds of their time in drinking and smoking, and whose main concern is not to devote more pence to their houses and children than they bestow crowns on the public-house.<sup>1</sup> Next to that, their object in marriage was to get a first-rate servant.

<sup>1</sup> See note on Letter LXXXIX.

In places where these principles hold sway one sees few marriages dissolved, because a man does not willingly turn off a servant who does her work well, who draws no wages, and who came with a premium; but just as seldom does one see the kind of union which makes the happiness of life, which suffices a man, and saves him from seeking elsewhere pleasures that are less genuine and attended with undoubted drawbacks.

Those who advocate these principles may retort that at Paris and in other places of the same sort there is little enough of comradeship in marriage. As if the reasons which dull the yearning for comradeship in capitals, where domestic bliss is not the sole interest of life, could exist in totally different social conditions, and in places where comradeship would mean felicity. In such places it is distressing to see how the two sexes are isolated. There is nothing sadder, especially for the women who have absolutely no compensations, and for whom there are no pleasant hours, no places of amusement. Repulsed, soured, and driven to choose between rigid economy and a disorderly household, they set about the creation of order in a spirit of sullenness and spite; they meet among themselves but seldom and like each other never, and become religious because they have nowhere to go but the church.

## LETTER LIX.

THE CHÂTEAU DE CHUPAN, *May 22nd* (VIII.).

By two o'clock we were in the wood hunting for strawberries. The southern slopes were covered with them; some were hardly set, but a good many showed their ripeness both by tint and fragrance. The strawberry is one of the most delightful productions of nature; it is abundant and wholesome right up to the polar regions. To my mind it seems to be among fruits what the violet is among flowers, simple, sweet, and beautiful. The scent of it is diffused by the light puffs of air that steal every now and then along the vaulted aisles of the wood and gently ruffle the thorny bushes and the climbing plants that cling to the tall trunks. It is borne into the deepest recesses of shade by the warm breath of the more open soil on which the strawberry ripens; it mingles there with the moist coolness, and seems to exhale from the mosses and brambles harmonies of wild nature! Ye are made up of such contrasts.

Though we scarcely felt the movement of the air in the cool dim solitude, a stiff breeze was blowing over the tops of the pines; their boughs soughed deliciously as they bent to those that pressed upon them. Now and then the tall stems swayed apart, and one saw their pyramidal heads ablaze with

brilliant sunshine, above the silent world of shade from which the roots drew their moisture.

As soon as we had filled our baskets we left the wood, some of us merry, the rest contented. We went by narrow footpaths through enclosed fields whose hedges were planted with full-grown cherries and tall pear trees; both alike wild. Mother earth still keeps her primitive simplicity, after men have lost it! I was in a state of well-being without exactly feeling any pleasurable emotion.

I remarked to myself that somehow pure pleasures are those that one just tastes and no more; that economy in one's enjoyments is the art of happiness; that for pleasures to be pure they must not only be without remorse and without alloy; it is essential also that one takes just enough of them to catch their flavour and to keep alive the hope of them, and that one knows how to put by for a future occasion their most tempting promises. There is something exquisite in prolonging an enjoyment by eluding desire, in not precipitating its rapture and shortening its life. To enjoy the present thoroughly one must be assured of a future equal to it at least, and one loses all happiness if one strives to be happy in an absolute sense. It is this law of nature which gives to first love its unutterable charm. Our enjoyments need a touch of tardiness, an advance from point to point, and some uncertainty as to their limit. We need a steady flow of pleasure and not violent and fleeting emotions; that calm possession which is self-sufficing in its domestic

peace and not that feverish pleasure whose wild intoxication satiates and lays waste the heart, worn out by its recrudescences and its loathings, by the emptiness of its hopes and the weariness of its regrets. But amid the restlessness of social life ought reason itself to dream of this state of happiness without pleasures, this unknown restfulness, this steady and simple well-being, in which we do not think about enjoyment, and have no further need of desire?

This ought to be the state of man's heart; but he has perverted his life, he has artificialised his heart, and colossal shadows have sprung up and wearied out his desires, because the natural size of real beings seemed to him too limited, in his insanely imagined greatness. The vanities of social life often remind me of the childish ostentation with which a prince, who thought himself somebody, had the monogram of his royal mistress designed in fairy lamps on a mountain side several leagues in extent.

We also had adorned the mountains, but our labours were on a less gigantic scale; they were done with our own hands, not by those of slaves, and our object was not to entertain masters but to prepare a place for friends.

The woods of the castle are bounded by a deep ravine, carved out between very wild and precipitous crags. On the edge of these crags, in the heart of the wood, stone must at some time or other have been quarried. The angles left by the work had



been rounded by time, but there remained a kind of enclosure, like half a hexagon in shape, just big enough to hold comfortably six or eight people. When we had levelled up the floor a little with stones, and prepared the ledge that was to do duty for sideboard, we made a circular seat with big leafy boughs. The table was a plank resting on some bits of wood left by the men who had just been felling some acres of beech not far away.

This had all been prepared in the morning. The secret had been kept, and we carried off our hosts, loaded with strawberries, to this lonely nook whose very existence was unknown to them. The ladies seemed charmed to find these tasteful arrangements in such threatening surroundings. We lighted a fire of pine-branches in a corner overhanging a precipice which was made less formidable by the projecting branches of the beech trees.

Box-wood spoons of Koukisberg<sup>1</sup> make dainty china cups, and baskets of wild cherries were carelessly arranged along the ledge of stone, along with platefuls of thick mountain cream, and bowls filled with that second cream which can be used alone instead of coffee, and whose perfume and flavour, with its faint suggestion of almonds, is said to be scarcely known away from the Alps. Some small decanters held a preparation to sweeten the strawberries.

The coffee was not ready-ground or even roasted.

<sup>1</sup> A small mountainous province with customs peculiar to itself, and something very striking in its manners.

It is best to leave these details to the women, who like to attend to them in person; they are well aware that one must prepare one's enjoyment, and be indebted to oneself—to some extent at any rate—for what one would like to have. A pleasure which comes unsought often loses some of its charm, just as one that is waited for too long lets slip the moment when it would have been worth having.

Everything was prepared, everything apparently had been foreseen, but when we wanted to make the coffee it transpired that the easiest thing of all was wanting; there was no water. We set to work to join some ropes that to all appearance had only been intended to tie up in bundles the boughs we had brought for seats and to bend down those that gave us shade. At last we managed to fill a couple of bottles with icy water from the stream three hundred feet below, not without breaking a few in the attempt.

Our party was congenial and our laughter sincere. The day was fine; the wind roared through the long gorge in whose gloomy depths the foam-white torrent churned its way among the jutting points of rock. The cuckoo kept calling in the woods, and all the wild sounds around us were echoed again and again by the woods higher up; far off we heard the big bells of the cows that were climbing up to Kousinberg. The rustic scent of burning pine mingled with these mountain sounds, and the steaming coffee stood amid simple fruits on the table round which we met as friends in this cosy nook in the wilderness.

Nevertheless, the only ones among us who really enjoyed the occasion were those who had no feeling for its inner harmony. Alas, how easily one thinks of what is absent! . . . But there were not two souls of that type among us. Inscrutable nature has not placed the end of a man's being in himself. Emptiness and insufferable reality are in the heart that looks within; the illusion that enchants us can only be caught from one whom we love. We are not conscious of the emptiness of the blessings enjoyed by another; and so, by a mutual self-deception, loving hearts become really happy in the well-being of one another, though each aware of the nothingness of their own.

For my part I gave myself up to dreaming instead of tasting the pleasure of the moment. And yet it is little that I need, but I must have that little in harmony. The most captivating things would fail to interest me if I found in them anything discordant; on the other hand, the least tinge of pleasurable emotion would satisfy my desires if it were untarnished. That is why simplicity is necessary to me; that alone is harmonious. To-day the scene was too beautiful. Our romantic dining-hall, our rustic fire-place, a taste of fruit and cream, our brief comradeship, the song of birds, and the wind that kept blowing pine-needles into our cups, these were sufficient; but the torrent in the gloom of the gorge, and the mountain sounds in the distance, these were too much; I was the only one who heard them.

## LETTER LX.

VILLENEUVE, *June 16th* (VIII.).

I have just been making a tour through nearly all the habitable valleys between Charmey, Thun, Sion, St. Maurice and Vevey. I did not go in high anticipation, seeking to admire and enjoy. I looked once more on the mountains I saw nearly seven years ago, but could not catch the spirit in which at an earlier age I eagerly explored their wild charms. The old names were still there, but then even I still bear the same name! I sat on the beach near Chillon where I used to hear the breakers, and tried to hear them again. And yet that old haunt, that beach so fondly pictured in memory, those waves unknown to France and the high peaks, and Chillon, and Lake Lemman, gave me no thrill and no satisfaction. I revisited the places, but I could not recall the old times.

What kind of man am I now? If I had no sense of order, if I did not still like to do some good, I should conclude that the zest for things was already extinct, and that the part of my being concerned with ordered Nature had become dead.

You do not expect from me either historic narratives or such descriptions as would be obligatory on a man whose object in travelling was to make observations, to improve his mind, or to

publish information about fresh places. A recluse will have nothing to tell you about men, for you have more to do with them than himself. He will have no adventures, and will not write you a romantic story of his life. But it is agreed between us that I shall still continue to tell you my experience, because it is myself you are interested in, and not my surroundings. When we talk together, it is about ourselves, for nothing concerns us more nearly. It often occurs to me as a surprise that we do not live together; there seems to be a kind of impossibility and contradiction in our separation. It must be some hidden destiny that has driven me to seek I know not what far away from you, though I might have stayed where you are when I could not bring you here with me.

I cannot tell what hunger brought me back to this region where I can neither recover a sense of its beauties, striking though they are, nor of inner self-realisation. Was not my dominant hunger just for that community of thought and feeling we were enjoying. Was it not a necessity of musing with you on that unrest which creates in a perishable heart a gulf of yearning that only imperishable things could fill? We used to smile at that ever eager and ever baffled striving; we admired the adroitness which had turned it to account as a proof of immortality; we zealously sought out instances of great and effective illusions so as to represent to ourselves that death itself and all things visible might be only phantoms, and that mind would

endure for some nobler dream. We steeped ourselves in forgetfulness of worldly affairs with calm unconcern, and our two souls were so attuned that we imagined the harmony of a world divine beneath the shows of a world that is seen. But now I am alone and have nothing to sustain me. Four days ago I roused a man who was dying in the snow on the Sanetsch, and directly after we met his wife and two children weak and half-dead with fear and cold, calling for him among the rocks and on the edge of the glacier. They were wholly dependent on him, and he seemed to be in the full sense of the word both husband and father, as were the patriarchs of old, as men are still among mountains and in deserts. You may imagine the delight of the wife and two children! All the rest of that day I breathed as a free man, I stepped out with fresh vigour. But since then the old silence has enwrapped me, and nothing happens to give me a taste of the joy of living.

The object of my search through all the valleys was to acquire some isolated but easily accessible bit of pasture-land, mild in climate, pleasantly situated, traversed by a brook, and within sound of a waterfall or of the waves of a lake. The property I want must be of some extent but not costly, and such cannot be found in the valley of the Rhone. I want too to build of wood, and that will be much easier here than in the Bas-Valais. As soon as I am settled I shall go to St. Maurice and Charrierès.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Letter V.—TR.

I do not care to go just yet, lest my native indolence, and the fancy I so easily take to places I have ever frequented, should keep me fixed at Charrierès. I prefer to choose a convenient place and build to suit my own tastes, now that I am in a position to settle down for some time, or even permanently.

Hantz, who speaks the patois, and who also knows a little German of the Oberland, followed the valleys and highways, and made enquiries in the villages. I myself went from chalet to chalet across the mountains, through places he would never have dared to cross, though he is stronger and more used to the Alps than I am; indeed, I should not have crossed them myself had I not been alone.

I have found an estate very much to my mind, but am not sure that I can get it. It has three owners; two are at La Gruyère, and the third at Vevey. The last-named is said to be unwilling to sell, and I must have the whole piece. If you know of any new map of Switzerland or of local maps of any sections of it, send me them. All I have been able to get are full of mistakes, though there may be recent ones that are carefully executed and that indicate with considerable exactness the position of many of the places. It must be admitted, however, that few countries would be so difficult to survey.

I did think of attempting a survey of the limited area bounded by Vevey, St. Gingolph, Aigle, Sepey, Etivaz, Montbovon, and Sempales, in the event, that is, of my securing the property I spoke of near

the Dent de Jaman; a peak which would have been the apex of my chief triangles. I was intending to devote to that task the restless season of heat and fine days, and should have begun it next year, but I have now thrown it up entirely. If all the gorges, all the further slopes, and all the points of view were perfectly familiar to me, there would be nothing left to find out. Far better keep open my only way of escape from intolerable crises of ennui, the chance, that is, of roaming through fresh places, of seeking what I care nothing about, of eagerly climbing the most difficult peaks to verify an angle or to ascertain a line which I shall straight-way forget, so that I may return to observe it again as if I had some object in view.

## LETTER LXI.

SAINT-SAPHORIN, *June 26th* (VIII.).

I am not sorry that I brought Hantz. Give my thanks to Madame T.<sup>1</sup> for letting me have him. He seems to be frank and capable of attachment. He is intelligent, and, moreover, he plays on the horn with more taste than I could have anticipated.

In the evening, as soon as the moon is up, I engage two boats. In my own I take only a single oarsman, and when we are well out on the lake, a bottle of wine keeps him sitting still without saying

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Letter LII.—TR.



a word. Hantz is in the other boat, which the oarsmen pull to and fro with measured strokes some little distance from where mine floats motionless or sways with the gentle undulations of the waves. He has his horn, and two German women sing in unison.

He is a very good fellow, and I must get him settled near me, seeing that he finds his berth here comfortable enough. He tells me his anxieties are over, and he hopes I will keep him always. I fancy he may count on that; should I go and deprive myself of the only blessing I have, a contented man?

I once resigned in favour of some fairly intimate acquaintances the only resources I then possessed. In order to leave to one another those who to all appearance were bound to find happiness together I parted with the only hope that could have enthralled me. These sacrifices, and others too, have failed to effect any good; and yet here is a servant who is happy, though the only thing I have done for him is to treat him as a fellow-man. I like him all the better for not being surprised at it; since it all seems a matter of course to him, he will not presume on it. It is not true moreover that it is kindness that usually evokes insolence; it is weakness. Hantz quite sees that I speak to him with some familiarity; but he realises just as strongly that I could speak as a master.

You would not suspect that he had begun to read Rousseau's *Julie*. Yesterday while steering for the

Savoy shore, he exclaimed—"This, then, is Meillerie!" But you need not be uneasy about that. Remember he is quite free from pretensions. He would not be with me if he had any flunkeyism about him.

There is no melody like that of sounds<sup>1</sup> for imparting to the soul that sense of the infinite which it postulates in time and space, for it unites extension without precise limits to a perceptible though vague progression.

I confess it is natural to man to think himself less limited, less finite, and greater than his present life, when some sudden perception reveals to him the contrasts and the balance, the coherence and organisation of the universe. It seems to him like the discovery of a new world to explore, like the first glimpse of what may one day be unveiled to his gaze.

I like songs best when I cannot understand the words, for these always mar for me the beauty of the air, or spoil its effect at any rate. It is almost impossible for the ideas expressed by them to be perfectly in harmony with those suggested by the music. The German accent too has something specially romantic about it. Silent and indeterminate syllables jar on me in music. Our mute *e* is

<sup>1</sup> Melody, in the fullest sense of the word, may also result from a succession of colours or of odours. It may result from any well-arranged succession of certain sensations, from any fitting series of those effects that possess the property of exciting in us what we exclusively call a sentiment.

disagreeable when the tune compels it to be heard, and the useless syllable of feminine rhymes is nearly always pronounced in a false and grating manner, because as a matter of fact one could scarcely pronounce it otherwise.

I am very fond of hearing two or a number of voices in unison. It leaves the melody all its power and all its simplicity. As for scientific harmony, its beauties are beyond me; ignorant as I am of music I do not enjoy what is all technique or difficulties.

The lake is very fine when the moon shines white on two sails, when Chillon re-echoes the notes of the horn, and the great wall of Meillerie shows dark between the soft radiance of the sky and the wavering lights on the water; when the ripples wash against our idle boats, and far off is heard the distant roll of breakers on the countless pebbles brought down by the Veveyse from the mountains.

You, who have the power to enjoy, why are you not here to listen to these two sweet voices at night, on the water. As for me, I ought to forego everything. And yet I like to muse on my losses when the austere beauty of my surroundings can make me forget how vain is everything in man, even his very regrets.

Pool of Chessel! Our rambles there were less beautiful, but they were happier. Nature overwhelms the heart of man, but comradeship satisfies it; we lean on each other and talk, and all is forgotten.

I shall get the place in question, but it will take a few days to settle the needful formalities. Then I shall put the work in hand at once, for the season is getting on.

## LETTER LXII.

*July (VIII.).*

I keep forgetting to ask you for a copy of the "Manual of Pseusophanes";<sup>1</sup> I cannot tell what has become of the one I kept for myself. Not that I shall find in it any admonitions on points I have overlooked, but if I read it every morning it will bring home to me more vividly how ashamed I ought to be of all my weaknesses.

I intend to add a note to it on certain rules of hygiene, on those matters of personal and local custom to which I think sufficient importance has not been attached. Aristippus could scarcely prescribe them for his imaginary disciple or even his real ones; but such a note will be even more useful than general considerations in helping me to maintain that well-being, that physical fitness by which the soul, itself so physical, is invigorated.

I have two great burdens; one alone would perhaps crush me, but I manage to live between the two because one balances the other. But for this

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Letter XXXIII.—TR.

settled gloom, this depression, this listlessness, this stolid attitude towards all one might desire, I should be much more swiftly, and quite as vainly, consumed by that hurrying restless activity which my ennui does at any rate serve to relax. Reason would control it; but between these two great forces my reason is very weak; the utmost it can do is to summon one of them to its help when the other gets the upper hand. Thus one may vegetate, and sometimes even sleep.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The following passage was appended to this letter :

“ The *Manual* brings to my recollection several other extracts communicated to me by the same student. His investigations were less concerned with what was valuable than with what he considered original or grotesque.

Subjoined is the shortest of these scraps of literature, or if you like, of curious philosophy. It is worth examining; possibly the views of a dweller by the Danube are not very far from the truth.

#### FUNERAL CHANT BY A MOLDAVIAN

##### *Translated from the Slavonic*

Whenever we are profoundly moved we straightway dream of dying. What better sequel could there be to a time of ecstasy? How can we imagine a morrow to great delights? Let us die; that is the last hope of pleasure, the last word, the last cry of desire.

If you wish for longer life practise moderation, and thus postpone your fall. Enjoyment is the beginning of dissolution; self-denial is economy of life. Pleasure emerges at the issue of things, at both ends; it bestows life and deals out death. The essence of pleasure is transformation.

In childhood, man is amused with earth's trifles but eventually he must make his choice among its gifts. When all his choices are made, then he longs to see death; that

## LETTER LXIII.

*July (VIII.).*

It was midnight; the moon had set, the lake seemed rough, the sky was transparent, the night deep and fine. On land a vague unrest prevailed.

long-dreaded turn of the game is henceforth the only thing that can impress him.

Have you never yearned for death? Then you have never really tasted life. But if your days flow smoothly and happily, if fortune loads you with favours, if you are on the pinnacle of success, then fall; death is your only possible future.

It is pleasant to dally with death, to regard it anew until the idea of embracing it seems the highest of joys. What beauty there is in the tempest! And that is what death offers. The flashes light up the depths rent open by the thunderbolt.

What nobler object of curiosity, what more imperious need can there be, than death? Sooner or later to each of us there comes an end to our investigation of the things of this world, but beyond death there lies immensity with all its light, or everlasting night.

Those who have least fear of death are the men of lofty character, men of genius, men in the full vigour of life. Can the reason be that they do not believe in annihilation in spite of their emancipation, and that others do believe in it in spite of their faith.

Death is not an evil, for it is universal. Evil is the exception to the supreme laws. Let us accept without bitterness our common and inevitable lot. When death is accidental or startling it may be unwelcome, but when it happens naturally it is a source of comfort.

Let us wait and die. If our present life is but a servitude,

One heard the shiver of the birches and some leaves fell from the poplars; the pines breathed weird murmurs; romantic sounds came floating from the mountain, and a heavy swell rolled up the beach.

let it come to an end: if it leads nowhere, if it is futile to have lived, let us be delivered from its snare. Let us die either to attain life indeed, or to shatter this pretence of living.

Death remains unknown. When we question it, it vanishes; when it stands forth to strike, we are bereft of speech. Death withholds one of the words of the universal enigma, a word which the earth will never hear.

Shall we condemn this dreamer of the Danube? Shall we class with idle freaks of imagination every idea that is alien to the frivolity from which the masses have no wish to escape.

You may have chanced some noontide in the country when drowsiness seemed to be stealing over everything, to experience an indefinable impression, a sweet sense of a more elusive and yet more free and natural life. All sounds grow faint and all objects fade from sight. Then one last thought presents itself so vividly that after this half-waking illusion, so unexpected and fleeting, nothing can follow but either complete unconsciousness or a sudden awakening.

The chief thing to notice is the substance of these rapid images. Often a woman's form appears, transcending all ordinary grace, all enduring charm and voluptuous hope. The vision is more than pleasure, it is the purity of the ideal, it is possession revealed as a duty, as a simple fact, as an all-compelling necessity. But the breast of this woman unmistakably signifies that she will nourish children. Thus is our mission on earth accomplished. Without distress and without regret we could die. To give life and then as our eyes are closing to overstep the limits of the known world is perhaps the essence of our destiny.

Just then an osprey broke into a scream under the beetling crags, and when she ceased the waves were hushed and austere silence reigned.<sup>1</sup>

At long intervals the nightingale flung into the quivering calm her solitary, long-drawn and reiterated note, that song of lovely nights, the sublime out-breaking of æonian melody; inexpressible ecstasy of love and grief, voluptuous as the yearning which devours me; simple, vast, mysterious as the heart of one who loves.

Giving myself up in a kind of mournful calm to the measured swaying of those pale, silent, ceaseless undulations, I steeped myself in their slow unchanging motion in that abiding peace and in those sounds enisled in the long silence. Nature seemed too lovely; and the waters, the earth, and the night, too kind and joyous. The peaceful harmony of things around bore hardly on my tortured heart. I mused

All else may be but a means, in itself indifferent, of getting through the rest of our time and reaching our goal.

I do not maintain that most men are visited at such moments by this identical airy dream with its calm and strong emotion, this miniature symbol of life, when all around is sunk in quiet forgetfulness. That I cannot say; but I do think it is not peculiar to myself.

To hand on life and then to lose it in the visible order of things, may be our chief function on earth. Yet I cannot but ask if there are no dreams in the last sleep. I ask whether the law of death is really inflexible. Some among us have seen their intelligence gain strength in many respects; may it not be that these will survive when others succumb?"

<sup>1</sup> There is nothing to show what lake is meant; it is not that of Geneva.



on the springtime of the world and the springtime of my life. I saw the years drifting, sad and barren, from the eternity to come into the eternity that is gone. I saw this ever vain and tantalising present unlinking from the dim future its indefinite chain, bringing nearer the end that is now in sight, trailing into the darkness the phantoms of my days, there to fade and vanish, seizing the last of their spectral forms, swallowing up with the same unconcern that day that ends the long procession, and plunging all in abysmal silence.

As if all men had not passed away, and passed in vain! As if life were real and concretely existent! As if our perception of the universe were the image of an actual object, and the human ego anything more than the accidental expression of a transient combination! What would I? What am I? What must I ask of Nature? Is there a universal system? Are there adaptations, rights corresponding to needs? Is a supreme intelligence bringing about the results that my intelligence would fain anticipate? Every cause is invisible, every aim deceptive; every form changes, all continuance comes to an end; and the torment of man's insatiable heart is the blind rush of a meteor through empty space to its doom. Nothing possessed is the same as it was when pictured; nothing is known as it really is. We see relations, not essences; we do not deal with things, but their images. The Nature we return to without, and find inscrutable within, is everywhere alike wrapped in obscurity. *I feel* is the only word pos-

sible to a man who will have nothing but truth. And that which is the basis of reality in my life is at the same time its torture. I feel, I exist simply to be the prey of untamable desires, to be besotted by the spell of a fantastic world, and to stand aghast at its dazzling falsity.

Happiness should not be the prime law of human nature! Pleasure should not be the ruling principle of the external world! But if we do not seek pleasure, what object in life can we have? If to live means simply to exist, why need we live at all? We cannot discover either the first cause or the real purpose of any being; the *why* of the Universe is beyond the reach of finite intelligence. The end of our existence is unknown to us; all the actions of life are aimless; our desires, our anxieties, our affections, become ridiculous, if those acts do not tend to pleasure, and if those affections do not take it as their object.

Man loves himself, and his fellows, and every living thing. Such love seems an essential feature of an organised being; it is the mainspring of the forces that keep it going. Man loves himself; without this active principle how could he act, how continue to exist? Man loves his fellows because he feels as they do, because he is near them in the very nature of things; apart from this relationship what would his life be?

Man loves all living creatures. If he ceased to suffer at the sight of their sufferings, if he ceased to feel with whatever has sensations akin to his own,

he would no longer be interested in what for him would not exist at all, he would perhaps even cease to love himself; certainly no affection is limited to the individual, for there is no being absolutely isolated.

If man sympathises with all that lives the weal and woe of his surroundings are as real to him as his personal emotions; the happiness of everything known to him is essential to his own; he is bound up with all that feels, he lives in the organic whole of the world.

The network of relations of which he is the centre, and which are only bounded by the limits of the world, constitutes him a part of that Universe, the unit in nature's number. The bond formed by those personal links is the order of the world, and the force which perpetuates its harmony is natural law. That inherent instinct which guides a living creature, passive when it simply wills, active when it compels another's will, is the sway of general laws. To keep the spirit of those laws should be the science of a being who would live in freedom. If man is free in deliberating, it is the science of human life; what he wishes when swayed by instinct indicates to him what he should wish when he is independent.

An isolated being is never perfect; his existence is incomplete; he is neither truly happy nor truly good. The complement of each particular object has been placed outside itself, but the need is mutual. There is a kind of end for natural beings; the principle is illustrated when two bodies become

productive by union, and two sensations shared in common become happier. In this harmony everything inanimate finds its consummation, and everything living its rest and joy. The complement of the individual is mainly in the species. In the case of man this complement has two unlike but analagous forms; so much is permitted him; he has two ways of realising his life; all the rest is grief or smoke.

Every unshared possession aggravates our desires without satisfying our hearts; instead of nourishing it saps and exhausts them.

For the union to be harmonious, he who shares it with us must be similar and yet different. In any given species this condition is fulfilled either in the difference between individuals or the opposition of the sexes. The first case produces the harmony, which results from two beings whose similarities and differences show a minimum of opposition with a maximum of likeness. The second gives a harmonious result produced by the greatest difference possible between like things.<sup>1</sup> All choice, all affection, all union, all happiness is found in these two channels. We may be captivated by something divergent from them, but it will deceive and weary us; while anything flatly opposed to them will lead us utterly astray and make us vicious or miserable.

We have no legislation in these days. Some of

<sup>1</sup> The greatest difference without mutual repulsion, as well as the greatest likeness without tame uniformity.

the Ancients tried to lead man by his heart, and, as we cannot follow, we condemn them. We are too busy with civil and penal laws to care for institutions. No genius has been equal to the task of educating all the laws of society and all the duties of life from the twofold need which binds men to each other and to the opposite sex.

The unity of the race is a dual one. Like beings differ widely enough for their very contrasts to incline them to love each other. Separated by their tastes, yet necessary the one to the other, they diverge in habits and are drawn together by a mutual need. Those who spring from their union, formed equally of both, perpetuate none the less these differences. This intrinsic effect of animal energy, this supreme result of man's organisation, will be the consummation of his life, the highest power of his affections, and in some sense the harmonious expression of his faculties. There is seen the strength of the physical man, the greatness of the moral man, and the soul in all its fullness; and he who has not loved to the uttermost has never possessed his life.

Abstract affections and speculative passions have won the homage of individuals and nations, while the happier affections have been repressed or degraded. The social fabric has set men at variance when their native instincts would have conciliated them.<sup>1</sup>

Love should govern a world fatigued by ambition.

<sup>1</sup> *Our* social fabric has set men at variance, men whom *true* social art would have conciliated.

Love is that calm and genial sun, that heavenly warmth which brings birth and bloom, which gives colour and grace and hope to life. Ambition is that barren fire which smoulders under the snow, which devours without reviving anything, which hollows vast caverns, rumbles underground, bursts out from gaping chasms, and leaves a century of desolation on the landscape that was dazzled by its glow for an hour.

When some new affection widens the outlook of a man who is trying the taste of life he yields to it eagerly, he ransacks all nature, he lets himself go, he is quite carried away; his life is wrapped up in love and he sees nothing but love anywhere. Every other feeling is swallowed up in this deepest feeling, every thought comes round to that, every hope is based on that. All is grief, emptiness, despair, when love is gone; all is joy, hope, and rapture when love is nigh. A distant voice, a murmuring breeze, swaying boughs and ruffled water all hint of love and express it, mimic its tones and intensify its desires. All the grace of nature is in the turn of an arm, the law of the world in the significance of a look. It is for love that the morning light comes to wake the world and tint the skies; for love the noonday heat draws up the steamy moisture from mossy forest floors, for love the evening brings the pensive charm of its mysterious twilight gleams. This is the fountain of Vacluse,<sup>1</sup> those are the rocks of Meillerie,<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Home of Petrarch.

<sup>2</sup> Scene of Rousseau's *Julie*.

there is the avenue of Pamplemousses.<sup>1</sup> Silence guards the dreams of love, the rippling of waters breathes gentle agitation; the waves in storm arouse its fiercer moods, and everything will minister to its joys when the night is mild and the moon is shining and when there is rapture in the moonlight and the shadows, in the solitude, in the air, the waters and the night.

Happy delirium! the one moment left to man. That rare and solitary flower, a fleeting guest beneath the cloudy sky, wind-battered and exposed, draggled by storms, droops and dies unopened; a cold wind, a fog, a breath, and the hope within its blighted bud is doomed. We pass on, still hoping, hurrying; and by and by see others on a soil as barren, and they too will prove as frail, uncertain, and short-lived, and like the first will fruitless perish. Happy he who owns what man must seek, and who enjoys all that man should feel! Happy too, say I, is he who seeks nothing, feels nothing, needs nothing, and for whom to exist is to live!

It is not merely a mistake of a dismal and unsociable kind, but a very deadly one too, to condemn that genuine and necessary pleasure, ever anticipated and ever reviving, alike in all seasons and lasting for the greater part of our life, which forms the strongest and sweetest bond of human society. It would be a strange kind of wisdom to go in the

<sup>1</sup>A *pamplemousse* is a species of very large orange; English, shaddock, from Capt. Shaddock, who brought it from West Indies.

teeth of natural order. Every faculty, every energy is a perfection.<sup>1</sup> It is well to be stronger than one's passions, but it is foolish to extol the silence of the senses and the heart; that is to credit oneself with more perfection the less capable one is of attaining it.

A man worthy of the name knows how to prize love without forgetting that love is a mere incident in life; and when he comes under its spell, he will enjoy it, he will make the most of it, without forgetting that the sternest truths are still superior to the sweetest illusions. Such a man knows how to choose or to wait with prudence, to love with constancy, to give himself without weakness as without reserve. The activity of a profound passion is to him the ardour of goodness, the flame of genius; he finds in love the glowing energy, the manly joy of an upright, noble, and responsive heart; he finds happiness and knows how to cherish it.

Ridiculous or guilty love is a degrading weakness, true love is the charm of life; there is madness only in that stupid austerity which confuses a noble sentiment with a base one, and condemns all love indiscriminately, because in assuming all men to be brutish it must conceive all passions to be sordid.

That pleasure received and given, that advance sought and won, that happiness offered and expected,

<sup>1</sup> There are men who boast of their coldness as the calm of wisdom, and some who lay claim to the barren honour of being inaccessible, but it is a case of the blind man thinking himself better equipped than the rest of the world because his blindness saves him so many distractions.



that ecstatic confidence which leads us to anticipate everything from the heart we love, that still greater pleasure of imparting happiness to the loved one, of being mutually sufficing and mutually necessary, that plenitude of tenderness and hope, expands the soul and rouses it to life. Inexpressible self-surrender! The man who has known it has never blushed for it, and he who was not made to feel it is no fit judge of love.

I do not blame the man who has never been in love, but him who is incapable of loving. Circumstances shape our affections, but generous emotions are natural to a man whose moral organisation is complete; he who is incapable of loving is of necessity incapable of magnanimous feeling and of sublime affection. He may be upright, good, diligent, prudent; he may have pleasing qualities and even acquired virtues, but he is no *man*; he has neither soul nor genius; I am willing to make his acquaintance, he shall have my confidence and even my esteem, but he cannot be my friend. But you, hearts of real tenderness, whom an unkindly fate has repressed ever since your springtime, who can blame you for not having loved? Every generous feeling was natural to you, and all the fire of the passions was in your manly breast. Love was what it needed; that should have nourished it; that would have shaped it for mighty issues; but love was denied you, and the silence of love was the beginning of the blank into which your life is sinking.

The sense of right and virtue, the need of order

and of moral decorum inevitably leads up to the need for love. The beautiful is love's object; harmony its principle and aim; every perfection, every merit seems to belong to it; the attractive graces invite it; and a sympathetic and virtuous morality gives it permanence. True love does not exist without the charm of physical beauty, but it is still more dependent on intellectual harmony, on graces of thought, and depths of feeling.

Union, hope, admiration, charm, keep ever developing towards perfect intimacy, a consummation which fills the soul enlarged by its preparatory stages. At that point the man who has more heart than head, and knows no need but that of pleasure, stops short and retrogrades, but the man who loves does not change thus; the more he gains, the closer he is bound; the more he is loved, the more he loves; the more fully he possesses his heart's desire the more truly he cherishes his possession. Having received all, he admits that he owes all; she who has given him herself becomes essential to his being; years of enjoyment have not changed his desires; they have added to his love the confidence born of happy intercourse and the delights of a free but delicate intimacy.

Love is sometimes condemned as a wholly sensual affection, with no other basis than what is branded as a gross need. But I fail to see anything in our most refined desires that has not as its true end the satisfaction of one of our primary physical needs; sentiment is merely the indirect expression of those

needs, and there is no such thing as a purely intellectual man. Our needs awake in us the idea of their definite object along with numberless ideas of subsidiary objects. The direct satisfactions would not of themselves fill our life, but these accessory interests engross it completely because they are limitless. He whose life is bound up with the hope of conquering the world would never have dreamed of it if he had not felt hunger. Our needs are a combination of appetite and sentiment, two modifications of the same principle; the preponderance of one over the other depends on personal temperament and the force of circumstances. Every end of a natural desire is legitimate, all the lines of conduct prompted by it are good, if they do not trespass on the rights of others, or create in ourselves any real disorder to counteract its utility.

You have multiplied duties to excess; your principle has been: "To ensure enough we must demand more"; but that is a mistake; if you exact too much of men they will rebel;<sup>1</sup> if you want them

<sup>1</sup> Anything meant to rouse the imagination at the expense of the understanding, to captivate the heart and inhibit all reasoning, will succeed the better the more austerity is linked with it; but settled institutions, temporal and civil laws, private morals and all matters admitting of investigation are on a different footing to fanatical fervour, whose very nature is to incite to everything difficult, and to evoke reverence for everything extraordinary. This essential distinction seems to have been overlooked. Man's multiplied affections have been very fully studied, and to some extent also the affairs of his heart, but we are still a long way from the goal.

to exhibit hot-house virtues they will do so easily enough. But because virtue of this kind is not indigenous, they will secretly indulge in exactly the opposite conduct, and because of its secrecy you will not be able to check its excesses. You can then only fall back on those dangerous expedients whose futile adoption will increase the mischief by increasing restraint and the conflict between duty and inclination. You may fancy at first that your laws are better kept because the breach of them is better concealed; but a perverted judgment, a depraved taste, a perpetual dissimulation, and hypocritical subterfuges will be the real consequences.

The pleasures of love involve great physical contrasts; its desires excite the imagination, its needs influence the organs, and men's feelings and attitude towards it will therefore differ widely. The consequences of this extreme diversity should have been anticipated, and not linked with moral laws calculated to exaggerate it. But these laws have been made by old men, and old men who have outlived the sentiment of love cannot have either its genuine modesty nor its delicacy of taste. They have grossly misunderstood what their senility disqualified them for understanding. They would have entirely forbidden love if they could have found other ways of continuing the race. Their superannuated sensations have forfeited what is essential to the graces of desire, and to prevent certain vagaries hateful to their impotence, they

have devised restraints so clumsy that society is daily disturbed by real crimes such as no decent, unsophisticated man would ever reproach himself with.<sup>1</sup>

Everything should be permissible in love that is not actually injurious. By love man is perfected or debased; in that above all he should keep his imagination within the bounds of a just liberty, finding his happiness in the sphere of his duties, and regulating his judgment by a fine sense of the reasonableness of law. It was the most effective natural instrument for awakening a perception of all the refinements of true taste and their real foundation, for ennobling and controlling the affections, for giving to every sensation a tone of sincere and lawful enjoyment, for inspiring the dull man with something of the superior man's responsiveness, for uniting and conciliating them, for creating a real fatherland and establishing a genuine society.

Leave us our legitimate pleasures; it is equally our right and your duty that you should. I fancy you thought you had accomplished something by the institution of marriage.<sup>2</sup> But when as the

<sup>1</sup> It is in love that we find the greatest dissimilarity among nations possessed of morals, and the term morals is exclusively applied to matters associated with love.

<sup>2</sup> I have somewhat slackly fulfilled my editorial function, for though I have cut out passages from several letters, I have left too many of a doubtful or useless character. But such negligence would be less excusable in a letter like this, and it is of set purpose that I have retained this

result of your institutions we are compelled to form an alliance by mere chance or mercenary considerations instead of on true affinities, an alliance that a moment may blight for ever, and that is unavoidably tarnished by so much that is sordid, such an alliance as that cannot suffice us. I ask of you a glamour that will last, and you offer me a bond in which I can see the bare fetters of a perpetual slavery, clumsily concealed under short-lived flowers, whose freshness had vanished ere they left your hands. I ask for a glamour to clothe my life or rejuvenate it, for that was my right by nature, and you dare to tell me of the resources that remain. So you would let me basely ignore an obligation founded on a deliberate promise that should be sacredly kept, and try to persuade a woman to become contemptible so that I may love her?<sup>1</sup> Or with less actual guilt but equal lack of consideration, shall I bring trouble on my family and dishonour on one to whom that kind of honour is so indispensable in society, to the humiliation of

remark on marriage. I have not suppressed it because I am not catering for the common herd of readers, and no one else could fail to see that it is neither an attack on the utility of the institution of marriage nor on whatever happy elements there are in a happy marriage.

<sup>1</sup>The original continued—"I would neither urge her to be unfaithful on my account nor even take advantage of such unfaithfulness, and such a stand would be for any thinking man a perfectly simple and imperative duty, whose infraction would degrade him. No force of desire, no mutual passion even, would avail as an excuse.

all belonging to her? Or on the other hand, so as to violate no right and expose no one to shame shall I resort in places of ill-fame, to those who can be mine not by sweet familiarity nor by natural desire, but because their profession puts them at the service of all? No longer being their own they are no longer women, but only creatures something like them. Their sacrifice of all delicacy, their incapacity for generous sentiments, and their yoke of misery, put them at the mercy of the coarsest fancies of the man whose sensations and desires will also be depraved by the indulgence. Other conceivable circumstances there are I admit, but they are very rare and sometimes do not occur in a lifetime. Some men, restrained by reason,<sup>1</sup> wear out their days in unjust and compulsory deprivation, but by far the majority make sport of the duty which opposes them.

This duty has ceased to be considered one, because the fulfilment of it is contrary to the natural order of things. The contempt felt for it ends in a habit of obeying nothing but custom, of making

<sup>1</sup> The diffidence of sentiment may also be a restraining force. In every affection of our being, two analogous, but not identical, elements have been distinguished, sentiment and appetite. The love of the heart involves men of feeling in much reserve and hesitation, and sentiment is then stronger than physical need. But just as there is no deep feeling in a weak disposition, so a man who is one thing in a true passion will be quite otherwise in a love without passion; if he is restrained then, it will be by his obligations not by his diffidence.

for oneself a rule to suit one's inclinations, and of despising every obligation whose infraction would not actually involve legal penalties or social humiliation. That is the inevitable consequence of the pitiful conduct in which people daily seek distraction. What morality can you expect of a wife who deceives the man by whom and for whom she lives; who trifles with the confidence he gives her as his nearest friend; who destroys his peace of mind, or laughs at him if he preserves it, and who imposes on herself the necessity of betraying him even in her dying moments, by leaving to his affections the child that does not belong to him? What pitiful honesty is that which scrupulously pays a crown and yet treats the most sacred promise known to men as an idle word! What morality can you expect of a creature who sets himself to trifle with a woman's affection, who despises her for becoming what he wanted, dishonours her for her love to him, leaves her when his desires have been granted, and deserts her when it becomes painfully obvious that she has shared his pleasures? <sup>1</sup> What morality or equity can you expect of that man who so inconsistently exacts of his wife sacrifices that he does not make himself, and who would have her discreet and inaccessible, while he squanders in secret

<sup>1</sup> I have still to learn what difference there is between the wretch who deserts the woman he has betrayed, and the soldier who murders the one he has ravished during the sack of a town. Indeed the soldier may be the less infamous, for at least he does not deceive her, and then too he is usually drunk,



dissipations the attachment of which he assures her, and which she rightly claims, if her fidelity is not to become an unjust slavery.

Indiscriminate pleasures degrade a man; guilty pleasures corrupt him, but love without passion does not debase him. There is an age for love with enjoyment, and there is an age for enjoyment without love. The heart is not always young, and even if it were, it does not always meet with love's true object.

Every enjoyment is good when it is free from injustice and excess, when it is brought about by natural affinities, and indulged in with true refinement.

Hypocrisy in love is one of the scourges of society. Why should love be exempt from the common law? Why not be in that, as in everything else, just and sincere? The only man quite out of harm's way is he who artlessly seeks what can give him joy without remorse. Every fanciful or accidental virtue seems questionable to me; when I see it proudly rearing itself on its sham pedestal I soon discover an inner ugliness under its drapery of prejudices and its flimsy mask of dissimulation.

Permit and sanction pleasures so that virtues may flourish; show the reason of laws that men may revere them; encourage enjoyment so that you may be listened to when you prescribe suffering. Uplift the soul by a taste for natural pleasures, so you will strengthen and ennoble it to respect legitimate

restraints, and even to find joy in doing so, from a conviction of their social utility. I would have man freely use his faculties when they do not trespass on the rights of others. I would make joy a stepping-stone to goodness; I would have man invigorated by pleasure, but guided by obvious equity; I would have his life just, happy, and even rapturous. I like a thinking man to base his duties on reason; I have no great opinion of a woman who is only kept from transgressing by a kind of superstitious dread of everything associated with delights that she would never dare to admit any desire for.

I like a man to say to himself: "Is this thing bad, and if so, why is it?" If it be, he abstains from it; but if not he enjoys it with strict discrimination, with that prudence which is the art of intensifying pleasure, but without any other reserve, or shame or concealment.<sup>1</sup>

True modesty should be the only check on pleasure. Modesty is delicacy of perception; it is an element in perfect taste, the grace of the senses, the charm of love. It shuns everything repulsive and permits everything attractive; it discriminates where Nature has left the task of discrimination to

<sup>1</sup> It might plausibly be objected that the majority are incapable of thus finding a rational basis for duty, still more of doing so without partiality. But that difficulty is not in itself very great, and would scarcely exist but for the prevalent ethical confusion. Besides, though in other institutions than ours there might possibly not be any minds so highly trained as with us, the masses on the other hand would certainly not be so dull and deluded.

our intelligence; and it is chiefly the neglect of this exquisite reserve that quenches love in the unbridled liberty of marriage.<sup>1</sup>

## LETTER LXIV.

SAINT-SAPHORIN, *July 10th* (VIII.).

My manner of life here is utterly absurd. I know that I am playing the fool, and yet I keep it up without being specially bent on doing so. If I do not act

<sup>1</sup> I append a portion of the omitted passage. It may perhaps be thought that I should have suppressed it altogether, but my answer in this case and in others, is that open discussion is permissible when there is nothing in one's mind that should be kept silent. I am responsible for what I publish. I venture to judge in matters of duty, and if it can ever be said that I have come short in this respect, in real duties, that is, not only will I cease to judge of them, but I will forego the privilege of writing altogether.

"I should have little confidence in a woman who did not see the reasonableness of her duties, but who fulfilled them strictly, blindly, and by an instinctive kind of prejudice. Such conduct may be safe, but it is unsatisfactory. I should think more highly of a woman whom nothing whatever would induce to betray one who relied upon her loyalty, but who in her natural freedom, unbound, either by word or serious attachment, and in circumstances special enough to leave her no option, would yield to more than one, and that even with the intoxication, the abandon, and the exquisite madness of pleasure."

It must be repeated here that apart from additions specified as such, the present edition differs little from the first.

more wisely it is because I cannot make myself feel that it matters at all. I spend half my time, both day and night, on the lake; and when I have to leave it I shall be so used to the swaying of waves, and the noise of breakers that I shall be quite uncomfortable on firm ground and in the silence of the meadows.

Some take me for a man whose mind has been a trifle unhinged by some love affair; others maintain that I am an Englishman in low spirits. The boatmen informed Hantz that I was the lover of a beautiful foreign lady who has suddenly left Lausanne. I shall have to give up my nocturnal expeditions, for the most sensible people pity me, and the best think I am crazy. He was asked at Vevey: "Are you not in the service of that Englishman who is so much talked of?" The matter is growing worse, and I think the lakeside folk would ridicule me if I were not provided with money; happily I am supposed to be very rich. The innkeeper insists on addressing me as Milord, and I am treated with great respect. Wealthy foreigner and Milord are synonymous terms.

Further, on coming in from the lake, I usually turn to writing, so that it is often broad daylight when I go to bed. On one occasion the people of the inn, hearing a noise in my room, and surprised that I was up so early, came up to ask if I would take anything that morning. I told them I never took supper and that I was just going to bed. I do not rise till noon or one o'clock. I take tea and

do some writing; then instead of dinner more tea, with nothing to eat but bread and butter, and directly after I go on the lake. The first time that I went out alone in a little boat I had ordered for that special purpose they noticed that Hantz stayed on shore and that I started late in the day; so at a meeting in the tavern they decided that this time the blues had got the upper hand, and that I should provide the village annals with a fine suicide.

I am sorry now that it did not occur to me beforehand what impression these peculiarities of mine might produce. I do not care to attract attention, but I did not find it out until the habit was formed, and it would not lessen their chatter if I were to change now for the few days I still must spend here. I have tried to kill time as if I had nothing else to do. When I am busy, I feel no other needs; but if I am bored, I like to be bored luxuriously.

Tea has a wonderfully soothing effect in moods of boredom. Among all the slow poisons in which man indulges I consider this one of the most serviceable in ennui. It encourages a mild and sustained emotion which, being free from unpleasant after-effects, settles down into a mood of peace and indifference, and into a languor which soothes the heart worn out with cravings, and relieves us of our painful energy. I acquired the habit in Paris and kept it up at Lyons; but here I have rashly carried it to excess. I am reassured, however, by the prospect of having an estate and workmen to keep me busy and pull me together. I am doing myself no little

mischief at present, but I shall soon be brought to order by necessity, never fear.

I see, or fancy I see, that the change which has come over me has been considerably hastened by the daily use of tea and wine. I think that, other things being equal, water-drinkers retain much longer their delicacy of sensation, and to some extent their original candour. The use of stimulants ages our organs. Those strained emotions outside the sphere of natural affinities between ourselves and our environment obliterate simple emotions, and destroy that harmonious proportion which kept us responsive to all external relationships, so long as we were dependent on them alone, so to speak, for our states of consciousness.

Such is the human heart, and there can be no other basis for the radical principle in all penal law. If you destroy the proportion between crime and penalty, if you strain too far the spring of fear, you destroy its elasticity, and if you go farther still, you break it; you give criminal courage to the daring, you extinguish all energy in the weak, and others you crane up to morbid virtues. If physical sensation is pushed beyond its natural limits, the organs themselves lose their sensitiveness to less violent impressions. By using them too frequently, by exciting unseasonably their utmost energies, you blunt their normal powers and make them functions either to excess or not at all; you destroy that graduated scale of adjustments which linked us even to material objects, and bound us to them by the

closest of ties. Those adjustments kept in a state of expectation and hope by revealing everywhere opportunities for feeling; they left us ignorant of the limits of possibility, and allowed us to fancy that the resources of our hearts were immense because indefinite, and because, being always relative to external things there was room for them to develop in unknown situations.

There is also an essential difference between responsiveness to external objects and to some inner stimulus supplied by caprice or accident rather than by present circumstances. We lose touch with the world around; we are lively when it would have us rest, and often just when it would have us lively we are sunk in the reaction due to our excesses. That exhaustion and indifference makes us callous to outside impressions, and to those external motives which have become foreign to our ways, and therefore out of harmony or in conflict with our wants.

Thus man has done his best to isolate himself from the rest of Nature, and to make himself independent of his environment. But that is no true freedom which is not in line with his own nature; it is akin to the licence of a nation that has broken the yoke of laws and national customs; it takes away far more than it gives; it substitutes the impotence of disorder for a legitimate dependence in harmony with our needs. That fallacious independence which sets up our caprices at the expense of our faculties puts us in the position of the man who, in defiance of magisterial authority, was bent on erecting in a

public square the symbol of a foreign creed instead of being content to set up its altars at home. He exiled himself in a desert of shifting sand where no one opposed his will, but where his will could produce nothing. There he died, free, it is true, but without domestic altars, food, or friends, as without temples, laws, or masters.<sup>1</sup>

I admit that it would be more to the purpose to argue less about the use of tea and to discontinue the abuse of it; but in matters of this sort, when a habit is once formed it is not easy to break it off. And if it is difficult to get rid of such a habit, it is perhaps no less so to regulate it, unless one can regulate at the same time one's whole manner of life. I cannot well put method into one thing when it is out of the question in everything else, or live by

<sup>1</sup> Tropical stimulants may have contributed to our premature senility. Their fiery nature takes less effect in India, where men are more sluggish; but European unrest, stirred up by their intoxicating influence produces those bustling, excited creatures whose derangement is a perpetual source of wonder to the rest of humanity.

I do not deny that, as things are now, there may be some compensation for individuals, and even for a whole people, in this bold and scintillating energy which revels in enduring hardship, and sees in anarchy the comic side of things. The man who is bent on satisfying his desires, very often exclaims: "What a dreary world!" but he who is content simply to avoid suffering says: "How droll life is!" But when things begin to seem comic they already look less wretched; still more when one finds amusement in the buffetings one gets, and hunts for dangers for the fun of the thing. As for the French, if they ever own Naples they will build a ball-room in the crater of Vesuvius.



rule when I have no hope of finding one that would be permanent and congenial to my other habits. Another difficulty is that I can do nothing without resources, whereas many men can create them, or make a little go a long way. I might perhaps manage to use my resources with method and profit, but the initial step requires a different kind of skill, and one that I do not possess. I think this defect is the result of my inability to see things otherwise than in their whole bearing, at any rate so far as I can grasp it. Hence I must have all their main functions respected; and a sense of order, possibly exaggerated, or at any rate too fastidious, will not let me either make or manage anything that is out of order. I would rather give up the attempt than undertake what I cannot do well. There are men who set up housekeeping on nothing at all; they borrow, they hold their own, they take every pains, they will pay when they find themselves able, but meantime they live and sleep in peace, and sometimes even prosper. I could never have settled down to such a precarious kind of life, and even if I had been willing to risk it I should not have had the necessary talents. None the less the man who succeeds in supporting a family by such efforts, without demeaning himself or failing to keep his engagements is certainly worthy of all praise. The utmost I myself could do would be to submit to utter destitution as if it were a law of necessity. I will always endeavour to make the best use possible of adequate resources, or to render adequate by

personal economy such as would not otherwise be so. I would work day and night at any respectable, regular, and fixed employment to provide the necessaries of life for a friend or a child, but to take a leap in the dark, or to supplement resources inadequate of themselves by some risky experiment is more than I can expect myself to do.

From such a temperament there results this serious inconvenience, that I cannot live in any good, reasonable, and orderly fashion, or even follow my tastes or consult my needs, without practically assured means, and though I might perhaps be capable of making good use of what is called a large fortune, or even of average comfortable circumstances, I should on the other hand be quite helpless in poverty, and it would be all I could do to escape wretchedness, ridicule, and sordidness, if my lot did not itself place me above want.

It is usually said that prosperity is more difficult to bear than adversity. But the contrary is the case with a man who has no pronounced passions, who likes to do well whatever he undertakes, whose first need is for order, and who looks at general effects rather than details.

Adversity is all right for a man who is strong and touched with enthusiasm, whose soul leans to an ascetic type of virtue, and whose mind happily does not see its instability.<sup>1</sup> But adversity is very sad and discouraging to the man who finds in it nothing

<sup>1</sup> The good man stands firm in his strict virtue; the man of systems is apt to go out of his way to find ascetic virtues.

serviceable; he would fain do good, but that requires power; he would like to be useful, and the unfortunate have few opportunities to be that. Not being sustained by the noble fervour of Epictetus, he can face misfortune well enough, but not a lifetime of unhappiness, for under that he breaks down in the long run, from the feeling that all his life is being thrown away on it.

The religious man, most of all one who is sure of a recompensing God, has a great advantage here; it is very easy to endure hardship when hardship is the best thing that can happen to one. I confess I am at a loss to see anything remarkable in the virtue of a man who struggles under the eye of his God, and who sacrifices the whims of an hour to a boundless and unending felicity. A fully convinced believer could not do otherwise, unless he had taken leave of his senses. It seems to me obvious that he who succumbs at the sight of gold, or of a beautiful woman, or any other object of earthly passion, has no faith. Evidently the one thing he clearly sees is the earth; if he saw with the same certainty that heaven and hell he sometimes remembers, if they were actually present to his thought like the things of earth, it would be impossible for him to succumb. What subject in his senses would not be incapable of transgressing the command of his sovereign, if he said to him "Here you are in my harem, with all my wives around you; for five minutes do not touch one of them; my eye is upon you, and if you are faithful for these brief moments all these pleasures and

more shall be yours for thirty years of unflinching prosperity." Who does not see that such a man, however ardent he might be, would resist without even an effort for so short a time? The only thing he needs is to believe the word of his sovereign. Certainly the temptations of the Christian are not greater than this, and man's life is far less compared with eternity than five minutes to thirty years, while there is an infinite difference between the happiness promised to the Christian and the pleasures offered to the subject I have described; and finally there might be some doubt about the word of a prince, but there can be none about God's. If this does not prove that in every hundred thousand of so-called true Christians there is not more than one who has anything like faith, it is obvious to me that nothing in this world can be proved.

Any inferences to be drawn from this you can very easily make yourself, and I will revert to the wants created by the use of intoxicants. I must set your mind at rest and convince you that you may believe me, though my promise to reform is made just when I am exercising least self-restraint and letting the habit gain strength.

I must make this further confession as a preliminary, that I am beginning to suffer from sleeplessness. When I have been enervated by tea, the only remedy I know is wine, and I cannot sleep without it, so there is another excess; I am obliged to take as much as I can without affecting my head. I know nothing more ridiculous than a man who

prostitutes his thought before strangers, and whose very words and actions proclaim that he has been drinking. But so far as oneself is concerned, nothing is pleasanter to one's reason than to upset it a little now and then. I maintain too that a touch of conviviality among friends would be as appropriate as real excess would be disgraceful in public and degrading even in secret.

Many of the wines of La Vaux, which are grown in this neighbourhood between Lausanne and Vevey, are supposed to be injurious. But when I am alone I use nothing but Courtailloux, a wine from Neuchâtel, which is as much prized as light Burgundy, and Tissot considers it equally wholesome.

As soon as I become a proprietor I shall have plenty of ways of spending my time, and of occupying in the cares of planning, building, and provisioning, that inward activity, whose cravings leave me no peace in idleness. While these undertakings are being carried out I will gradually lessen my allowance of wine; and as for tea, I will drop the regular use of it entirely, and for the future only take it occasionally. When everything is settled, and I can adopt that mode of life that I have so long desired, I shall be ready to accommodate myself to it without feeling the inconvenience of too sudden and complete a change.

As for the cravings of ennui, I hope to see the last of them when I can subordinate all my habits to a general scheme; I shall easily occupy my time, and I will substitute for desires and enjoyments the

interest one takes in doing what one approves, and the satisfaction of following the laws of one's nature.

Not that I anticipate a happiness which was never meant for me, or which is at any rate still quite out of reach. All I expect is that time will not weigh so heavily on my hands; I shall find an escape from boredom, or perhaps I should say, be bored for the future in my own fashion only.

I do not mean to bind myself by any monastic rule. I will keep some resources to fall back upon in times of intolerable dreariness, but most of them I shall find in movement and activity. These special resources will be strictly limited, and even the exceptional will have its rules. So long as my life is unsatisfied, I must order it by rule, for without that my strength would be the only limit of my excesses, and even then they could not fill a boundless emptiness. I have seen it stated that a man of feeling has no need of wine. That may be true for one who has never acquired the habit, but when I have been abstemious and busy for several days my brain is all in a whirl, and sleep deserts me. Then I require some excess to shake me out of my restless dulness and to hoodwink a little that divine reason whose literalness chafes our imagination without filling our hearts.

There is one thing that surprises me. I meet with people who seem to drink solely for the pleasure of the palate, for the sake of the flavour, and who apparently take a glass of wine as they would a

sillabub.<sup>1</sup> It is not really so, but they fancy it is, and would be surprised if you questioned it.

I intend to hold aloof from these methods of cheating the craving for pleasure and the barrenness of time. Whether the substitutes I shall find will be any more effective I do not know, but I shall simply say: "This is my rule, I must stick to it, and there's an end of it." If I am to keep to it, steadily, I must take care not to make it too rigid or too monotonous, for then I should find excuses and even motives for breaking the rule, and once broken there would be no reason for not throwing it aside altogether.

It is a good thing to lay down a law for our pleasures beforehand, for it requires an effort to impose restrictions upon them when they are in full swing. Even those who are equal to the task would do better to settle at a suitable time those points that require deliberation, instead of leaving it to the very moment when a discussion of pros and cons would clash with and take the edge off their pleasurable emotions. By dwelling on the reasons for not enjoying more, what we do enjoy is stripped of its charms, for it is characteristic of pleasure that it must be indulged in without reserve or misgivings. It evaporates if one tries to limit it by anything but necessity, and yet it must be limited by reason; so the only way of reconciling these apparently conflicting principles is to impose on the pleasures beforehand the restriction of a general law.

<sup>1</sup> *Bavaroise*, literally Bavarian, a drink made of tea, syrup, and milk.—TR.

However weak an impression may be, the moment of its occurrence is in some sense one of passion and it is difficult to estimate its real worth; objects of vision, for instance, become greater the nearer we approach them. The principles that control our desires should be determined before the desires spring up, and then in the heat of the moment the memory of that rule will not come as the obtrusive voice of cold deliberation, but as the law of necessity, and that law never depresses a wise man.

It is essential therefore that the law must be general; one made for special cases would be too questionable. Still we must leave something to circumstances; a certain latitude will remain, because one cannot foresee everything, and because we need only be bound by our own laws to the same extent that we are naturally bound by those of necessity. Our affections should possess a certain independence, but an independence within definite limits. They are like the movements of the body, which have no grace if they are stiff, constrained, and monotonous, and yet are both unseemly and useless when abrupt, irregular, or involuntary.

It is carrying order itself to excess to strive after perfect gradation of our enjoyments, restricting and controlling them, and husbanding them with severest economy to make them last longer, or even for ever. Such absolute regularity is but seldom possible; pleasure captivates and carries us away, just as sadness checks and fetters us. We live in a world of



dreams, and of all our dreams, perfect order may be the furthest from reality.

What I am at a loss to understand is why men seek the intoxication of liquors when they have that of active life. Are not our passions the outcome of a craving for emotion? And when we are excited by them what more can we get from wine, unless it be a sedative to temper their violence?

Apparently the man engrossed in great undertakings seeks in wine not energy but forgetfulness and calm. So I have found that coffee, by its stimulating effect, sometimes gives sleep to my brain when exhausted by some other agitation. It is not usually a craving for rousing emotions that betrays strong natures into excesses in wine or spirits. A strong nature, busy with great undertakings, finds a more congenial activity in the task of keeping them in order. Wine can only soothe it. Unless this be so, why have so many historical worthies, so many rulers and world-masters been drinkers? True, many nations have thought it a distinction to drink deep, but there have been great men equally addicted to it in epochs when no credit was attached to it. Leaving out of account all those who merely followed the fashion, and those rulers who were men of very average ability, there still remain a number of strong and usefully employed characters, and these could only resort to wine as a sedative for a brain weighed down by cares whose gravity might be lightened though not annihilated by the indulgence, for they could have no other motive.

## LETTER LXV.

SAINT SAPHORIN, *July 14th* (VIII.).

You may rest assured that I shall not dispute your opinion; if I were weak enough ever to need recalling to reason on this point I should look up your letter. It would make me all the more ashamed of the change that had come over me, for now I think exactly as you do. Until then, if your letter is superfluous in that respect, it is none the less gratifying. It is full of that genuine friendly solicitude which dreads beyond everything lest the man in whom there lives a part of oneself should let himself go to the bad.

No, I shall never forget that money is one of man's greatest opportunities, and that by the use he makes of it he shows what he is. The best possible is rarely attainable; I mean that things are so twisted that one can scarcely ever do what is good in all its bearings. I consider it essential to live fairly respectably and to order one's household on comfortable and methodical lines, but beyond that there is no excuse for a sensible man who spends on luxuries what he might have put to so many better uses.

No one knows that I intend to settle down here, though I am having some furniture and various other things made at Lausanne and Vevey. They

have apparently concluded that I was in a position to spend freely on the whims of a short visit; they must have fancied I was going to take a house for the summer. That accounts for their thinking that I was lavish in expenditure, and also for the respectful treatment I have received, even if I have the misfortune to be a trifle wrong in my head.

Those who have houses of some pretensions to let do not address me as they would an ordinary man, and I am tempted myself to pay the same respect to my louis when I see that one man is already quite happy. The case of Hantz makes me hopeful; if he is satisfied without it costing me a thought, others will perhaps be so now that I can do something for them. Poverty, hardship, and uncertainty tie one's hands in more ways than financially. One cannot settle to anything, or have any definite plans. Living in apparent comfort among men sunk in wretchedness, one can do nothing for them, not even stave off their resentment by explaining one's helplessness. And yet who is alive to the efficacy of money? Men waste it as they waste their strength, their health, and their years. It is so easy to hoard or to squander it, so difficult to use it well!

I know a curé near Fribourg, ill dressed and ill fed, who never spends a farthing if he can help it, and yet he gives all he has, and gives it intelligently. One of his flock referred in my hearing to his avarice, but it is a noble kind of avarice.

When one ponders the value of time and of money,

one grieves at the waste of a single minute or a halfpenny. Yet we are the slaves of circumstances; a mere conventional requirement carries off a score of louis, while some one in need fails to get a single crown. \*Chance brings or takes from us far more than would have served to comfort the destitute. Chance again condemns to inaction one whose genius might have saved the commonwealth. A bullet penetrates the brain that seemed meant for great undertakings, after thirty years of careful training. Amid this uncertainty and under the law of necessity what becomes of our calculations and precision in details.

But for this uncertainty we should not want handkerchiefs of cambric; cotton ones would serve just as well, and then we should have some to spare for the poor day-labourer who denies himself his pinch of snuff when he is working indoors because he has no handkerchief that he dare use in public.

Life would be happy could one spend it like this worthy curé. If I were a village pastor, I would hasten to adopt it before the force of habit had made the comforts of life indispensable to me. But one would have to be unmarried, alone, and independent of public opinion, or one might grow too economical to use one's opportunities of breaking away for a time from so narrow a sphere of usefulness. Life so arranged would have too limited an outlook, and yet, once depart from it, and you are enslaved to all those conventional wants in which it is so difficult to draw the line, and which carry

us so far from true order that we meet people worth £5,000 a year who are afraid of spending a single sovereign.

We do not sufficiently realise what it means to a woman who is dragging herself along the road with her child, both wanting bread, when at last she picks up or has given a threepenny piece. Then she boldly enters some place where she can get straw for them both, she makes him his bread and milk before going to bed, and as soon as he is asleep she contentedly drops off herself, leaving to Providence the needs of the morrow.

What ills might be prevented or cured, what consolation might be given, what pleasures bestowed, and all, so to speak, contained in a purse of gold, like seeds put away and forgotten, and only awaiting the husbandry of a good heart to produce wonderful fruit! A whole countryside may be abjectly miserable; want, unrest, and disorder may have blighted all hearts; all may be soured by suffering. And yet ill-temper, quarrels, sickness, poor food, rough bringing up, miserable ways, all can be changed. Unity, order, peace, confidence can be restored; and hope itself, and happy manners. What cannot be done with money!

A man who has a position, who can live by rule, who has a fixed income and lives within it, accepting its limitations as he does the laws of his being—the heir of a little patrimony, a country minister, or a man enjoying a modest independence—all these can estimate what they have, fix their annual expen-

diture, reduce their personal wants to the necessaries of life, and then reckon every penny that remains over as an unfailing source of joy. Not a single coin should leave their hands without bringing delight or peace to some needy creature's heart.

I love to enter this patriarchal kitchen under its simple roof, at the head of the valley. I see vegetables cooked with a little milk, because it is cheaper than butter; the soup is made of herbs because the beef stock has been sent to a sick man half a league away. The best of his fruit is sold in the town, and what it fetches serves to treat all the poorer women of the neighbourhood to a few stones of maize flour, not as a charity, but just as material for puddings and cakes. Such wholesome and less expensive fruits as cherries, gooseberries, and common grapes are eaten at home with quite as much pleasure as those choice pears and peaches that are not a whit more refreshing, and have been put to far better use.

Indoors everything is clean, but rigorously simple. If miserliness or poverty had laid down this law, it would seem pitiful enough, but it is the economy of benevolence. His deliberate privations and voluntary lack of comfort are sweeter than all the refinements and profusion of a luxurious life, for the latter become necessaries that one cannot dispense with, though they give us no pleasure, while the former provide ever-recurring joys and still leave us our independence. The father and children are clothed almost entirely in stout home-

spun materials not easily soiled. His wife is content with white cotton dresses, and year by year they find excuses for distributing over two hundred ells of stuff among those who but for that would hardly have a shirt to their backs. Their only china consists of two Japanese cups which were used by his father before him; everything else is made of very hard wood, nice to look at and kept spotlessly clean; it does not easily break and costs little to renew, so that there is no need to be nervous or to scold about it; it ensures neatness without loss of temper, and one may handle it briskly without fear of breakages. They keep no servants; as the household duties are light and well arranged they wait on themselves for the sake of being free. Besides it is not pleasant either to be always watching or to lose one's things, so the gain in confidence outweighs the extra trouble. They simply have a poor woman to come in every day for an hour to do the roughest work, and she takes her wages each time. In this way they know exactly what they are spending. They do not undervalue an egg, and yet they can cheerfully give a sack of corn to a poor debtor hard pressed by a wealthy creditor.

Order itself requires that our cultivation of it should not be irksome. Our actual wants are easily confined by habit within the bounds of simple necessity, but the cravings of ennui would know no bounds, and would involve in addition the cravings of fashion, as infinite as themselves. But these

people have taken every precaution to keep any trace of irksomeness from spoiling the harmony of the whole. They use no stimulants, because they give rise to excessive fluctuations of feeling, from excitement to prostration. Wine and coffee are therefore forbidden. Tea alone is permitted, but not frequently under any pretext; they have it regularly once in five days. No festivity occurs to disturb their imagination by its pleasures of anticipation, by the spontaneous or affected indifference it evokes, and by the disappointments and ennui that follow alike the frustration and satisfaction of desire. Their days differ little from each other that so they may be the happier. When some are devoted to pleasure and others to work, a man who is under no absolute compulsion soon tires of all alike and yearns for some other mode of life. The instability of our hearts must either have monotony to steady it, or continual change to occupy and amuse it. Amusements involve expenses, and we waste on dreary pleasures what would have made us happy and beloved in surroundings of rural contentment. On the other hand one must not let every hour of life become dull and joyless. One may become inured to the monotony of ennui, but character suffers by it; one's temper grows irritable and soured, and in the most peaceful surroundings one forfeits peace of soul and the calm of well-being. Our worthy friend is fully aware of this, and has taken care that the services he renders and the order he has established should give his family



the felicity of a simple life, and not the bitterness of privations and poverty. Every day brings for the children a festive hour of a kind that can be daily repeated. Never a day passes in which the children have not enjoyed themselves, and the parents had the paternal satisfaction of seeing their children always growing better while always remaining contented. The evening meal is taken early; the fare is plain but appetising, and they are often allowed to prepare it themselves. After supper they join in games either at home or with their respectable neighbours; and races, quiet strolls—all the fun so essential at their age, and so wholesome at any age—are never wanting, so thoroughly convinced is the head of the household that happiness makes the virtues attractive just as the virtues promote happiness.

That is how one should live; that is what I should like to do, especially if I had a considerable income. But you know what day-dreams I indulge in. I have no hope of realising them, and yet I cannot exclude them. Fate, which has given me neither wife, children, nor fatherland; this vague unrest, which has isolated me and always kept me from playing a part in the world like other men; my destiny, in fact, seems to hold me back; it keeps me always expecting, yet making no headway; it does not determine my course, but it prevents me from doing so myself. There seems to be some force holding me back and secretly preparing me, some purpose as yet unknown that my

life is to serve, something wholly unsuspected for which I am reserved. That is perhaps an illusion, and yet I cannot voluntarily forego what I think is foreshadowed and what the future may actually have in store for me.

To tell the truth I might order my life here almost in the way I have described; the end in view might be inadequate, but at any rate it would be definite; and if I saw what I had to attend to, I might compel myself to occupy my besetting unrest in these daily cares. By doing good in a limited sphere to a few men I might succeed in forgetting how useless I am to mankind as a whole. Possibly I might actually adopt this course if I were not in a state of isolation that would afford me no inward satisfaction; if I had a child to train and observe in every detail; if I had a wife who was fond of household duties, who could enter sympathetically into my views and find pleasure in domestic comradeship, and enjoy like myself all those things that cost nothing but voluntary simplicity.

I should soon be satisfied just to cultivate order in the affairs of private life. The secluded vale would be the whole of my world. I should cease to suffer and grow contented. Since in a few years time I shall be a handful of dust which the worms have done with, I might come to regard as a sufficient monument the unfailing spring that supplied me with water, and my days would be fully employed if half a score of families found me of service.

In a suitable neighbourhood I should enjoy this mountain simplicity more than I should all the comforts of wealth in a large town. My floor would be of pine-wood; I should have walls of pine instead of polished panels; my furniture would not be of mahogany, but of oak, or of pine. I should enjoy seeing the chestnuts put in the ashes on the kitchen hearth just as much as being seated on an elegant chair twenty feet from a drawing-room fire, by the light of forty candles.

But I am alone, and in addition to that, I have other reasons for taking a different line. If I knew what sort of people I shall be thrown amongst I could adapt my wants and tastes accordingly. If I could be of some service in my domestic life I should see my way to bend all considerations of the future to that object, but ignorant as I am of those with whom I am to live, and of what my own status will be, I do not want to break any connections that may become a necessity to me, and I must not adopt any singular habits. So I shall adapt myself to my surroundings, but in such a way as not to repel any kindred spirits.

I do not possess any great fortune, and apart from that, an Alpine valley is not the place into which I would introduce unbecoming luxury. Places like that permit of the simplicity I love. Not that excesses are there unknown, any more than conventional wants. One cannot literally describe the locality itself as simple, but it suits simplicity. A competence there seems sweeter than elsewhere,

and luxury less tempting. There many things that are natural have not yet fallen into ridicule. It would not do to go there to live if one were very hard up, but so long as one just has enough one will fare better there than elsewhere.

I shall therefore settle down there as if I were fairly certain of staying for the rest of my life. I shall adopt in everything the mode of life indicated by circumstances. When I am fit up with things essential my remaining income will not be more than eight thousand livres<sup>1</sup> clear, but that will suffice me, and I shall be less pinched with it there than with double the amount in an average country place, or with four times as much in a large town.

## LETTER LXVI.

*July 19th (VIII.).*

Unless a master is fond of changing servants he should be satisfied when he has one who will let him do pretty much as he likes. Mine accommodates himself perfectly to whatever suits myself. When I am ill-fed he is content to fare almost as badly, and if I spend the night in my clothes on some hay when there is not a bed to be had, he takes to it too, without parading his condescension.

<sup>1</sup> £320; a livre=a franc.—Tr.

I do not abuse it, and have just had a mattress brought up for him.

Then too, I like to have someone who, strictly speaking, has no need of me. People who can do nothing of themselves, and who are naturally so shiftless that they have to depend on others for everything, are too difficult to get on with. Never having acquired anything by their own efforts, they have had no opportunity of learning the value of things and of submitting to voluntary privations, and hence all such are hateful to them. They make no distinction between poverty and reasonable economy, nor between stinginess and temporary inconvenience necessitated by circumstances, and their claims are all the more exorbitant because but for you they could lay claim to nothing. Leave them to themselves and they would barely have rye bread, take them into your house and they scorn vegetables, butcher's meat is not good enough for them, and water does not suit their health.

At last I have a place of my own, and that too among the Alps. Not many years ago that would have been a source of great happiness; now it gives me the satisfaction of having something to do. I am having workmen from La Gruyère to build my timber dwelling and to fit it up with stoves in the fashion of the country. I have begun by putting up an ample roof covered with shingles to join the barn to the house, and shelter the wood-shed and water supply and the like. It is now the general workshop where the men have hastily knocked

together some huts in which to spend the night while the fine weather permits. By this plan they lose no time, and the work will make much more headway. They also do their cooking in common so you may fancy me at the head of a very busy and united little state. My prime minister, Hantz, sometimes deigns to eat with them. I have succeeded in making him understand that though he is my clerk of works, if he would be popular with my people he would do well not to look down on free men like peasants and artisans, for the philosophy of the age might possibly give them insolence enough to call him a valet.

If you can find time, send me your ideas on all the points that occur to you, so that in arranging matters for a long stay, perhaps even for life, I may do nothing that will need to be altered later.

My address is Imenstrôm, near Vevey.

## LETTER LXVII.

IMENSTRÔM, *July 21st (VIII.)*.

My retreat does not catch the rays of the rising sun at any time of the year, and except in winter sees little of its setting. About midsummer it is out of sight in the evening, and only becomes visible in the morning some three hours after the actual time of sunrise. It then appears between the straight stems of the pine trees, lighting up a bare

peak which towers far above it into the skies; it seems poised on the water of the torrent on the brink of the fall; its rays shoot dazzlingly through the black wood; its glowing disk rests on the wild and wooded rim of the mountain whose slope is still in shadow, like the flashing eye of some Colossus of gloom.

But the evenings will be loveliest as autumn comes on, and worthy of appreciation by a younger soul than mine. The gorge of Imenstrôm falls away and opens towards the winter sunset; the southern slope will be in shadow, but mine, which faces south, will catch the splendour of the setting sun, and see it sink far off into the broad bosom of the lake all burnished by its flames. Then will my deep valley with its refreshing temperature be like a sanctuary midway between the fatiguing glare of the level lake below and the cold snow of the peaks which close it in on the east.

I have seventy acres of grass land of varying quality, twenty of very fair woodland, and nearly thirty-five that is all rocks, damp or sunless hollows, and stunted or almost inaccessible woods. This will produce next to nothing; it is waste ground from which I shall derive no benefit beyond that of including it in my estate, and of being able if I like to make it ornamental.

What I like about the estate, beside its situation, is that it is all together, and may be enclosed by one common fence, and also that it contains neither arable land nor vineyards. The vine might succeed

here in certain aspects; in fact there used to be some formerly, but chestnuts have been planted instead, and I much prefer them.

Wheat does badly here; rye very well, I am told, but I could only use it for barter, and for that purpose cheeses would be more convenient. I mean to simplify all the tasks and cares of the household so as to secure order with a minimum of trouble.

I do not want vines because they involve exhausting labour, and I like to see a man busy but not overworked. Their produce too is very irregular and uncertain, and I like to know what I have and what I can accomplish. I do not care for arable land, because the amount of labour it requires is too fluctuating, and a hailstorm or, up here, the frosts in May, might too easily ruin the crop, while its aspect is almost always either distasteful or uninteresting to me.

Grass, wood, and fruit—that is the extent of my requirements, especially in this part of the world. Unfortunately the fruit is wanting at Imenstrôm. That is very awkward, for I shall have to wait a long time to get the benefit of any trees I plant, and my habit of only counting on the present, even while appreciating security for the future, makes me impatient of delay. As there has been no house here there is not a single fruit tree, except chestnuts, and some very old plum trees, apparently survivals from a time when there was a vineyard, and doubtless habitations as well, for the property



seems to have been shared by several owners. Since these allotments were thrown into one, it has simply served as a pasture for the cows to stop at on their way up the mountains in spring, and in coming down for the winter.

This autumn and next spring I shall plant a good many apples and wild cherries, and some pears and plums. As for other fruits, which would be difficult to manage here, I prefer to dispense with them. I consider one is well enough off if one has what a place is adapted to produce. It would cost more than the thing was worth to get what the climate will not yield without special attention.

For a similar reason I shall not attempt to produce at home everything I shall find indispensable or useful, for there are many things that it is better to get by exchange. I do not at all disapprove, in the case of a large estate, of having everything—linen, bread, and wine—home-made, nor of keeping on the premises pigs, turkeys, peacocks, guinea-fowls, rabbits, and whatever else can be profitable under good management. But I have been amazed at the muddle and squalor of those households in which a hundred anxieties, provocations of temper, and risks of loss are endured, for the sake of an economy that is always doubtful and often oppressive. All rural occupations are useful, but most of them only when one is in a position to undertake them on a fairly large scale. In other cases it is better to stick to one's own business and to do that thoroughly. By simplifying things, order becomes

easier, the mind less distracted, subordinates more faithful, and domestic life more delightful.

If I could turn out a hundred pieces of cloth per annum I might possibly see my way to taxing myself with it at home; but for the sake of a few ells shall I sow hemp and flax, and go to the trouble of having it soaked, and stripped, and spun, and of sending it somewhere to be woven, and somewhere else to be bleached? When everything was reckoned up, allowing for losses, frauds, bad work, and incidental expenses, I am quite satisfied I should find my cloth very dear. As it is I choose it to my liking without any such worry. I only pay what it is really worth, because I buy wholesale from a warehouse. Then, again, I never change my dealers, any more than I do my workmen and servants, unless I am obliged; and that rarely happens, whatever people say, if one chooses with the intention of abiding by it, and if one honestly fulfils one's own side of the contract.

## LETTER LXVIII.

IMENSTRÖM, *July 23rd* (VIII.).

Your ideas about my new residence are very much the same as my own. I certainly think that moderate cold is intrinsically quite as bad to bear as excessive heat. I hate north winds and snow; I have always had a hankering for sunny climes

where winters are unknown, and there was a time when the idea of living at Archangel or Yeniseisk seemed to me preposterous. I can scarcely realise that commercial and industrial labours can be carried on in some forlorn polar region, where for so long together liquids become solid, the ground as hard as rock, and the outside air fatal to life. It is the north that seems to me uninhabitable, and I find it just as difficult to understand why the tropics were considered to be so by the Ancients. Their deserts are arid enough, no doubt; but it is obvious that their well-watered regions must be well suited to man, for they entail few wants, and provide for the only absolute want he is there conscious of by lavish and unfailing natural productions. They say snow has its advantages. No doubt it has; it brings fertility to sterile regions; but I prefer those that are fertile of themselves, or rendered so by other means. It has its beauties, say they again. Well, so it ought; for they are to be found in everything, if one considers it in all its aspects; but the beauties of snow are the last that I shall discover.

But now that my dream of an unfettered life is shattered; now when perhaps the extent of my ambition should be to remain a fixture so long as hunger, cold, or ennui do not compel me to stir, I am beginning to judge of climates more by deliberation than by sentiment. There is little to choose between the frozen sky of the Samoyedes and the genial one of Ionia, when one can spend the time indoors as I do. What I should dread most would

perhaps be the perpetual sunshine of those scorching regions where one may live to old age without seeing rain half a score of times. Fine days are very convenient, but in spite of cold, and fog, and melancholy, I find the tedium of bad weather more endurable than that of fine.

I do not sleep so well as I did, and my restless nights, with their craving for sleep, set me thinking of all the insects by which man is plagued in hot countries, and during the summer of some northern ones. Deserts are no longer to my taste; conventional needs are becoming second nature to me. What should I gain by being independent of my fellows? I must have money, and with money I can be as comfortable at St. Petersburg as at Naples. In the north man is fettered by wants and obstacles, in the south he is enslaved by indolence and pleasure. In the north the outcast has no refuge; he is naked, cold, and hungry, and Nature would be as harsh to him as beggary and imprisonment. Under the equator he has the forests to fly to, and Nature suffices him when man does not. He finds there a refuge from destitution and oppression, but I, who am tethered by habits and destiny, must stay nearer home. I want a snug little cabin where I can breathe, sleep, keep warm, pace to and fro, and keep my accounts, and it is something to build it beside an overhanging cliff within sound of rushing water, where my surroundings will at times remind me how different things might have been.

I did once think of Lugano, and would have liked to go and look at it, but I have given up the idea. The climate is favourable; equally free from the oppressive heat of the Italian plains and the sudden changes and bitter cold of the Alps. Snow seldom falls there, and never stays long. There are olives, I am told, and beautiful scenery, but it is a very out-of-the-way corner. I was still more afraid of Italian ways, and when I bethought me of the stone houses I did not trouble to go. It is not real Switzerland. I should much prefer Chessel, and that is where I ought to be, had not the way seemed blocked. I have been led hither by a force which may be only the effect of my earliest notions of Switzerland, but which seem to be something more. Lugano has a lake, but a lake alone would not have induced me to leave you.

The part of Switzerland in which I am settling has become like a native place to me, or like one in which I had spent happy years in childhood. I feel dull enough here now,—that shows how low I am,—but I should be worse off anywhere else. This grand basin at the eastern end of Lake Lemán, so vast, so romantic, with such fine surroundings; these timber dwellings, these chalets, these cows with their big bells, coming and going from the mountains; the advantages of the lowlands and the nearness of the heights; a style of living that is both English, French, and Swiss; one language that I know, another that is my own, and a third, less often met with, that I do not understand; a tranquil

variety resulting from all this; a kind of unity little known among Catholics; the mildness of a western aspect, without a trace of north; this long level crescent of water, far-reaching and dim, from which distant vapours rise beneath the midday sun, and kindle in his glowing evening beams, and from which by night there comes the sound of waves that rise, roll in, and swell until they break and perish on the shore by which one rests—all this tends to keep me in a mood that is not to be found elsewhere. I do not exactly enjoy it, and yet I could scarcely do without it. In other places I should feel strange, because the scenery would not equal my expectations. I should know what to complain of if I wanted to blame my surroundings for the impotence and emptiness of my life; but here I can only put it down to vague desires and deceptive needs. I must therefore look within for resources which are possibly there unknown to myself; and if my impatience is incurable, at any rate my contingencies will be infinite.

I must confess that I like to own things even when they give me no pleasure; either because the hopeless sense of their emptiness inspires me with a sadness congenial to my settled mood, or because, when I can look forward to no other enjoyment, I find some consolation in a melancholy which is not acutely painful, and which leaves my dejected soul in a listless and mournful peace. This indifference to things in themselves attractive and once longed for, pathetic evidence as it is of the insatiable

hunger of our hearts, still soothes their restlessness, for it seems to our subtle ambition a sign of our superiority to what is sought by our fellows, and to everything offered us by Nature as being great enough for man.

I should like to know the whole world without the trouble of going to see it; life is too short to make it worth while overcoming my native indolence. I who dread the shortest journey, and sometimes even a simple removal, shall I set myself to scour the world to gain the rare advantage of knowing before the end of my days a number of useless facts, if I have the luck to return at all.

Let that man travel who has faith in his resources, who prefers fresh sensations, who expects undreamed of successes or pleasures, and for whom to travel is to live. I am neither soldier nor merchant, nor sightseer, nor scientist, nor social reformer; I am a careless observer of things around me, and I should bring back from the ends of the earth nothing of service to my country. I wish I had seen it and were back in my retreat with the certainty of never having to leave it again. The only thing I am fit for now is to end my days in peace. You doubtless remember that once when we were talking of the ways of spending time on board ship, with pipe, grog, and cards, I, who hate cards, who drink little, and do not smoke at all, made you no other reply than to put on my slippers, drag you indoors into the breakfast-room, hastily shut the window, and start pacing to and fro with you in

short steps on the carpet, beside the brazier on which the kettle was steaming. And you still talk to me of travelling! As I said before, the only thing I am fit for is to end my days in peace, while managing my household with moderation, simplicity, and comfort, so as to see my friends at home in it. About what else should I distress myself? And why spend life in preparations? A few more summers and a few more winters, and your friend the great traveller will be a handful of human ashes. You remind him that he ought to be useful, and that is just what he intends; he will contribute a few ounces of mould to the earth, and it may just as well be in Europe.

If I were equal to anything else I should undertake it; I should look upon it as a duty, and that would rouse me a little; but for my own sake I have no ambition to do anything. I shall be called a useful man if I do not live alone in my log house, and if I manage to keep everybody in it fairly happy, but that is not my idea of usefulness. It is not being useful to do with money what money can do anywhere, and to better the condition of two or three people, when there are men who bring ruin or deliverance to thousands. But after all, I shall be content in seeing the contentment of others. In my snug little room I shall forget the world outside; I shall narrow down to my lot, and possibly come to believe that my valley is the hub of the universe.

What then would it profit one to have seen the world, and why do I desire it? I must try to tell



you so as to define it to myself. You rightly conclude that regret for what I have missed seeing does not greatly disturb me. Had I a thousand years to live I should start to-morrow, but as I have not, the narratives of men like Cook, Norden, and Pallas have told me all I need to know about other lands. But if I had seen them I should compare like sensations under different skies; I should perhaps see a little more clearly into the relations between man and his environment, and as I am bound to write for lack of anything else to do, I might possibly say something less useless than at present.

Dreaming alone, without a light, on a rainy night, by the glowing embers of a good fire, I should love to say: I have seen sands, and seas, and mountains, capitals and deserts, tropical and arctic nights; I have seen the Southern Cross and the Little Bear, I have endured  $145^{\circ}$  of heat and  $130^{\circ}$  of cold.<sup>1</sup> I

<sup>1</sup> This can only mean Fahrenheit,  $145^{\circ}$  above zero, or  $113^{\circ}$  above freezing-point, corresponds to something over  $50^{\circ}$  Réaumur and  $130^{\circ}$  below zero corresponds to  $72^{\circ}$  R. of frost. It is said that  $70^{\circ}$  of frost is not unknown in Nova-Zembla. But I cannot say whether a temperature of  $50^{\circ}$  has ever been experienced even on the banks of the Gambia. The maximum temperature of the Theban district is said to be  $38^{\circ}$ , and that of Guinea is also apparently below  $50^{\circ}$ , so that I doubt whether it reaches that point anywhere, unless it be quite accidentally, as in crossing the Samiel. Possibly there is also some doubt about the  $70^{\circ}$  of frost in any inhabited countries, though it has been claimed for Yeniseisk.

Here are some observations taken in 1786. At Ostrog-Viliki,  $61^{\circ}$  N. lat., the mercury froze on November 4th,

have trudged through snow at the Equator, and seen the glow of daylight up the pines of the polar circle; I have compared the simple outlines of the Caucasus with the splintered irregularities of the Alps and the tall forests of Mt. Felix with the bare granite of Thebes; I have seen Ireland with its moisture and Lybia with its drought; I have lived through the long winter of Edinburgh without suffering from cold, and I have seen camels frozen in Abyssinia; I have chewed betel, taken opium, and drunk kava; I have stayed in a village where they would have cooked me if they had not thought I was poisonous, and after that with a people who offered me worship because I appeared in their midst in a balloon; I have seen the Esquimaux happy with his bad fish and blubber, and the broker dissatisfied with his wines of Cyprus and Constance; I have seen the free man go a couple of hundred leagues in chase of a bear, and the tradesman eat, grow fat, weigh out his goods, and await extreme unction in the dingy shop that his mother established. I should recall incidents such as these: a mandarin's daughter died of shame because her husband saw her bare foot an hour too soon; while in the Pacific two girls in the scantiest of attire came boldly on deck into a crowd of foreign sailors to entice them ashore, and were overjoyed when a ship hove in and Réaumur's thermometer stood at  $31.5^{\circ}$ . On the morning of December 1st it fell to  $40^{\circ}$ , later in the day to  $51^{\circ}$ , and on December 7th to  $60^{\circ}$ . This makes  $70^{\circ}$  of frost quite credible either in Nova-Zembla, or in the extreme North of Russia, still nearer the Pole, and yet inhabited.

sight. A savage killed himself in despair in the presence of the murderer of his friend; while a true believer sold the wife who had loved, saved, and nourished him, and sold her the more dearly when he found she was likely to bear him a child.<sup>1</sup>

But if I had seen these things and plenty more, and could assure you, my deluded and gullible fellow-creatures, that I had seen them, do you not already know them? And are you on that account any less prejudiced in your narrow ideas? Have you any less need of being prejudiced if you are to preserve any shred of moral decency?

No; it is only a dream! Far better buy oil wholesale, and retail it out at a profit of a penny a pound.<sup>2</sup>

If Anacharsis,<sup>3</sup> Pythagoras,<sup>4</sup> and Democritus<sup>5</sup> were living now, it is hardly likely they would travel, for everything is divulged. The secrets of science are no longer the property of any one place; there are no longer any unknown manners, any remarkable institutions; it is no longer indispensable to visit distant scenes. If it were necessary to see everything with one's own eyes, now that the world is so wide and knowledge so complex, a lifetime would

<sup>1</sup> The well-known story to which this seems to be an allusion is not founded on fact.

<sup>2</sup> Apparently an allusion to Democritus.

<sup>3</sup> A witty Scythian prince who travelled widely in quest of knowledge, and visited Athens in the time of Solon.

<sup>4</sup> Greek philosopher 582-500 B.C.; taught transmigration and the properties of numbers.—TR.

<sup>5</sup> The "laughing philosopher" fifth century B.C.; taught atomic theory of the Universe.—TR.

not suffice either for the multitude of subjects to be studied or the number of places to be visited. We have given up these great schemes because their scope has become too immense, transcending the powers and even the hope of man; how then could they be feasible to my solitary powers and my extinguished hope?

What more shall I say? The maid who milks the cows, who sets the milk to stand, and skims and churns the cream, knows well that she is making butter. When she puts it on the table and sees the satisfaction with which it is spread on the bread, and sees also that more tea is put in the pot because the butter is so good, she is rewarded for her trouble; she has done what she wanted to do. But when a man strives after what is just and useful, does he know what he will produce, or even whether he will produce anything at all?

In truth this Gorge of Imenstrôm is a place of deep tranquillity, where I see nothing above me but dark pines, bare rocks, and the infinite sky, while below me fields tilled by human labour stretch away to the far distance.

In former days men reckoned their length of life by the number of spring-times they had seen; and I, under my wooden roof like those of old, will reckon what remains of mine by the number of times you pay that annual visit of a month's duration that you promised me.

## LETTER LXIX.

IMENSTRÔM, *July 27th* (VIII.).

I learn with pleasure that M. de Fonsalbe has returned from St. Domingo; but they say he is beggared; and a married man, too. I am also told that he has business at Zurich, and must soon go there.

Tell him to call here; he will be most welcome. You must warn him, however, that he will fare badly in other respects, though I do not think he will much mind that. Unless he has greatly changed he is thoroughly sound at heart. Does a good heart ever change?

I should not pity him so much for the wrecking of his house by hurricanes, and the shatter of his hopes, were he not married; but as things are I am very sorry for him. If his wife is a wife indeed, he will be distressed to see her unhappy; while if she is no more than a woman who shares his house and bears his name, he will be sunk in incompatibilities from which weather alone offers a way of escape. I have not heard whether he has or has not any children.

Make him promise to take Vevey on his way, and to spend a few days here. Madame Dellemar's<sup>1</sup> brother is perhaps fated to visit me. A sudden hope arises within me. Tell me something about him,

<sup>1</sup> Letter XL.—TR.

you who know him better than I. Congratulate his sister on his escape from the recent miseries of the voyage home. No—do not give her any message from me; let bygones be bygones.

But let me know when he will come, and tell me in confidence what you think of his wife. I hope he will bring her with him; it is almost necessary that he should. As a pretext for persuading them, you may urge that now is the best time of the year for seeing Switzerland. If they fear the trouble and expense, assure them that she can stay on at Vevey both with comfort and propriety, while he finishes his business at Zurich.

## LETTER LXX.

IMENSTRÔM, *July 29th* (VIII.).

Though my last letter was only sent off the day before yesterday, I am writing again without anything special to say. If both letters reach you at the same time do not look for something urgent in this; I give you warning that the only news it contains is that we are having wintry weather. That is my reason for writing and for spending an afternoon by the fire. The mountains are covered with snow, a cold rain is bringing out the floods in the valleys; it is chilly even down by the lake, and up here the temperature was only 5° (Réaumur) at noon, and below 2° a little before sunrise.

I do not dislike these spells of winter in the middle of summer. Up to a certain point change is congenial even to steady-going men, to those even who are the slaves of habit. Some of our organs grow weary of too prolonged stimulation; I am thoroughly enjoying the fire at present, whereas in winter it annoys me, and I get away from it.

These alternations, more sudden and violent than in the plains, make the trying climate of the mountains in a sense more interesting. The master a dog likes best is not one who feeds it well and leaves it in peace, but one who chastises and caresses, threatens and forgives. A variable, stormy, uncertain climate becomes a necessity to us in our restlessness; a more genial and uniform one, though quite to our taste, soon leaves us apathetic.

Possibly settled weather, cloudless skies, and perpetual summer appeal more to the imagination of the multitude, because then the primitive instincts absorb less time, and because men are more alike in regions where there is least variety in weather, outlines, and everything else. But places full of contrasts, of beauty and terror, with the experience they give of widely different scenes and rapid alternations of feeling, uplift the imagination of exceptional men towards the romantic, the mysterious, and the ideal.

Cultivated regions of unvarying mildness may breed men of great learning, and burning sands are the home of gymnosophists and ascetics. But mountainous Greece, cold and mild, harsh and

genial, Greece with her snow and her olives, had Orpheus, Homer, and Epimenides; while Caledonia, more trying, more changeable, more arctic and less fortunate, produced Ossian.

When trees, streams, and clouds, are peopled by the souls of ancestors, by the spirits of heroes, by dryads and deities; when invisible beings are chained in caverns or borne on the winds; when they wander over the silent tombs and are heard moaning in the air on moonless nights; what a homeland is that for the heart of man! What a world to inspire eloquence.<sup>1</sup>

Beneath an unchanging sky in a boundless plain, where the upright palms cast their shadows on the banks of a broad still river, the Mussulman seats himself on his cushions and smokes all day long amid the fans that wave before him.

But moss-grown cliffs overhang a deep and tossing sea, and all through the long winter a thick mist has cut them off from the world; once more the sky is clear, the violet and strawberry bloom, the days lengthen, the woods grow green. On the tranquil Ocean daughters of warriors sing of the battles and the hope of their fatherland. But now the clouds begin to gather, the sea grows angry, the lightning shatters the ancient oaks, the ships are engulfed; snow covers the heights, torrents sweep away the cabin and carve out deep gorges. Then the wind

<sup>1</sup> It is peculiarly helpful to the poet; he who wants to express whatever he imagines has a great advantage over him who must stick to facts, and only say what he believes.



changes, the sky is clear and cold. The starlight shows the planks on the still threatening sea; the daughters of the warriors are no more. The winds drop, and all is calm, human voices are heard on the cliffs and "cold drops drip from the roof." The Caledonian girds on his arms, he sets out by night, he crosses mountains and torrents, he hastens to Fingal and cries "Slisama is dead, but I have heard her voice; she will not forsake us, she has summoned thy friends, she has commanded us to conquer."

The North seems to produce heroic enthusiasm and the colossal dreams of a sublime melancholy.<sup>1</sup> To the South belong austere conceptions, mystic reveries, inscrutable dogmas, cabbalistic and magical secret sciences, and the stubborn fanaticism of hermits.

Plausible arguments against the predominating influence of climates have been found in the blending of races and the multiplicity of causes, whether associated with the climate or not, that modify human character. We seem too only to have caught the merest glimpse of the operation and effects of this climatic influence. Nothing has been taken into account but the temperature, and that is not even the chief factor, much less the sole one.

Even if the annual aggregate of heat were the same in Norway as in Hedjâz,<sup>2</sup> the difference

<sup>1</sup> Another vague generalisation; and if this criticism serves little purpose here, it will be useful elsewhere, in other passages to which it might be applied.

<sup>2</sup> A province of Arabia.—TR.

between them would still be very great, and that between the Arab and the Norwegian almost equally so. To the former Nature's aspect is constant, all days are alike, there is no change of seasons, and the parched soil preserves a scorching monotony. The other, after a long season of gloomy fogs, when the earth is frozen, the waters rigid, the sky wild with tempests, will see a new season brighten the skies, set the waters flowing, and enrich the gay and blossoming earth with harmonious tints and romantic sounds. In spring he enjoys hours of surpassing beauty; in autumn he has days more charming still in their very sadness, for it fills the soul without betraying it, and pervades and nourishes it with a rapture full of mystery, grandeur, and regrets, instead of distracting it with delusive pleasure.

Possibly the different aspects of earth and sky, and the stability or transitoriness of natural features, can only impress highly-organised men, and not that multitude which seems restricted, either by incapacity or misery, to mere animal instinct. But it is these men of larger mind that lead their country, and sway the crowd, by institutions, by example, and by open or secret efforts; so that the crowd itself is unconsciously governed by those natural influences to which I have referred.

One of the chief of these causes is no doubt to be found in the air we breathe. The emanations and exhalations from the earth and its vegetation vary with cultivation and other circumstances, even when there is no perceptible change of temperature. Thus

when it is argued that the people of a certain country have altered, though its climate is still the same, it does not seem to me to be a valid objection; it only takes account of the temperature, and yet the air of one place would often not suit the inhabitants of another, though the summers and winters might seem the same.

Moral and political causes act at first more powerfully than climatic influence; they have a rapid and immediate effect which exceeds that of physical causes, though the latter, being more permanent, are more powerful in the long run. Nobody is surprised that Parisians have changed since the time when Julian<sup>1</sup> wrote his *Misopogon*. The force of circumstances has substituted for the original Parisian character a blend derived from the inhabitants of a great inland town, along with Picards, Normans, Champenois, Tourangeaux, Gascons, Frenchmen generally, Europeans even; the character, in a word, of the subjects of a kingdom whose external features are free from extremes.

<sup>1</sup> Julian the Apostate (A.D. 331-363), Emperor of Rome. The *Misopogon* was a satire on the effeminate and luxurious citizens of Antioch.—TR.

## LETTER LXXI.

IMENSTRÖM, *August 6th* (VIII.).

If there is one thing in the world which from time to time arrests my attention and astounds me, it is that being who appears to us the end of so many means, and yet seems to be the means to no end; who is wholly on the earth, and yet is of no service either to it or to himself;<sup>1</sup> who seeks, combines, agitates, and reforms, and yet always does new things in the old way, and old things with ever-renewed hope; whose nature is activity, or rather the unrest of activity; who is wild to find what he seeks, and wilder still when he has nothing to seek; who sees in what he has gained only a means of gaining something else, and even while he enjoys anything, finds nothing in the gratification of his desires but a new impulse to further him towards what was once undesired; who would rather long for what he used to dread than have

<sup>1</sup> Probably the rest of nature would be equally obscure to our eyes. If we find in man more grounds for surprise it is because we see more of him. It is above all when we try to get to the heart of a thing that we are everywhere made aware of the limits of our ideas. In any object which is in great measure known to us, we feel that the unknown is linked with the known; we see that we are on the point of conceiving this residuum, and yet that we never shall conceive it.

nothing left to look forward to; whose greatest calamity would be to have nothing to suffer; who is intoxicated by obstacles, and dejected by pleasures; who sets no value on rest till he has lost it; and who, drifting ever from illusion to illusion, has nothing and can have nothing but illusion to expect, and never does more than dream of life.

## LETTER LXXII.

IMENSTRÖM, *August 6th* (VIII.).

I can scarcely be surprised that your friends blame me for shutting myself up in a lonely and out-of-the-way place. It was only what I had to expect, and I must also agree with them that my tastes seem at times contradictory. I fancy, however, that the opposition is only apparent, and is due to their crediting me with a decided preference for the country. But I am not exclusively fond of what is called living in the country, nor have I any aversion to the town. I know which kind of life I consider intrinsically preferable, but I should be at a loss to say which suits me just now.

So far as the places themselves are concerned there are few towns that I should care to settle in, and yet perhaps there are none that I should not prefer to such country as I have seen in several of the provinces. If I wanted to imagine the locality

ideally suited to me it would not be in a town. And yet I do not give a decided preference to the country; for if in straitened circumstances, it is easier to make life bearable there than in the town, I consider that with plenty of means it is much easier in large towns than elsewhere to adapt oneself with perfect comfort to one's surroundings. The whole question is therefore subject to so many qualifications that I cannot decide in the abstract. What I like is not exactly a thing of a particular kind, but the one that of its kind comes nearest to perfection, the one that I recognise as being truest to its type.

I should prefer the life of a wretched Finlander amid his icy crags to that led by countless little tradesmen in certain towns, where, all swathed in custom, haggard with discontent and living on the follies of others, they fancy themselves superior to the robust and rollicking fellow who vegetates in the country and makes merry every Sunday.

I like well enough a clean little town, well built and pleasantly situated, with a tastefully planted park as public promenade, instead of dreary boulevards; with a convenient market and beautiful fountains, where a select few can meet, who are neither remarkable nor celebrated, nor yet learned people, but well-disposed, pleased to see each other, and not without wit; a little town in fact where there is the least possible amount of misery, mud, strife, gossip, vulgar worship, and slander.

I like still better a very large town containing all

the advantages and all the allurements that human ingenuity has devised, where one finds the pleasantest manners and the most enlightened intelligence; where, in its immense population, one may hope for a friend and choose one's acquaintances; where one can lose oneself at will in the crowd; be both esteemed, independent, and unknown; live in any style one likes, and even change it without exciting remark; where one can make choices, order one's ways, and form habits, without any other judges than the people to whom one is really known. Paris is the capital which embodies to the fullest extent all the advantages of town life, and so, though I have probably turned my back on it for ever, I cannot wonder that so many people are led, some by their taste, others by their passions, to prefer it as a place of residence to any other place.

Any one unqualified for the occupations of country life finds himself quite stranded there; he feels that his talents are not suited to the life he has chosen, and that he would succeed better in some other line, even if he considered it less worthy and congenial. For living on an estate, rural habits are indispensable, and there is hardly time to acquire them when youth is past. One must have muscular arms, and enjoy planting, grafting, and hay-making with one's own hands; one should also be fond of hunting or fishing. Otherwise one is conscious of not being equal to one's environment, and the thought presents itself "In Paris I should

not feel this incongruity; my conduct would harmonise with my surroundings, though both conduct and surroundings might be out of harmony with my real tastes." Thus one cannot recover one's true place in the order of the world if one has been out of it too long. The settled habits of youth denaturalise our temperament and affections, and if we happen in later life to be left entirely free, we can only approximate to our ideal, and a perfectly congenial sphere is impossible.

Paris is all very well for a time, but it would never do to spend all one's life there; it is contrary to human nature to be always shut in by stone walls, between the mud and the roof-tiles, for ever cut off from the glorious scenes of nature. The charms of society are not without value; they divert us and captivate our fancy, but they do not satisfy the soul or compensate us for what we have lost; they cannot suffice the man who has nothing else in the town to fall back upon, who is not duped by the promises of idle rumour, and who knows the paltriness of pleasures.

Certainly, if any lot can give entire satisfaction, it is that of a freeholder with no outside cares, yoked neither to a profession nor to passions, quietly living on a pleasant estate, and prudently managing his land, his house, his family, and himself. He courts neither worldly successes nor failures, but only desires to enjoy as they come those simple, familiar pleasures, that sweet abiding joy, that each day brings in its train.



With a wife like himself, with one or two children, and a friend like one you know, with health, a comfortable estate in a pleasant situation, and with the spirit of order, he has all the happiness that a wise man's heart can contain. Some of these privileges I possess; but a man who has ten wants is not happy when nine are supplied; that is and must be characteristic of man. It would ill become me to complain, and yet happiness is quite out of my reach.

I do not regret leaving Paris, but I remember a conversation I once had with a distinguished officer who had just retired from the service and settled in Paris. It was late in the day, and I was calling on Monsieur T.; there were others present, but they went down into the garden, and we three remained alone. Our host ordered up some porter, and shortly after went out, leaving me alone with the officer. Some parts of our conversation I have never been able to forget. I cannot tell how he happened to drop on this topic, nor how much the after-dinner porter may have had to do with his self-revelation; be that as it may, I will give you what he said almost word for word. It will show you a man who expects never to tire of amusing himself, and his hope may be justified, for he aims at regulating his very amusements by an order of his own, thus making them minister to a kind of passion which will only end with his life. What he said struck me as so remarkable, that next morning, finding I could recall it sufficiently well, I took the trouble to write it out, so as to preserve

it among my notes. Here it is; I am too idle to copy it, so please let me have it back.

“ I wanted a profession and got one, but I soon saw that there was no good to be got out of that, at any rate by me. I saw too that there was only one external thing worth troubling oneself about, and that is gold. One must have it, and the advantage of having enough is just as real as the necessity of not seeking it too greedily. Gold is a force, it stands for all the faculties of man, for it opens to him all paths and gives him a right to all enjoyments; it is no less useful to the good man than to the sensualist, for attaining his ends. I have also been the dupe of a craving to observe and to know; I carried it too far, and laboriously acquired information that is useless to man’s reason, and that I shall now proceed to forget. Not that I shall be any the happier for forgetting it, but I paid for it too dearly. I have travelled a little, lived in Italy, crossed Russia, seen China. As these journeys were exceedingly wearisome, I thought I would travel for pleasure when I was released from the duties of my profession. Foreigners were always talking of your Alps, so off I went there like everybody else.”

“ Then you found compensation for the tedium of the plains of Russia.”

“ I saw what colour snow is in summer, and found that Alpine granite is hard, that water descends quickly when it falls from a height, and various other matters of that sort.”

“ But seriously, were you not satisfied? Did you bring back no pleasant recollections, no fruits of observation? ”

“ I know the shape of the pans used for making cheeses, and I am in a position to decide whether the plates of the *Tableaux topographiques de la Suisse* are accurate, or whether the artists have drawn on their imagination, as is often the case. What matters it to me that a handful of men crushed a far greater number below with the stones they rolled down. If north-easters and snow still reign for nine months in the meadows as of old, that wonderful phenomenon will not tempt me to live there now. I am pleased to know that at Amsterdam plenty of people earn bread and beer by unlading casks of coffee, but I can get coffee elsewhere without breathing the bad air of Holland or shivering at Hamburg. Every country has good points, but Paris is said to have fewer bad ones than any other place; that may be or may not, but I have my little ways in Paris, and here I shall stay. With common sense and something to live on one can be comfortable anywhere, if there are sociable fellow-creatures. Our heart, our head, and our purse, have more to do with our happiness than places. I have seen the grossest immorality in the deserts of the Volga, and the most absurd pretensions in lowly Alpine valleys. At Astrakhan, Lausanne, and Naples, man groans as he does in Paris, and he laughs in Paris as he does at Naples and Lausanne. Everywhere the poor suffer and

the rest torment themselves. True, the diversions of the populace in Paris are not just those that I like to see the populace amused by; but you will admit that I could not find elsewhere pleasanter society or a more convenient life. I have given up those fancies that absorb too much of one's time and means. I have only one dominant taste now, call it a craze if you like; it will never leave me, for there is nothing visionary about it, and it does not involve great trouble for a worthless end. I like to turn to the very best account my time, my money, and my whole being. The passion for order is a better way of spending time, and produces far greater results than the other passions; it lets nothing be utterly wasted. Happiness is less costly than pleasures."

"Granted! But what kind of happiness are we speaking of? To spend one's days in playing cards, dining, and discussing some new actress may be pleasant enough, as you rightly remark, but a life like that will not mean happiness to a man of large desires."

"You want vivid sensations and violent emotions; it is the thirst of a noble soul, and you are young enough to be deluded by it. As for myself, I do not care to be thrilled for an hour and then bored for a month; I prefer more frequent enjoyment, without the boredom. My manner of life will never weary me because it is bound up with order, and I am fond of that order."

That is all I have preserved of our talk, which

lasted a good hour in the same style. I confess that if he did not reduce me to silence, at any rate he set me pondering deeply.

## LETTER LXXIII.

IMENSTRÔM, *September* (VIII.).

I shall feel very solitary while you are from home. Who will share my life when you are roaming beyond the seas? It is only now that I begin to realise what loneliness means. You say you will not be away very long; that may be, but shall I be much better off on your return? Have these new duties that are usurping the whole of your time made you forget these Alps of mine and the promise you gave me? Did you think Bordeaux so very near the Alps?

I will not write again until you return. I do not like sending letters at a venture on the mere chance of their reaching one's correspondent, with no possibility of a reply for three months, and perhaps not for twelve. As I shall be a fixture here, I shall hope to hear from you before your return.

I am sorry M. de Fonsalbe has business to settle in Hamburg before attending to that in Zurich, but as he expects it will take him some time, the worst season of the year may be over before he comes to Switzerland. So you may let the arrangements we had planned for this autumn stand over till then.

You must on no account start until he has definitely promised to spend a few days here.

You see how deeply it concerns me. I have no hope of getting you here, so do at least let me have some one you have loved. I should be charmed with what you tell me to expect of him, if I could go into raptures about anything so far in advance. I have given up counting on the fulfilment of doubtful contingencies.

## NINTH YEAR.

### LETTER LXXIV.

IMENSTRÔM, *June 15th* (IX.).

I was absurdly overjoyed to receive your note. For the moment it really brought Bordeaux nearer to my lake than Port-au-Prince or the Isle of Gorée. So your affairs have prospered, and that means a great deal. The soul can make shift to subsist on that, when it has no other nourishment.

I myself am bored to extinction. Not that I am eating my heart in idleness; on the contrary, I keep myself busy; but the utter inanity of things is killing me.

I must be concise like yourself. I am at Imenstrôm. I have no news of M. de Fonsalbe. Besides, I no longer hope for anything, and yet . . . . Farewell. *Si vales, bene est.*

When I think of your calm and busy life, engaged as you are in congenial work varied by the pleasure of restful amusements, I almost go so far as to condemn independence, fond of it though I am. It is beyond dispute that man needs an object in life

to attract him, and a career to engross and govern him. And yet it is a fine thing to be free, to choose what is adapted to one's resources, and not to be like a slave always working for another. But I am too conscious of all the futility and vanity of what I am busy with, and this lukewarm estimate of the real worth of things is next door to disgust with them all.

So you are selling Chessel and buying property near Bordeaux. Shall we never meet again? You were so well off as you were! But each of us must fulfil his own destiny. It is not enough to seem contented; even I, to all appearances, should be that, and yet I am not happy. If you ever find yourself so, send me some Sauterne;<sup>1</sup> till then I do not want it. But you, good and sensible fellow that you are, with a heart swayed by reason, you, whom I esteem but cannot imitate, you are sure to be happy; you know how to make good use of life, whereas I keep expecting it. I am always looking for something beyond, as if my time were not being wasted, as if eternal death were no nearer than my visionary hopes.

<sup>1</sup>A wine of Bordeaux.—TR.



## LETTER LXXV.

IMENSTRÖM, *June 28th* (IX.).

I will give up hoping for brighter days. The months roll round, year follows year, everything wakes to new life in vain; I am still the same. Surrounded by all that I desired, everything eludes me; I have grasped nothing, I possess nothing; my span of life is wasting away in the weariness of a long silence. Whether it be that the idle cares of life make me oblivious of natural surroundings, or that the fruitless craving for enjoyment overshadows them, each season that comes but widens the desolation that is ever around me. No comradeship cheered my tedium in the long fogs of winter; spring came to nature, but it did not come to me; all creatures felt the touch of reawakening life, but to me its quenchless flame brought exhaustion, not invigoration, and I felt myself an alien in a happy world. And now the blossoms have fallen, and even the lily is over; the heat is increasing, the days are longer, and the nights more lovely. But notwithstanding all the season's charm, to me these glorious days mean nothing, and the delicious nights bring only bitterness. Ah me, peace of dim glades, breaking of waves, silence and moonlight, birds piping by night! Where are the feelings you used to inspire?

Phantoms only remain; they appear before me, pass, repass and vanish, like a cloud that takes a hundred pale, weird forms. I strive in vain to enter calmly on the night of the tomb; my eyes will not close. These phantoms of life are always present disporting themselves in dumb show, advancing and receding, sinking and re-appearing; I see them all and hear not a sound; they are a vapour; I seek them, and they are no more. I listen, I call, and cannot even hear my own voice; I am left in a ghastly void, alone, forlorn, uncertain, beset by unrest and amazement, in the midst of flitting shadows, in silent, impalpable space. Inscrutable Nature! thy splendour overwhelms me and thy favours consume me. What are these long days to me? Their light dawns too soon; their glaring noon exhausts me; and the soul-piercing harmony of their glorious nights disturbs the ashes of my heart, for the genius asleep beneath its ruins feels a shuddering pulsation of life.

The snows melt on the heights, the storm-clouds roll up the valley; then beneath glowing skies the earth ripens her fruit; but in me, wretched man that I am, barren winter still remains. Mellow radiance of the setting sun! Vast shadows of the changeless snow-clad peaks! Alas that a man should feel no thrill untinged by sadness when the torrent murmurs far off in the universal silence, when the chalets are being closed for the night's rest within, and when the moon is rising over the Velan.

At the time when I emerged from that childhood

to which men look longingly back, I pictured and even tasted real life, but my experiences were all chimerical; the creatures I saw turned out to be shadows, when I sought for harmony I found only conflict. Then I sank into gloom, an aching void filled my heart, boundless cravings devoured me in silence, and at the age when life should really begin my only mood was one of life-weariness. Everything hinted to me of that complete universal felicity, the ideal image of which survives in man's heart when the means of attaining it, natural though they be, seem banished from Nature. I was then only guessing at what men had lost, but when I saw the Alps with the shores of their lakes and the silence of their chalets, and felt there the permanence and stability of epochs and surroundings, I recognised isolated features of Nature as she was meant to be. I saw the moonlight flashed back from facets of rock-schist and wooden roofs; I saw men free from desires, I trod the short mountain grass; I caught whispers of another world.

Then I came back to earth again; and there that blind faith in the absolute existence of things vanished, that dream of fixed adjustments, perfections, and positive joys. It is a dazzling conjecture that captivates the young heart, but only evokes a sad smile in one that has been chilled by deeper thought or ripened by the lapse of time.

Unending mutations, aimless action, universal inscrutability—that is all we know about this world in which we reign.

Some resistless destiny shatters our dreams, and yet their place must be filled: what does it give us instead? Power wearies; pleasure eludes our grasp; glory comes when we are dust; religion is a system for the wretched; love used to wear the colours of life, but the shadow comes, the rose fades and falls, and eternal night is upon us.

And yet our soul was great; it knew the force of *will* and *ought*; but what has it *done*? It does not pain me to see, as I have done, the prone and death-stricken trunk of some venerable tree that two hundred springs had stirred to fruitfulness. It has fed living creatures, it has received them to its shelter; it has drunk the rain, and lived on through stormy gales; it dies amid trees that have grown from its fruit. Its destiny is fulfilled, it has obtained what was promised it; it is no more, but it has been.

How different the pine that chance has set by the edge of the marsh! It shot up wild, strong, and stately, like the tree of the forest depths, but all in vain was its energy. Its roots are sodden with fetid water; they burrow in foul slime; its trunk grows weak and languid; its top, warped by the dank winds, sways feebly; its poor and scanty fruit falls into the mud and comes to nothing. Pining, distorted, yellow, prematurely old, and already leaning over the marsh, it seems to invite the storm that one day must uproot it; its life is over long before it falls.

## LETTER LXXVI.

*July 2nd (IX.).*

Hantz was right<sup>1</sup>; I shall stick to him. He has a brother living some half a dozen leagues away, by trade a well-sinker. I had a number of pipes to lay, so I sent for him, and am very pleased with him; he is an honest and sensible fellow. He is simple, and has the kind of self-reliance that is based on natural gifts and the consciousness of unswerving integrity. Though not over robust, he is a good worker, and does things carefully and accurately.

In my presence he has been neither constrained nor effusive, neither abject nor familiar. I went in person to the village he comes from, and learnt what was thought of him there, and I even saw his wife. On my return I made him fit up a spout and trough at a place where he could scarcely imagine I should have any use for it. Then while he was busy with other work, I had a little peasant's cottage put up close to this spring, built in the style of the locality, with several rooms, kitchen, barn and stable all under the same roof; just large enough for a small household and for wintering a couple of cows. Now he and his wife are both settled there, with the bit of land he needs and several other things. So when

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Letter LXI., paragraph 3.—TR.

pipes run short, I shall have a maker of them always on the spot. The house was ready in twenty days; that is one of the advantages of buildings of this kind; when the materials are handy, half a score of men can put one up in a fortnight, and there is no need to wait for any plaster to dry.

On the twentieth day all was ready. It was a fine evening, so I made him leave work a little earlier and took him to the place. "This house," said I, "this stock of wood which you can replenish year by year from my estate, these two cows and the meadow up to this hedge, are reserved henceforth for your use, and will always remain so if you conduct yourself properly, as I have not the least doubt you will."

I will mention two circumstances just to show you how worthy the man was of it, and more. Feeling apparently that long service alone could fitly express his deep sense of obligation, he simply insisted that everything was wonderfully like what he had imagined as the height of his ambition, like what he had pictured since his marriage as the supreme good, beyond the reach of hope; the one thing he would have asked of heaven if he could have made a single petition with the certainty of an answer. That will please you, but here is something that will surprise you. He has been married eight years, and has had no children; poverty was their only inheritance, for burdened with debt left by his father he could scarcely earn enough by his work for himself and his wife. But now she is expecting to bear

him a child. Consider the few facilities, and even chances, of cultivating one's gifts afforded by a state of continual poverty, and then say whether there could possibly be more natural nobility and uprightness than this man possesses, without a trace of ostentation either towards others or himself.

I am fortunate in having something to live on without owing it to a profession which would compel me to keep up appearances, and to waste in stupid trifles what can accomplish so much. I agree with the moralists that great wealth is often a doubtful advantage, and in very many cases is put to fatal uses; but I will never concede to them that an independent income is not one of the greatest sources of happiness and even of wisdom.

## LETTER LXXVII.

*July 6th (IX.).*

In this diversified region, where within a limited space natural features differ so widely both in outlines, products, and climates, the human race itself cannot have a uniform character. Racial distinctions are here more marked than elsewhere; they were not blended and confused in these remote districts, long considered inaccessible, and in these deep valleys, once the refuge of shattered and fugitive hordes. These mutually alien tribes have remained

isolated within their rugged natural barriers; they have preserved as many distinctive peculiarities in government, language, and manners as there are valleys, or sometimes even pastures and hamlets, among the mountains. One may cross the same stream six times in an hour's walk and find as many different races distinct in features and with traditions confirming their independent origin.

The cantons as they are to-day<sup>1</sup> are made up of a multitude of states. The weaker ones have been amalgamated by fear, by agreement, by desire or by compulsion, with the republics that had become powerful, and the latter, by means of negotiation, expansion, influence, invasion, or conquest, after five centuries of prosperity, have become possessed of all the land within sound of the bells of their capitals.

There is something noble in their very weakness, if only they had knowledge and skill to find in it the means of that general well-being which is conceivable in a district marked out by the nature of things, but impossible in a vast country given over to the fatal pride of conquest and the still more deadly ostentation of empire.

Now please give me credit for beginning with the intention of simply discussing the facial characteristics of the people! In certain parts of the Oberland, where the general slope of the pastures is towards the west or north-west, the women have a whiteness of skin that would excite remark in towns, and a freshness of complexion that no town can

<sup>1</sup> Before the last revolution in Switzerland.



show. Elsewhere, at the foot of the mountains about Fribourg, I have seen features of a high type of beauty that might be characterised as tranquil dignity. I remember a farmer's servant-girl who had nothing remarkable about her but the curves of her cheek; but that was so fine, and gave to her whole countenance such a calm and dignified expression, that an artist might have gained from it a suggestion for the head of a Semiramis.

But clearness of complexion and individual striking or beautiful features are very far from general perfection of outline, and from that harmonious grace which constitutes true beauty. I will not pretend to settle so fine a point, but it seems to me that here there is a certain harshness of outline, and that as a rule one sees striking features or a picturesque rather than a perfect type of beauty. In the places I referred to at starting the cheek-bone is very prominent in nearly every case, and Porta<sup>1</sup> would classify them as sheep's heads.

If a French<sup>2</sup> peasant-girl happens to be pretty at eighteen, before twenty-two her tanned features seem coarse and jaded; but in these mountains the women preserve through all their hay-making the clear complexion of youth. It is a continual surprise to one in passing through their country, and yet it would be quite the exception for an artist to find a single model there, even if all but the face were left out of account.

<sup>1</sup> Neapolitan physiognomist, 1543-1615.

<sup>2</sup> The word *French* is too general.

It is said that nothing is so rare in the greater part of Switzerland as a fine figure. I know a painter who goes so far as to say that many of the women have no idea what is meant by it. He maintains that certain defects are there so universal that the majority cannot conceive anything different, and regard as imaginary, pictures painted from Nature, in Greece, England and France. Though this element of perfection would seem to belong to a type of beauty which is not Swiss, I cannot believe that it is entirely absent, as if the most attractive charms were excluded by the modern name which embraces so many families of totally distinct origin, and still differing in very marked characteristics.

If, however, this assertion is well founded, and also the statement that there is a certain irregularity of outline, it might be accounted for by the harshness which seems to belong to the atmosphere of the Alps. It is quite true that though Switzerland has some fine men, more particularly among the mountains, as at Hasli and the Haut Valais, it also contains a remarkable number of idiots and even more goitered, drivelling, and deformed semi-idiots. Many of the inhabitants, without the actual enlargement of goitre, seem to suffer from the disease of which it is a symptom. These swellings and obstructions may be attributed to the grosser elements in the water, and still more in the air, which accumulate and clog the ducts, and seem to make human nutrition akin to that of the plant. Can it be that the ground is there sufficiently cultivated for the

other animals, but still too much of a wilderness for man?

May it not be that the lowlands, covered as they are with soil produced by incessant trituration, exhale vapours better adapted to the requirements of highly organised creatures, while from rocks, bogs, and sunless waters, grosser particles are given off, unimproved by cultivation so to speak, and therefore injurious to delicate organs. The nitre of the perpetual snows may enter our pores too easily when summer opens them. Snow produces subtle but undeniable effects on the nerves and on sufferers from gout and rheumatism, and it is not improbable that it may have a still more occult effect on our system as a whole. Thus it would seem that Nature, whose results are always mixed in quality, has counter-balanced by unknown dangers, the romantic charms of regions unsubdued by man.

## LETTER LXXVIII.

IMENSTRÖM, *July 16th (IX.).*

I am quite of your opinion, and therefore have less excuse for being so long in making up my mind to write. There is something which sustains the soul in this communion with thinking men of diverse epochs. To dream of being with Pythagoras, Plutarch, or Ossian in the study of

some future L——, is an illusion not without sublimity; it is one of the noblest diversions of man. He who has seen how scalding is the tear on the cheek of the outcast indulges in dreams more enchanting still; he thinks he can tell the man of sorrowful mood how precious is the joy of his fellow; he will check the groans of the forgotten victim; he will restore a measure of energy to the broken heart, by bringing home to it those vast or comforting ideas by which some are led astray and others sustained.

We fancy our ills are of small account, and that moral good is within man's reach. We draw theoretical inferences which point to the idea of universal happiness; we overlook the force which keeps the human race sunk in confusion; we resolve to attack errors, to abide by natural principles, to say things that are good or that tend to goodness. Then we fancy ourselves less useless and forlorn on the earth; we mingle dreams of great undertakings with the quiet of an obscure life, and we find genuine pleasure in the possession of our ideal, because we expect to turn it to practical account.

The ideal state of things is a kind of new world as yet unrealised but still possible; human genius derives from it the notion of a harmony germane to our needs, and introduces on earth changes for the better copied from that supernatural type.

The endless versatility of man proves his aptitude for widely different modes of life, and it might be possible by making a selection from the highest

achievements of various times and places to create an environment more congenial to his heart than anything that has hitherto been offered him. That is the task before me.

One can only reach the close of day without ennui by undertaking work of some kind, however fruitless, and I will travel towards the eve of life deluded, if possible, and buoyed up by the hope of augmenting the resources bestowed upon man. My heart must have illusions, for it is too great not to yearn for them, and too weak to dispense with them.

Since the consciousness of happiness is our first need, what can be done by him who neither expects it now nor dares to hope for it in the future? Must he not try to find its radiance in a friendly eye, on the brow of a being like himself.<sup>1</sup> He cannot but be eager for the joy of his fellow, the only happiness he feels is that which he imparts. If he has not kindled in another the joy of living, if he has not been a source of gladness, the chill of death is at the core of his baffled heart, and he seems to be ending his days in the shadows of oblivion.

We talk of men who are self-sufficing and who find nourishment in their own wisdom; if they have eternity before them I admire and envy them; but if not, they pass my comprehension.

<sup>1</sup> "O Eternal, Thou art to be admired in the order of the spheres, but Thou art to be adored in the sympathetic look of the good man who is breaking his last crust into the hand of his brother." These are, I believe, the exact words of M., An. 2440.

For myself, not only are my present and future alike bare of happiness, but even if any practicable aspirations I might indulge in were realised I should be no better off. The affections of man are an abyss of cravings, regrets, and errors.

I do not tell you what I feel, what I wish, what I am; I have grown blind to my wants, and scarcely know my own desires. If you think you know my tastes, you will guess quite wrongly. You between your lonely heaths and mighty waters will wonder—“Where now is my absent friend, the one whom I found neither in Africa nor the Antilles! This is the misty hour his sadness delights in; he will be taking a walk and dreaming of my regrets at his absence and of the blankness of his year; he will be turning his ear westward as if the notes of my daughter’s piano could reach his lonely ear; he will be picturing the jasmine trained over my terrace, and my grey hat between the branches; he will be looking at the sand for the print of my slippers, and breathing the evening air.” Idle dreams; for I tell you I have already changed. Besides, is your sky always like mine, now that we have each sought in widely different climates a land remote from that of our earliest days.

When you are having mild evenings, here a wintry wind may come with the close of each scorching day. The sun may have parched the grass round the cow-sheds, and on the morrow the cows are eager to be out, expecting to find it freshened by the moisture of the night, but two feet of snow load

the roof under which they are confined, and they will be reduced to drinking their own milk. I myself am more uncertain and variable than this eccentric climate. What I like or find tolerable to-day by the time you have read my letter will perhaps be distasteful to me, and the difference will not be a great one. Suppose the weather suits me, it is calm, everything is still, and I start for a long ramble, and in a quarter of an hour I am back indoors again. All my intentions fled at the sight of a squirrel that raced to the top of a pine when it heard me or the sound of a blackbird piping overhead. I return and shut myself up in my study. In the long run I must hunt out a book that will not bore me. If any one comes to ask a question or to receive an order, they apologise for disturbing me, but they have really done me a good turn. This gloom goes as it came; so long as I am distracted I am content. Could I not get rid of it myself? No; I am fond of my melancholy; I cling to it while it lasts, and when it is gone I think it unspeakably foolish.

I am greatly changed, I tell you. I remember that life once used to chafe me, and that there was a time when I only endured it as an evil which could not last many months longer. But this memory seems now something quite outside myself; it would actually surprise me if I could be surprised by the fluctuations of my feelings. I see no reason at all for leaving any more than for staying. I am weary, but in the midst of my weariness I find there is

comfort in repose. Life both bores and entertains me. To arrive in the world, grow up, make a great stir, worry about all sorts of things, measure the orbit of the comets, and then after a few brief days to sleep beneath the grass of a cemetery, that seems to me ludicrous enough to be worth seeing through to the end.

But why maintain that it is our moods of ennui, or of morbid gloom, that unsettle and confuse our desires and our outlook, and distort our life itself into this consciousness of the collapse and futility of man's days? We have no business to let a melancholy temperament be judge of the colours of life. Do not ask the son of the Incas, chained down in the mines that supplied the gold for the palace of his ancestors and for the temple of the sun, or the blameless and diligent tradesman who begs in decrepit and neglected old age; do not ask the hosts of the woebegone what is the worth of human hopes and prosperities; do not ask Heraclitus<sup>1</sup> about the importance of our schemes, or Hegesias about the significance of life. Ask Voltaire, elated with successes, fêted in courts and admired throughout Europe, Voltaire the renowned, the clever, the witty and generous; ask Seneca at the throne of the Cæsars that he almost ascended himself; Seneca, with wisdom as his mainstay, honours as his diversion, and thirty millions as his heritage; for Seneca, so useful to men, and Voltaire, so amused at their follies, will show you the joys of the soul and peace

<sup>1</sup> Heraclitus, the weeping philosopher, circ. 5000 B.C.



of mind, the length and value of the procession of our days.

My friend! I have still a few hours to spend on the earth. We are poor, distracted creatures while we live, but we are so utterly null when we are dead! Then too one has always some scheme to complete. I have a great one on hand now: I want to measure the rain which falls here in ten years. I have given up the idea of the thermometer; it would mean getting up at night, and on dark nights I should need to keep a light burning, and to put it in a cabinet, because I like to have my room as dark as possible (my taste has not changed in that important particular, you see). Besides, in order to take an interest in noting the temperature here, I ought to keep myself acquainted with its variations elsewhere. I should like to have observations taken on the sands of Senegal, and on the mountain tops of Labrador. Another matter is more interesting to me; I should like to know whether there has been any fresh exploration of Central Africa. Those vast unknown regions where one might, I think . . . I am quite cut off from the world. If any more accurate notions of it are available, let me have them please. I am not sure that you understand me.

## LETTER LXXIX.

*July 17th (IX.).*

If I were to tell you that the prospect of attaining some celebrity would not in the least elate me, you would for the first time refuse to credit me; you would at any rate consider me mistaken, and rightly so. It is very difficult to separate the craving to stand well in one's own estimation from the no less natural pleasure of being esteemed by certain of one's fellows, and being reckoned by them as one of themselves. But the taste for quietness, and a kind of indolence of soul which has been confirmed in me by ennui, could easily make me forget that fascination, as I have forgotten others. What I need to restrain or to stimulate me is the dread of my own self-accusations if I were to improve nothing and do nothing, but languidly take things as they are, neglecting the only course of activity suitable to the obscurity of my life.

Must not man count for something, and in one way or another play a significant part? If not, he will sink into dejection and lose the dignity of his being; he will undervalue his powers, or if he realises them it will be to torture his baffled soul. He will not be listened to, followed, respected. Even that fraction of good that the barest life should produce will no longer be in his power. Simplicity is a very

fine and serviceable motto, but it has been ill understood. The mind which does not see both sides of a thing perverts the best maxims; it debases wisdom itself by robbing it of its opportunities, by plunging it into poverty, and by humiliating it in the resultant chaos.

Obviously a man of letters<sup>1</sup> in dirty linen, living in a garret, patching his clothes and copying anything he can lay hands on for a living, cannot easily be of service to the world, or have influence enough to do much good. At fifty he marries the washer-woman who lives on the same floor; or if he has made money and keeps a servant he marries her. Did he really mean to bring morality into ridicule, and make it a butt for the sarcasm of free-livers? He does more harm to public opinion than the priest who is paid to advocate daily the creed he has betrayed, than the factious monk who extols peace and self-effacement, than those virtuous quacks so common in certain circles, who interlard their talk with the words morals! virtues! honest man! and to whom in consequence one would not lend a sovereign without security.

Every man who has an upright mind and a desire to be useful, if only in his private life, every man in fact who is worthy of respect, seeks it. He shapes

<sup>1</sup> This term is only appropriate in this connection. I do not like to see it applied to savants or great writers, but to pamphleteers, professional scribblers, or at most such as are strictly and solely men of letters. A real magistrate is not a man of law. Montesquieu was not a man of letters, nor are several living authors.

his conduct with a view to gaining it even in matters on which public opinion is of no consequence, though he does not let his anxiety for it betray him into anything that is opposed to his duties or to the essential features of his character. If any rule is without exceptions, this must surely be the one; I would go so far as to say that it is always through some fault either of heart or of judgment if a man despises or pretends to despise public opinion, wherever justice does not require the sacrifice.

It is possible to be respected in the most obscure situation if one's surroundings are fairly comfortable, and if one maintains order at home and a touch of dignity in one's mode of life. It is possible to be so in poverty itself if one has a name and a reputation for work done, if one's manner is superior to one's lot, and if one can steer clear of what would be sordid misery in the mob, and even of the bareness of typical mediocrity. The man of lofty character is by no means on a level with the crowd, and if it requires attention to minute details to escape being confounded with it, I am sure he would make up his mind to pay it, nor can I see that there would be any vanity in so doing; a sense of the fitness of things leads every man to take his true place, and to try to get others to concede it to him. If this were a vain desire for precedence a superior man would dread the obscurity and privations of the wilderness as much as he dreads the depravity and wretchedness of the lowest grades; but what he really fears is self-degradation, not lack of distinction; it is not repug-

nant to him to miss a leading part, but to play one that is contrary to his nature.

If some kind of prestige is essential in all the actions of life, it is indispensable to an author. Popular esteem is one of his most powerful instruments; without it he merely follows a trade, and that trade becomes a paltry one because it takes the place of a noble calling.

It is absurd and revolting for an author to presume to lecture a man about his duties when his own character is unsatisfactory.<sup>1</sup> But if a profligate

<sup>1</sup>It is absurd and revolting for him to pretend to seek out principles and test the genuineness of virtues if he governs his own conduct by the easy maxims of society and sham conventional morality. No man should set up to tell others of their duties and the moral grounds of their conduct unless he is himself devoted to order, and desires above everything, not exactly the prosperity, but the felicity of the community. His sole aim must be to augment that under-current of happiness and well-being of heart which is the source of everything worth having, and which it is the task of intelligence to ceaselessly retrieve from the deterioration due to human frailty. Whoever is swayed by other passions and does not bend to this idea every human affection, whoever deliberately seeks honour, wealth, and even love or glory, was never meant for the noble calling of instructor of men.

He who preaches a religion without inwardly following it, and without respecting the supreme law of his heart, is a pitiful charlatan. Do not grow angry with him and hate the man himself, but vent your indignation on his duplicity; and if you cannot otherwise prevent him from corrupting the human heart, hold him up to infamy.

A still more detestable charlatan is he who presumes to talk of morality to men like himself, full of natural

moralist gains nothing but contempt, an unknown one is so ineffective that his writings are treated with ridicule even if he escapes it himself. Everything that should be held sacred among men lost its power when books on philosophy, ethics, and egotism and human infirmity, without submitting his own tastes, desires, and opinions to the control of order and moral equity; he debases the loftiest themes, he ruins what little we had left. If he has a craze for writing, let him invent stories and tinker at verses; if he has gifts for it let him translate, or be a *man of letters*, or an art-critic, and be useful in his own way; let him work for money or reputation, or less selfishly, for the credit of a society, for the advancement of science, and the glory of his country; but let him resign to the good man the function of imparting wisdom, and to the preacher the profession of moralist.

Printing has effected a great change in the social world. Some harm it was bound to do, but it could not well have done less. Its awkward consequences have been realised, but the means used to check them have produced results equally serious. Surely, however, in the present state of affairs in Europe some way might be found of harmonising freedom of the press with a method for separating the useful element in literature from the extravagances that counteract it. The harm is chiefly done by the wild assertions of party spirit, and by the amazing number of books that have nothing in them. Time, it is said, brings forgetfulness of what is unjust or injurious. But something more than that is required, both by individual men and even by the public as a whole. The author himself is dead by the time public opinion has taken shape or been rectified, and people are apt to be fatally indifferent to the true and upright amid the uncertainty of things present, though they usually escape from that spirit when dealing with things past. If my supposition were acted on, it would be permissible to write whatever is permissible to-

religion were displayed for sale on muddy quays<sup>1</sup> and when the most serious pages were used for the sordid purposes of traffic.

Even if popularity and notoriety were of themselves worthless, they ought not to be despised or neglected, for they are one of the chief means of attaining the most praiseworthy and important ends. It is equally a mistake to ignore them altogether or to consider nothing else, where action is concerned. Great things achieved gain distinction from their mere greatness, and there is no need to try and display them and set them off, but it is quite otherwise with great thoughts. The courage of him who perishes at sea is an example thrown away, and the noblest thought and wisest conception are equally wasted unless they are imparted to others; their

day, and public opinion itself would also be free. But those who did not want to wait for half a century, and those who could not lay hands on or would not read a score of volumes to discover one that was a book, would find it both convenient and helpful to have some external guarantee for the value of a book, and a course marked out for them, to follow or not as they pleased. An institution for this purpose would insist on the strictest impartiality, but there would be no restrictions on writing without its imprimatur, and hence its most obvious interest would be to deserve that public esteem which it could not exact by force. The stock objection is that just men are too scarce. I cannot say whether they are so scarce as people pretend, but it is certainly untrue to say there are none at all.

<sup>1</sup> In Paris the second-hand bookstalls are on the embankment of the Seine.—TR.

utility is contingent on their expression, and it is their celebrity that makes them fruitful.

An author should perhaps always prepare the way for his philosophical works by a good book of an interesting kind, which would be widely circulated, well read, and thoroughly enjoyed.<sup>1</sup> A man with a name speaks with more confidence; he gets through more work and does it better, because he has reason to hope it is not labour thrown away. Unfortunately one cannot always command the courage or the means for such precautions, and writings, like so many other things, are dependent on unexpected opportunities; they are determined by an impulse that is often outside our schemes and arrangements.

To write a book simply for a reputation is hack-work; there is something repulsive and servile about it, and though I feel the force of the reasons in favour of it, I cannot bring myself to undertake it, and should give it up again if I did. I do not want to make a start, however, with the work I am planning. It is too important and difficult ever to be fully accomplished, and it will be a great deal if at some future time it approximates to the idea in my mind. But this very remote prospect would not keep me going, and I must really make a plunge into authorship so as to gain courage to stick to it. I shall then have taken a definite line, and shall be bound to follow it as the fulfilment of my vocation.

<sup>1</sup> Thus the *Esprit des Loix* was preceded by *Lettres Persanes*.



## LETTER LXXX.

*August 2nd (IX.).*

I think with you that what is needed is a romance, a genuine romance like some we have already; but an elaborate work of that kind would take me a long time. In many respects I should be little qualified for it, and the plot would have to come to me as an inspiration.

I think I will write a book of travels. I will take my readers through the whole inhabited world, and when we have viewed it together, and grown used to each other, we will come home and discuss it. Thus do two elderly friends set out for a stroll; they examine and ponder things in silence, simply pointing to them with their sticks; but in the evening by the fireside they talk over what they saw during their walk.

The scene of life is full of beauty, and we must regard ourselves simply as spectators. We must take an interest in it without illusion and without passion, but also without indifference, just as we take an interest in the vicissitudes, the passions, and the adventures of a work of fiction, for the story of life is not lacking in eloquence.

The course of the world is a drama coherent enough to keep our attention, varied enough to arouse interest, sufficiently stable and according to

rule to satisfy our reason and to entertain us with its systems; problematic enough to awaken desires and supply food for passions. If we had nothing to suffer on earth the idea of death would be intolerable, but griefs sap our interest, things that jar on our tastes repel us, so that we turn our backs on it all without reluctance, just as we leave the stalls when a troublesome neighbour, and the sweltering heat, and the foul air of the crowd, have replaced desire by discomfort and curiosity by impatience.

What style shall I adopt? Any I like. I will write as I speak, without thinking about it; if I had to do otherwise I should not write at all. There is this difference, however, that the spoken word cannot be corrected, whereas one can erase from what is written anything that reads badly on revision.

In earlier times poets and sophists used to read their books to popular assemblies. Things should be read to suit the style in which they were written, and written as they are meant to be read. The art of reading is like that of writing. The various shades of grace and truth of expression in reading are as infinite as the turns of thought; I can scarcely conceive of a bad reader with a good written style, or a just and comprehensive understanding. Genius in feeling without the power of expression seems as unthinkable as forceful expression without a basis of feeling.

Whatever side one takes on the question whether everything has or has not been said about ethics,

one cannot infer that nothing is left to be done for that science, the only science of man. It is not enough for a thing to be said; it must be published, demonstrated, brought home to all, and universally accepted. Nothing has been done so long as the statute law does not conform to moral law,<sup>1</sup> and public opinion does not see things in their true light.

So long as disorder exists we must attack it. Are we not daily face to face with things which are due rather to defective understanding than the force of passion, things more mistaken than malicious, and not so much instances of individual crime as the almost inevitable result of public indifference and incapacity.

Is there not still need to ask the wealthy what fatality keeps them poorer and more uneasy than the day-labourers in their fields? To say to children who are blind to the baseness of their unfilial conduct: "You are neither more nor less than thieves, and thieves who ought to be more severely punished by law than he who robs a stranger. You add the most abominable disloyalty to open robbery. A pilfering servant is more sharply dealt with than an outsider because he is guilty of a

<sup>1</sup> The following curious passage occurs in some letters published by a writer named Matthew. "It is a necessary consequence of the depth of depravity to which the human race has sunk, and of the existing state of society as a whole, that there are many institutions equally incompatible with Christianity and morality." *Voyage à la rive de Sierra-Leone.*

breach of trust, and man must have security in his own house at any rate. And if this holds good for a hired servant, has it not still greater force in the case of a son of the house? Who has more scope for deception? Who neglects more sacred duties? Whose untrustworthiness inflicts more grief? If the objection is raised that certain considerations may prevent the law from stepping in, that shows still more clearly the need there is to enlighten public opinion and not to leave it to itself, as we have too often done; we must guide its fluctuations, and above all make it so respected that it can accomplish what our irresolute laws dare not take in hand.

Is there not still need to ask women endowed with sensibility, pure intentions, youth and frankness: "Why do you surrender to the first rascal that comes so many priceless treasures? Can you not see in his very letters, mixed up with the romantic jargon of his mawkish sentiments, expressions any one of which would be sufficient to betray his scant respect for you and the meanness of which he is conscious himself? He pleases you, captivates you, plays with you; he is leading you to desertion and disgrace. You would feel and know it, were it not for the weakness, or it may be indolence, that lets you imperil your honour for life. Perhaps for a single night's enjoyment you blight the whole of your existence. The law will not lay hands on him; he will have the shameful privilege of laughing at you. How came you to take this wretch for

a man? Would it not have been better to wait for ever? How immense is the difference between man and man! O lovely women, when will you realise your worth? The need of loving! That will not excuse you. The supreme need is not to degrade oneself, and the heart's own needs should make you indifferent to one who can only be called a man because he is not a woman. The requirements of the age! Even if our moral institutions are still in their infancy, if everything is confused with us, and if our reason is groping in the dark, your imprudence, if on that account less culpable, is not thereby justified."

The very word woman has a noble sound to us men when our souls are pure, and seemingly the word man too can cast a spell on maiden hearts; but however sweet the glamour that it brings, do not let yourselves be too enraptured by it. Though man is the natural friend of woman, women often have no deadlier enemy. All men have the instincts of their sex, but wait for one who has the soul of it. What could you have in common with a mere creature of sense? <sup>1</sup>

How often has it happened that we have been swept into an abyss of woes by the instinct of

<sup>1</sup> I have suppressed a few pages dealing with the special case of a person to whom I can find no other reference in these letters. I have given instead a fragment from another source,<sup>1</sup> which says almost the same things in general terms, and which I have been led to insert here by its similarity to the omitted passage.

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<sup>1</sup> Senancour's *De l'Amour*.—TR.

happiness, that our character has been marred by our most natural desires, and that we have greedily gulped down the cup of bitterness. Take the case of a girl with all the frankness of youth, the desires of inexperience, the yearnings for a fuller life, the hope of winning a loyal heart. She has every faculty for loving, and love she must. She has every capacity for pleasure, and must be loved. She is just entering on life, and what is it without love? She has beauty, freshness, grace, vivacity, nobleness, and charm. Why this harmony of movement, this entrancing modesty, this expressive voice, this winning smile, this heart-thrilling glance? Why this refinement of soul and depth of feeling? Age, desire, the fitness of things, soul, and sense, all point to it; it is a necessity. Everything about her expresses and invites love; this smooth, white skin so delicately tinted, this hand shaped for the tenderest caresses, this eye whose possibilities will never be revealed until it says "I consent to be loved"; this breast, which without love is mute, unresponsive, and barren, and would one day wither and miss its divine ideal; these rounded outlines which would lose their form without being known, admired, and enjoyed; these tender emotions, so sweet and vast, the heart's ambition, and the heroism of passion. She is constrained to follow this entrancing law, sanctioned as it is by the law of the world. What young, intelligent and loving woman could dream of leaving unfulfilled this rapturous part that she knows so well, that

everything suggests, that day inspires and night commands?

As a matter of fact she does not dream of missing it. Upright, pure, and noble hearts are the first to be betrayed. Their greater capacity for exaltation ensures their being taken captive by the exaltation of love. They feed on delusions that they mistake for esteem; they fancy themselves in love with a man because they are in love with virtue; they are betrayed by scoundrels, because as they are incapable of really loving any but a good man, they fancy that he who offers himself as the realisation of their ideal must of necessity be worthy.

The craving to impart and receive energy of soul, esteem, and confidence; sacrifices to reward, fidelity to crown, a hope to cherish and a climax to reach; the intolerable commotion and unrest of heart and sense; the praiseworthy desire to make a return for so much love, and the no less legitimate desire to rivet, consecrate, and make lasting and eternal such pleasing bonds; and still other desires—something of fear, something of curiosity, chance indications, the will of destiny, all tend to deliver a loving woman into the arms of the libertine. In all her love, and yielding, and joy, he is simply finding amusement; she dreams of constancy, happiness, and the long rapture of mutual affection, she is rapt in celestial fancies; she sees his eye enkindled by pleasure, and longs to heighten his felicity; but the monster is simply amusing him-

self; the arms of pleasure are dragging her into the abyss, she devours a fearful ecstasy.

On the morrow she is bewildered, restless, and moody; gloomy forebodings are the beginning of terrible sufferings and a lifelong bitterness. The respect of men, paternal tenderness, a clear conscience, the pride of a pure soul, fortune, honour, hope, love, all have fled. Loving and living are now out of the question; tears must be her portion, and the dragging out of insecure, blighted, and miserable days. There is no hope now of growing glamour, love, and life; she must banish her dreams, and struggle to forget while waiting for death. O sincere and loving women, beautiful with all external graces and charms of soul, so adapted to be purely, tenderly, constantly loved—*love not!*

## LETTER LXXXI.

*August 5th (IX.).*

You admit that morality is the only subject worthy of serious treatment by a writer who wants to serve some great and useful end, but you say that I have hitherto shown a leaning to certain opinions on the nature of human beings which are inconsistent with any investigation into moral laws and the basis of duty.

I should not like to contradict myself and will



endeavour not to do so, but I cannot accuse my weakness of being fickle and unstable. However searching and impartial an examination I make, I cannot discover any real contradictions.

There might perhaps be some between different statements I have made if they were taken as positive affirmations, as different parts of a single system, of a single body of professedly established principles, linked together and deduced the one from the other. But isolated thoughts, and questionings about things inscrutable, may vary without being contradictory. I even confess that I sometimes consider a certain theory of the course of nature very probable, and at other times much less so, according to the standpoint from which my imagination regards it.

Suppose I say: "Everything is necessitated, for if the world is still inexplicable on this principle, on all others it is impossible." And after looking at it from this point of view, next day I may say on the contrary: "So many things are ordered by intelligence, that many others are probably ordered by it too. Perhaps intelligence makes a selection from alternatives rendered possible by the essential nature of things, and these restricted alternatives may be explained by the fact that though the world can only exist on certain lines, everything in it is susceptible of numerous modifications. Mind is not the autocrat of matter, but employs it; it can neither create nor destroy it, neither alter its nature nor change its laws, but it can move it, work it up,

and combine it. This intelligence is not omnipotence; it is wonderful craftsmanship, limited, however, by the necessary and inherent laws of being; it is a sublime alchemy which man calls supernatural because he can form no conception of it."

You will tell me that here are two conflicting theories, both of which cannot be accepted at the same time. That I admit, but it involves no contradiction, for I only state them as hypotheses; I am so far from accepting both that I do not absolutely accept either, and I do not claim to know what is outside human knowledge.

No general theory of human nature and the laws of the world is ever more than a random guess. Some men may have believed in their own fancies or wanted others to believe in them, but these have been either ridiculous frauds or victims of amazing infatuation. For my own part I cannot but doubt, and if I say dogmatically, "Everything is necessitated," or, on the other hand, "There is a hidden power working to an end that we can sometimes foretell"—I only use these affirmative expressions to avoid constantly repeating the phrases, "It seems to me," "I suppose," "I imagine." Such forms of speech are no expression of certainty, and I cannot suppose that any one is misled by them. What man in his senses would undertake to affirm what it is impossible to know?

It is totally different when we turn from these obscure inquiries and devote ourselves to the sole

science of humanity, that is, ethics. The eye of man can tell us nothing at all of human beings in their essence, but everything of their relations one to another. There we find a light adapted to our organs; there we can discover, reason, affirm. There we are responsible for our ideas, for their coherence, agreement and truth; it is in that sphere that infallible premises must be sought, and contradictory conclusions would there be inexcusable.

There is just one possible objection to the study of ethics, but it ought not to bring us to a standstill, serious though it is. "If everything is necessitated, what end will be served by our enquiries, our precepts, and our virtues?" But this universal necessity has yet to be proved; man is swayed by the opposite feeling, and that is ground enough for him to consider himself a free agent in every act of his life. The Stoic believed in virtue in spite of fate, and those Orientals who hold the doctrine of fatalism act, fear, and desire, like other men. Even if I regarded the necessitarian theory as probable, I should still be able to seek for the principles of the best human institutions. While crossing a lake some stormy day I shall say to myself—"If events are irrevocably determined, it matters little whether the boatmen are drunk or not. All the same, as it may be otherwise, I will advise them not to drink till we land. If everything is necessitated, then it is equally inevitable that I should take this precaution and should falsely call it prudence."

I can make nothing of the subtleties by which men claim to harmonise free will with foreknowledge, human choice with Divine omnipotence, the infinite abhorrence for sin inevitably felt by the author of all justice, and the inconceivable means He has taken to prevent or to retrieve it, with the unbroken reign of injustice, and with our power to go on committing crimes as long as we please. I find it somewhat difficult to reconcile the infinite benevolence which voluntarily created man, and the infallible knowledge of what would result from it, with the eternity of frightful torment that is said to await forty-nine out of fifty of men so beloved. I could discuss these insoluble problems at length with acuteness and learning, like anybody else; but if ever I write, I will devote myself rather to matters relating to man's present life as a member of society, because it seems to me that by confining my attention to those conclusions for which we have reliable premises, I shall be able to think what is true and say what is useful.

I can advance to a certain point in the knowledge of man, but Nature surpasses my comprehension. I cannot understand two conflicting principles, co-eternally doing and undoing. I cannot understand a Universe arising so late out of nothing, existing only for a time, and thus cutting into three parts the indivisible eternity. I have no fancy for trying to discuss seriously matters outside my knowledge; "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God."

I shall never understand how it is that man, who recognises intelligence in himself, can pretend there is none in the world. Unfortunately, I am just as much at a loss to see how a faculty can be a substance. I am told: "Thought is not a body, a thing physically divisible, so death will not destroy it; it had a beginning, but you see that it cannot have an end, and that it must be a spirit because it is not a body." I confess my lamentable inability to see any common sense in this triumphant argument.

Here is a more serious one. "Since long-established religions exist, bound up with our human institutions, and apparently adapted to our weakness, serving to curb or console so many, it is a good thing to practise and uphold the religion of the country in which one lives; even if one takes the liberty of disbelieving it, it is best not to say so when writing for one's fellows; one should not unsettle their cherished beliefs." That is your opinion; now you shall have my reasons for dissenting.

I have no immediate intention of weakening a single religious belief in the valleys of the Cevennes or the Apennines, nor even here in Maurienne or Switzerland, but how can one discuss morality without mentioning religions. That would be an unwarrantable affectation and would deceive no one; it would only fetter my treatment of the subject, and rob it of the completeness which alone could make it serviceable. People tell us that opinions

on which many base their hopes and some their morality must be treated with respect. I should consider this reticence wise and proper in an author who only touches incidentally on moral questions, or who writes from a different standpoint to the one I am bound to adopt. But if in a work on human institutions I were to leave out all mention of religious systems, it would be interpreted as truckling to some dominant party. That would be a culpable weakness, and in venturing to undertake a task like this, my first consideration must be to fulfil its duties. I am not responsible for my qualifications, and they will prove more or less insufficient; but my intentions depend on myself, and if they are not inflexibly pure and steadfast I am unworthy of so high a vocation.

I shall have no personal enemy to attack in literature any more than in private life, but when it is a question of publishing what I believe to be true, I must not shrink from displeasing a sect or a party. I owe neither grudge nor allegiance to any one. I will attack things and not men; if men take it amiss, if some of them regard me with pitying abhorrence, I shall not be surprised, though I will not anticipate it. I feel sorry for some reasons that I am not at liberty to omit all reference to religion, as one may in many writings, but every impartial man will admit that such silence is impossible in a work like the one I have in view, the only one to which I can assign any importance.

I shall therefore treat of religions when dealing

with human affections and the general system of ethics, and certainly cannot do other than say what I think. It is because I shall have to speak my mind on it then that I am not careful to exclude any casual reference to the subject from these letters; otherwise I should have preferred, even at the risk of seeming constrained, to keep to myself what is sure to vex, or rather, distress you.

I put the question to yourself—suppose in the chapters devoted to an examination of religions as accidental institutions<sup>1</sup> I happen to mention the one which is said to have come from Jerusalem, as I should be expected to do had I been born in Jerusalem myself, what real disadvantage can result from it wherever the European spirit is astir, where ideas are clearly defined and imaginary notions disenchanted, where men live oblivious to illusions, in the fearless study of positive and demonstrable sciences.

I would not like to knock a single idea out of any head that is already empty enough to say: "If there were no hell it would not be worth while to be honest." Possibly, however, I may chance to be read by a man like this. I do not flatter myself that no harm whatever will result from my effort to do good, but possibly also I shall lessen the number of those dull folk whose faith in duty is based on faith in hell. Perhaps I shall ensure the

<sup>1</sup>It is certain that Obermann's distaste for doctrines, all of which he considered to be accidental, did not extend to fundamental religious ideas.

survival of duty when relics and horned demons are quite out of fashion.

It is inevitable that the rank and file will more or less rapidly, and certainly before very long, come to despise one of the two ideals that have always been foolishly presented to them together, and we must show them that these ideas can quite easily be separated, and that disregard for the one does not involve the overthrow of the other.

I believe the time is fast approaching when it will be more widely recognised that we must no longer build on a crumbling foundation those moral bulwarks without which we should live in secret warfare, beset by treachery more hateful than the long-drawn feuds and revenges of savage hordes.

## LETTER LXXXII.

IMENSTRÔM, *August 6th (IX.).*

I am not sure whether I shall leave my snow-clad mountains and come to see that delightful region of which you give me so attractive a description, where the winter is so mild and the spring so sweet, and where the green rollers that have crossed the Atlantic break at last. The waves I see have not travelled so far; in my rock-walled gorges, where I haunt the dark like a sad screech-owl, such wide horizons would ill-suit my eyes and my thoughts.



My regret at our separation increases daily. I wonder at rather than blame myself for leaving you; I try in vain to account for it, and can only assure you that I could not do otherwise. I will come some day; that is settled. I want to see you at home, to bring back with me the secret of being happy when nothing is amiss but oneself.

I shall see at the same time the Pont du Gard and the canal of Languedoc, and will visit the Grande-Chartreuse on my homeward route; not as I go, for reasons you will understand. I love this retreat of mine, and shall continue to love it more and more, but I no longer feel equal to living alone. Now for other matters.

Everything will be finished here in a very short time. It is already four days since I took possession of my own bedroom. At night through the open windows I can distinctly hear the water of the spring falling into its trough; and when a breath of wind disturbs it, it splashes on the bars of iron put to support the vessels while they are being filled. Scarcely any natural occurrence is so romantic as the sound of water pouring from a spout into still water at dead of night, when the silence of the valley below is only broken by the faint murmur of a torrent rolling through the dense woodland.

The spring is under a spacious roof, as I think I told you before; its sound is less rural than it would be in the open air, but more unusual and cheerful. Here I am sheltered without being shut in: I rest on a good bed in desert solitudes, the charms of the

wild are at my doors, so that I combine the conveniences of luxury with the vigour of Nature. By our labours we have arranged our natural surroundings without altering their laws, and so pliant a sway knows no limitations. That is man's true function.

This great shed, about which as you see I am so complacent, is seven fathoms wide and more than twenty long, in line with the other buildings. It is really the most convenient thing imaginable; it joins the barn to the house, without touching the latter, with which it only communicates by a passage of light construction which could easily be cut in case of fire. My carriage, wagonette, carts, tools, firewood, joiner's shop, and water supply are all here in due order; and here we can work, wash, and do whatever is necessary, without being inconvenienced by sun, snow, or mud.

As I have given up hope of seeing you here for a long time, I will send you a detailed account of my mode of life. I will describe the whole of my house, and perhaps at times will picture you as sharing it, and taking part in my inspections, deliberations, and improvements.

## LETTER LXXXIII.

IMENSTRÔM, *Sept. 24th* (IX.).

I have been awaiting somewhat impatiently the end of your travels, for I have news to tell you.

M. de Fonsalbe is here. It is five weeks since he came, and he means to stay; his wife has been here too. Though he has spent years on the sea, he is a man of quiet and equable ways. He neither gambles, hunts, nor smokes; he drinks nothing, has never danced, and does not sing; he is not melancholy, but I fancy he has had his share of it in the past. On his brow the pleasing signs of inward calm are mingled with deep traces of sorrow. His eye, which usually only expresses a kind of quiet dejection, is capable of expressing anything; his head is very striking, and if some great idea or powerful emotion happens to rouse him from his usual calm, he unconsciously adopts the silent attitude of command. I have seen an actor applauded for his effective delivery of Nero's "I will it, I command it"; but Fonsalbe would do it better.

I can criticise him to you quite impartially. He is not so equable within as without; but if it is his misfortune or his fault to be incapable of happiness, he has too much good sense to repine. He is just the man to complete the cure of my impatience; he has taken his stand, and what is more, he has proved

to me beyond dispute that I ought to take mine. He maintains that with health and independence and nothing beyond, only a fool would be happy and only a madman miserable. After that you will quite understand I could say nothing but that I was neither happy nor miserable. I made that statement, and now I must try to live up to it.

I am beginning, however, to find something more than independence and health. Fonsalbe will be a friend, and a friend who will share my solitude. I do not say a friend as we once understood the word; we have outgrown the age of heroism. It is just a question of spending one's days pleasantly; great things no longer concern me. I am trying, I tell you, to make the best of what my destiny brings me. A fine way of doing that it would be to dream of friendship as the Ancients knew it! No, no; friends in the old sense and friends in the city sense alike we forego; imagine something between the two. "What can that be?" say you. A great deal, I assure you.

I have something else in my mind. Fonsalbe has a son and a daughter. But I am waiting for my scheme to take definite shape before saying any more, and it involves, moreover, several details which are still unknown to you, and of which I must inform you. Fonsalbe has already assured me that I may discuss with you whatever concerns him, and that he does not regard you as a third party; but be sure to burn my letters.

## LETTER LXXXIV.

SAINT-MAURICE. *Oct. 7th (IX.).*

An American friend of Fonsalbe has just been calling here on his way to Italy, and the two of them went on together as far as Saint-Branchier, at the foot of the mountains. I kept them company, intending to halt at Saint-Maurice, but I went on to the cascade of Pissevache, between that town and Martigny. I had seen it before, but only from the road.

There I awaited the return of the carriage. The weather was delightful, the air still and balmy, and I took a cold vapour-bath, all dressed as I was. The volume of water is considerable, and it falls three hundred feet. I went as near it as seemed possible, and in a moment I was drenched as if I had been overhead in water.

I recovered, however, some touch of old-time impressions as I sat in the upward-fuming vapour, amid the deafening roar of that water from the silent icefields, for ever gushing from its frozen source, thundering to destruction yet never ceasing, carving out gorges in its headlong career, and seeming to fall for ever and ever. Such is the course of our years and of the ages of men; our days emerge from silence, necessity reveals them, and they glide into oblivion. The stream of their hurrying shadows

murmurs evenly past, to be ever dispersed and renewed. Nothing remains but a rising vapour, which is borne back to enswathe in obscurity the inexplicable and futile procession, that ceaseless manifestation of an unknown power, the strange and mysterious expression of the world's inherent energy.

I confess that *Imenstrôm*, with my memories and habits, my childish schemes, my trees, my study, and all that has claimed my affection, seemed then very small and pitiful in my eyes. That rushing, penetrating water, charged with energy, that solemn thunder of the falling stream, that endlessly uprising mist and my own attitude of body and mind, broke up the apathy into which my years of struggle had sunk me.

Separated by the mist-laden air and the deafening roar from the outside world, I saw it all before me as something in which I had no part. Sitting motionless, I was nevertheless stirred by a mighty impulse. Safe amid the crash of dissolution, I was engulfed in the water and yet alive in the abyss. I had left the earth and saw the absurdity of my life; it moved me to pity, and led me to dream that days well spent might take the place of these now given to trifles. I saw more clearly than ever before those happy unturned pages of the scroll of time. Moses and Lycurgus indirectly proved their possibility to the world, and their actual future existence was now proved to me among the Alps.

In the days when men used to withdraw into the utter solitude of mountain-caves without incurring

ridicule for their singularity,—their object was not simply to think out the schemes they were preparing; that one could do at home, and silence may be secured even in a town. Nor was it simply to impress the crowd; a miracle of magic would have equally appealed to their imaginations, and taken less time to work. But the least hide-bound soul cannot wholly escape the sway of habit; it still feels the influence of that argument from use and wont, so effective with the crowd and plausible with genius itself, which finds in the average lot of man a natural evidence and proof of his destiny. Hence the need to withdraw from human affairs, not to see that they might be different, but to strengthen one's faith that they will be. We need isolation not to devise means but to give us hope of success. Living thus in seclusion, the grip of use and wont is relaxed, the extraordinary loses its glamour and is judged impartially; there we gain faith, and return to succeed.

I regained the road in time to meet Fonsalbe. I was wet through, and he declared that one might go right up to the fall without any such inconvenience. I had him there though; he succeeded for a time, but the rising column of spray was far from steady though there was no perceptible wind in the valley. We were about to retire when in a moment he was saturated; after that he let me take him to the exact spot where I had been sitting. But I feared the sudden alternations of air pressure might affect his chest, which is not so strong as mine, so we returned

almost at once. I had vainly tried to communicate with him otherwise than by signs; but as soon as we were a few paces away, I asked him, before his astonishment subsided, what would become of a man's habits in a situation like that, or even of his strongest affections and the passions he fancied invincible.

We paced to and fro between the cascade and the road. We agreed that a man of the strongest type cannot have any actual passion, though capable of all, and that there have frequently been such men, both among rulers of men, magicians, gymnosophists, and among the true and convinced believers of certain religions, such as Islamism, Christianity, and Buddhism.

The superior man possesses every human faculty and is capable of the whole range of human affections, but he devotes himself to the highest within his reach. He who subordinates great thoughts to petty or selfish notions, and who is influenced in important acts and decisions by paltry affections and sordid interests, is not a superior man.

The superior man always looks beyond his present position and achievements; far from lagging behind his destiny, he is always transcending its limitations, and this natural movement of his soul is no mere passion for power or greatness. He has higher aims than greatness and power, he loves what is useful, noble, just, and beautiful. He accepts power because he needs it to restore utility and beauty; but he would prefer the purity and charm of a simple



life. He sometimes does things that are within the scope of human passions, but the one thing he cannot do is to accomplish them by means of passion. The superior man and genuine statesman is not only free from the infatuation of play, wine, and women, but I maintain that he is not even ambitious. When his actions are like those of ordinary mortals his motives are not such as they recognise. He is neither suspicious nor confiding, neither underhand nor transparent, neither gushing nor ungrateful; he does not move in that sphere at all; his heart is passive, his mind leads. While he is in power he advances to his end, which is universal order and the betterment of man's lot. He sees, he wills, he accomplishes. A man who can be taxed with a particular weakness or inclination is no better than his fellows, but the born ruler is just and independent. Disenchantment would make him something more; he would cease to be independent and supreme, and become instead a sage.

## LETTER LXXXV.

IMENSTRÔM, *October 12th (IX.).*

There was a time when I shared your fear. It was natural to suppose that this listlessness into which my ennui has plunged me would soon become an almost insurmountable habit, but on further con-

sideration I came to the conclusion that I knew the worst, that the mischief was already done, and that it would always be too natural for me to be like this in circumstances akin to my present ones. I also came to see that in another situation I should display quite a different character. My present vegetative mode of existence would not have the slightest influence on the one I should adopt if circumstances were ever to demand of me as much activity as they now require little.

What would be the use of wanting to stay up during the time for sleep, or to keep alive in the grave? If a man is diligent and does not want to waste the day, must he therefore refuse to sleep at night? True, my night is too long, but is it my fault if I was born to short days and long, dark nights? I will stir abroad like others when summer comes; meantime I am drowsing by the fire till the frosts are over. Fonsalbe seems to be growing as drowsy as myself. Our placid melancholy mood in this loveliest nook of a beautiful country, so comfortably off amid a few poor creatures far happier than ever we shall be, is an absurdity characteristic of man's pitiful condition.

I must tell you something of our whims, to show you that as a rule there is nothing bitter in our languor. I need not say that I do not keep a larger household. In the country, and living as we do, the servants all have their tasks, and you might ring for them half-a-score times without any response. I have aimed at convenience, not

appearances; I have avoided needless expenditure, and would as soon take the trouble of pouring out a glass of water from the decanter myself as ring for a sturdy lackey to come from the other end of the house to do it. As Fonsalbe and I scarcely stir without each other, his bedroom communicates with mine, and with my study by means of a bell. We have different ways of ringing it, and thus we call each other's attention as our whims dictate, not as our needs require, so the bell is kept going.

The more absurd these whims are the more they entertain us. They are the playthings of our indolence; in this respect we are princes and indulge in odd caprices, though we have no states to govern. We hold that a good laugh is always worth having, provided that it hurts nobody's feelings. Sometimes a mere trifle interrupts us when counting the stars with Lambert,<sup>1</sup> and sometimes, while steeped in enthusiasm for Pindar,<sup>2</sup> we watch with amusement the proud strut of a turkey, or the display of agility by two amorous tom-cats fighting for a mate.

For some time past we have had an understanding that when one of us spends a sleepless half hour he should wake the other, to give him his turn of patience, and that if either of us has a very funny dream, or one calculated to arouse deep feeling, he should report it at once, so that next morning over

<sup>1</sup> German mathematician, 1728-1777.—TR.

<sup>2</sup> The greatest lyric poet of Greece, 522-433 B.C.—TR.

the tea-cups we may interpret it by the rules of ancient occult science.

I am now able to trifle a little with sleep, for I have begun to recover it since I gave up coffee and adopted strict moderation in tea, occasionally substituting buttermilk or just a glass of water. I used to sleep without realising it as it were, and it gave me neither rest nor enjoyment. While dropping off and waking up I felt just as I did through the day, but now for several minutes I have a sense of the gradual approach of sleep, and enjoy that blissful relaxation of tension which precedes unconsciousness, and which makes life bearable to the unhappy by periodically suspending it and doling it out a day at a time. Under such circumstances bed is welcome, even when one is not asleep. Towards morning, in a comfortable state between sleeping and waking, I turn over and dream in peace. I love to contemplate life in these quiet moments, when it looks like something outside myself, in which I play no part. What strikes me most of all is the bustle of effort for so empty a result, this immensity of toil for an end so uncertain, barren, and perhaps opposed to one's aim, or for various conflicting and futile ends. The moss on the wave-beaten rock only ripens its fruit to perish, the violet blows in vain beneath the shrubs of the wilderness. So man desires, and thus will he die. His birth is an accident, his efforts are aimless, his struggles without object, he thinks and feels in vain, and vanishes without tasting life, and even

he who gains it will vanish in his turn. Cæsar won fifty battles and conquered the West, but he has passed away; Mahomet and Pythagoras both are gone. The cedar which overshadowed the herds has passed like the grass that they trampled under foot.

The more we strive to see, the deeper we plunge into the dark. All things act with a view to self-preservation and reproduction; why is not the end of their existence as obvious as that of their actions? The animal has organs, powers, skill to live and perpetuate its kind; it performs the actions essential to life and reproduction, and these results follow; but why does it live, why perpetuate its kind? That is altogether beyond me. The beast browses and dies, man eats and dies. One morning I was musing on all he does before he dies, and I felt such an impulse to laugh that I pulled the bell twice. But at breakfast we could not raise a laugh at all; on that morning Fonsalbe pretended to see something serious in art, glory, pure science, trinitarian metaphysic, and I know not what else. After breakfast I took down *De l'esprit des Choses*, and read one volume of it nearly through.

I confess that this scheme for transforming the world does not jar on me in the least. It is not modern, but that only gives it the more authority. It is both sublime and plausible. The author treats of deep things, and I have taken a liking to the extreme obscurity of his terms, because they prepare one for that of the facts dealt with. I would

gladly regard this theory of an accidental degeneration and a slow recovery, of one force vivifying, uplifting, and refining, and another corrupting and degrading, as not the least plausible of our speculations on the nature of things. The only thing I should like to be told is how this great revolution took place, or at any rate why it was necessary, why the world thus broke away from the Eternal, how he could permit or could not prevent it, and what power alien to the universal sway produced this universal catastrophe. This scheme can explain everything except the main difficulty, but the Oriental theory of two principles was clearer.

Whatever may be said on a question with which mankind is doubtless ill-qualified to grapple, I know nothing to account for this endless procession of events, bewildering to our minds and baffling to our eager curiosity. We see individuals massing and multiplying in their respective species to advance with intensified and persistent efforts to some unknown end from which they are for ever hurled back. On the one hand, a supreme energy produces without intermission and in infinite ways; on the other, a principle of inertia, a cold dead force of resistance, destroys and extinguishes wholesale. The agents taken individually are passive, and yet they press eagerly on to they know not what, and the aim of this general tendency seems also the unconscious aim of every thing that is. Not only does the scheme of things present numberless contrasts of methods and conflicting results, but its

motive-power seems vague, restless, enervated or counteracted by some indefinable force; Nature seems hindered in her progress, and as it were fettered and uncertain.

We shall catch a glimmer of light in the gloom if we regard the worlds above as spheres of activity and places of regeneration, where matter is gradually worked up and etherealised by a principle of life, and rises from a passive and crude condition to a degree of elaboration and refinement at which it becomes responsive to heat and penetrable by light. It will then be used by intelligence not as raw material but as a perfected instrument, after that as an immediate agent, and finally as an essential part of the supreme Being, who will then become truly universal and truly one.

The ox is strong and powerful, but he is not even aware of it. He assimilates a mass of vegetation, he eats up a whole meadow; what great benefit will he get from it? He chews the cud and stolidly vegetates in the stall in which he has been shut up by a man as dull, stolid, and useless as himself. The man will kill and eat him, and will be none the better for it; and after the ox is dead the man will die too. What will be left of them both? A handful of earth that will produce fresh grass, and the grass in turn will feed new flesh. What a dumb and futile alternation of life and death! What a frigid Universe! How can its existence be better than its non-existence?

But if this silent and terrible ferment which seems

to create only to destroy, to make only to undo, to produce seeds only to waste them, and to bestow the consciousness of life only to inflict the shudder of death; if this force which stirs eternal matter in the darkness rays forth some tentative gleams of light; if this power which ruffles repose and promises life grinds up and pulverises its handiwork to fit it for some grand design, if the world we are in is only the rough draft of the world, if what is only heralds what should be; does not the perplexity aroused in us by the existence of evil seem to be explained? The present is toiling for the future, and things are so ordered that the existing world may be consumed; the sacrifice was necessary and only seems great to ourselves. We shall vanish in the hour of disaster; but so it had to be, and the story of the creatures of to-day will be summed up in the words: they have lived. An order that is fruitful and constant will be the outcome of the strenuous crisis in which we are annihilated; the work has already begun, and the ages of life will last on when we with our wailings, our hopes, and our schemes have for ever passed away.

That was the feeling of the Ancients, who never lost consciousness of the world's anguish. That vast and far-reaching idea produced the primitive institutions which were retained in the memory of the nations as the great monument of a sublime melancholy. But hordes that were never civilised, and others collected by exiles who had forgotten their ancient traditions while roaming the forests—



Pelasgians, Scythians, and Scandinavians—these spread the dogmas of barbarism, the legends of bards, and the false magic<sup>1</sup> of savages; thus history became an enigma, until a man, whose life was all too short, set himself to rend some part of the veil with which the barbarians covered it.<sup>2</sup>

Then in the midst of my musings I make a movement which disturbs me, and my whole train of thought vanishes.

At other times I find myself in a vague but delightful condition between sleeping and waking. I enjoy the blending and confusion of the ideas of daytime with those of sleep. Often there lingers with me a trace of the gentle agitation left by some vivid, startling, and remarkable dream, with those mysterious associations and that pictureque incoherences so dear to the imagination.

Man's genius in his waking hours cannot equal the caprices of the night. Some time ago I dreamed of a volcanic eruption, but never was real volcano so grand, awe-inspiring, and magnificent in its terror. I seemed to be watching it from the window of a palace on a lofty site, with several others near me. It was night, but everything was lighted up. The moon and Saturn were visible in the sky between scattered and hurrying clouds,

<sup>1</sup> Clearly the word magic must here be understood in its original, not in its recent sense, so that false magic will be almost equivalent to modern magic.

<sup>2</sup> B[oulanger] died at thirty-seven, and he had written *L'Antiquité Devoilée*.

though all around was calm. Saturn was near the horizon and seemed larger than the moon, its ring, like white-hot metal on the point of fusion, lighted up the vast, cultivated and populous plain. In the far distance, but distinctly visible, a long and regular chain of lofty snow-clad mountains linked the plain with the sky. While I gazed a terrible wind swept over the landscape, tearing up and sweeping away every trace of cultivation, forests, and dwellings, and in two seconds nothing remained but a desert of arid sand, red and glowing as if with internal fire. Then the ring of Saturn detached itself and shot downward through the sky until it touched the pinnacles of snow, while they began to shudder and upheave from their very roots, rising and rolling in great billows like huge sea waves raised by some vast earth-tremor. In a few moments the flames that spurted from the crests of these white waves fell back from the skies and rolled down in blazing streams. The mountains were alternately pale or glowing as they rose and fell in weird pulsation, and the great catastrophe was wrought amid a silence more weird still.

No doubt you will fancy that in this wreck of the world I awoke in horror before the climax, but my dream did not end according to rule. I did not wake; the flames died down, and a great calm ensued. Darkness fell on the scene; we shut the windows, began chatting in the drawing-room on the subject of fireworks, and my dream went on.

I have heard it stated again and again that our

dreams are suggested by what has impressed us on the previous day. I quite admit that our dreams, like all our ideas and sensations, are composed entirely of elements with which experience has already made us familiar, but I think the resultant whole has often no other relation to the past. Whatever we imagine can only be built up of existing materials; but we dream, just as we imagine, new combinations, and often they have no traceable connection with what we have previously seen. Some of these dreams constantly recur in the same way, identical in many of their smallest details, though we may never have thought of them in the meantime. I have seen in dreams lovelier views than any I could have imagined, and have always seen them alike. Ever since my childhood I have dreamed of being near one of the chief cities in Europe. The landscape is entirely different from that which actually surrounds this capital, which I have never seen, and yet every time I have dreamed of approaching this town in my travels, the landscape has looked just as it did when I dreamed of it first, and not as I know it to be.

Some twelve or fifteen times I have seen in a dream a place in Switzerland that I was previously familiar with, and yet in these dream visits it looks quite different from the reality, and always exactly as I saw it the first time I dreamed of it.

Some weeks ago I saw a delightful valley, so perfectly in harmony with my tastes that I question whether such a place can exist. Last night I saw it

again, and found there also an old man, quite alone, eating some coarse bread at the door of a wretched little cabin. "I was expecting you," said he; "I knew you would come; in a few days I shall be here no more, and you will see everything changed." Then we went on the lake, in a little boat which he upset by jumping overboard. I went to the bottom, and woke up in the act of drowning.

Fonsalbe maintains that a dream like this must be prophetic, and that I shall see such a lake and valley. To make the dream come true we have decided that if I ever discover such a place I shall go on the water, provided the boat is well built, the weather calm, and no old man about.

## LETTER LXXXVI.

IMENSTRÔM, *November 16th (IX.).*

You have made a good guess at what I merely hinted at. You infer that I already regard myself as a celibate, and I admit that any one who regards that as his destiny is next door to resolving on it.

Since life is so dull when stripped of its fairest fictions, I think with you that we lose more than we gain by standing too much on the defensive and shirking that risky yoke which promises so many delights and occasions so much bitterness. Without it one's home life is empty and cold, especially

for a man of sedentary habits. Happy is he who has parted with his solitude and does not regret it.

There is nothing in what you say in favour of marriage that I can honestly deny or question, but I join issue with you on what you leave unsaid.

The obligation to marry is obvious, but what is a duty in one respect may become madness, folly, or crime in another. It is not easy to reconcile the different principles of our conduct. Celibacy in the abstract is admitted to be an evil, but to blame this or that particular man for it is a very different matter. True, I am on my defence, and am trying to excuse myself, but what matters it that the cause is my own, so long as it is a good one. I only wish to adduce in its favour a single consideration whose justice seems to me obvious. I offer it all the more gladly to you because one evening you wanted to dispute my contention that there is the utmost need of a reform to bring unity, consistency and simplicity into our rules of duty, and you accused me of exaggeration when I declared that discernment to recognise one's duty is a more rare and difficult attainment than strength to fulfil it. You had weighty authorities, both ancient and modern, in your favour, but so had I too; on such a topic even Solons and Ciceros might well be deceived with the best of intentions.<sup>1</sup>

Some assume that our moral code is final, and the

<sup>1</sup> This is the gist of the saying of Solon and the passage from *de Officiis* which apparently suggested this mention of Cicero and Solon.

only thing then is to urge man to follow it, for if they were loyal to it they would always be upright. But I have the misfortune to hold that this code is still in the making; I side with those who see in it contradictions and grounds of continual uncertainty, and who are sorry for those upright men who are more perplexed to decide than weak to fulfil. I have met with circumstances in which I would defy the most disinterested of men to give an opinion without hesitation, and which the most skilful moralist would never decide as rapidly as it is often needful to act.

But from all these cases of difficulty I will only select one; it is that on which I have to vindicate myself, and I revert to it forthwith. The essential thing is to make one's wife happy and to provide for the happiness of her children, so the first consideration is to order one's life so as to ensure if not the certainty, at any rate the probability, of doing this. We owe it also to ourselves and to our other duties to make the best of our talents, and hence we must safeguard our prospects of being in a position that will permit of it, and will give us the share of happiness that is essential to making good use of life. It is as wrong as it is imprudent to take a wife who will subject us to continual muddle, disgust, and humiliation; one whom we should be driven to turn out or desert; or one with whom any mutual happiness would be impossible. It is wrong to bring children into the world when there is no prospect of our being able

to do anything for them. We must be practically certain, not perhaps of leaving them independent, but at least of giving them the moral advantages of education, and the chance of a career, and of occupying a place in society that is neither squalid nor dishonest.

On a journey you can dispense with selection in the matter of a night's lodging, and make the best of the first inn you come to; but when a house is in question you will exercise choice; you will not settle yourself for life, or buy an estate, without making sure it will suit you. Take care then not to choose at random in a matter intrinsically more important, and irrevocable as well.

To be sure, we must not set our hearts on absolute and imaginary perfection, expecting of others what we could not pretend to offer in return, and judging so severely what is within reach that we never attain what we seek. But can we commend the man who throws himself into the arms of the first comer, and who will be compelled in three months' time to break with the comrade so rashly chosen, or else to forego for the rest of his life a true comradeship in order to keep up a false one?

These obstacles to marriage are not the same for all; they are to some extent peculiar to men of a certain type, and in the case of such men they are many and serious. We are responsible for the welfare of others; we are bound by manifold considerations, and circumstances may not admit of any reasonable choice until we have outlived the hope of it.

## LETTER LXXXVII.

*November 20th (IX.).*

What a chaos life is! What a task to live it! What vexations reward well-doing, and what disorders ensue from sacrificing everything to order! What a price we pay for wanting to live by rule when our destiny does not admit of it!

You will be at a loss to see the bearing of this preamble, but my mind is so full of Fonsalbe—of his ennui, his past history and future prospects, both what I know myself and what he has told me—that I gaze into an abyss of injustice, repulsion, and regret, and what is sadder still, I see nothing remarkable or peculiar to himself in this round of miseries. If all secrets were revealed, if we could see the hidden bitterness gnawing at men's hearts, we should find that all these cheerful men, these pleasant homes, these merry gatherings, are but a host of victims chafing at the bit that holds them, and gulping down the muddy lees of the bottomless cup of sorrow. They veil their miseries, and flaunt their false joys, exerting themselves to dazzle the jealous eyes that are always watching their fellows. They place themselves in such a light that the tears standing in their eyes give them a touch of brilliancy which at a distance is enviously mistaken for a sign of happiness.



The chief social vanity is keeping up an appearance of happiness. Every man thinks that he alone is in every way to be pitied, but he behaves as if he were in every way to be congratulated. When confiding his troubles to a friend, his eyes, his mouth, his attitude, all express sorrow; notwithstanding his strength of character, deep sighs bewail his lamentable fate, and his gait is that of a man who has nothing to look for but death. But if strangers come in, he throws back his head, raises his eyes, steadies his gaze, and gives the impression that reverses could not touch him, that he enjoys his lot, and can purchase every pleasure; everything about him, even to his very necktie, wears a more cheerful aspect, and he walks like a man who accepts with joyous excitement the handsome favours of destiny.

None but fools fail to observe this vain display, this craze for appearances, and yet nearly all men are themselves the dupes of it. The festivity from which you are absent seems delightful, while the one you are taking part in at the time, is only an additional burden. "My neighbour enjoys a hundred things!" say you. But are you not enjoying those identical things, and perhaps many more besides? "I seem to be enjoying them, but . . ." Deluded mortal! Has he not also his *buts*. All these presumably happy people put on their holiday looks as the common people turn out in their Sunday clothes, leaving their shabbiness behind in garrets and wardrobes. Joy and patience are seen on their lips;

dejection, grief, and the fuming of passion or ennui are deep down in their hearts. Every expression in the throng is a studied one, and is either placid or radiant, but the state of things within is appalling. It is only on such terms that hope is possible. Unless we fancied that others were happier than ourselves, and that we might therefore be happy too, which of us would drag on to the end of his fatuous days.

Bent on some grand scheme, well thought out though a trifle romantic, Fonsalbe set out for Spanish America. He was detained at Martinique by a somewhat curious incident, which seemed likely to be of short duration, but which had lasting results. Eventually he was obliged to give up his plans, and look out for an opportunity of making the voyage home. A distant relative, with whom he lived during his stay in the Antilles, was taken ill, and died a few days later. On his death-bed he gave Fonsalbe to understand that it would be a comfort to him to entrust his daughter to Fonsalbe's care, for he believed this would ensure her happiness. Fonsalbe, who had never given her a thought, objected that as they had spent six months in the same house without forming any special attachment he was obviously indifferent to her, and likely to remain so. The father insisted, assuring him that his daughter was already fond of him, and had confessed as much when refusing to enter into another marriage. Fonsalbe made no further protest; he hesitated, and in place of his frustrated plans

there rose before him that of living peaceably and worthily a life of obscurity, of making a woman happy, and having children while still young, in order to mould their characters. He fancied that her defects were those of education, and that her good qualities were innate. He decided, and pledged himself. The father died, and several months passed by; the son and daughter were on the point of dividing the property he had left them. A war was going on at the time; the enemy's ships were cruising round the island, and an invasion was imminent. With this excuse the future brother-in-law of Fonsalbe arranged everything as if for sudden departure to a place of safety when the necessity might arise; but one night he went over to the hostile fleet with all the negroes of the estate, taking with him everything he could carry away. They learnt afterwards that he settled on an island under English rule, and that his lot was not a happy one.

The sister whom he thus plundered seemed to fear that Fonsalbe would desert her in spite of his promise. His only response to this suspicion was to precipitate the marriage for which he had been awaiting the consent of his family; but it was not calculated to increase his esteem for a woman whom he was taking thus, without either good or bad opinion of her, and with no attachment beyond an ordinary friendship.

A match without sentiment may very easily turn out happily, but their dispositions had little in common. They had something, however, and it is

just in such cases that love would be useful to complete their mutual understanding. Reason might have been equal to the task, but it only holds full sway in an orderly environment, and their circumstances were unfavourable to a settled and regular life.

We have only once to live, and if our rule of life has been adopted both by mind and heart we do not care to break it; hence it seems to be a duty to risk something for the good we shall never achieve if we wait for certainty. I am not sure whether you will agree with me, but my own conviction is that Fonsalbe acted rightly. He has suffered for it, as he was bound to do, but does that prove that he did wrong? If we only live once. . . . He did not swerve a hair's-breadth from real duty, the sole consolation of a fleeting life, from sacred morality and the heart's own wisdom. He over-stepped certain notions now in vogue, he ignored our paltry rules; the stay-at-home philosopher and local magnate would condemn him, but those just and great ones of old whom thirty centuries have revered would have acted, and did act, just as he did.

The better I know Fonsalbe the more convinced I am that we shall stick together. This had been settled by the nature of things before we settled it ourselves; it is fortunate for me that he has no profession. He will supply your place here so far as a new friend can replace one of twenty years' standing, and so far as I can find in my present circumstances any trace of our early dreams.

The comradeship between Fonsalbe and myself

outstrips the progress of time, and already has a venerable and old-time character. He treats me with unlimited confidence, and as he is a man of great discretion and naturally reserved, you may judge how I prize it. I owe him a great deal; my life is a little less unprofitable, and will become tranquil, in spite of the inward load that he can sometimes help me to forget, but will never be able to remove. He has restored to my wilderness something of its smiling beauty and a touch of the romantic to these Alpine scenes; and after his misfortunes my friend is tasting here hours of unwonted sweetness. We walk and talk at random, content so long as we are together. I see more clearly every day what hearts may be hidden by adverse fate among men who fail to appreciate them, and in surroundings where they vainly seek to realise themselves.

Fonsalbe has lived sadly amid incessant worries, enjoying nothing. He is two or three years older than I, and feels that life is slipping away. I was saying to him one day: "Our past is more remote from us than the existence of a perfect stranger; nothing real survives of it; the memories it leaves behind are too unsubstantial to be counted either as weal or woe by a wise man. What ground can there be for wailing or regret, about that which is no more? If you had been the happiest of men, would to-day be the better for it? If you had suffered the most appalling calamities . . . ." He would have let me go on, but I stopped abruptly

myself. I realised that if he had spent ten years in a dank vault his health would have been permanently the worse for it, and that moral sufferings can also leave behind ineffaceable impressions. Hence when a sensible man complains of misfortunes that he seems no longer to endure, it is their various after-effects and consequences that he deplures.

If we voluntarily let slip an opportunity of doing right, we do not usually have another chance, that is the penalty of negligence in the case of those whose nature it is to do right, but who are checked by temporary considerations or interests of passion. Some among us combine with this natural disposition a deliberate resolution to follow it, and a habit of stifling every opposing passion; the sole intention and supreme desire of such people is to play the man in everything, and to put in practice what they judge to be good. Must they not regretfully witness the disappearance of every chance of worthily fulfilling those duties that belong to private life alone, and yet are important because so few men give any real thought to performing them rightly.

It is not so restricted and secondary a part of life as people suppose to treat a wife not only as duty prescribes, but as enlightened reason counsels, or even permits. Many men honourably fulfil great public functions, who could not have acted at home as Fonsalbe would have done had his wife been fair-minded and reliable, such a one as he needed to help him to carry out his ideas.

The joys of confidence and intimacy are great enough between friends, but when quickened and multiplied by all the details which arise from a consciousness of distinctions of sex, these refined enjoyments know no bounds. Can anything be sweeter in domestic life than to be good and upright in the eyes of the wife one loves; to do everything for her and exact nothing in return; to expect from her what is natural and honourable while making no exclusive claims; to minister to her worth and leave her in possession of herself; to maintain, advise, and protect her without controlling or enslaving her; to make of her a friend who hides nothing and has nothing to hide, without forbidding her things which would then be indifferent, but which others keep silence on and therefore have to forbid; to make her as perfect, but also as free as possible; to have every right over her in order to give her all the liberty a rightly-disposed soul can accept; and thus to ensure, at any rate in private life, the happiness of a fellow creature with sufficient worth to receive happiness without corrupting it, and liberty of soul without being corrupted by it?

## LETTER LXXXVIII.

IMENSTRÔM, *November 30th* (IX.).

The weather to-day is just the sort I like for scribbling five or six hours about trifles; for chatting on insignificant topics, for reading good parodies, for *killing time*. I never felt more in this humour than during the past few days, and you would get the longest letter ever delivered in Bordeaux if I had not to join Fonsalbe in measuring the fall of a streamlet that he wants to divert to the top of my meadows. It comes from a small glacier, and hence no drought can affect it. But I can well afford the time to tell you that the sky is just the sort I had been waiting for.

People who live by convention, creatures of society, who only take from Nature what they have shaped to their liking, have no need of waiting. The seasons, the sunrise, the state of the sky, are all alike unobserved by them. Their habits, like a monkish rule, are a law which ignores everything else; it does not regard natural law as a loftier order, but simply as a succession of nearly periodic occurrences, a series of helps or hindrances to be made use of or overcome according to the mood of the moment. Without deciding whether this is an evil or not, I admit there is no help for it. Public affairs and almost all kinds of business have



their dates fixed long beforehand, they require at stated times the meeting together of a number of people, and there would be no getting on at all if these matters were dependent on other considerations than those prescribed for them. This necessity involves all the rest; the townsman, who is no longer dependent on natural events, but finds them many times a nuisance for once that they serve him, decides and must decide to adopt his habits to his profession, to those of the people he meets and of the general public, to the opinion of the class to which he belongs or is ambitious to reach.

A great town always wears pretty much the same aspect; its occupations and amusements go on with little variation, and it is easy to settle down into regular ways. It would in fact be very inconvenient to rise at daybreak when the days are long, and to retire earlier than usual in December. It is pleasant and healthful to see the dawn, but what could one do next, after watching it over the roofs, and hearing a couple of canaries hung in an attic window salute the rising sun? A clear sky, a genial temperature, a moonlight night, make no difference to your daily round, and you end by saying, What profit is there in it? And even while condemning the state of things that provokes this remark, one must admit that the man who makes it is not altogether wrong. It would be eccentric, to say the latest of it, to knock up one's hall-porter and turn out first thing in the morning just to hear the sparrows chirping in the streets, or to seat oneself

behind the curtains in a drawing-room window, cut off from the lights and noise within, in order to devote a moment to Nature and pensively gaze on the moonlight reflected in the gutters.

But in my Alpine ravine the days of eighteen hours are very unlike those of nine. I have kept some of my town habits, as being pleasant in themselves, and even essential in the case of a man like myself, who cannot adopt all those of the locality. Still, with four feet of snow and twelve degrees of frost I cannot live exactly as I do when the pines of the forest catch fire in the drought, and cheeses are being made five thousand feet above me.

I need one kind of bad weather for outdoor labour, another for short walks, another for excursions, another for staying by the fire even when it is not cold, and yet another for ensconcing myself in the chimney corner of the kitchen, while special household tasks that I reserve as far as possible for these occasions are being attended to. In order to show you my plan as a whole I am including some things that are still future with what is already in operation, and am assuming myself to have carried out the style of life I am actually entering on, in accordance with my plans for future seasons and occupations.

I have been afraid to speak of the fine days, but if the truth must be told I am not fond of them, not as I used to be I mean. Fine weather makes the country more lovely and life in it more exuberant; at least that is the general experience.

But I, on the other hand, feel most doleful when the weather is at its best. I struggled in vain against this inward malady and found it too strong for me, so then I adopted a different and far more congenial line, and managed to dodge the ill I could not cure. Fonsalbe is quite willing to accommodate himself to my weakness, and our little convivialities will be reserved for blank days like these, so beautiful to all eyes but my own. They will be days of self-indulgence, we shall begin them late and spend them by candle-light. Whenever we come across anything amusing to read we put it aside for such mornings, and after dinner we shut ourselves in with our wine or weak punch. Then in the freedom of comradeship, with the security of those who can trust their own hearts, and in moments when friendship itself, like everything else, seems unsatisfying, we greedily sip a little of the folly we had sacrificed without gaining wisdom, and strive for a lively and glowing consciousness of the thing nearest us in place of a bare and literal consciousness of things as a whole and of that solitary thinking which is too cold and exhausting for human weakness.

Thus midnight overtakes us, and we are delivered—yes, delivered—from time so precious and irrevocable, time that we often cannot help wasting, and often still are unable to enjoy.

When our minds have been unsettled by imagination, observation, and study, by aversions and passions, by habit and even by reason, is it, think

you, an easy matter to have just enough time and never more than enough? Hermits and rustics though we are, we have our hobbies; we study our natural surroundings. Besides, I believe that even in a state of barbarism there are many with too much intelligence not to suffer from ennui.

We have sacrificed the relaxations of a congenial social circle, and we pretend to console ourselves for it by musing on the boredom, the futile and inevitable restrictions of society as a whole. But could we not have excluded all but intimate acquaintances? What can we substitute for those distinctively feminine graces that are found in the capital of France, so charming when displayed, and equally prized by the man of taste and the man of emotion. It is in that respect that our solitude is profound and that our life here is one of desert bareness.

In other respects I consider our mode of life here is almost the best way possible of spending our time. We have left the stir of the town, and the silence around us at first makes time seem monotonous and stationary, and hence depressing to one used to a bustling life. Imperceptibly, and by changes of habit, we accustom ourselves to it. As we grow calmer we find that the days are not much longer here than elsewhere. If I had not a hundred reasons, some weighty, others trivial, for not living like a mountaineer, I should be as regular as he in my activities, in my fare, and in my whole style of living. Without distraction, without hope, without desire, without expectation, imagining nothing,

scarcely even thinking, coveting nothing further and dreaming of nothing fresh, I should drift from season to season and from the present to old age as one drifts from long days to winter ones without noticing their gradual shortening. At nightfall I should simply conclude that lights were needed, and when the snows began I should tell them to kindle the stoves. From time to time I should hear news of you, and should put down my pipe for a moment to reply that I was well. I should grow contented, and should find my days slipping away rapidly enough in the cold tranquillity of the Alps; and I should give myself up to that sluggish, incurious, unheeding, daily round which is characteristic of the mountaineer amid the desolation of these vast solitudes.

## LETTER LXXXIX.

IMENSTRÔM, *December 6th (IX.)*.

I want to send you word on the very day itself that the hour once so desired has come; I am settled in a home of my own; all the work is finished. If I were quite awakened from my dreams, or perhaps I should say, if I had not recovered from the error of my ways, it might mark an epoch in my life. At last the time has come to plan out my life for useful employment and relaxation. I

can do as I like; but the trouble is that I cannot quite see what I ought to do.

All the same, it is very nice to be comfortably off; one can arrange everything, meet one's requirements, select and regulate things. In easy circumstances reason can avoid the miseries of everyday life. The rich would be happy if they had anything to spare, but they prefer to keep themselves poor. I pity the man who is compelled by circumstances to live up to the level of his income. There is no domestic happiness without the margin that is essential to security. If peace and good temper abound more in the cottage than the palace, it is because easy circumstances are rarer in the palace than the cottage. The pitiful creatures, with all their gold, do not know how to live. If they had known how to limit their ambitions and those of their families, they would have everything at command, for gold is all powerful, but in their thriftless hands it is no use at all. So they will have it; every man to his taste! But let us with our moderate means set a better example.

To escape positive unhappiness only one qualification is necessary, call it reason, wisdom, or virtue. To gain satisfaction I consider four are essential; a good share of reason, health, some means, and a little luck in one's favour. In reality none of these three other advantages is worth anything without reason, and reason without them is worth a great deal. It can either bestow them in the end or console us for their absence, but they cannot

bestow it; and anything they do bestow apart from that is only dazzling externally, and the heart is not long deluded by it. Let us admit that we are well off when we can say—"I can," and "I know." Power without knowledge is very dangerous; knowledge without power is depressing and useless.

For my own part—I do not pretend to live, but only to be a spectator of life, and it will be well for me, in imagination at least, to conceive the part of a man. I mean to spend four hours daily in my study. I will call that work, though it is not really so, for it is quite permissible to write a chapter of *Le Monde Primitif* on the day of rest, when it would be sabbath-breaking to screw on a new lock or to hem a handkerchief. Having made up my mind to write, I should be quite inexcusable if I did not do it now.<sup>1</sup> I have everything I need; leisure, tranquillity, a small but sufficient library, and instead of a secretary, a friend who will keep

<sup>1</sup> Days steeped in melancholy, the pensive mood of a fettered soul, the long dreariness that breeds a sense of the vanity of life, may arouse or feed the craving to express one's thought; such days have often been favourable to the composition of poetry expressing the depths of feeling, and the vast conceptions of a human soul rendered unfathomable, and as it were infinite, by its sorrows. But a work that is important alike in subject, range, and completeness, a work for the good of humanity, and intended to last, can only be undertaken when a man's mode of life is fairly regular, and when he is free from anxiety about those who belong to him. But Obermann had been living alone, and I fail to see that his present favourable position was indispensable to him.

me at work, and who maintains that sooner or later I can do good by writing.

Before turning my attention to the weaknesses of my fellows, I must confess one of my own for the last time. Fonsalbe, from whom I have no other secrets, but who has no suspicion of this, daily makes me realise, both by his presence and by the frequent recurrence of his sister's name in our talks, how far I have been from that forgetfulness which is the sole refuge left to me.

He has mentioned me in his letters to Madame Dellemar,<sup>1</sup> and has done so as if at my request. I do not know how to prevent this, as I cannot give my reasons to Fonsalbe, but I regret it the more, because she must have thought me inconsistent in not observing the line of conduct I myself had laid down.

Do not think it strange that I derive so much bitterness from these memories, and take such fruitless pains to banish them, as if I were not sure of myself. My integrity is neither fanatical nor unstable. My intentions are under my own control, but not my thoughts, and if I have all the confidence of a man who means to do right, I have all the weakness of one who has never been settled. Still I am not in love, I am too unhappy for that. "How in the world can that be?" say you. You cannot understand me, for I do not understand myself.

It is many years since I saw her, but as my life

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Letters XI., LXIX.—TR.



was fated to be nothing but a dream, to ensure that end the memory of her remained bound up with my consciousness of continued existence. Let me tell you something about those bygone days.

The craving for love had identified itself with my very existence, and consciousness itself was nothing but the yearning anticipation of the hour when the light of life would dawn. But if in the dreary round of my days there ever came one that seemed to proffer the only good that Nature then contained for my heart, that memory was within me to put it out of reach. Without having loved, I found myself incapable of loving like those in whom one deep passion has destroyed the capacity for a new affection. That memory was not love, for I derived from it no consolation, and no sustenance; it left me empty, and seemed to keep me so; it gave me nothing, and seemed to exclude anything being given me. In this state I remained, without either the happy intoxication of love, or the bitter-sweet melancholy in which our hearts would fain consume themselves when love is unrequited.

I have no wish to tell you the weary story of my troubles. I hid my blighted lot in the desert lest it should involve my surroundings, as it almost did involve you. You wanted to forsake all and become sad and useless like myself, but I compelled you to take up your old interests. You even thought that I too had found some, and I was careful to encourage that impression. You knew that my calm was like the smile of despair; I wanted

to keep you longer under the delusion. I used to write you when I felt inclined to laugh—when I laughed for very pity at myself and my destiny, and at everything over which I see men groaning while reiterating that it is coming to an end.

I am telling you too much, but the consciousness of my fate excites and overwhelms me. I never look within without seeing the phantom of what will never be given me.

I cannot but be entirely myself in speaking to you of her, and see no reason for imposing on myself any reserve in the matter. She felt as I did, and we understood each other as few do, and yet I did not give myself up to all these illusions. As I said before, I do not want you to dwell on those days that should be banished into oblivion, and that are already sunk in the gulf of the past; the dream of happiness has vanished, like those spectral days, into the realms of death. Why then these memories of what has long been dead and gone? They come to shed over all that remains of me the bitterness of the universal tomb to which I must go down. I am not trying to justify this shattered heart of mine, that preserves amid its ruins nothing of life but its unrest, for you know it too well already. You, and you alone, know its quenched hopes, its unaccountable desires, its limitless needs. Do not make excuses for it; sustain it, rebuild its waste places; restore to it if you can both the glow of life and the calm of reason, all the energy of genius and all the stoicism

of wisdom; I have no wish to enlist your pity for its utter follies.

At length by the merest chance I met her near the Saône <sup>1</sup> on a day of sadness, and even this simple incident was enough to thrill me. There was sweetness in seeing her from time to time. Her generous, tranquil soul, great in its weariness and disenchantment, surely could not but calm the unrest and continual torture of my heart. The grace of her whole being; the indefinable charm of her movements and her voice! . . . . Bear in mind that love is denied me, and bring home to yourself the full extent of my misfortune.

But my sadness grew more constant and oppressive. Had Madame Dellemar been free I should have found in her company the pleasure of at last being unhappy in my own way; but she was not, so I withdrew before it became impossible for me to endure the weight of time anywhere else. Then everything was a weariness to me, but now everything is a matter of indifference. Sometimes even I succeed in being amused, and that is why I have been able to write to you all along. I am no longer capable of loving, my life is extinct. Possibly I might make a good husband, for I should display much attachment. The joys of love are beginning to be but a dream, for I am no longer worthy of a lover. Love itself could not now give me anything but a wife and a friend. How our affections

<sup>1</sup> See Letter XL.—TR.

change! How the heart is worn out! How life escapes us even before it ends!

I told you at the time how I sympathised with her distaste for all the so-called enjoyments of life, and was far more fond of spending a quiet evening. But that could not last.

Not often, but occasionally, I have forgotten for a moment that I am like a walking shadow on the earth, which sees but can grasp nothing. That is the law of my life, and if ever I have tried to evade it I have paid the penalty. Each new illusion means an aggravation of my miseries. Thus when I felt myself on the brink of happiness I drew back shuddering. I feared the rekindling of the ashes that I believed extinct, so I had to flee.

I am now in an out-of-the-way valley, and am striving to be oblivious of life. I have tried tea to benumb me, and wine to distract me. I amuse myself with building and cultivating. I have found a few good servants, and look forward to making acquaintances at the tavern.<sup>1</sup> I am late up and late to bed; I linger over meals, turn my hand to anything and try all positions; I love the night and squander my time; I gulp down my tedious hours in my greed to have done with them.

Fonsalbe is her brother. We talk of her, for I cannot prevent him; he is very fond of her.

<sup>1</sup> What is impracticable in France is still feasible in almost the whole of Switzerland. It is there the recognised thing to meet towards evening at places which are nothing but respectable taverns. Neither age, aristocracy, nor high official position make any exception to the rule.

Fonsalbe will be my friend; I wish it for the sake of his loneliness. I wish it also on my own account, for what would become of me without him? But he will never know how much the thought of his sister pervades these solitudes. These gloomy gorges! These romantic streams! Once they were silent, and by-and-by will be so for ever. That thought does not invest them with the peace of Nirvana, but with the desolation of the wilderness. One evening we were under the pines when their waving tops were vocal with mountain murmurs, and as we talked of her he wept. But tears are permitted to a brother.

I will take no oaths and make no vows; I despise those empty protestations, and that eternity which man thinks to impart to his passions of a day. I promise nothing, I know nothing; all things pass away, every man changes, but unless I am greatly mistaken I shall never fall in love. When the saint has dreamed of future blessedness he no longer seeks it in the world below; and even if he loses his ecstatic illusions, he finds no charm in things that come so far short of his earlier dreams.

She too will drag the chain of her days with the disenchanted firmness and sorrowful calm that becomes her so well. Many of us would perhaps be further from our place if we were nearer to happiness. That life of superiority to all surrounding comforts, and of flawless health in spite of ennui, those annoyances cheerfully endured, that unembittered sadness, that smile that hides her griefs,

that simplicity which resigns all when it might claim all, those uncomplaining regrets, that effortless resignation, the depression she makes light of, the gifts she does not boast of, the losses she ignores, the possibilities she will not utilise; all this is full of harmony, and belongs to her alone. Had she been satisfied and happy, possessing all that seemed to be her due, she might perhaps have been less truly herself. Adversity is good for those who bear it thus; and even supposing happiness were granted her now, what could she do with it? The time for it is gone by.

What then is left her? What will be left to us in this exile from life, the only thing in which our destinies coincide? When everything vanishes, even the aspirations of our desires, when our dream of the lovely and true grows dim in our wavering thoughts, when harmony, robed in ideal grace, falls from its high estate and is wrapped in the fogs and shadows of earth, when nothing survives of our wants, our affections and our hopes, when we ourselves pass away on the ceaseless stream of time, fleeting irrevocably like the world around,—ah then, my friends, my only friends! she whom I have lost, and you so far away, you in whom alone I still realise my life, what will be left to us, and what are we ourselves? <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It transpires that this letter should end as follows: "When our dream of the lovely and the true grows dim in our wavering thoughts; when the image of harmony falls from its high estate and is wrapped in the fogs and shadows of earth; when nothing survives of our affection

or our hope; when we pass away on the ceaseless stream of time, fleeting irrevocably like the world around—my friends! she whom I have lost and you so far away, how can we congratulate ourselves on having had the gift of life?

“What is there that can truly support us? What are we? A sorrowful blending of blind matter with free thought, of hope with bondage; urged on by an invisible breath in spite of our complainings, grovelling beneath clear skies on the miry soil, crawling like insects in the muddy paths of life; and yet until the very last moment, dreaming of the pure raptures of a destiny sublime.”

## SUPPLEMENT<sup>1</sup>

### TENTH YEAR.

#### LETTER XC.

*June 28th (X.).*

Fonsalbe's sister is here. She arrived unexpectedly, and with the intention of only spending a few days with her brother.

You would find her even yet as attractive and striking as ever, perhaps more so. Her unlooked for appearance, the altered circumstances, ineffaceable memories, our surroundings, the time of year, all seemed to harmonise. I am bound to say too that even if in the eyes of an artist there might be a more perfect type of beauty, there is none that could better exhibit all that for me usually constitutes the charm of women.

We could not entertain her here as you would have done at Bordeaux, but at the foot of our mountains we had to do as best we could. There were two meadows to be mown, and we had planned

<sup>1</sup> Consisting of material collected about the year 1833, when the second edition was published, or later.



to keep at work until late in the evening and begin again early next morning, so as to avoid the heat of the day. I had already thought of utilising this occasion to give a little encouragement to my labourers, and had sent for musicians from Vevey. Refreshments, or if you like, a country supper, beginning at midnight and sufficiently varied to suit the taste even of mowers, was to occupy the interval between the evening's work and that of next morning.

As the day was closing I happened to pass a flight of stairs of six or seven steps. She was at the head of it, and pronounced my name. It was just her voice, but with something in it unexpected, unusual, quite inimitable. I looked without replying, without being aware that I did not reply. A curious half-light, an airy veil, a mist, surrounded her. There was a vagueness about her form in which all details of dress were blended, there was a suggestion of ideal beauty, an enchanting illusion, that gave for a moment the impression of inconceivable reality. Thus was I fated to see my infatuation and end it. It is true, then, said I to myself when I had passed, this attachment was touched with passion, the yoke has been there. On that weakness have rested other vacillations. Those past years are irrevocable, but to-day remain free, to-day is still my own.

After a hint to Fonsalbe I absented myself and set out for the head of the valley, walking noiselessly along, deep in thought. I had received an emphatic warning, but the glamour of it haunted me, and the

power of the past seemed invincible. All those by-gone ideas of loving and being no longer alone swept over me in the quiet seclusion of that lonely spot. There was one moment when I could have said like those whose weakness I have repeatedly condemned—"Let me win her and die!"

On the other hand, as the thought came home to me in the silence that the world itself might end on the morrow, I realised more vividly the distance between the use I had made and the use I ought to make of life's opportunities. The use I have made of them indeed! Still young though I am, I stop short of the decisive moment. She and the wilderness, in that my heart would triumph. But it cannot be; a hermit life without her, that is my portion; stern toil and a future.

I was standing at the bend of the valley; on the one side was the rocky channel of the tumbling stream; on the other, the songs I had myself arranged for were just beginning in the distance. But whereas those festive sounds grew faint with every pulse of air, and I knew the time when they would cease, the rush of the torrent still kept on, rolling by, yet rolling for ever, like the centuries themselves. The flowing of water is like the flight of our years. It has often been repeated, and will be repeated still a thousand years from now; a running stream is to us the most striking image of the irrevocable flight of time. Voice of the torrent in depths of gloom, sole solemn sound beneath the peaceful skies, let me listen to thee alone!

Nothing is worth consideration that is not lasting. Seen from above, what are the things from which our last breath will sever us? Shall I hesitate between a chance meeting and the ends of my destiny, between an idyllic fancy and the just and generous use of my powers of thought? It would be stooping to the idea of an imperfect union, an aimless affection, a blind pleasure. Am I not aware of the promises she gave to her family when she was left a widow? Complete union is therefore excluded; the question is a simple one that needs no deliberation. What manliness would there be in the delusive spell of a barren love? To devote the faculties of life to mere pleasure is to betray oneself to eternal death. However poor those faculties may be, I am responsible for the use of them, and must see that they bring forth fruit. I will guard and respect these blessings of existence; I will not at any rate yield to inward weakness until it can be staved off no longer. Is it for no purpose that we are permitted to gaze into the depths of space? From age to age the majesty of might reiterates the cry—"Woe to every soul that finds delight in bondage!"

Were we made simply to revel for a while in the fascination of desire? After all our waiting and success, what does the satisfaction of a few days amount to? If life is no more than that it is nothing. One year, or even ten years, of pleasure, is a barren enjoyment followed by swift revulsion. What will be left of our desires when posterity with its

sufferings or its stupid dissipations is trampling on our dust? Let us hold them cheap since they are so soon to vanish. Let us seek another portion while the world's great game goes on around us; if anything is abiding it will be the outcome of our firm resolutions. "Man is perishable," is the response. That may be; but let us perish resisting, and if annihilation must be our portion, let us not make it a just one.

As you know, I gave way to despondency under the impression that my powers were already failing. I had too readily come to the conclusion that my youth was over. But the symptoms I noticed were caused, as I think I have since told you, by mistakes in diet,<sup>1</sup> which I have now in a great measure rectified. I had not sufficiently taken account of the natural changeableness to which some of my hesitancy is due. It is a continual source of instability, but more so in moods than in opinions, or even than in inclinations. It does not keep pace with my increasing years, but swings back to what it was before. My habits of exercising self-control, of nipping in the bud all my inner tendencies has often allowed me to misinterpret the conflicting elements within me. But I have come to see that the difference between what I am now and what I shall be in forty years' time is not greater than the difference I have scores of times experienced from one quarter of an hour to another. Thus sways in mid air the top of some too pliant tree, and if you look at it

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Letter LXIV.—TR.

again, in days to come you will find it yielding still, consistent in its very flexibility.

Each passing event, each random thought, the merest trifles whether opportune or inconvenient, certain memories, vague fears, all these chance emotions can alter the whole aspect of things for me, including my estimate of human faculties and the worth of life. Several times while quietly and idly listening to uninteresting small talk, reproaching myself meanwhile for my coolness, though feeling grateful to those who tolerate it, I have emerged from disgust with this narrow, chafed, and fettered existence, into a no less natural appreciation of the wonderful variety of things, or into that philosophical mood which invites us to enjoy them yet a little longer. Nevertheless, it is not so much the scheme of things as a whole that seems so easily to change its aspect, but the individual consequences related to ourselves; not the prevailing order but my own powers of adaptation. This visible order has two faces; the one attracts, the other repels us, everything depends on our having a measure of self-confidence. With me this is continually ebbing and flowing. We are very weak, but wonderfully ingenious! A stroke of luck, a balmy breeze, a gleam of sunshine, the tossing of a flower in bloom, and the drops of dew, seem to tell me that all will be right in the end. But the clouds gather, the bull-finch ceases piping, a letter is over-due, or some ill-expressed thought in my essays baffles correction, and then I see nothing but obstacles, delays, dull

resistance, defeated plans, the drawbacks of the happy and the sufferings of the crowd, and once again I am the sport of that power which will shatter us all.

But at any rate these fluctuations are not likely to shake my principles of conduct. It matters not that the end we seek is a mere probability, so long as it is the only one in sight. If one thing is clear to us let us not wait for fuller light, we can walk in unfamiliar paths. So things will settle themselves. I am what I always was; if I will it, I shall still be all I ever could be. That is not much to say, certainly, but whatever comes, let us not sink beneath ourselves.

*June 30th.*

I am writing at great length and using many words to say what might have been put into two or three lines, but you know my style, and I have plenty of leisure. Nothing employs me, nothing interests me; I am adrift in the void. I must indulge the mood just one day more, and then I am resolved that it shall end. But just now everything looks dreary. It is not apathy, but intensity of feeling to the point of numbness and exhaustion. I continue my letter for the relief of leaning on you.

On the evening I was telling you of I remained alone some time longer, feeling already more at one with the tranquil harmony of Nature. I reached home while supper was going on, before the songs came to an end.

From henceforth you need anticipate no relapse into inexcusable idleness or my former vacillation. The advantages of health and comfortable circumstances are not always combined, but I possess both, and will make the most of them. Let that declaration be my rule of life. If I speak to others of their avoidable weakness, is it not essential that I should tolerate none in myself. You know that formerly, among other idle schemes, I had some hankerings for Africa. But at the present time everything conspires to make such a notion impracticable. In any case it would have required further maturing, and it is now too late to undertake the preparatory studies which would be necessary.

“What then is to be done?” I am quite convinced that there is nothing for it but writing.

“On what topics?”

You know that pretty well already.

“After what model?”

I shall certainly imitate nobody, unless it be in some short passage, when the fancy takes me. It seems to me a great mistake to adopt another man's mode of treatment if I can have one of my own. And if a man has no originality of method, that is to say, if he is never carried away, never inspired what is the use of his writing at all?

“In what style then?”

Neither strictly classical, nor carelessly free. Anything worth reading must conform to real rules of fitness.

“But who can judge of that?”

Myself I imagine. Have I not read both kinds of authors; those who took excessive pains as well as those who wrote more freely. It is for me to choose as best I can a happy medium, equally suitable to my subject and the times on the one hand, and to my temperament on the other, without intentionally violating accepted rules, but without specifically studying them.

“What guarantees shall I have of success?”

The only natural ones. If it is not sufficient to say what is true and to try to present it in an acceptable way, I must do without success, that is all. I do not regard a reputation during one's own lifetime as indispensable, unless one is doomed to depend on one's pen for a living.

On, then, to the front, you who court drawing-room popularity. You too, society men, who count for much in countries where everything depends on influence, you who teem with ideas of a day, with books written in a party spirit, with devices for creating an effect; everything in turn you adopt and throw aside, pick it up again and wear it out, and even after that you still manage to dash off a few muddled pamphlets to evoke the remark, “See how well he chooses his words, and how cleverly he strings them together, though they are a trifle threadbare.” Pass on to the front, you who are gulling or being gulled; for to be sure you will soon pass away altogether, and it is only fair you should have your day. Show off then to-day your skill and your success,



Cannot one be practically sure of making a work useful, without dishonouring it by intriguing for popularity? Whether you stay in your retreat or live in seclusion in a capital, in the long run your name becomes known and your book is sold out. Let a few copies of it be deposited in libraries or sent as specimens to the booksellers in large towns, and sooner or later the book will find its place quite as surely as if you had grovelled for patronage.

Thus then is the task before me. It only remains for me to fulfil it; if not with satisfaction and renown, at any rate with a measure of zeal and dignity. Many things I forego, content to do little beyond staving off suffering. Shall I bewail my seclusion when I have activity, hope, and friendship? Occupation that is not too laborious contributes materially to peace of mind, the least illusory of all blessings. There is no need to seek for pleasure when the simplest things awaken gladness; that is why so many men manage to thrive on the plainest of fare. Who can fail to see that hope is preferable to memories. It is the future alone that matters in this life where all is fleeting. What has happened vanishes, and even the present escapes us unless we utilise it. Pleasant recollections, to my thinking, are only highly prized by weak imaginations whose earlier vitality has flagged. Such men begin by picturing things in too glowing colours and growing infatuated with them. Then when experience has disenchanted them, and made such exaggerated pictures impossible, they cease to imagine at all.

Real creations of fancy, if one may use such a phrase, being forbidden them, they require pleasant memories, and no mood is pleasing without them. But a man whose imagination is just and powerful can always create for himself an adequate idea of various blessings whenever fate allows him a quiet moment; he is not among those whose horizon is wholly bounded by past experience.

For the sweetening of my daily round there is left to me our correspondence and Fonsalbe; these two links of friendship will suffice me. Even in these our letters, let us seek for truth without either tedious dissertations or bigoted theories; let us worship immutable truth. What other conception can sustain the soul, weary though it sometimes may be of vague hopes? It is far more nerveless and desolate when left to itself, stripped alike of the languors and the delights of that active uncertainty. Justice at any rate admits of demonstration. Your moral intuitions visit you in peaceful moods, I pursue them when I am ill at ease; our comradeship will last.

## LETTER XCI.

Date unknown.<sup>1</sup>

I have never told you of the fix I was once in, when trying to cross the Italian Alps.

The incident has just been vividly recalled to mind by reading the following passage: "Possibly the sole object of our present life is to bring in, in spite of our weakness, face to face with opportunities of rising vigorously to present emergencies." Hence the due employment of all our powers without either passion or fear would be the perfection of manhood. This happiness is rarely granted us. As for myself, I only half attained it in those mountains, for I had only my own safety to consider.

I cannot give you a full account of the event without entering into personal details, for it consisted of nothing else.

I was going to the city of Aosta, and was already in the Valais when I heard a stranger remark at the inn that he would not risk crossing the St. Bernard without a guide. Forthwith I resolved to do it alone, rashly assuming that by following the gorges or the direction of the streams I should reach the hospice before the muleteers, without asking them for any directions.

<sup>1</sup> This letter was discovered after the publication of the former edition, and has already been printed in *Les Navigateurs*.

I left Martigny on foot in splendid weather. In my impatience to get a glimpse, if only a distant one, of some fine scenery, I walked all the faster, because below Sembranchier there was nothing of the sort to be seen. On reaching Liddes I fancied I should meet with no other inn of any kind before reaching the hospice. The one at Liddes had run short of bread, and there were no vegetables to be had. The only thing left was a piece of mutton, and that I did not touch. I took a little wine, but at that unaccustomed hour it was quite enough to give me such craving for shades and rest that I fell asleep beneath some bushes.

I had no watch, and had no suspicion when I awoke that I had lost several hours. When I resumed my route the only thought in my mind was that of reaching my destination; my hopes of anything unusual had fled. Nature does not always give us a hint of the illusions she has in store. Nothing of interest presented itself, no beauty in the valleys, no singularity of costumes, not even the usual effect of mountain atmosphere. The appearance of the sky had completely altered; dark clouds enveloped the peaks I was approaching, and yet even that did not correct my mistake about the time; for at such an elevation they often gather quite suddenly.

A few minutes later snow began to fall thickly. I passed through the village of St. Pierre without enquiring of any one. I was determined to carry out my enterprise in spite of the cold and the

absence from that point onwards of any beaten track. By this time it had become quite impossible to find one's way with any certainty. I could not see the rocks until I was close upon them, but even that I put down to the thickness of the mist and the snow. When the darkness became so dense that nothing but nightfall could account for it, I realised at last my position.

The slippery ice-slope I came to, as well as the absence of any track practicable for mules, convinced me that I had missed my way. I stopped short as if to give myself leisure for deliberation, but the complete numbness of my arms soon warned me to keep moving. If it was becoming impracticable to wait for daybreak where I was, it seemed equally impossible to find the monastery, from which, for anything I knew, great gulfs might separate me. Only one course suggested itself,—to follow the sound of the water so as to reach the main stream, which was sure to arrive by a succession of falls at the last habitations I had seen on the way up. I was literally in the dark, and among rocks from which I should have found it difficult to extricate myself in broad daylight. The presence of danger sustained me. It was a choice between perishing or getting back with the least possible delay to the village, which must have been some three leagues behind me.

I scored one success fairly promptly by reaching the torrent I was bound to stick to. If I had ventured again among the rocks I might never

have been able to get back to it. Partly smoothed by the wear and tear of ages, the bed of the Drance was sure to present less formidable barriers in several places than the endless hummocks of the neighbouring masses. Then began the struggle with obstacles, and also the unique delight that is evoked by the greatness of danger. I stepped into the uneven bed of the roaring current, resolved to follow it until the hazardous venture ended either in some serious accident or in bringing me within sight of the lights of the village. Thus I committed myself to the course of this ice-cold stream. When it fell some distance I fell with it. Once the fall was so great that I thought the end had come, but a pool of considerable depth received me. I do not know how I got out. I could almost fancy it was my teeth rather than my hands that seized a jutting piece of rock. My eyes were scarcely any use at all; I rather think I must have shut them whenever I was expecting a particularly violent shock. I kept going with an eagerness that seemed as though nothing could tire it, feeling happy apparently in having a settled impulse to follow, and in keeping up an effort that did not admit of hesitation. I was growing used to this jolting motion and sense of daring, and had forgotten the village of St. Pierre, the only refuge within reach, when a gleam of light revealed it to me. The indifference with which I saw it arose more no doubt from lack of reflection than from true courage; and it did not prevent me from making my way as best I could

to the house, where I found the occupants sitting by the fire. A corner was missing from the shutter of their little kitchen window, and to that circumstance I owed my life.

It was an inn of the sort one finds among the mountains. Naturally there was a lack of many things, but I received the attentions I most needed. Ensconced in the inner corner of a huge fireplace, the chief feature of the house, I spent an hour or more completely oblivious of the exalted state I had been so fortunate as to experience. Feeling limp and miserable after my escape, I did whatever they wished me, though they gave me hot wine, not knowing that I needed solid food more than anything else.

One of my hosts had seen me climbing the mountains late in the day during those snow-squalls that are dreaded even by the mountaineers themselves, and had afterwards remarked in the village, "A stranger went through this evening on his way up the mountain; in weather like this it is as much as his life is worth." When these good folk afterwards learnt that I should certainly have perished but for the defective condition of their shutter, one of them exclaimed in patois, "My God! it is we who have saved him!"

Next morning they brought me my clothes, well dried and respectably mended, but I could not get rid of a somewhat violent shivering, and in addition to that, several feet of snow on the ground made me feel reluctant to set out afresh. I spent part of

the day with the curé of this poor hamlet, and dined with him; it was my first meal for some forty odd hours. Next day, the snow having disappeared under the morning sun, I traversed without a guide the five arduous leagues, and the feverish symptoms disappeared on the way. I received a hearty welcome at the hospice, and yet was sorry I could not approve of everything. I thought the variety of fare was a little out of place, for in such regions it can only be characterised as luxury, not cordial hospitality. In the chapel too it seemed to me that a stricter simplicity would have been more seemly for such a mountain sanctuary than an attempt at decoration. I spent a night at the little village of St. Remi in Italy. The tumbling Doire surges against one corner of the wall of the inn. I left my window open, and all night long the sound alternately woke and lulled me to sleep, to my great satisfaction.

In the valley below I met people afflicted with those enormous goitres that struck me so forcibly on the other side of the St. Bernard during my first visits to the Alps. A quarter of a league from St. Maurice there is a village so sheltered from cold winds by its unique situation that bay-laurels and pomegranates can grow there without any protection all the year round, but the inhabitants think little of it. The absence of frost leaves them a prey to cretinism, and they stolidly vegetate at the foot of their huge cliffs, knowing nothing of the movements of the strangers who pass so near them



just across the river. I determined to take a nearer view of these people on my return to Switzerland; they are steeped in dull ignorance, poor without being aware of it; sickly without actual suffering, and I dare say the poor wretches are happier than ourselves.

Apart from the scrupulous accuracy of my story, it would be so void of interest that even your friendship could not find any in it. For my own part I have only too much reason to remember a fatigue that I was not conscious of at the time, but which has permanently injured my powers of walking. Still less am I likely to forget that the two hours of my life in which I felt most exhilaration and self-complacency, and was nearest to the intoxication of happiness, were those in which I was pierced with cold, worn out with struggles, swept sometimes from precipice to precipice before I knew where I was, each escape a fresh surprise, and yet all the time saying to myself in the pure simplicity of my solitary pride: "For this one moment I am willing what I ought, and doing what I will."

*Conclusion of a Letter of Unknown Date.*

How many unfortunates in every age have said that flowers have been granted us to hide our fetters; to delude us all on entering life, and even

to help to keep us here to the end. They do more, though perhaps with equal futility; they seem to suggest what no mortal mind can fathom.

If flowers had no charms save those which appeal to the eyes they would still enchant us, but their perfume casts a spell as though it were some blissful state of existence, a sudden challenge recalling us to a deeper life. Whether these invisible emanations come unsought and take me by surprise or as the object of my search, I receive them as a forceful though elusive expression of a thought which is veiled and guarded as a secret by the material world.

I do not deny that colours too must have their significance; everything may be symbolic. But odours are more penetrating, no doubt because they are more mysterious, and because if we need obvious truths for everyday conduct, the great activities of the soul are based on truth of another order, on that essential truth which is unattainable by our meandering paths.

Jonquil! violet! tuberose! brief is your duration, lest our weakness should be overpowered, or perhaps that you may leave us restlessly alternating between buoyancy and depression. True, I have seen neither the sindrimal of Ceylon, nor the gulmikek of Persia, nor the pegé-hong of Central China, but the jonquil and the jasmine are quite enough to make me say that even such creatures as ourselves may one day dwell in a better world.

What would I have? To be and not to be is but

to hope and then cease hoping. But why is it that after the songs of a thrilling voice, after the fragrance of flowers, the yearnings of imagination, and the transports of thought, we must needs die at last?

To some too it is granted by fate to hear the secret approach of a woman dowered with all lovely grace, unveiling the fullness of her charms behind some curtain in the sunset glow, retreating and then freely returning, smiling at her own sweet resolution. But she too must needs grow old. Where now are the violets that bloomed for the generations gone by? There are two flowers in some sense speechless and almost devoid of fragrance that inspire in me an affection words cannot express, by lasting so long. The memories they awaken carry me back vividly to the past as if these links of time called up the thought of happy days. These simple flowers are the blue-bottle of the corn-fields and the early daisy of the meadows.

The blue-bottle is the flower of rural life. Could I but see it once more in surroundings of natural leisure,<sup>1</sup> amid the wheatfields, within sound of the crowing of cocks and farmyard noises, by the paths of the hoary ploughmen, I could not promise that it would not move me to tears.

<sup>1</sup> When this was written Obermann had perhaps left Imenstrôm, or even if he had not been obliged to return to town life, it may be that he yearned for the rural activities of the great [lowland] farms. The pastures of the Northern and high Alps are often picturesque enough in situation, but they have only one kind of crop, and the work is the same all the year round.

The violet and the meadow daisy are rivals. They come at the same time and exhibit the same simplicity. From our earliest spring the violet charms us, and year by year the daisy evokes our love. The one is to the other as a portrait in oils to a marble bust. The violet suggests the purest sentiment of love as it is felt by upright hearts; but that very love, with all its winsome tenderness, is but a beautiful incident in life. It fades away, but the peace of country surroundings abides with us to our last hour. The daisy is the perennial symbol of that sweet repose.

If ever I reach old age; and if one day, still pondering many thoughts, but turning from speech with men, I have near me a friend to receive my last farewell, let my chair be set on the short grass, with the peaceful daisies before me, beneath the sun and the far-spread sky, so that in the act of quitting this fleeting life, I may recover some touch of the infinite illusion.

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