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LOVE-LIFE OF AUGUSTE COMTE.

BY JENNIE JUNE CROLY.

IT is said that no man is a hero to his wife or his *valet de chambre*; and so inseparable, indeed, is some touch of weakness from poor human nature, that we are rather apt to expect from the exceptionally great in some respects, corresponding feebleness in others, and charitably excuse, or else hold them up to the light, as the excuse for our own shortcomings.

The private, or emotional life of Auguste Comte is but little known in this country, and the impressions concerning it, derived mainly from John Stuart Mill, is not of a character to encourage strict investigation. Even his disciples seem to consider his domestic relations as a subject to be avoided, and the second part of his great life-work, the "Politique Positive," as more the result of the weakness of his heart than the strength of his head.

The aim of this brief and necessarily very imperfect sketch is simply to state facts, to show what justification existed for departure from conventional standards, and who and what the remarkable woman was whose brief acquaintance exercised so singular an influence upon the mind of Comte, and inspired him with those ideas which form the basis of his ultimate system.

Whatever the weakness or strength of its founder, there is little doubt that the "Religion of Humanity" will live and continue to attract, as heretofore, the respectful attention of the wisest and best among us, and with its growth will spring up an interest in that episode of the life of August Comte which unites his name with that of Clotilde de Vaux, and accepting her, as the representative of the noblest attributes of humanity, will place her, toward its religion and its believers, as Laura to Petrarch, as Beatrice to Dante, as Heloise to Abelard, if not, with all reverence be it spoken, as the Virgin Mary to the Christian Church.

"To-day," Emerson says, "is king," but we rarely recognize its royalty. Laura and Beatrice may have been very ordinary persons to their intimates, and it is possible that even Joseph saw nothing more in his wife than many a man believes of the woman he loves. Yet who would wish to lose the spiritual significance of the Virgin-Mother by confronting it with the common-place fact of her daily life. Clotilde

de Vaux may have realized to no other person the remarkable qualities with which Comte's imagination invested her, but the evidence she has left of high intellectual ability, united with singular purity and devotion, lifts her above the common-place, while, apart from any idealization by Comte, her personal history is clothed with a strange, sad, and most romantic interest.

Born of a respectable but obscure family, beautiful, delicate, and surrounded always by an air of touching sadness, which seemed a prophecy of her future destiny, Madame de Vaux became early the wife of a man who was subsequently convicted of a capital crime, imprisoned, and finally sent to the galleys, yet, by the laws of France, still maintained his right and authority as her husband.

It was in this position that Comte met her.

Comte himself was born, as Robinet, his biographer, informs us, of an admirable mother, Mme. Rosalie Boyer, a strict Catholic however, who shared the monarchical tendencies of her husband. She is described as a woman of great heart, great character, and Comte ascribes to her all his higher qualities. He admits also that it was through Clotilde de Vaux that he learned to fully know and appreciate his mother. His family were in moderate circumstances—his father being cashier in the department of the Receiver-General. He was born in a modest house, facing the church of Saint Eulalie, Montpellier; was sent to school at the age of nine years, and was so precocious that at ten he criticised with severity and judgment his teachers and their methods of instruction.

In 1825, twenty years before he met Mme. de Vaux, he contracted a marriage of convenience, which proved, as he afterwards declared, the one "serious" fault of his life. His wife was a bookseller, an active, capable woman of business, intelligent, but worldly, as most Parisian women of the middle classes are, and utterly without sympathy in any new systems of philosophy or their results. She was proud in her own way of her husband's ability, but wished it to be acknowledged by the world, and she could not forgive in him the unconscious egotisms of a powerful genius, or the loss of his material opportunities, by his obstinate adherence to unpopular opinions and principles.

For seventeen years they lived a life which must have been almost unendurable to both, for Comte, released as he considered himself by the greatness of his work from ordinary duties and obligations, was probably one of the most exigent, exacting, and intolerable of husbands to a busy, ambitious, and practical wife, while she became to him every day more an object of indifference, and even of dread.

Mahomet was happy in having for his first disciple his wife; Madame Comte realized nothing but the obstinacy which deprived her husband of honorable positions and material resources. She was quite willing to assist in building up an honorable home, quite capable of forming a sound, and even wise judgment on any of the ordinary affairs

of every day; she had literary taste and talent of her own, but believed thoroughly in putting them to practical use, in employing them to achieve a recognized name, honor, position, money, and the good-will of mankind, and she considered Comte's splendid generalizations as the chimeras of a distraught brain.

It was unfortunate for both that no children resulted from this ill-starred union. The existence of these ties, and the knowledge, through them, which they would have gained of each other, would undoubtedly have softened their feelings, and contributed to a better mutual understanding. But it was not to be. Day by day they drifted more and more widely apart, until, upon April 5, 1842, seventeen years after their marriage, Mme. Comte left her husband never to return.

Although M. Comte had not at that time developed fully his social theory, his natural instincts, heightened by the respect and veneration with which his mother had always inspired him, would have compelled him to endure to the end his self-imposed yoke, and forbidden any sympathy with the anarchical ideas that were then becoming common in France. The defection of his wife he accepted with the dignity with which he had borne his matrimonial infelicity, and considered his condition of domestic isolation as complete and final. His noble nature, however, his truthful instincts, his affectionate disposition, made this severance of home ties very painful; he realized all the possibilities of true marriage, all the difficulties resulting from a mistake in this most important act of human life, and his pain was augmented by the knowledge of the detrimental effect which his matrimonial blunder would be likely to exert upon his public career. Believing profoundly in the indissolubility of marriage, insisting with the whole strength of his powerful intellect on the perfectness and perpetuity of the marriage relation as the golden band which purifies and holds society together, his own experience at once justified and illustrated his theory in his own eyes, yet furnished to carping critics a choice morsel of gossip, which they were undoubtedly willing to make the most of.

"Behold the teacher!" "Who lives in glass houses should not throw stones." All this, and much more, must have made Comte feel that a mistaken marriage was the most serious mistake of a man's life, and that the evils resulting from it must be borne by the individual, not thrust upon society. Of course his situation, isolated and stigmatized without direct act or fault of his own, enabled him more readily to appreciate the peculiarity of the woman's position whose name was afterwards to be associated with his own—Madame Clotilde de Vaux.

His first meeting with this still young and gifted lady took place in 1845, three years after his wife had left him. It is admitted by all that she possessed graces of person combined with remarkable purity, tenderness, and dignity of character. The singular coincidence of their position attracted them all the more powerfully toward each other,

and the admirable delicacy and consistency which had distinguished her conduct in her peculiarly trying and unfortunate position, established at once a claim upon Auguste Comte's sympathies.

Moreover, Madame de Vaux, notwithstanding that she possessed a mind of the finest order, was as little understood by her family circle as Comte by the rest of the world—a fact which, united with Madame de Vaux's convictions in regard to the moral nature and duties of women, so different from those of her best-known contemporaries, but in exact accordance with Comte's predilections, created a new bond between them. Under these circumstances, it is not surprising that Clotilde de Vaux became to Comte a revelation of the power, purity, genius, and suffering of woman, or that, having worked out his theory of Divine Humanity, he should recognize its highest development in her noble, self-sacrificing life.

It is a fact worthy of particular remark that, notwithstanding the exceptional nature of their mutual positions, no breath of suspicion, even in France, ever attached to their relationship. Slander itself was dumb before the purity of her character, the modesty and dignity of her life. Her intercourse with Comte was wholly that of master and pupil; and although he fully acknowledges that to her he was indebted for his entire knowledge and education of the heart, yet this was unconscious on her part, and she hardly realized that the chivalrous and reverential nature of his sentiments toward her, and all women, owed their development and expression mainly to herself.

But with the real claims of Madame de Vaux to the moral and intellectual height to which Comte elevated her, we have little to do. To Comte she gave the key to one half, and the diviner half, of the human race, and became at once the motive and the inspiration to that part of his work which had been left incomplete. His discovery of sociology, of a new philosophy of life based upon the laws of exact science, placed him upon a level with Aristotle and Bacon; his realization of the perfectness of moral quality, through Clotilde de Vaux, of its high uses, unfolded to him a new religion, a religion of Man, or Humanity, which can only be expressed by the homage paid to the moral qualities as embodied in their acknowledged representative, Woman. What individuals, Laura, Clotilde, or Beatrice, were in themselves, matters, we repeat it, very little. It is enough that they stand as the types of Woman, as the ideals of Mother, Daughter, Wife, Sister, Friend, or all of these—as the embodiment of the sentiments and qualities which men most venerate and admire, and which act upon them as the strongest incentive to worthy deeds.

In the preface to his Positive Catechism, which consists of a series of imaginary questions and answers between himself and adopted daughter, which relation he had intended to legalize with Madame de Vaux, if she had lived. Comte says, in reference to her—

“Through her I have at length become for Humanity, in the strict-

est sense, a twofold organ, as may any one who has reaped the full advantages of woman's influence. My career had been that of Aristotle, I should have wanted energy for that of St. Paul, but for her. I had extracted sound philosophy from real science; I was enabled by her to found on the basis of that philosophy the universal religion."

If Clotilde de Vaux had left no other evidence than Comte's commemoration of her worthiness, she would still stand in the niche of the Temple of Humanity as its first high-priestess—as the eternal mother of that ideal Woman whose image is enshrined in all good men's hearts, and is dimly realized in the goodness, purity, and self-sacrificing love of some every-day sister, wife, or mother.

But young as Madame de Vaux was at the time of her death, unfortunately suppressed as the most important work of her life was by the interference of relatives, she still left enough behind to show that she was a woman true to all a woman's best instincts, to all a man's noblest ideals of Womanhood. Like Comte, her nature remained unwarped by the sad issue of her own conjugal relations. Her little work, "Lucie," written altogether from her own inspiration, and before her acquaintance with Comte, reveals at once a charming tenderness, allied with real strength. Individual unhappiness did not lead her, as it would a weaker nature, to denounce marriage, or seek in license the remedy for social ills. On the contrary, in this work she idealizes marriage, accepts motherhood as the natural function of the mass of women, anticipates Comte's theory of protection for women, and demands governmental institutions for the aid and guardianship of unprotected women. Moreover, her advocacy of a true home-life for women had more force in France than in this country, because there the doctrine of individualism in marriage had been to a certain extent conceded, and the relationship already assumed a business aspect almost unknown here. The women of the middle classes, it is well known, nearly control the retail trade of Paris, and their mercantile activity and preoccupation undoubtedly prevents the realization of the comfort and domesticity which belongs to the English acceptance of the word *home*; and while it has developed shrewdness and business tact, certainly detracts somewhat from the reserve and delicacy which naturally belongs to women.

In Comte's theory of marriage, individual rights are not allowed a place. The institution he considered necessary to the happiness of individuals and the well-being of society, but the former he subordinates to the latter, and he exacts from all men and women who take upon themselves the obligations of marriage, a stern fulfilment of its requirements. He quotes with great approval the remarks of Madame de Vaux, that "great natures will not involve others in their own sorrows and difficulties," and insists that the mistake of an individual should be confined as much as possible to him or herself, and not hung as a load upon the back of society.

It is for its singular truth, purity, and integrity, that Madame Clotilde de Vaux's contribution to the literature of her day deserves preservation, and for this reason we reproduce it here. Her clear mind was alike uninfluenced by custom or the sophistical ideas of anarchists and so-called reformers. She did not give to woman all the scope that she must claim for herself while she possesses ability, but she fully recognized the fact that the home is the woman's rightful domain, that the employment of her strength, talent and energies in other directions, and especially as a means of livelihood, should be exceptional; that the woman cannot be the mother and also the provider, and that no woman ever tries to fill the two positions without feeling that she is constantly sacrificing the greater to the less.

A presentation of a theory of marriage which recognizes its full value, its sacredness, and its indissolubility, seems particularly desirable just now, and in this country, where individualism is making itself strongly felt, and social evils are seeking a remedy in the easy disruption of the marriage bond. The position which Comte assigns to Woman is clearly stated in the following extract from the general View of Positivism :

"The social mission of Woman, in the Positive system, follows as a natural consequence from the qualities peculiar to her nature. In the most essential attribute of the human race, the tendency to place social above personal feeling, she is undoubtedly superior to man. Morally, therefore, and apart from all material considerations, she merits always our loving veneration, as the purest and simplest impersonation of Humanity who can never be adequately represented in any masculine form. But these qualities do not involve the possession of political power, which is sometimes claimed for women, with or without their own consent. In that which is the great object of life they are superior to men, but in the various means of obtaining that object they are undoubtedly inferior. In all kinds of force, whether physical, intellectual, or practical, it is certain than Man surpasses Woman in accordance with a general law which prevails throughout the animal kingdom. Now, practical life is necessarily governed by force rather than by affection, because it requires unremitting and laborious activity. If there were nothing else to do but to love, as in the Christian Utopia of a future life in which there are no material wants, Woman would be supreme. But life is surrounded with difficulties, which it needs all our thoughts and energies to avoid; therefore Man takes the command notwithstanding his inferiority in goodness. Success in all great efforts depends more upon energy and talent than upon moral excellence, although this condition reacts strongly upon the others. Thus the three elements of our moral constitution do not act in perfect harmony. Force is naturally supreme, and all that women can do is to modify it by affection. Justly conscious of their superiority in strength of feeling, they endeavor to assert their influence in a

way which is often attributed by superficial observers to the mere love of power. But experience always teaches them that in a world where the simplest necessities of life are scarce and difficult to procure, power must belong to the strongest, though the latter may deserve it best. With all their efforts, they never can do more than modify the harshness with which men exercise their authority. And men submit more readily to this modifying influence from feeling that in the highest attributes of humanity women are their superiors. They see that their own supremacy is due principally to the material necessities of life, provision for which calls into play the self-regarding rather than the social instincts; hence we find it the case in every phase of human society, that women's life is essentially domestic, public life being principally confined to men. Civilization, so far from effacing this natural distinction, tends, as I shall afterwards show, to develop it, while remedying its abuses."

The following "Complement of the Dedication" to Mad. Clotilde de Vaux is from the pen of Auguste Comte, and will be found in his last great work. It is followed by her novelette of "Lucie" and her poem, "Thoughts of the Flowers," which Comte repeated every morning for the nine years preceding his death.

COMPLEMENT OF THE DEDICATION.

PARIS, 12th Dante, 62.
Saturday, July 27th, 1850.

In order to complete this exceptional dedication, I think I should add to it the only composition published by my sacred colleague. This touching novel, of which the principal situation essentially characterizes the conjugal destiny of the unhappy Clotilde, was inserted in the columns of the "National" on the 20th and 21st of June, 1845. In reproducing it here, I hope to furnish competent judges with a direct proof of the exalted nature, intellectual and moral, of the unknown angel who presides over my second life.

Following this characteristic production, I publish my unedited letter on the social commemoration, which would have appeared with "Lucie," but for the malevolence of a well-known journalist, who has proved himself unworthy of confidence. This little composition offers a certain historical interest to all those who understand the Religion of Humanity. They will see in it the first direct and distinct germs of an immense moral and social synthesis, spontaneously arrived at through a pure, private effusion. My normal reaction of the heart, on the mind, was thus manifested several years before I had constructed its definitive theory.

I end this natural complement of my dedication with an unedited *canzone*, that Madame de Vaux wished to place in her "Willemine," although she had composed it in 1843. These graceful strophes, of which *Petrarch* could have perhaps envied the sweetness, can indicate the facility and the versatility of a talent worthy of the highest commendation. The poetical tendency of this exalted soul showed itself involuntarily, in her most trifling inspirations. It would be, for example, sufficiently characterized by this melancholy inscription, secretly written at the age of twenty-two, in an old "Journal of a Christian," which I preserve religiously.

"Precious souvenir of my youth, companion and guide of the holy hours which have lived for me, and which always recall to my heart the ceremonies, grand and sweet, of the convent chapel."

"LUCIE."

A NOVELETTE, BY CLOTILDE DE VAUX.

A few years since, the little town of — was stupefied by the commission of a crime complicated with extraordinary circumstances.

A young man, belonging to a distinguished family, had disappeared under a terrible suspicion. He was accused of having assassinated a banker, his partner, and stolen from him a considerable amount of valuables. This double crime was attributed to the fatal passion for gaming. The culprit abandoned, after a few months of marriage, a young wife endowed with great beauty and the most eminent qualities. An orphan, she remained, at twenty years of age, condemned to isolation, misery, and a position without hope.

The laws granted her spontaneously the separation of person and wealth ; that is to say, of all that which she had already lost. Her husband's family lent her a shelter and a pair of shoes. Rich men who admired her, added to her anguish of heart insulting offers of protection as disgraceful as they were humiliating.

She was, happily, one of those noble women who accept misfortune more easily than disgrace. Her clear mind fully unveiled to her the position she was in ; she comprehended that she owed to her beauty the interest she excited in men ; she foresaw the dangers that professions of sympathy hide, and wished to draw from herself alone all mitigation of her fate. This courageous resolution having been taken, the young wife thought only of executing it. Possessing a remarkable talent, she proceeded to Paris to make use of it. After several trials, she was admitted as a teacher into the house of the *Abbaye-aux-Bois*, where she found an honorable asylum.

During this time, justice took its course ; active steps sought everywhere for traces of the fugitive. Already the irritated creditors had divided the property of the unhappy wife, whose clothing and jewels, even to the little treasures of her girlhood, had been sold at auction. The interest she inspired was so great, that strangers voluntarily redeemed these pledges and returned them to her.

One young girl purchased a medallion which contained her portrait, and wore it like that of her patron saint, and the priest of the place bought her wedding-dress to decorate the altar of the Virgin.

These details sensibly affected the unfortunate one. A noble pride became joined in her heart to a profound sensibility : she felt herself sustained by these proofs of interest that reached her from so many sources. Filled with terror at the remembrance of her first love, she considered her chain as a barrier that she had voluntarily placed between herself and men. The horror and peril of her position thus escaped her mind, and she accepted without a complaint the unjust decree of the laws.

An indestructible sentiment, a sweet and holy friendship of childhood, at first saved this noble heart from the bitter griefs of solitude. Philosophy, so pitiful and so arid in egotistical souls, developed its magnificent proportions in that of the young woman. Poor, she found the means of doing good : if she rarely went into the churches, where frivolity sits side by side with sanctity, she was often met in the garrets of the poor, where misfortune hides itself like shame.

Two years slipped by without any event transpiring to change this strange and unhappy position. Time, which can only increase great sorrows, had impaired, little by little, the admirable organization of the orphan. To her heroic courage, to her persevering efforts to tread the rough path marked out for her, there succeeded a profound dejection. Thirteen letters which have fallen into my hands paint better than I can the griefs of the weary heart. I ask permission to reproduce them, and thus finish this history.

FIRST LETTER.

LUCIE TO MADAM M.

I write to thee from Malzéville, where I intend to pass several months, my beloved. My lungs had need of country air, and country milk; and our worthy friends have seized this pretext to invite me to share their pleasant solitude. How much I love these excellent people! May I not resemble them, or at least allow my heart to share in the peace which reigns in the depths of theirs? Meanwhile I feel better here: nothing is so healthy as the sight of beautiful nature, and of this laborious and uniform life which forces the mind to rule itself.

The General awaits the near arrival of his neighbor, who is reputed the benefactor of all this little region. He is a young man of twenty-six, the possessor of a handsome fortune, and a sincere disciple of liberal ideas. He has with him his mother, whom he adores, and of whom they tell a great deal of good.

Thou dost advise me to cultivate flowers so as to wean me from music and reading. Alas! my beloved, are not these the only pleasures that remain to me? When I have paid my feeble tribute to friendship, when I have read to the General some passages in his memoirs, when we have together evoked great and sacred recollections, or when I have shared with my friend her little domestic cares, I resign myself to this absorbing faculty of thinking and feeling, which has become the resource of my existence; and yet, no woman loves a peaceful and simple life more than I. What brilliant pleasures would I not have sacrificed with joy to the duties and happiness of the family circle! What successes would not have appeared silly compared with the caresses of my children! O, my friend, maternity, that is the sentiment whose phantom rises so strong and so impetuous in my heart. This love, which survives all others, is it not given to woman to purify and mitigate her sorrows?

SECOND LETTER.

MAURICE TO ROGER.

Roger, I have at last seen this woman, so grand, and so unhappy, of whom thou didst speak to me with pride. Do not say that "the die is cast," if I avow to thee the deep impression that I have felt at the sight of this young and beautiful martyr to social injustice. The touching virtues of Lucie, her mind, her unconscious attitudes, everything about her bears forever the imprint of a profound grief. One feels, in seeing her, that she will have need of generosity in order to love. However, is she not free in all honor and reason? By what astonishing lack of foresight in the laws, may the pure and respected woman find herself chained by society to the branded being whom it casts from its bosom?

What do we call civil death? Is it a phantom? To what end does society bind a wife to a man who can no longer give birth but to outcasts? By what right does it impose isolation and celibacy on one of its members? From what motive does it force a living death, or irregularities which it condemns?

But I speak as if before judges. Roger, my blood is ready to boil when I see how the apathy of men produces and seems to sanction misfortune and oppression.

I have just had a *belvedere* built in sight of Malzéville; from there, with a telescope, I see the whole of the General's pretty house. Yesterday, I perceived Lucie, who was seated on the edge of a small stream of water; her attitude was dejected. Shall I say it to thee, her looks seemed to me to be often directed toward the south. Alas! in seeing her so graceful and so broken, I asked myself with disgust the secret of certain influences over our hearts. Why do we see vulgar women fascinate superior intellects and become the objects of a true worship? How does it happen that the generosity and nobleness of certain women are seen so often in the

power of selfishness and grossness? We must give up the explanation of this enigma.

As thou dost wish a new description of Oneil, I shall tell you, my dear Roger, that I have made of it one of the prettiest places in the department. They described to me lately a recent dispute on my account between the inhabitants of the neighboring corporation and an old, decayed gentleman. They excited themselves with nothing less than a discussion as to whether they owed the title of *Château to Oneil*, and the first piece of consecrated bread to its proprietor. I have settled the question by not going to mass, and by calling the whole country my valley.

THIRD LETTER.

MAURICE TO ROGER.

Never, Roger, never will another woman excite in me the powerful and elevated sentiments with which the mere sight of Lucie inspires me. Friend, thou hast spoken truth; it is in vain that the laws, opinion, and the world raise their triple barrier between us; love will reunite us, I feel it. Who knows better than thou the needs of my heart and its insurmountable repugnance to vulgar joys? Alas! before meeting Lucie, I have often felt that it is dangerous to refine its sensations.

A little while ago my mother made her visit to Malzéville. I was curious, I avow it to thee, to know the impression Lucie would produce upon her. On arriving before the grating of the little park, we saw her grafting a rose-tree. She was dressed in white; a large garden-hat carelessly covered her head, a simple green ribbon defined her small and elegant waist. One would say, on seeing her, the sweetest ideal of *Galatia*.

I was surprised to perceive no emotion on my mother's face, she, ordinarily so kind, and who finds so much pleasure in admiring; she was dignified and cold during our visit; the words *duty* and *honor* found a place in all her phrases. For the first time I had a glimpse of what is bitter and implacable in feminine rivalries. Guided by the delicate tact that the habit of suffering gives, Lucie withdrew before we did, under some slight pretext. Would that I had dared to follow her, and throw myself at her feet to protest against my mother's words.

Roger, this moment settles my fate forever! I comprehend that it is my duty to snatch this sweet victim from misfortune. Perish the chimeras that rise up between us! I feel myself strong against the false faith of opinion and the blame of the envious; may I also be so against the self-abnegation and grandeur of Lucie!

FOURTH LETTER.

MAURICE TO ROGER

One could willingly curse civilization and enlightenment, when one sees the small number of just minds and upright hearts that there are in the world. I could not tell thee how many pitiful and odious insinuations I have to submit to every day on Lucie's account. But, what is not the least shocking, all the honor rests with these corrupters of morality who stand proudly on their small proprieties as on a rock of impregnable virtue. It seems, in truth, that success only accompanies hypocrisy and deceit.

I have just had a painful conversation with my mother, which has only more strongly confirmed my loyalty and devotion. The latter is a magnificent virtue: it lives, however, much more willingly on enjoyments than on sacrifices. I have lately met in the world the young Countess of ———, whose husband is in the galleys. She was twenty-four years of age when this fatality overtook her; she was remarkably pretty and amiable. The worthy L——— fell in love with her, and they are united. Well! she told me that what she has had to suffer from her

own family is incalculable. When I expressed to her my astonishment, seeing their advanced ideas in everything, she answered me, "Are you still in your catechism in regard to men? They authorize me to be an atheist, but not to do without the sacraments."

So it is, my worthy Roger, that this admirable humanity is not yet well rid of its debt toward the monkeys, from whom several doctors insist that it is directly descended.

FIFTH LETTER.

MAURICE TO LUCIE.

What have you done, Lucie? What fatal thought have you obeyed in removing yourself from me? Alas! it is in vain that I seek to justify your silence; it weighs on my heart like an icy burden. And meanwhile, only yesterday you made me cherish my life. Your soul seemed to open itself to hope. When a trifling danger menaced me on the border of the lake, you came to my assistance without appearing to fear the presence of those around us. How beautiful you were at that instant, and how womanly in your devotion! Have you not read in every glance the enthusiasm of which you were the object? O Lucie, when it was only necessary, perhaps, for you to show yourself as you are to soften my mother's heart, by what inconceivable misfortune do we find ourselves separated? But perhaps you are not the angelic woman that I thought I had discovered; perhaps a generous love is beyond your powers? Perhaps!—But of what use are these doubts? You alone can restore the peace that you have taken away; I await a line from you, a word that may teach me what are your future plans. Think of it! I will not answer for myself if you continue to overwhelm me with your silence. Manuel is going post-haste to Paris: in ten hours I may have your reply.

SIXTH LETTER.

MAURICE TO ROGER.

Must it then be so? Roger, to have been acquainted with her, to know that which contains this exalted heart, this delicate mind, and perhaps, in a few hours, to have to deplore her loss! May my misery fall again on those who caused it! Alas! when I accused her with what I have suffered, she was struck down with the violence of her struggles and her love. I wander like a fool around the General's house, interrogating his people unceasingly, and receiving from them only vague and unsatisfactory answers. Happily, the physician is ignorant of who I am, and three times a day he forces the truth on my heart. I have this moment quitted him; he looked so sad, he seemed so overwhelmed that I conjured him not to hide the worst from me. He assured me that she still exists; but he expects a terrible and inevitable crisis.

P.S.—She is saved! One should love as I love to comprehend the magic of such news. I threw myself at the feet of the physician; I asked him for his friendship. In vain he preserved a serious manner; I felt ready to perform any folly in his presence. He is a distinguished man; he spoke of Lucie with an enthusiasm almost equal to my own. But, one thing struck me: he observed me often with thoughtfulness, and seemed ready to confide a secret to me. I have vainly endeavored several times to make him speak his mind. He always ends our conversations about Lucie with this phrase: Society is very culpable.

I have often remarked that prudence is the vice of men in this profession, whose profound knowledge renders so capable of assisting the social movement. What important modifications could be produced in the laws by the sole authority of certain scientific facts which remain eternally hidden from the vulgar! I wish that a great physician would publish his memoirs; it would be, in my opinion, a very useful book to humanity.

SEVENTH LETTER.

MAURICE TO ROGER.

Friend, I have seen her again! Alas! one dares not think that she still belongs to earth, so much is her beauty invested with an ideal and celestial character. She has consented to take her first walk leaning on my arm, and I was astonished at the simplicity with which she described to me her sufferings. If I do not deceive myself, a gleam of hope has crept into her heart; but I have not been able to explain to myself the meaning of several of her words. As we rested in the shade of a little ruined chapel, a villager's wedding party passed before us. There was so much happiness and freedom from care on their open countenances, that I could not suppress a bitter reflection in comparing our destinies. Lucie trembled as she heard me.

"O, my friend!" she exclaimed, "they are happy; but it is because their good fortune neither afflicts nor offends any one."

I looked at her with surprise; her face was slightly flushed; she placed my hand on her heart; then she resumed in a voice serious and moved: "Maurice, it is in vain that our misfortune forees us to set ourselves against society; its institutions are great and venerable as the work of ages; it is unworthy of great natures to inflict upon others the sorrows that they feel."

I would have answered her, but she made me a sign with her hand to indicate that she felt very feeble. It began to grow late. The worthy doctor, who was already anxious at not seeing Lucie return, came to meet us, and he assisted me in supporting her as far as the entrance to the park of Malzéville, where it was necessary for us to separate.

Roger, all the obstacles that surround me frighten me less than Lucie's natural greatness. It is not to false prejudices, I feel it, that such a woman has been able thus far to immolate the sweetest desires of her heart

EIGHTH LETTER.

LUCIE TO MADAM M.

My Cherished Friend:—Hope has overtaken me on my return to health; Maurice consents to raise his powerful voice in a protest against the terrible abuse that separates us. His mother has pressed me to her heart; I shall never forget the delicious sensations that were mingled at that moment with the bitterness of my recollections.

O my beloved! the love of a pure and good man is a sentiment full of power. How much do I need courage and strength to resist it! But Maurice's interests and honor are dearer to me than my own happiness can be; and I am also sustained by the pride of seeing him attempt a noble enterprise; for it seems to me, that in it I also shall have accomplished something for humanity.

It was only yesterday that our fate was decided. We had spent the evening with the worthy physician, whose sentiments are at the same time so gentle and so elevated. Hardly had we left him, when Maurice impetuously seized my hand; and, pressing it to his heart, he swore to protect me in spite of the world, and no longer permit me to forsake him. I collected my strength to struggle against these sweet yet terrible emotions. I represented to him that duty commanded him to endeavor to free me from my bonds, in claiming a wise and just law. I employed to affect him the arguments which have the most influence on his great heart. I described with ardor the advantages that society would receive from this courageous attempt. For him, it was not difficult to interest him in the fate of those beings, young, feeble, and defenceless, whom an odious bond consigns to despair. He agreed that the injurious effects of the laws result mainly from the apathy of men, and that it is always honorable and useful to struggle against oppression.

We considered then our position from all points of view. Maurice agreed that a tie like that which he was advising me to contract would suffice for happiness, and that he would renounce, without the least regret, a world which sacrifices true happiness to prejudices arrogantly adorned with the title of propriety. I confessed to him that I did not feel myself high enough or low enough to brave opinion, and that it would be sweet to me to be able to surround our love with the respect of honest families.

He gently combated my ideas; but the thought of his mother was joined in his heart with all the elevated sentiments that belong to him. He finished by promising me to address a petition to the Chamber of Deputies, and to await patiently the result.

I threw myself at the feet of this man so dear, shedding tears of gratitude and love. The efforts that I had made to control myself had so exhausted my strength that it seemed to me that life was going to abandon me. I never felt its value so much as at that moment.

O, my friend! thou who dost live calm and happy with the man of thy choice, thou wilt comprehend all that passes in my heart. Thou knowest if I share the ridicule poured upon those women who wish to be deputies, or who ride on horseback to demonstrate that they could be at need excellent colonels of dragoons. But thou knowest that I feel sensibly oppression where it is real. It is in striking a blow at the true and modest happiness of woman, that the laws force her out of her sphere, and make her at times forget her sublime destiny. Henrietta, what pleasures can exceed those of devotion? To surround with comfort the man whom we love, to be good and simple in the family, worthy and self-forgetting outside of it, is not this our sweetest office and the one which suits us best? It seems to me that from the family circle radiates communities and the world, and is it not woman who is the inspiration of them?

NINTH LETTER.

MAURICE TO ROGER.

A new grief has just burst upon her; the monster who chains her to himself has been arrested on the frontier and conducted to the galleys at Toulon, where he goes to suffer his penalty.

This event, which gives such great force to our demands, seems meanwhile to have weakened Lucie's courage. This heart so tender has fainted with terror before the horrible *dénolement* with which the laws associate her. The name that she still bears echoes within her, loaded with infamy, and re-awakens all her gloomy recollections. Her imperishable goodness has just added compassion to all her wrongs. May her strength not be exhausted in this cruel struggle! No, I feel it, laws cannot be voluntarily immoral and absurd. Evidence strikes men; they will break this odious bond which chains the purest being to a galley-slave.

Lucie will still suffer much; but various circumstances have enlightened me on all her sentiments, and I shall not sacrifice one of them to love. This noble woman shall be a proud wife and mother, pure, true, and loving friend. The sacrifices that she would valiantly accept for herself, she cannot bear the thought of bequeathing to her children. May she find at last the reward of these sweet virtues! I shall rally my strength and my courage to subdue my impatience. O Roger! life has had trials. I send thee a copy of my petition to the Chamber.

"Gentlemen Deputies:—There exists in the bosom of the laws an abuse of which the extent is frightful; permit me to signalize it by a striking example.

"A woman of twenty-two years, whose heart is pure and full of honor, finds herself chained by marriage to a galley-slave. Fifteen years of imprisonment, infamy, scorn, all that which separates virtue from vice, materially annuls this odious bond.

"The man is civilly dead; the woman, declared free by the tribunals, regains possession of his fortune, which she already manages. All her rights are evident; yet she must renounce the most precious of them, that of using the liberty of her heart. By an inconceivable lack of foresight in the laws, this woman finds herself expelled from their protection, and placed by them between two abysses, misfortune and immorality. Which choice dare we assign her? To adorn herself with a barren heroism, shall she renounce love and motherhood, those beautiful and noble rights of the wife?

"If isolation weighs like a sentence of death on her heart, and forces her to contract a tie hostile to society, who will protect her against the evil testimony of opinion, and against all the dangers attached to a false position?

"Between these two, there is a third, into which falls many oppressed and feeble natures—it is baseness.

"Gentlemen deputies, I call your attention to this question of high morals, and I solicit a law which establishes divorce for a single act of an infamous and criminal character."

TENTH LETTER.

MAURICE TO ROGER.

Our hearts are calmer. Lucie seems happy in seeing me submissive to the laws which govern society. May she reap the fruit of my patience!

Perhaps I have truly performed a duty. I have suffered so much for some time, that I can no longer be a very good judge on matters of wisdom. Abuses shock me, and oppression inspires me with such horror that I would willingly flee before it instead of contending with it. It may be that Lucie, in her heroism, is much nearer than I to simple justice and morality. Few women unite as she does penetration and sensibility; she is eminently loyal and spiritual. The better I understand this heart so tender, the more I feel that I could not too well repay her love.

How slowly each day brings the moment that unites us! I love to surprise her in the midst of the occupations which she invents for herself, while expecting me, she tells me. Yesterday I found her very busy copying a large book of insignificant music designed for schools. As I evinced my astonishment with much persistency, she ended by confessing that this work was one of her means of living. I could not tell thee, Roger, the painful impression that this discovery made upon me. The true duty of woman, is it not to surround man with the joys and affections of the domestic hearth, and receive from him in exchange all the means of existence that labor procures? I would rather see the mother of a poor family washing her children's clothes, than see her earning a livelihood by her talents away from home. I except, let it be understood, the eminent woman whose genius forces her out of the family sphere. Such an one should find in society her free development; for other minds are kindled by the exhibition of their powers.

I would not only that women might find in their fathers, their brothers, and their husbands natural support; but that these supports failing them, they should be sustained by governments. Institutions should be founded in which to unite them and make use of their various talents. There are many kinds of work that can only be done by women. These labors could be performed in these establishments, where feeble and desolate women would at least be assured of a resource against the wrongs which menace them in a struggle with the world without.

Our towns would then have vast bazars where wealthy women would go to choose their attire. We should no longer see poor girls attenuated by forced labor, often obliged to walk all day to dispose of their work. These means, or others analogous, would establish a slight proportion between the strength and the duties of women, which are often so little in harmony.

ELEVENTH LETTER.

MAURICE TO ROGER.

Where to find a remnant of zeal in this weary, money-loving society? Money! that is the key to their dictionary, the word which we must absolutely grasp to comprehend them.

I had confided to Count J—— our present position and my proceeding with the Chamber. He thought he would benefit me by introducing me to several of the men whom they call wise, no doubt because they have sacrificed the heart for the good of the head. I did not believe that bluntness could go so far. The conversation of these men resembled a veritable operation in stocks. It was a curious thing to see their efforts to convert an unworldly person.

The obliging manner in which Count J—— had introduced me to his circle made me, in spite of myself, give my evidence. Forced to speak of my sentiments and my opinions, I became at once the target for the whole assembly. They defeated me in philosophy and morals. They were going to declare me sublime in order to get rid of me, when one of the most influential men of the period took me aside.

"You resemble," said he to me, "a crow which pulls down walnuts. Do not err thus. You have just offended men who were able and willing to serve you. Arrange your affairs quickly; and believe that a hero with fifteen thousand *livres* rental is not strong enough to walk alone."

This language astonished me so much that I remained silent.

"You come," he continued, "to demand divorce; you are authorized by an example striking enough. Truly, justice and reason are with you. A law restricted like that which you demand, would pass without the least difficulty, and would be a real benefit. Very well! nevertheless, this law, it is a hundred to one, that you will not obtain it."

"It is my conviction," added he, while I repressed with difficulty a painful impatience, "the fault is yours, entirely yours. Wishing to play giant, foolishly despising the hierarchy, refusing it deference, and exploring for all support the arsenal of old words, is it not voluntarily taking the *role* of a dupe, and running, dagger in hand, into the midst of a pigeon match? Listen," said he, "if you were not so young, you would be a fool. But that infirmity excuses everything. I offer you, then, my influence with the ambassador of——. You have some position, a noble figure; you can advance yourself with him. You love a remarkable woman, you will give her a station worthy of her; and believe me, love does very well without marriage."

Finishing his period, my worthy mentor threw me a significant glance and left me. I went to shake hands with Count J——, so superior to the men by whom he is surrounded, and I returned to Oneil with rage in my heart.

Roger, I shall promptly investigate what this man has said to me, and see if there is no longer any trace of justice and honor in humanity. Lucie is too grand and too pure to stoop before it.

TWELFTH LETTER.

LUCIE TO MAURICE.

Maurice, you are noble and good. What heart can be more capable than yours of comprehending justice and reason? O best and most generous of men, you to whom I could have sacrificed with joy the peace of my whole life, could you but know to what extent yours has been dear and sacred to me! My beloved, it is in vain that we attempt to struggle any longer against destiny. My soul is completely broken under its blows. Alas! when I gave myself up to the happiness of loving

you, I thought to be able, in my turn, to add a charm to your life. Let me collect my last powers in one consoling thought, hoping you will restore again to society and your mother that which they have lost by your devotion to me. How often have I seen your great soul incensed at the sight of the afflictions that fill the world! O Maurice! it is delicious to experience all generous emotions. What destiny is at the same time greater and sweeter than that of the useful man! Do you not remember having often envied poor artisans the glory of a trifling discovery? You who can do so much more than they, would you remain inactive? Dear, very dear friend, live to imprint on the earth your noble steps. When a man like you appears in the midst of society, he should either bring to it his tribute of light and virtue, or condemn himself to the silence and coldness of selfishness. I know your soul; it is rich, and glowing as the clouds in a beautiful sky; never would you have found happiness in isolation. Do not renounce family joys; children will create great interests in your existence. You will find pleasure in developing in them the noble germs that they will inherit from you. You will make of their young hearts so many hearths in which the flame of yours will be diffused. They will surround you with respect and love. O Maurice! are not all the felicities of life summed up in this single word?

LAST LETTER.

DR. L — TO DR. B —.

My old friend, I approve the means you take in caring for yourself in turn. For us, who believe in good, it is a painful spectacle that of society in disorder, where nothing that is noble and great can succeed any longer. I have just witnessed again one of those sacrifices which shock the heart and the reason. The unfortunate young woman whose history I have written to you, expired yesterday in my arms, broken by sorrows that I refrain from describing to you. The man whom she loved survived her but a few moments; it seems as if he could comprehend only his despair. In vain I tried to lead him to reason and calmness; he blew out his brains beside the death-bed, before I was able to prevent his fatal design.

Those who have known the interesting and unhappy woman whose loss I deplore, will comprehend the fatal passion that she inspired. She had one of those rare organizations in which the heart and mind are equally balanced. No woman felt more than she the possibilities of her position. She might have been an accomplished mother and wife. Alas! in seeing her die in my arms at the age when one should live, I have painfully appreciated how little power is given to man to repair the evil that he causes.