Un Été
à la Campagne

CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

Two young Parisian Ladies

Collected by

A Man of the World

Being an English Translation of that famous little erotic classic

"Un Été à la Campagne"

PARIS

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PRÉFACE

The following letters, a correspondence between two young girls, were not, as may be supposed, intended for publication. How, and under what circumstances they fell into our hands is a matter of slight importance to the reader. The principal thing is whether or not they please him.

As we do not wish to take our friends unawares, we beg all persons of striet principles and—we hope—equally austere behavior, likewise the chaste, the devout, prudes, and in a word those who take delight and relief in mortification of the flesh and continence, on no account to open this book the reading of which would gravely imperil their chances of securing a reserved seat in Paradise.

On the other and, we cannot too highly recommend there letters to those who are apt to seize upon all that is pleasant and attractive in life; for

instance old men who still possess imagination and passion, but whose unfortunately waning powers require a slight stimulus. And we prescribe the book especially for young people of both sexes who, scarcely on the threshold of existence, are ambitions to learn, and desire to spend as lavishly and judiciously as possible the riches with which Dame Nature in her munificence has endowed them.

Therefore, without further preamble, we shall let our gentle correspondents take the floor.

Note.—It is perhaps nedless to state that the names of the personages in this chronicle are represented merely by their initials because all or most of them are yet living.

A SUMMER IN THE COUNTRY

LETTER I

Adèle de F .. to Albertine B... Teacher in the Y... boarding-school at... near Paris.

Paris, 23 april 18 .

You will accuse me of indolence or indifference, my dear, little friend, but I assure you it would be wrong to do so. If I have not replied to your last letter it is certainly not my fault, for I have been very busy.

Only think of it! My uncle has recently been appointed Colonel of a regiment in Algier's, and before leaving home he surprised my aunt with the gift of a delightful country house where she intends to pass the period of her widowhood—two or three mouths at most. And what a widowhood it will be! My good uncle has begged us to have all the company we want and enjoy ourselves to the utmost.

I leave you to guess whether or not we intend to grant our dear tyrant's request.

So for the past fifteen days I have not had a moment to myself. There are gowns to buy and try on; a thousand errands to attend to, besides accompanying my aunt one all her visiting tours, saying good-bye to one, inviting another to stay with us this summer, and in addition making all the preparations for my uncle's departure. You see not much time has been left for me to write to my dear Albertine.

But if I have not written, I have often thought of you. When alone in my room and in my solitary bed how greatly have I regretted the sweet nights we used to pass in each other's arms. How many times have I awakened and sought you by my side to ask for a certain pleasure that alas! I was obliged to procure unaided!

And you... have you thought of me? No doubt you have forgotten me for some one else. Ah if I knew that—well, I would expose you to Madame Y... and tell her that the severe and accomplished teacher who so admirably instructs her pupils during the day, explaining the secrets of history, the niceties of the French language, and the beauties of its literature, gives lessons at night in—the most delicious thing in the world!

Never mind; during the two mouths that have elapsed since I left the boarding-school, I have often wept when thinking of you. I must console myself somehow, and I trust that my sojourn in the country will help me to do so.

We leave in a couple of hours, and I did not wish to turn my back upon Paris without at least telling you were we were going. If you write to me first, address your letter to B... near Meulan.

Good-bye, dear heart. I kiss your pretty red mouth a thousand times. Think sometimes of your.

Adèle.

LETTER II

Albertine to Adèle.

Paris, 27 april 18 .

You see, darling Adèle, that I do not delay my reply. I presume you are already seetted in your castle and I therefore send this to B... as you directed. So you think of me, dear? Need, I assure you that you are repaid in the same coin. Two whole months of separation with no hope of our ever being together again! And I should ask nothing better than to spend my whole life with you.

My story is very like yours. We must now deprive ourselves of the pleasures that we enjoyed together—which is hard indeed—or else resort to solitary delights that are robbed of half their flavor. Still.....

What do you say, Miss? That if you knew some one had replaced you in my affections you would denounce me to Madame Y...? First of all

let me tell you that she and also her husband are so devoted to me that nothing you could say of me would lessen the high opinion they entertain of my rigid virtue. They would regard your stories as dreadful lies and calumnies. Besides, you must know, little tale-bearer, that since you left here all the big girls who remained, and all the new arrivals as well, are so ugly, flat-chested and thin—so badly built and generally unattractive, that even had I conceived the wicked idea of substituting some one else for you, I should have been obliged to renounce it. Joking aside, my little adored angel, the thought of taking another in your place *has* securred to me. You know my temperament and my principles. One imperiously commands enjoyment no matter how obtained. As for the rest, I am not troubled either with scruples or remorse; and had I found a *subject* worthy to supplant you, I should have arranged a plan of attack. But after assisting for several nights *incognito* at the retirement of these young ladies from the observatory I made for myself in order to take in the entire dormitory at a glance, I must say I came to the conclusion that I had under my supervision a regiment of dolls instead of a bevy of girls.

I have consequently been forced to remain faithful to you and to content myself with your recollection when I would gladly hold in my arms your lovely form.

Do you know, dear Adèle, that you are going to be terribly bored a whole summer away from Paris? You who are so fond of study, who used to ask me such strange questions—questions that I could not possibly answer for the simple reason that I was as ignorant as yourself—are surely aware that the country, which I am told is the veritable abode of innocence, is a spot badly chosen for the acquirement of the knowledge you lack.

In any event, tell me what you are doing and how you employ your time. Write often; it will lessen your ennui; and if I find some one to take your place—no matter whom. I shall not fail to acquaint you with the fact.

In the meanwhile, as a reward for the thousand kisses you so generously gave me in your last letter, I send you twice the number—one thousand for your charming mouth, the rest for your divine breasts.

Yours

ALBERTINE.

LETTER III

Adèle to Albertine.

B..., 8 may 18 .

Dear Albertine : If you think I am boring myself to death in the country you are greatly mistaken. For not only am I exempt from ennui—which is not so remarkable considering that I have been absent from Paris for only fifteen days—but I fancy I am likely to have a good deal of amusement, and that the " abode of innocence ", as you term it, will materially help me to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge for which I have such a furious appetite.

To begin with, the country pleases me, perhaps because until now I have been confined between four walls. Then my uncles's house—I do not say " castle " as you do, flatterer !—is really very nice, and possesses one advantage that you will appreciate—a fine library which I can use at my dis-

cretion, or even indiscretion, judging from the few books I have glanced at. To a *student* like myself, this is no small privilege. Every morning therefore after six o'clock—the weather is superb—you might see your little Adèle weandering along the garden paths, volume in hand, drinking in the pure air, poetry, and the perfume of lilacs. Before coming to B... I knew nothing about spring :

> That lovely nymph, kin to each flower that blows,
> Ripening the fruit, and opening the dewy rose!

Don't tell me that I am not profiting by my reading. Here I am quoting already!

Afterwards comes my music that I love, and my piano is excellent. Then I have drawing and painting. There are any number of charming views in the neighbourhood that I intend to sketch. Now you must admit that have resources enough to banish boredom.

But there are other things still. I told you awhile ago that my stay at B... would enable me to acquire knowledge. I shall explain more fully. Her gardener V... has two sons and two daughters; my aunt brought from Paris a maid and a cook. Nell, all these people are young, and not bad looking, and they get on famously together if I may form an opinion from what I have seen.

There is a certain grove at the end of the garden whose sombre depths will prove fatal, I fear, to rustic innocence. Up to the present, no harm has

probably been done; but something is bound to happen before long and I hope no details will escape me.

Only fancy, nobody pays any attention to me. They all look upon me as a child. I shall soon be eighteen, but I am not taken for more than fifteen. You know my reserved and ingenuous air; it would deceive any one. Even you hesitated a long time before daring to make me a declaration. And when you finally screwed up your courage it was in fear and trembling.

I am not noticed in the least; I am considered a mere cipher, and you may be sure I do all I can to justify this impression.

My researches too, might to be singularly favored by the situation of my apartment. Imagine a love of a room, flanked by two smaller ones. One of these contains my piano and serves as a study; the other I have turned into a dressing-room. My aunt's bedroom adjoins my suite on one side, and the best spare room is on the other—the room that is assigned to intimate friends or persons that are to be treated with special consideration.

You are wondering, dear Albertine, how all this can aid me in securing the information I desire. Well, in this way : last evening, while making examinations, I perceived that through an almost imperceptible crack in the wall I could see directly into my aunt's room.

Therefore what chance had effected in my study,

I succeeded in imitating with the same happy results in my dressing-room, so that a second ray of light no less indiscreet than the first made me mistress of the secrets of the guest chamber. The two points of observation, if you please, look directly upon the beds, and nothing can occur in either without my seeing it.

Do you understand now? My uncle will not remain in Algiers forever; he will return to B... and I shall be unlucky indeed if the mysterious curtains which hide the secrets of his couch are not drawn aside a little for my edification. So much for the left side. As for the right, I sincerely hope that some delightful mystery will he unveiled for my benefit.

Add to the advantages of the situation that when the doors of my study and dressing room are closed nothing can be seen or heard in my new room. In case it should suit me to perfect my education by passing from theory to practice I know positively that my walls possess neither eyes nor ears. It is not everybody who can say as much.

But for greater security I have greased my locks, and now they are marvellously discreet. I constantly open and shut the doors, and go in and out in such a way that the most acute sense of hearing would not be aroused. If the right occasion presents itself, it will not escape through any fault of mine. All that a good general can do to insure success I have accomplished.

Since we have both provided ourselves with observatories, our confidences will be multiplied, and will surely not be wanting in variety or piquancy. My aunt expects a great many visitors during the season, so look out for an interesting chronicle; and try on your part to find something better than dolls to look at. That is truly sad!

I write especially to-day because I dreamed of you last night. I leave you to imagine what I did when I alone. If you can guess, do the same, my love, and think of your.

ADÈLE.

LETTER IV

Albertine to Adèle.

Paris, 11th may 18 .

Dear little Adèle,

Although I do not pretend to possess the wisdom of Ædipus I was able to guess the enigma propounded to me at the conclusion of your last letter, and you may rest assured that your request was granted.

I am glad to know of your good luck in having secured so desirable a location for keeping yourself informed of everything that occurs at your uncle's. If I can trust my intuitions you will learn a great deal in a very short time, and the wisdom you gain will, I trust, accrue somewhat to my benefit. I positively blush—I who am your senior by three years—at the idea of taking lessons from a child. I am not deficient in the love of study, or application, as you are aware. It is opportunity that fails

me. After all, what can be learned in a girl's boarding school? Nothing beyond the few things we already know so well. These are of some importance no doubt, yet how many secrets remain still to be discovered!

Come, be quick to learn and instruct me; I await your next letter impatiently. I close mine rather more abruptly than I wish because Madame Y. is indisposed and begs me to go to her. Good-bye, dear. Remember that I look to you for a great deal.

ALBERTINE.

LETTER V

Adèle to Albertine.

B..., 15 may 18 .

Last evening it occurred to me to use my observatory on the left—that is to say the one in the study, as the room on the other side is unoccupied at present. My aunt was getting ready for bed, and honestly I can say with Titus, "My day was not thrown away."

My aunt, as you know, is a tall, handsome woman of about eight-and-twenty. Her face is very attractive; her teeth beautiful, and she takes good care to display them· But I fancied, owing to her somewhat angular features, slender fingers, and long, narrow feet, that her crinoline must he responsible for the rotundity of that particular portion of her person that my uncle alone has the right to explore between mid-night and nine o'clock in the morning. I say my uncle *alone*,

because I have the utmost respect for my aunt's virtue. Well, my dear friend, I found I was wrong concerning her anatomy, and my uncle, who adores his wife, is a much more favored man than I supposed. He has a statue by Praxiteles or Pradier for a bed-fellow.

My poor aunt, totally unaware that an indiscreet eye was levelled upon her, proceeded with her night toilet with a freedom quite in keeping with the solitude in which she imagined herself. First she unlaced her shoes, exhibiting during the operation, a calf whose fine proportions Diana might have envied. When she removed her gown, I saw a pair of arms fit to replace those lost from the Venus of Milo. Her corsets having gone the way of the dress, I perceived a bosom of marble firmness, and I had not recovered from my surprise when her chemise fell disclosing to my admiring eyes a slim and graceful figure, magnificent hips, and thighs and legs of such perfect proportions and purity of outline that they might well cause the Velléda in the Luxembourg, who is a knock-need skeleton in comparison, to blush with shame.

My aunt looked at herself with undisguised pleasure in the mirror of the wardrobe at the foot of her bed and which reflected so many charms united in a single personality. No doubt she regretted that her beauty was, so to speak, taking a vacation, and that my uncle was far away chasing

Arabs while he might have been reclining on the luxurious couch at her side—a couch destined to receive a poor lonely woman whose recollections formed her only solace.

I admit frankly that the bed inspired me with longing. I should have liked to occupy half of it, and endeavour to make the deserted lady forget the annoyances of her widowhood, and I racked my brain to find a pretext for entering her room. But the fear of having my advances badly welcomed made me hesitate, and when my fair neighbour had retired and her light was extinguished, I crept between my own sheets where I performed by myself what I yearned to entrust to another hand

You, my dear Albertine, would have taken the risk I presume, and perhaps success would have proved the step to be the right one. But I... I did not dare.

Adieu for a little while when I hope to have more news for you. I kiss you and love you.

ADÈLE.

LETTER VI

Adèle to Albertine.

B..., May 16 18 .

Congratulate yourself, dear Albertine, for here is the expected news, and if it does not please you you are certainly hard to satisfy.

Yesterday my aunt received a letter from Africa which made her very happy. Her husbaud was well and his absence would not be so prolonged as we feared.

She went upstairs early in the evening and I followed her example as there was nothing to keep me elsewhere. I sought my bed without a single evil thought, but happily the idea came to me to visit my observatory for had I neglected to act upon the impulse I should have missed the most extraordinary sight in the world.

My aunt, in her night-dress was sitting in an arm chair opposite me. The room was lighted by

a lamp that stood on a little table, and she was busily engaged in re-reading my uncle's letter.

This sheet of paper probably contained many tender expressions as her face was quite animated. Suddenly her eyes closed, her head drooped languidly upon the back of the chair, her left hand placed the ardent communication upon the table, while the right one, gently descending, caught hold of her one garment and raised it by an almost involuntary movement high enough for me to plainly see a lovely mound of brown hair coquettishly shaped and curled which recalled to my mind another to which you are not altogether a stranger. Then the naughty creature, her fingers still hesitating and groping here and there without the slightest intention apparently of falling upon the right spot, glided slyly between her superb thighs that were slightly separated, and began to move quickly to and fro.

Nothing very remarkable in that, you will exclaim. My aunt, thinking of her absent lord whom she loves is forced to employ the same method of sensual gratification that we poor girls are often obliged to resort to in order to banish the weariness that we wait for some-agreeable man to eventually dispel permanently.

But patience! the astonishing thing is yet to come. My aunt paused in her sweet pastime as if struck all at once by a thought. Did she perhaps suspect that the was watched? For a second I was

alarmed, but needlessly so after all. She rose and approached the wardrobe whence she took from a tightly closed drawer a pretty oblong box which she opened and from which she took... really, I hardly know how to define the object. It was a queer looking instrument, round and long that I can compare to nothing I ever saw before. She examined it amorously, then holding it firmly hastily resumed her seat as described above. With her left hand she cleared the way while with the right her singular companion, and notwithstanding quite a formidable resistance, caused it finally to disappear completely in a certain receptacle where it remained tightly imprisoned. A kind of struggle ensued. The new-comer furiously taking advantage of his position, the villain! seemed to revenge himself madly upon my aunt whose beautiful body trembled, rose and fell in frantic bounds and who, soon vanquished by the enemy, collapsed utterly. The humiliation of her defeat, no doubt, drew from her a series of plaintive sighs.

After lying for a few moments motionless in the chair in an attitude which an artist does not often have the chance to reproduce upon his canvas, my aunt recovered herself, released the serpent she had inadvertently warmed in her bosom, and placing it upon the table, got into bed and blew out the candle.

I suspect, however, that she did not fall asleep

immediately, for as I stood listening I heard long-drawn breaths, caused possibly by the eccentric nocturnal successor of colonel de M... This suggested to me, as I did not know how to call the gentleman in question the idea of giving him the name of " my Uncle ".

What do you think of that? Isn't it appropriate? And what have you to say of the whole performance? For my part. the spectacle I had witnessed affected me so strongly that I scarcely closed my eyes, and when I at last dropped off to sleep, the image of " my uncle " flitted through my dreams.

The following morning my aunt was fresh as a rose and appeared to have passed an excellent night.

Good-bye, dear Albertine. Write soon and tell me the impression this makes upon you.

Your own,

ADÈLE.

LETTER VII

Albertine to Adèle

Paris, 19 Mai 18 ,

What do I think of all you told me in your last letter? Well my dear, after having thought a number of things I have ended by thinking nothing. However, I laughed heartily in picturing to myself your aunt's treasure, and I find the name with which you baptized it admirable. Certainly I would give a great deal to see the sight you enjoyed gratis, while I am confronted with such pitiable surroundings, for things here are the same.

I can't get that wretched "Uncle" of yours out of my head. Sleeping or waking I see him before me. He is a spectre that haunts me continually. Ever since I read the picturesque description you gave me of your aunt's perfections, I don't venture to look at myself at all, and I sincerely admire her

virtue. young and beautiful as she is, with violent passions, we can only conclude after what you saw, that she has shut herself up in the country to escape the attentions of lovers, and is content to satisfy her desires with a vulgar and grotesque imitation of nature when she might, if she chose, enjoy a seductive reality. Isn't that heroism and the crême of conjugal fidelity? Your uncle — the real one I mean — is a lucky man and ought to be the happiest of husbands. Does he realize all that she sacrifices? Probably he is like other men, finding all this wholly natural, and doesn't experience, much difficulty in deceiving a woman who is so careful to remain pure for his sake. They are all the same, and I promise you that should I ever marry, the " uncle " I shall employ during my husband's absence will not be put under lock and key.

I told you that things here were unchanged. That is true so far as the pupils are concerned; but a few day ago a new servant arrived who is worth considering.

Félicie, without being precisely pretty, has a striking face. She is about twenty-four or five. small, slight, and a brunette. She is a Provençale. Her hair is fine, her nose rather sharp, her grayish-blue eyes are large and their peculiar expression is enhanced by the dark circles that surround them and the thick eyebrows that meet over the nose. Her upper lip is shaded by a tiny mous-

tache while a heavier down that would pass for whiskers on the face of a collegian of eighteen, begins at her temples and extends wantonly, along her cheeks. When I add that Félicie has little white teeth, small hands, and well-formed feet, you will agree with me that she is not beneath my notice, Don't be astonished therefore if I have already laid claim to her. Yes I mean to take the risk. Only a plausible excuse is lacking for the commencement of hostilities, and I am in the way of discovering one. I shall keep you posted as to developments.

Madame Y's indisposition which I mentioned in my last letter has increased to a real illness.

She has been confined toher bed for eight days, and during that time I have become mistress of the establishment-instead of a mere humble teacher. Eery thing is under my supervision, and I am far from sorry that this is the case, for you know how much I appreciate authority.

Monsieur Y is very kind to me and treats me with great deference.

Adieu, If you see any thing more from your points of observation, Anne, my sister Anne, do not fail to acquaint me of the fact. As for me, you recall my promise. I kiss you many times.

ALBERTINE.

LETTER VIII

Adèle to Albertine

B... 22 May 18 ,

Our solitude has been enlivened, dear Albertine. Some people have arrived from Paris and B... is no longer the same. Everything indeed is topsy-turvy.

First of all we have Monsieur Y... a celebrity of the Parisian bar who won, nearly a year ago, a big lawsuit for my uncle. He is said to be very rich. He is a small man of about forty serious and important looking. He always wears a white cravat; his voice is deep, and he has large eyes, a blotchy complexion, and half a dozen hairs that he drags from the back of his neck to his forehead. To him has been accorded the chamber of honor, and it must be confessed that I have little luck with my right hand observatory, for it will certainly be useless to trouble myself about this solemn Monsieur Y...

and as he intends to stay a whole month there will be a gap in my studies.

We have also a young married couple, a pair of turtle-doves whom I should much prefer as neighbours. From them, at least, I should be sure to learn something. I did my best to secure the best room for them, but my aunt would not consent. The lawyer was entitled to the finest apartment in the house and got it.

A well known author, Monsieur X... has also honored us with a visit. I understand his work is very clever, and I have no doubt that it is, for it could easily outshine his conversation and yet leave much to be desired. He is a most fatiguing person.

We expect other visitors and are organizing *bals champêtres*, excursions and sailing parties. The Seine is close by. We are contemplating also a theatrical performance. Isn't that lovely? It has always been my dream to act. Surely our summer will be a most delightful one.

In the meantime we have music in the evening. The young married lady plays remarkably well. Her husband is a nice fellow and quite clever although he will never take a prize for brilliancy.

Of course this influx of strangers has necessitated an increase of servants, and this morning a recruit arrived who I imagine forms a strong contrast to the Félicie whose conquest you are planning. Judge for yourself.

She is a blonde girl from Normandy, scarcely eighteen years of age. She is taller than my aunt who, you will recollect has a very fine presence. And what a figure! What splendid flesh!

Her large frame is surmounted by a small head, with round, chubby cheeks. Her eyes are limpid and the expression of her entire countenance is almost infantile — a real baby face.

You ought to see the greedy looks of the men — both masters and valets — at the sight of this handsome girl.

Even M. Y... has emerged from his shell a trifle-when he first saw the young Normandy peasant's blooming freshness and abundant charms, his large eyes strained themselves to the ulmost and gleamed-like live coals. His nose turned from pale red to deep crimson, and his six hairs stood up straight in the air.

I don't know what the outcome of all this will be, but I tremble for Rose's virtue. I fancy she will be subjected to several rude assaults. From to-day, however, I shall keep my eye on her, and I am confident of soon having something to communicate.

As for you ,dear Albertine, I wish you all success in the seige you are about to undertake-keep me informed in regard to your progress.

Yours always,

ADÈLE.

LETTER IX

Albertine to Adèle

Paris, 26 May 18 .

Well, my dear, the seige was not so prolonged as that of Troy. I am mistress of the situation and your place, empty for three mouths, is at last occupied.

You would like to hear the details I suppose. This is how I arranged my batteries. Yesterday morning, on going to see Madame Y... whose illness grows worse day by day. I complained of not feeling well myself-at noon my discomfort had increased, although I could not exactly locate the seat of my trouble. At one moment it was my head, at another my nerves. Oh, those dreadful nerves !

In the evening I wanted to stay with Madame Y... as usual, but I soon became so ill that Monsieur Y... insisted upon my retiring, declar-

ing that he would remain beside his wife, and requesting Félicie, whose room is near mine, to show me every attention.

That was just what I was after. I rose, with a sigh, and proceeded to stagger off to my room, followed by my *camera major*.

Once there, I found myself so weak that she was obliged to undress me. When I was in bed, however, and had swallowed a cup of camomile tea, I felt much better, so I sent Félicie to beg Monsieur Y... not to worry about me as my indisposition was passing away and that I was overwhelmed with drowsiness.

Having satisfied myself on this point and my messenger having returned, the pain overcame me again. This time my nerves were violently affected and I tossed about, twisting my arms.

Félicie, greatly embarrassed spoke of fetching Monsieur Y..., but all at once the attack ceased as if by magic. She then proposed to pass the night with me, and seated herself at my bed side.

After a quarter of an hour of quiet, I suggested that she go back to her own room but this she naturally declined to do. I therefore asked her to share my couch, so that in case of a fresh attack she would be close at hand to help me. She hesitated for an instant, but finally decided to accept the invitation.

The decisive moment was approaching!

Félicie removed her gown, petticoat and corsets,

while I, regarding her through lowered eyelids, saw, as her various garments fell, a beautiful form with pure, though slightly accentuated, outlines.

At last she got into bed!

When I felt her near me a kind of fever pulsed through my veins, and as a punishment for my former pretence of suffering. I now experienced an actual pain. The ungovernable desires that had possessed me for eight days and which I had rigorously abstained from gratifying in the expectation of this blissful hour, together with the fear of being repulsed and the possibility of a scandal — all reacted so forcibly upon my nervous system that my seeth chattered involuntarity and a quivering, impossible to control, shook me from head to foot.

But my dear Adèle this condition helped me to play my part the more thoroughly.

I asked Félicie to put out the light which I said prevented my sleeping. This precaution taken and five minutes having elapsed — five centuries it seemed to me — I turned over with a convulsive breath. She inquired if I felt any pain.

" Horrible pain, my dear child", I replied, and I brusquely threw my arms about her neek, as if imploring relief of some sort, and kissed her.

This advance was not ill received. On the contrary, my embrace was instantly returned. The good creature evidently was ready to do all in her power to ease my torment.

Encouraged by this affability, which only served to intensify my longing, but continuing to moan as if still tortured by my miserable nerves, I clasped her tightly, while my hand wandered tentatively here and there, for fear of alarming her, and came into contact with the softest, finest skin that ever covered a young, supple, and luscious body.

Finding nothing to impede, feeling indeed that my advances were rather welcome than otherwise, I resolved upon a master-stroke. I thrust my left arm around Félicie, glued my mouth to hers, and forcing open her legs, slipped my right hand between two satin thighs which, far from objecting, appeared to invite my entrance.

I reached the goal, but suddenly my hand drew back, and I uttered a cry of dismay to which my Provençale responded with a burst of wild hilarity.

I can imagine you quite bewildered. You are wondering what caused me to stop — the reason for this laughter and stupefaction. Not long ago you referred to a certain mound of hair as " coquettishly shaped and curled ". Oh, my dear, if that was a *mound* how shall I designate what I had just touched? It was more like a forest, not perhaps so virgin as those in the wilds, of America, but amost as impenetrable. But perhaps we had better leave metaphors aside and call it simply a fleece — a real fleece — tufted, bristling, tangled,

coarse, harsh as the hide of a goat, and recalling to mind the historical skin in which Jacob arrayed himself in order to fool poor old Isaac. Really, I was tempted to believe the line of Esau is not yet extinct. Félicie must be a direct descendant of this hairy patriarch with his passion for beans.

But I must tell you the rest of the story. When Félicie's mirth had subsided and I had in a measure recovered from my astonishment, the wicked girl confessed that she had been perfectly aware of my little game for the past hour, and had not been at all deceived by my nervous agitation. She had nevertheless permitted me to play, my part to the finish, curious as to the effect her marvellous hirsute adornment would produce upon me. Her expectations in this respect had been fully realized.

At the recollection of my impulsive exclamation and rapid retreat from the seat of action, we both laughed like a couple of lunatics, and in a moment the most complete undertanding existed between us Félicie took possession of my still timid hand, guided it, with considérable difficulty, through the thick furry mass, and soon proved to me by her transports of delight that she was no less appreciative than I of a pleasure that it had cost me so much unnecessary stratagem to procure.

In short, we were enchanted with each other. The hours passed quickly, and when Monsieur and Madame Y... inquired next morning whether

I had recovered from my illness, they concluded that my heavy eyes and haggard face betokened a sleepless night, and sympathized with me accordingly.

You see I have kept my word and given you all the details of my late conquest. Now it is your turn.

To the devil with your horrid little lawyer! what business has he to interrupt a course in natural history that promised to be so entertaining? Fortunately you have other resources at B...

Good-bye, dear Adèle. I kiss and love you always notwithstanding my infidelities.

ALBERTINE.

LETTER X

Adèle to Albertine

B..., 28 May 18 .

Bravo, my bold amazon; you have covered yourself with glory! Your rare prudence and subtle diplomacy were wholly superfluous, it is true, but an able general should never open fire without providing for a possible retreat. I approve of and admire the provisions you felt called upon to make for a contingent failure.

Do you know that you have drawn a terrifying picture of your shaggy adversary? To stumble during the night and at the most unexpected moment upon a prickly beast is enough to make the most adventuresome recoil, and I am sure it required all your courage to enable you to vanquish the monster.

You said in a preceding letter that the image of " my uncle " haunted you continually. For my

part, I have always before my eyes the rough object you lately described. We are consequently quits. You can have " my uncle " whenever you like, and in return I will take your " Bear " Now that's settled.

I quite agree with you concerning Félicie's genealogy, and yeilding to my morbid desire to re-baptize every body, I shall henceforth call her " Mademoiselle Esau " if you have no objection. She certainly has an incontestable right to that name.

But let us go back to B... not that I have anything especial to relate, but because matters are shaping themselves I think, and contrary to the advice offered by the united widsom of all nations, I have at present any number of irons in the fire.

I will begin with Rose about whom all the men are hovering like moths around a candle-flame— the monotonous Monsieur X... the bridegroom, and even the litle lawyer.

These gentlemen do not suspect that I am watching them and that not one of their movements escapes me. The two former do not progress very well. X... is too foppish, and the other cannot get rid of his wife. But the lawyer goes regularly to work and presses his suit with a vim I should never have believed he could display, and I should not be surprised if he arrived first and foremost. The flunkies come in for their innings also. The coachman, a fine-looking fellow, is very

much smitten and has turned his back upon little Victoria. the gardener's youngest daughter. I no longer see him at nine o'clock in the evening walking toward the grove whither the simple village girl, was wont to direct her steps from another part of the. grounds. Poor Victoria is altogether out of it " nowadays ".

Rose has only to keep quiet and appear disinterested. She is the object of a veritable steeple-chase. Up to the present she has seemed to pay slight attention to what is going on, but I am studying her carefully. This is easy, particularly at night, as she sleeps in a small room situated at the extreme end of the corridor occupied by my aunt, the lawyer and myself.

You have no idea, dear Albertine, how busy I am, indeed I scarcely find time to sleep. And to think that you should have fancied me a victim of the spleen !

There is something else.

I am keeping an eye on the granary that our cook, Madame Plum—don't laugh, that is really her name—visits very often. This place is under the immediate supervision of Nicholas, Victoria's elder brother, a pretty blonde boy whose education has already been begun by Plum who is a big, jolly, red-faced woman of thirty. The honorable Monsieur Plum is amusing himself in London just-now, and it is quite proper that his wife should employ her spare time to advantage. Her

culinary efforts are confined to day, and her evenings are consecrated to teaching.

I hope eventually to take part in one of these lessons which are usually given between tenn and eleven o'clock. I shall find a way of creeping behind an innocent bale of hay or something else.

I am collecting material for your benefit, and, you will soon hear from me again, dear Albertine. I kiss you tenderly. Don't speak of this to "Mademoiselle Esau", for she might be jealous,

Ever yours,

ADÈLE.

P.-S. An old cousin of the family came yesterday. She is not interesting, but she is accompanied by a young man Lucien P... who is decidedly so. We had met before, for danced twice with him last winter at the one ball I attended. We renewed our acquaintance and I like him exceedingly. He is most agreeable and devoted and—I don't know but...

Good-bye again.

ADÈLE.

LETTER XI

Albertine to Adèle.

Paris, 1 june 18 .

Your last letter, dear Adèle, ends with a *but* which gave me much food for reflection, for it says more than one would suppose so tiny a word capable of saying.

Can it be possible that your heart is beginning to stammer its first utterances? And is Lucien, armed with Cupid's ammunition, the fortunate one destined to pluck the precious rose that I could touch but not gather?

I await specific information, and I trust that you who are so liberal with details that concern others will not be niggardly when it comes to be a question of your own case.

Moreover, I have set you an example, and will continue my history of " Mademoiselle Esau " as you call her.

What a clever girl she is! And how much I have learned in the short time we have been together.

The one subject of our nocturnal conferences—that which appeared to you and me so mysterious and inexplicable—is as clear to me now as if I had seen it with my own eyes. Putting actual experience aside, I know as much as any woman in the world thanks' to Félicie.

I must say that she is by no means commonplace. Her studies have carried her over considerable ground, and she may well flatter herself upon her familiarity with human nature. She has done everything, and everything has been done to her.

I can't help laughing when I recall my feigned illness. Nobody ever took useless precautions before in such absolute good faith.

If you knew dear Adèle, what happy nights I have since passed! I will not say that they were more delightful than *ours*—they were of a different character and cannot be compared one with the other.

Félicie is indefatigable. Sleep is hard to obtain in her company, and the night is not sufficient for her. She profits by the day time also, and when a favorable opportunity fails to present itself she can create one.

What *we* did, dear child, was simple foolishness— mere innocent diversion. We were at the

a b c of the art, and you would be amazed if I could show you my scientific methods of to day.

There is one delicious thing that neither of us ever dreamed of, strange to relate, for when once learned it is the most natural amusement imaginable.

I will explain as best I can relying upon your fertile fancy to elucidate whatever may be obscure.

Were we side by side in the same bed, there would be no occasion for mystery, and you would understand my demonstration at once without having recourse to your imagination.

Old Æsop was right, my dear, when he said the tongue was the greatest thing on earth, although among the many uses he assigned to it he neglected to mention the particular one that my instructor revealed to me.

What ineffable joy can be obtained through the organ of speech, and how well Esau's descendant comprehends it all! It makes me shiver to think of it.

Well my love, you contract a debt that you are anxious to pay without delay. Generous reciprocity is in order, and it becomes you to do unto others what you are charmed to have others do unto you. And you must not shrink from what constitutes, according to Molière, man's chief attraction.

Now if I have succeeded in giving you a sufficiently exact idea of this masculine prerogative

which is so oddly portrayed in Félicie, you will understand that the trial through which I passed was a severe one. How many difficulties and hinderances I had to surmount! Fortunality I am not deficient in courage, and after measuring with a glance the task I had to fulfil, I threw myself forward with lowered head, and performed my duty heroically.

Good heavens! The habit is easily acquired I assure you. Indeed it becomes facinating in a short space of time.

Félicie likes me, and declares I shall soon be as apt as herself. I fear, however, that she flatters one.

By the way, I spoke to her of your " uncle ", and she explained to me his character and special function. She even told me the real name of this consoler of the abandoned. The name however, is so peculiar that my refractory pen refuses to undertake its burlesque orthography. There are things we can say openly and yet hesitate to write.

But enough of these follies! I end my letter with a sad bit of intelligence. Madame Y... is very ill indeed and a medical consultation has been held. Her husband is in despair.

Good-bye, my sweet Adèle,

ALBERTINE.

LETTER XII

Adèle to Albertine.

B..., 5 June 18 .

I understand you perfectly, my dear Albertine. My subtle intelligence, as you rightly inferred, followed you step by step without a slip through the labyrinth you so happily penetrated. This was the easier for me because, I confess, the idea of a similar woodland excursion often occurred to me in the past, and I can't help wondering why you and I never undertook it. Had the suggestion come from you, I should have hailed it with enthusiam, but I did not dare take the initiative. What singular scruples possess us at times! Of, if we could but begin again...!

It seems that the wise mademoiselle Esau has enabled you wonderfully to make up for lost time. I who know how industrious you are, must congratulate you upon the discovery of such a trea-

sure. She must indeed be a marvel, and I am curious to learn to what extent she enjoys the respectable emblem of virility.

As however, I cannot see it for myself, I will pass on to something of yet deeper interest to me.

You guessed rightly, dear Albertine. Yes my heart responds to Lucien's, but I try to hide in the depths of my soul the secret my eyes have already revealed. It is not well to throw myself at a man's head.

Ah, if you knew how charming he is ! Let me draw his portrait for you, and then tell me whether or not my taste is commendable. I shall be un compromising but perfecly just, and if you find him still attractive, so much the better.

The physical representation comes first. He is seven-and-twenty, of medium height, and with regular, expressive features. He has great blue eyes that say all manner of things, thick brown hair, a beautiful black moustache, and pearly teeth no beard or whiskers.

Well, how do you like him so far? Does he please you? I will add that he has aristocratic hands and small feet, that he is an adept at every kind of sport, a fine horseman, and always carefully though simply dressed. All the women and the men also agree with me as to his accomplishments and attractions.

Now for the mental characteristics.

I am ashamed to say that his intellectual quali-

ties are quite in accord with his exterior advantages. I know you will think I exaggerate and that I am blinded by passion. You will compare my Lucien to the impeccable hero of a novel. Nevertheless, it is not my intention to detract from the truth and deny the evidence of my own senses. As every body here considers him agreeable, gay and clever, I am forced to join in the chorus. I am even obliged to make a few special observations which will serve to induce you to appreciate him the more. He has not an atom of vanity, and never seeks to draw attention to himself in any way. Still, he converses easily on all subjects, and the moment he opens his lips the company has ears for no one else. Although deftly sarcastic he is never malicious, and he cannot endure conceit. Monsieur X... has ample opportunity of knowing this. Lucien understands several languages, draws and paints remarkably well, has a good voice and accompanies himself on the piano. I have also seen some admirable verses of which he is the author.

There is the picture! Don't you thimk Lucien a pretty name? I repeat it to myself all day long. And bear in mind Miss Albertine, that I have not flattered him a bit.

How is it possible to resist such a man, especially when he takes every means of letting me see his preference for myself by saying something pleasant or tenderly squezeing my hand while his gaze meets mine with an intense expression? So

far as I am concerned resistance is out of the question, and I can only throw myself on his mercy.

You recollect the description of my apartment which is so arranged that the observation of others is as certain as safety in regard to myself. After the first advantage has been enjoyed I can profit by the second. Mere theory no longer satisfies my thirst for knowledge and I have determined upon practical methods. The hour has struck, the pupil is impatient docile and ambitious, and I believe, egotism aside, talented. I ought to make rapid progress with so fine a professor as Lucien if he will consent to pay me a visit and give me a course of instruction.

We are more than ever bent upon having private theatricals at B... Monsieur X... who for the first time has shown that he is good for something, is writing a play in which Lucien and I are to take the part of two lovers. Of course this will help the situation, so toward the end of June or the beginning of July.— A month of beating about the bush will be sufficient I fancy—prepare yourself for a general confession from me.

You know I have no secrets where you are concerned.

It is quite time that I continued my other studies which of late have been seriously interrupted. On my aunts' side nothing happens. Can " my uncle " be in disgrace? Perhaps he only has appearance on the days we receive letters from Al-

giers, and we have had none for a mouth. Rose's virtue is apparently impregnable. As for Plum she is quiet as the grave. I have found a way though, of getting into the granary. The trouble consists in being able to get out again. I am not anxious to be caught like a mouse in a trap.

Dearth of adventure at present. But wait! I finish my letter with your new words.—" Enough of these follies! And with the hope that your reply will bring better accounts of poor Madame Y... whom we love so much.

Adieu, dear Albertine. Your

ADÈLE.

LETTER XIII

Albertine to Adèle

Paris, 7 June 18 .

Instead of the favorable news you expected, dear Adèle, I have a sad announcement to make, Madame Y... died this morning at three o'clock. Poor woman, she etc., etc., etc.

Here follows a lengthy panegyric which is but a paraphrase of the famous ; " Madame is dying Madame is dead! " The éditor however does not deem it necessary to hand down to posterity Mademoiselle Albertine's éloquent tribute to the defunct schoolmstress, and respectfully refers the reader who admires such lugubrious efforts to Bossuet's funeral oration on Queen Henrietta of England. Nothing will he lost or gained by substituting one for the other.I

LETTER XIV

Adèle to Albertine

B..., 9 June 18 .

So Madame Y... is dead, dear Albertine! I can hardly believe it. She was so young, so full of spirits, to... etc. etc.

(The compiler begs the reader to peruse Malherbe's *Consolation* addressed to Du Perrier ;

"Rose herself she lived as the roses do." She ventures to say in addition that Mademoiselle Adèle's eloquence is in no way inferior to that of her friend, or of Aigle de Meaux. Truly Madame Y... had every reason to be proud of her scholars!)

LETTER XV

Albertine to Adèle.

Paris, 20 Juin 18 .

What I am about to tell you, my dear Adèle, will not seem credible, but it is absolutily true. I am not speaking lightly, and I have taken care to be sure of my facts before writing my suspicions to you.

Monsieur Y.., who on the day of the funeral could not be torn from his wife's body and even insisted upon following her to the tomb, has succeeded in finding consolation in the short space of fifteen days. The tears which he declared would flow forever have miraculously dried. What is more extraordinary is that I am the one who has provoked this satisfactory change in his feelings.

We began by weeping in concert and sincerely too, I am pleased to believe. Later, however, I perceived that his grief was becoming more tender and sympathetic, and yesterday one or two lan-

guishing looks, a few significant-pressures of the hand, and certain free and easy touches, warned me that the decisive moment was drawing near.

At the first intimation of this a thought flashed through my brain—a thought that can easily be realized. It has occurred to me to become Madame Y.'s... successor, and so I shall in due course of time.

Monsieur Y... is nearing forty it is true, but he is still good-looking notwithstanding a slight boldness, which is not an unpardonable fault that I am aware of. He has a small fortune, and the school brings in a substantial income, so that he would he an excellent match for me who am penniless. I shall be a lady and the head of an establishment—my dream!

But if I wish to gain my end it will never do for me to descend from the pedestal upon which I have climbed.

Consequently I resolved to proceed in this wise. Without saying a word, I seized the bold hand which strayed over my person, and returned it to its owner. Then casting upon him an icy glance, I rose majestically, and with the air of an outraged empress, marched out of the door and locked myself in my room, leaving the poor man speechless and crushed.

Even this morning he had not recovered his voice. Things therefore are progressing famously.

But now, dear Adèle, let us put serious matters

aside and speak of yourself. Your Lucien, I do not doubt, is just as you have described him, and you deserve that he should be, for you are certainly a lovely creature.

How far have you gone with him? Tell me quickly.

And Rose... I am interested in her wefare. Has she capitulated? And I have not forgotten Plum either.

Come, write soon, do you hear? I have not had a line from you for two mortal weeks. And do try to find something new to communicate.

Between ourselves, I am getting very tired of Félicie, and am seeking some means of ridding myself of her without compromising my character.

Good-bye, dear little Adèle. I kiss you affectionately. Don't forget that I expect a long letter.

ALBERTINE.

LETTER XVI

Adèle to Albertine.

B..., 23 Juin 18 .

Being a respectful and submissive pupil, Mademoiselle, I obey the expression of your sovereign will. You ask for a long letter and you shall have it.

Does that satisfy you? I write with all the deference due to the austere Mistress of an important institute of learning, for I do not in the least doubt that your project will succeed. How can Monsieur Y... resist so much grace, beauty, and *virtue* combined?

Speaking of virtue, I would have given any thing to see you march out of that door. You must have been magnificent, my Albertine, and I can see in imagination the sad face of the unfortunate widower so rudely repulsed from the confort he sought. I hope he has recovered ere this

and accepts his fate philosophically In a few months I fancy you will not refuse him any thing. And as the poor devil has borne the loss of his wife so bravely, I don't see why you should hesitate to do the same. So let us say no more about the dead. It is not worth while.

There are more interesting topics to talk of. Since our correspondance was interrupted, I have come into possession of some documents which are at your disposal.

Then too, I found out a way of assisting at Plum's nocturnal diversions without running the risk of remaining a hostage among the bales of hay. This is how I managed to solve the difficult problem.

The barn is lighted by two dormer windows on a level with the second storey, one of which looks out upon a shed containing a heterogenous assortment of tools and garden implements, among which I discovered a ladder leaning against the wall.

A flash of inspiration came to me, and I calmly awaited my opportunity,

For four days I waited in vain. Then one evening toward eleven o'clock, as I was playing sentinel behind my curtains, I heard young Nicholas cough as he passed by the kitchen, and saw him subsequently disappear in the direction of the granary.

A moment later fat Plum, in a fine deshabille, emerged from the door, and having looked cau-

tiously around and discovering nothing to excite her suspicions, trotted as nimbly as her hippopotamus, like feet would permit toward the same haven of rest.

Losing no time, I crept downstairs and reached the shed in a few moments, taking an opposite route.

The ladder was standing immediately beneath one of the windows, and mounting it fearlessly, my eyes penetrated the billowy depths of the loft.

Unfortunately the moon was obscured by clouds from which she only glided occassionally, so that although I could hear distinctly all that was said I could see but imperfectly.

An animated discussion was in progress as I entered my private box. I shall not attempt to quote it. Suffice it to say that Plum, who had the floor, is not particular as to her language, and on that special evening made use of many technical expressions that it was impossible for me to understand, and which I think it would be useless to hunt for in Bescherelle or the Academy.

From what I was able to gather, however, I inferred that like Penelope, separated from her Ulysses for more than a year, Mr Cook had no intention of presenting her spouse on his return with any contraband offspring whose paternity she could not with decency reveal. The discussion continued, and Nicholas, carried away by his youtful ardour, flatly refused to take the precau-

tions his instructress declared were infaillible to prevent the disastrous consequences of love.

But finally the impatient pupil appeared to listen to reason. She became still. The talk faltered, then stopped altogether, and... I could make nothing but a black mass moving back and forth in the heavy shadows.

I despaired of learning anything by this blind-man's-buff, but suddenly a pale moonbeam pierced the clouds, illumined the darkness, and enabled me to distinguish Nicholas, a resigned victim doubtless, stretched at full length on his back, while kneeling before him, her face toward the floor, the big cook was engaged in some mysterious rite in the accomplishment of which she evinced the greatest enthusiasm.

The moonlight vanished, but not until I had seen Nicholas wriggling like an epileptic, as he convulsively grasped his companion's head. Presently she ceased operations and tried to calm him by means of kisses and loving caresses.

A short silence ensued, interrupted by Plum who congratulated herself on her prudence and proved conclusively to Nicholas that had he failed to follow her prescription he might have perpetrated an apocryphal Plum.

When this was settled, the clever cook turned her attention elsewhere. I could see her this time on top of her blonde youth who did not alter his position. She quite covered the poor boy with her

voluminous person, and rode him with all the courage of a bold Equestrienne, when in her turn she was overcome by a violent nervous attack, is it contagious?—And ended by rolling completely over, uttering the while such terrific sighs that they almost amounted to bellowing.

The second lesson terminated, and my interest no longer especially aroused, I felt a sudden weariness's steal over me. I decided therefore to descend the ladder and go to bed, endeavoring meanwhile to explain what I had just seen and heard. But I fell asleep without so doing.

I tell you this hoping that you will consult Mademoiselle Esau on the subject, for I have the ulmost confidence in her superior scientific attainments.

Pretty Rose in whom you are so interested will soon be brought to terms if I mistake not. Negociations are proceeding like mad, and as I predicted it is the lawyer who holds the fort. He has everything in his favor. The young married man is hampered by his wife, and X... is debarred by his colossal conceit. Both were out distanced from the start. Charles the coachmann stood a fair chance, but lost it. Accustomed to rush at things like the wind, he made a dead set at Rose and frightened her away. The lawyer goes slowly but surely. In a few days I shall announce his success to you.

You inquire how far I have gone with Lucien.

Ah, dear Albertine, he grows more charming and more worthy of my love every day, If you knew how violently my heart beats, how it melts, so to speak, when his hand touches mine, when his arm encircles my waist, or when his mouth brushes my cheek or hair! And the blissful sensations he excites in me are wholly unsuspected by him, poor dear, for I am careful to hide them .

The parts we are to play in X's... comedy help us wonderfully toward the goal we are striving to reach. At rehearsal Lucien is more intense and devoted than ever. He uses the assumed character to display the infinite and seductive resources of his intelligence, while I, taking refuge behind my borrowed, ingenuousness—for I can honestly state that I play the *rôle* of outraged virtue as well as yourself—torment him at my pleasure. I pretend not to understand his manœuvres, and drive him to desperation by means of a calculating innocence.

He does not, cannot, read my thoughts. If he could see how I also long for the happy moment, when throwing myself into his arms, I shall abandon my lips to his kisses.

After all, dear Albertine, is it not true that we cannot reach that point without being, to some extent, prepared for it?

Women are dubbed deceitful coquettes, and with justice I admit. But merciful heavens, what would become of us were we otherwise? And what

would the men think of us? Besides they ought to be forced to pay dearly for their pleasures.

I want to put a high price on Lucien's victory, and therefore I struggle with him at every step. But he will reap a rich reward for what his love for me now makes him suffer. He little knows what amends I shall offer him.

I mentioned in the beginning of my letter some documents that I had obtained during my long silence. Among them are two curious authograph productions which I propose to copy for you. But first let me tell you how they happened to fall into my hands.

Last Sunday we had company. Dinner was very lively, and when dessert was brought on, the conservation took on a jocular tone. The lawyer, who was in a high good humor probably because Rose waited on the table, hurled from the top of his white cravat several smutty stories. X... was almost clever, and Lucien who is always a brilliant talker was remarkably gay. When they left the dining-room these jovial gentlemen lighted their cigars and strolled into the garden, where no longer restrained by the presence of ladies, they gave full vent to their spirits. At least I judge so from the roars of laughter that reached me. Lucien was the centre of attraction. What could he be saying? I was crazy to hear, but it was impossible for me to do so. All at once, he left the hilarious group, went into the house, and

presently returned with several pages of manuscript.

A reading unfit for virginal ears was to follow! For greater security therefore, the party retired to a secluded path bordered by a tall hedge where, arm in arm, and in profound silence, they listened to the reader with rapt attention.

My curiosity could have asked nothing better. Taking my dramatic *rôle* from my pocket, and pretending to be absorbed in its study, I walked stealthily toward the protecting hedge which hid me from view and enabled me to catch disjointed fragments of Lucien's reading.

It was poetry, but as he spoke in an undertone, I did not hear distinctly enough to gather the meaning. I should consequently have had my trouble for my pains had it not been for a lucky accident.

When the entertainment was over, the gentlemen began to discuss it. forming a little circle at the end of the path. Lucien, who was the recipient of compliments and criticism from his audience, thought doubtless to put the manuscript into his pocket. But through a gap in the hedge I saw it flutter to the ground, Nobody noticed this, and still arguing, the company walked away and disappeared rouned a corner. I sprang like a panther on my prey, seized the papers, hid them quickly in my bosom, and rushed to my room. I had almost written my *den*. Once there, I

locked the door, and began at once to read Lucien's secret compositions.

They form two pictures meant to be companion pieces. Of one, dear Albertine, we can from our own experience, form a correct estimate. It pleases me immensely, and if I dared, I would congratulate the author upon the fidelity of his pen to nature. The other, I am not in sympathy with. I must add too that it is a translation handed down from ancient Rome some two thousand years ago, I trust that tastes have changed since then.

These, however, will form the subject of two letters that I shall send you at the earliest opportunity. You will see how odd they are.

Are you content? Is my letter sufficiently detailed? And have I made good use of my time?

Awaiting your reply to my questions, I kiss you, dear Albertine, and pray for your early *promotion*. I speak as the Colonel's niece.

Good-bye. Your

ADÈLE.

P. S. Imagine if you can, Lucien's expression as he hunts high and low for his lost poems, hoping to snatch them from some vandal's hand, questioning the servants, casting inquiring glances

every where, and finding no trace of his vanished property. He hasn't recovered from his perplexity yet, Poor boy! He is very unhappy, and am I not a wicked girl? Tell me.

ADÈLE.

LETTER XVII

Albertine to Adèle

Paris, 25 Juin 18 .

How good you are, my Adèle! I was delighted with your letter which carried me to B... and gave me a pleasant hour among your guests. It is not necessary for me to say that I impatiently await the verses that have caused your cavalier so much annoyance. I am curious to learn how far the lewd imagination of Lucien carries him and what merit he has as a poet.

I begin to think you will find him an excellent teacher, and his pupil will certainly prove to be the most michievous imp that was ever concealed in feminine form.

But what wretchedness and peril would one not face in the interest of science! You must have formed a fit subject for a painter, perched on your ladder, waiting for the moon to disclose the mys-

teries of the barn—mysteries however, to which Mademoiselle Esau is at present powerless to furnish a key for the simple reason that she left the school three days ago under the escort of a splendid caribineer. Yes, my dear, my successor in Félicie's good graces is a man six feet tall.

Good luck to them both! For my part, I am rid of her and very glad of it.

I can tell you I exhausted my strenght on that girl. You have no idea how thin I have grown. Then her disposition, her language and manners did not suit me, and I was on perpetual thorns lest she should do or say something to shatter the hopes I am now entertaining.

Heaven be praised she is gone! Don't mention her to me again.

In her absence, nevertheless, and thanks to the lessons she gave me, allow me to remark that I am learned enough to assure you that Monsieur Plum can stay in England indefinitely and run no risk of finding an increase in his family on his return — that is if his chaste better-half continues to practise love-making as you saw her do with her young neophyte.

I shall say nothing more on this subject. A little instruction from your lover will give you more information than ten pages of written explanations.

Be patient! It only depends upon you moreover to hasten the date of your initiation. Don't keep that poor fellow in agony much longer.

I have now reached the serious part of my letter — my *promotion*. Well, dear, it is on the way, and unless some unforseen accident intervenes, I shall be Madame Y... within three months.

The morning of the day I last wrote you, I said you recollect, that Monsieur Y... had not yet found his voice. In the evening he sent for me, and somewhat nervously I obeyed the summons.

I perceived that he was bent upon heroîc measures, although a trifle embarrassed as to the method of procedure.

After a lengthy preamble in which he referred with profuse excuses, to the scenes of the previous evening, he began a discourse wherein a funeral oration on the late lamented, praise of virtue, the touching spectacle of two hearts united by the bonds of tender sympathy, etc., etc. were mingled incongruously. Then wiping his forehead, he passed on to the peroration. In other words, he asked in due and proper form for the hand of Mademoiselle Albertine.

Of course I pretended to be astonished and appeared to fall from the clouds. I hesitated, stammered a thousand objections, all of which were naturally swept away, and as after all, I am alone in the world and not obliged to consult anybody before taking an important step. I finally consented to be his. In an access of joy, he seized the hand which I relinguished and, in fault of something better, he pressed it to his lips

It only remained to fix the wedding-day. Here violence was necessary, for I quite agree with you that we cannot keep the men waiting too long or make them pay too dearly for my favors.

After several skirmishes it was arranged that I should wear my wreath of orange blossoms early in September.

By this time, dear Adèle, Love must have given up all his secrets, and your pretty white teeth have doubtless bitten to the core the fruit of the tree of knowledge, while I, a timid *fiancée* will walk to the altar as virgin as the Himalayan snows, as Mademoiselle de Maupin puts it.

Adieu, my dear, send me the poetry and don't lose sight of Rose. I am anxious to hear how the lawyer gets on with her.

I kiss you many times,

ALBERTINE.

LETTER XVIII

Adèle to Albertine

B..., 28 June 18 .

I was sure that Monsieur Y... would come to terms as you expected. With the prospect of getting you, a man would throw himself into the fire.

I am doubly pleased at your good fortune, dear Albertine. Your marriage will give you a fine position and you are out of the clutches of a girl who, whatever her good qualities may have been, would sooner or later have seriously compromised you.

I shall write no more to-day as all my available space is taken up with the bit of ancient history I send you. Besides, there is no news except that our theatricals are postponed on account of illness. The invitations have been recalled.

Yours

ADÈLE.

A Chapter of Petronius

THE TUTOR OF ANTIQUITY. — DRAWN BY HIMSELF

In the days of my youth the idea came to me
To leave Rome for far Asia by way of the sea ;
So I hastened away with all possible speed
And arrived at Pergamos, which all are agreed
Is a plaee made for pleasure and joys without end,
And the gods pleasant smiles to sweet intercourse lend,
So what drew me completely to thoughts of above
I may plainly confess was nought else but mad love.

My host had a son like Narcissus of old,
A bud yet to be plucked by a hand ever bold ;
But I hid my desire neath a manner most suave,
And passed for a pedagogue more or less grave ;
Everybody misled by my serious mien
Praised me up to the skies, and it was soon to be seen
That the father, more dense than rest of his kind,
Placed the lad in my hands with a confidence blind.

I was charged to instruct this fair treasure so dear,
With the utmost severity. Keep him quite clear,
Of wicked companions and seniors grown old;
Like a miser who clutches his much hoarded gold:
I watched him with greedy and covetous eyes,
In fear lest I lose this magnificent prize;
For I did not intend that another should grasp
The charms that my arms were then longing to clasp.

One morning while lying beside the sweet lad,
I sought an occasion to make us both glad,
Realize the fond dream I had cherished so long,
While love filled my soul with a rapturous song.

Inspired by Cupid I rose from my bed
And advancing discreetly, with soft feline tread,
I reached the youth's couch without making a sound.
Looking down on him thus; I immediately found.
That he merely feigned sleep; so more venturesome still,
I prayed amorous Venus in accents to thrill.
" Protect me, fair goddess, my prayer deign to hear,
I'll adore thee forever; but make this boy dear
Close yet tighter his eyelids until I have pressed
A kiss on his lips and we both shall be blessed.
If he does not awake. If he lets my hand stray
O'er his beautiful limbs without moving away,
Two doves I will lay on thy shrine before night,
The prettiest birds that ere greeted thy sight."

The exquisite youth never stirred, and I took
The sweet kiss from his mouth with a ravishing look
That increased my wild passion and did not allay
The fire that consumed me and urged me to stay.
But I prudenty stopped, and no further advanced,
Then arose to my feet like a person entranced,
And soon hastened to get the two innocent doves,
The gracious reward of our platonic loves.

Encouraged indeed by this happy event,
And on further enjoyment implacably bent,
I the following night prayed aloud as before :
" Oh, grant me, dear Venus, thy favor once more!
" Allow me to touch this sweet form and enjoy
" The ripe fruits of love — the fruits that n'er cloy :
" Do this, and I swear by the god of all truth,
" A horse I'll present to this beautiful youth. "

The boy did not wait ; he turned to one side,
And invited the combat with arms outstretched wide.
I lingered no longer, but clasped to my breast,
This statuesque form, while my lips hotly pressed,
A hundred caresses on face, limbs and feet.
He bounded and rolled in the clinging white sheet,
His lust grew with mine. With one passionate kiss,
I reached in a moment the centre of bliss.
I entered the door—but ah, how can I tell
The delight that o'ercame me? I cannot now dwell
On the happiness felt when I held in my arms

This adorable lad and his mainfold charms.
Transported with joy, with a gladness intense,
That the gods let us taste with a gracious prepense,
The night glided by like a swift — flitting dream,
And the pale dawn surprised us in comfort supreme,
Exhausted though happy, unconquered as yet,
And valiantly striving fresh power to get,
In spite of the weakness that crept through our blood,
And drowned its warm flow in a submerging flood.
From my pupil, however, I knew I must go,
So I hurried away from the ravishing foe.

I'd a promise to keep, but relied on my wit
To shirk the said tax in a manner most fit;
A horse costs much more than a pigeon or two,
And I thought if I bought it perhaps not a few
Would look rather askance at my pupil and me.
While his father night tighten the reins now so free.
These ideas alarmed my grave mind more and more,
And when later I arrived quite alone at the door,
The boy stood there waiting, his eyes all alight
Gazing full into mine with expectancy bright,
Each seeming to question and plainly express
His keen disapointment and trenchant distress.
" Oh, master ", he cried, " and where is the steed
" That you promised, and of which I am sorely in need?
" Empty handed you come! " Then I gently replied,
" To-morrow, sweet lad, you shall have him, I tried
" To find a good beast, but did not quite succeed.
" Very well, " quoth the youth, in the future you need

" Not disturb my repose. I mean what I say. "
And turning his back he walked stiffly away.
I retired confused, but when night at last fell,
I ventured again to his beside to tell
Him a thousand sweet nothings in accents most mild,
For the father slept close to his beautiful child.
I acknowledged my fault and shed tears of despair,
But my sorrow impressed not the wounded one there.
His anger arose. " Go away! " cried the youth.
" Or I'll waken my father and tell him the truth. "

I was frightened of course, but my ardor leapt high,
Results I dared risk. With a triumphant sigh
His resistance I conquered. Then he begged me to take
By rude violence all that would ecstasy make.
Yet when my desires were sated he said.
·' Is it thus that you keep obligations instead
" Of giving like one with no thonght of return?
Is the horse very dear? " And I felt my cheeks burn
As I tried to explain, but at last made amends,
And we parted ere long very excellent friends.

Overcome by fatigue I was soon fast asleep,
When I heard gentle footstep toward my bed creep;
I jumped up in alarm, wondering who it could be—
" Ah, master "—a murmur came floating to me,
Are you already sleeping, and tired so soon? "
And I saw my fair boy by the light of the moon.
He rushed to my arms. The rascal was bent
On reaping the joy he so lavishly spent.

I tried to arouse all my slumbering fires
And fan into flame again sluggish desires.
A difficult task, and if still I won
It was not without pain and with strength atmost done.
After this exercise I hoped much for peace,
But I reckoned in vain. It but served to increase
The lad's ardent longing. The duty so rude
I had finished was merely a simple prelude.
His appetite grew and claimed more and yet more,
I saw that no rest for poor me was in store.
" What, you still want to sleep O, master most dear?
" I cannot permit it while I remain here.
This charming performance as every one knows,
Puts life into one's veins; I'm as fresh as a rose. ,'

I was utterly spent and near dead with ennui,
And I made up my mind to quick set myself free.
I turned brusquely toward him: " oh say would you rather
Leave me once more in peace or let me waken your father?

The shaft struck well home. The boy hurried away,
And snored in his bed until nearly mid day.

LETTER XIX

Adèle to Albertine.

B..., 29 June 18 .

The weather has been dreadful since this morning. Tis impossible to set foot out of doors, and everybody is in a bad humor. I have shut myself up in my own room and send you this time a chapter of modern history, I am sure you will like it better than the other.

Yours,

ADÈLE.

A Tempestuous Night

T' was one April late ; the uncertain gleam
That stole through the window—drapery light,
Revealed two forms—a witching sight,
Touched by the langourous moonlight beam.
As the radiant glow of a summer night
Turns into silver—the darkening stream.

So warm was the air that the dainty sheet
Was tossed aside, and the women lay
(For fear of intruders they would say),
Side by side in the bed—a wondrous treat.
For robbers who chanced to come that way,
And one that would chain their flying feet.

Let us borrow a ray from Phœbus bold,
And lift up the curtain with indiscreet hand,
Surely no artist in all the land
Could paint that scene with a brush of gold.
And I who have nothing half so grand
Must content myself with materials old.

A couch in disorder—a spread on the floor,
Two bodies uncovered, with no stays to press
The white breasts or waist in the torturesome dress
That suggests iron corsets and thumb—screws of yore.
Freed from all this machinery you may well gness
The picturesque sight that my eyes gloated o'er.

Of the sleepers one was a maiden in years,
Scarcely twenty perhaps, thin, pallid and blonde,
Made of roses and cream, smiles tender and fond,
With small pearly teeth, and pink shells for ears,
Yellow hair that was shimmering under the bond
Of a cap, and eyes that were foreign to tears.

Her locks streamed on pillow and bosom and arm,
While her thighs hard and warm alabaster of hue,
Were marked by blue veins traced faintly and few,
And her two beasts would surely have raised in alarm
Dead Lazarus—even would thrill through and through
Saint Anthony chaste and have brought him to harm.

The lady in fact was a simple delight,
Fit for courtier or prince. But now for her friend
Who was large and brunette, just as likely to send
A man to perdition, fair, radiant and bright,
Alluring and sweet, in whose head I saw blend
The raven's black wing and the darkness of night.

Like ivory firm was her flesh and the bed
Creaked now and then under her limbs as she turned,

Though the glory of holding her had it not spurned,
T'would not have cried out so from footboard to head,
But with pride and enchantment lustily burned,
For n'er was a couch with such loveliness fed.

I've a mind to facilitate here my own task.
And allow you to finish the portrait yourself,
Of this most entrancing and fotunate elf.
How to do this is doubtless the question you ask,
Well, take marble and ebony, streaks of blue delf,
Mix them up and make of her an excellent mask.

Add a unit of the summer, perhaps thirty years,
But I hear you exclaim in dismay unconcealed,
How comes it these charms were to your gaze revealed.
Were you then in the room of those poor sleeping dears?
Ah, my vagabond fancy all portals unsealed,
On that warm April night and cried truce to all fears.

To discover how each was especially made.
I'd no cause to employ any ruse or yet art.
For familiar they were in their every sweet part,
As if I'd undressed each plump soft skinned jade,
The history too of each impassioned heart,
I knew, and now at your feet twill be laid.

I'll transmit without details the primitive tale,
My words are sincere, I'm not given to lies.
To begin with these ladies both thought till one dies
That prudery's much out of place, and no veil

Was thus cast o'er their loves, nor were spies
Ever feared. They knew not the word fail.

They were quite unpretending, of modest estate,
Keeping house on a scale that was modest and plain,
Not an indecent word passed their lips, and again
Many visitors came for informal debate,
For both were possessed of an agreeable vein
Of wit and good breeding quick to create.

The youngest was called Anaïs the sweet,
She was picked up a waif by the other I'm told,
Sent to school by Eulalie dark, large and bold,
Until growing to womanhood she sought for her feet
An oasis amid the wide desert waste cold,
To cheer her with Loves overmastering heat.

A lone widow Eulalie pretended to be,
But this was accepted with many a wink,
And not a few said it was merely a link
T wixt a good many " pasts " and a present most free,
And hinted a record whereon the black ink
Was scarce dry, besides smiling at what all could see.

Be this as it may, the two were in love,
And called one another a lover like name,
Side by side all the while, precisely the same
As mother and daughter, hand in glove,
Scorning excuses or reasons lame,
One playing the lion the other the dove.

The union was based on their opposite traits,
The fine law of contrasts; an equal share
Of misery, happiness, joy, despair,
Was meted to each as with mates to mates.
Every burden was lightened, each glad day more fair,
They doubled their pleasures and lessened their hates.

Strange to say, some disgust or a sated ennui
Made them cultivale solitude all the day long,
The life of gay Paris, its dancing and song,
Were left for the meadows, the woods and the lea :
They shunned the bright streets with their gossipping throng,
And took a small house on a plain by the sea.

In this gentle abode where sweet innocence dwelt,
The masculine sex was n'er known to stay;
Not a bearded male being day after day
Was seen to approach, and yet each fair one felt
That a fasting prolonged was a weary way
To make time pass, and resolves did melt.

Eighty one in the shade and long abstinence too
It is easy to think that sleep was not near.
Lucretia herself had succumbed without fear
To Tarquins assault, for women are few
Who can safely preserve all their chastity dear
When consumed by desire that thrills them all through.

As if in a dream a fair maid feels a lip
Burn her own like a coal in a passionate kiss,

In an ecstasy wild she is fainting with bliss,
Like a bacchante longs for a yet deeper sip
Of the cup that intoxicates; she fears lest she miss
A lascivious caress or a limb's loving grip.

T'is a prey to this dream that Eulalie lies,
And moves to and fro on the wide creaking bed,
While as if understanding, Anaïs is led
To uncover her bosom—a bosom that vies
With snow that on mountain tops softly is shed,
While she fingers the breast that beside her lies.

The fever of love exites both apace,
Draws one to the other, and faint murmurs low
Are mingled with sighs and soft kisses slow—
Two clinging shapes are in close embrace,
Each breath in a dulcet ebb and flow,
Fanning a flaming, quivering face.

. . . . . .

All must come to an end; the pallid moon,
Gives way to the daylights golden beam.
Exhausted, with love-lit eyes that swoon,
The women rise to greet the gleam
That comes through the drapery, and soon
Will mark a new day and a new love-dream.

LETTER XX

Albertine to Adèle.

Paris, 3 July 18 .

You are right, my dear child. The *tempestuous night* is much better than the *Ancient tutor*, the subject of which, not to count the difficulties incident to translation, is neither attractive nor sympathetic.

I do not know whether it is physical or mental repulsion, but it revolts me to think that there are men who are capable of seeking such disgusting pleasures. Pah!

I am vexed with your Lucien. Why on earth did he dig up those horrid creatures? Why did he not leave them and their vileness buried in the old book from which he extricated them?

Were it not for his charming portraits of Eulalie and Anaïs I should be seriously angry with him. I can understand those ladies.

We wretched girls in whom nature has implanted passions as impetuous as those of men, but who cannot gratify the secret longings of our temperament without being confronted with shame and misery, and paying for a single moment of weakness with atrocious suffering. Are not so very wicked after all when we seek in each other's arms a pleasure which however imperfect is at least not fraught with inçessant terror.

There! That is a sentence inspired by some eighteenth century philosopher upon whom I must have unwittingly stepped.

Forgive me, and allow me to tell you frankly that Lucien is a very indiscreet fellow. He has no business to divulge feminine mysteries in this manner. Scold him well for me, will you, when you have acquired the right to do so, I trust it may be soon.

I must leave you now, although I have much more to say. The school claims my attention, and I am introducing a great many changes. Monsieur Y.., has made me absolute mistress of everything, and looks upon all I do with unfeigned delight. I am cutting cleverly into my cloth.

Adieu, dear Adèle. Try to write soon.

ALBERTINE.

LETTER XXI

Adèle to Albertine.

B..., 5 July 18 .

Monsieur J... has won his suit; rest assured of that, dear Albertine. He has conquered all along the line, and last night Rose was finally vanquished after a heroic defence. All honor to his bravery!

Although I did not witness the campaign in detail, I heard enough to enable me to give an impartial account of it.

Having every reason to suppose that the affair would shortly come to a climax, I did not let a single movement on the part of the actors escape me.

Yesterday morning when it was time for Rose to make the lawyer's room, I stationed myself at my right hand observatory and waited to see what would happen.

I had not been there five minutes when Monsieur J... came in as I expected.

A conversation which I had difficulty in following as the interlocuters spoke in low tones, began at once in an animated style. The tempter, bent upon victory at any cost, made seductive proposals. I heard the words, *dress*, *apartment*, *gowns*, *shawls*, etc, from time to time which suggested incendiary projectiles that would soon undermine the fortress.

And indeed resistance weakened. The girl, with lowered eyelids and heaving breath, hesitated only long enough to satisfy her conscience, and when at last Monsieur J.., opened a pocket-book filled with gold and notes which he thrust into her hands, she succumbed, and granted him a rendez vous for the evening.

The hour and the place escaped me. Would he go to her room or would she come to his? Or would they perhaps choose neutral ground? I could not find out.

A kiss which the little man, standing on tiptoe, deposited on Rose's lips, she being as red as a poppy, sealed the bargain, after which she lightly tripped away so as to avoid appearances.

The day passed uneventfully.

It must have seemed long to J... who wriggled nervously on his chair, looked at his watch, wiped his forehead, got up, and sat down again. Certainly Guatimoyin on his gridiron was not more deserving of sympathy.

At last the expected hour arrived. Everybody retired and I placed myself on guard.

The lawyer waited for the happy moment, pacing the floor like a bear in a cage.

Eleven o'clock struck. Nothing happened. Slight noises were still to be heard in the house. Half past eleven. Nothing yet. My neighbour undressed and got into bed. Decidedly the meeting was to take place in his room.

Midnight! He started up as if worked by a spring. It was the fatal hour!

Two minutes passed, profound silence everywhere. The wind rustled in the tops of the tall poplars, that was all.

Had Rose changed her mind? Would she break her word? I understood J...'s doubt and anxiety.

Hush! A door creaked on its hinges. Then a step rather heavy, though evidently cautious, was heard in the hall. Quick, let us see!

The lawyer's door which was ajar, opened, and Rose, pale, trembling, but lovely in her white *négligée* that failed to conceal her splendid figure, advanced hesitatingly.

The happy man caught her in his arms and drew her toward him. She resisted, but he forced her gently to sit on the bed, and after one more effort she was beside him. What would happen next?

All my faculties were centered in my eyes. It

seemed as if my vision could penetrate a stone wall. But oh, misery! The candle was suddenly blown out and everything enveloped in darkness. There was not even a ray of moon-light. What was I to do? Listening was my only resource, so so I listened.

Rose weptand lamented and implored, but her tears and supplications were useless. Were the half-articulate words she let fall expressions of pain? I did not know. I can only say that if they were Monsieur J... was not touched by them, but continued the onslaught bravely. Ah, the groans redoubled! Rose screamed — it was a cry doubtless caused by suffering then silence — it was all over.

What a monster to make a woman endure such an agony!

But perhaps it is best not to accuse him. He kisses his victim and tries in every way to console her. Gradually she is quieted and dries her tears. I think she laughed a liitle.

Then they whisper, and my ear can catch nothing distinctly. Is that the end? Shall I go to bed? I feel like it.

Oh, oh! The lawyer becomes agressive. Fresh onslaught! More resistance! This time the victory is easy. Not a murmur of pain, only a few weak remonstrances lost in kisses.

By and by they cease and a deep silence ensues. I am nearly dead with fatigue, and I am going to

bed. I hope to awake at daylight and witness that portion of the scene which has been denied me. Good-night.

As you may imagine, dear Albertine, I could not close my eyes. I tossed about incessantly unable to sleep a wink. In spite of myself my ear was strained to hear the faintest sound. But as nothing reached me I finally dozed. I do not know how long I had been asleep when I was roused by the gentle opening af a door.

I hastened to my observatory. The lawyer was alone in bed. Rose had returned to her room and it was four o'clock. I had risen too late.

Later in the day the poor girl's swollen eyelids, pallid cheeks, and lagging steps formed a marked contrast to the animated face and high-spirits of Monsieur J... who ate like a wild beast at breakfast and drank like a Knight-Templar.

I shall write soon again, dear Albertine, for I am counting upon complete satisfaction if I have to stay awake all night. Yours,

ADÈLE.

LETTER XXII

Albertine to Adèle

Paris, 7 July 18 .

I have but little time to devote to you, dear Adèle, but I do not wish to leave your letter unanswered. Accept my sincere congratulations: you are an admirable historian. You omit nothing and do not lose sight of a single detail.

I was able to follow accurately the exploits of your horrid little monkey of a lawyer. What might you have seen had the candle been lighted?

However it is merely a pleasure deferred, for I know your vigilance and your lynx eyes. Therefore I shall shortly expect a clever description of some "undraped amusements", as your Lucien says.

By the way, what is he about? I trust the triumphant day is approaching. You have kept him waiting a whole month for something you are

dying to give him. Surely that is long enough, and your sense of honor ought to be appeased. I beg mercy for him or rather mercy for both of you. If only my consent is lacking to consummate the decisive act, I send it accompanied by my blessing. Try to put it to advantage.

A new boarder has come to us—or I should say to *me*, since it is I who take charge of the clients now-a-days—and I shall tell you about her in my next letter. For the present I merely inform you that she is a lovely young girl of seventeen, who intends to spend a couple of months here. She will then leave to be married. With this I kiss you and bid you good-bye. Don't be angry at my hurried leave-taking. My next will not be so brief, I promise you.

ALBERTINE.

LETTER XXIII

Adèle to Albertine

B..., 10 July 18 .

You were right, dear Albertine, it was but a pleasure deferred. Oh, what a revenge I enjoyed for the extinguished candle! This time I saw—saw all that could be seen. No more secrets for me! The veil has fallen—light has dawned!

I have only to photograph the scene that was enacted before my eyes, but it embarasses me to do so, I assure you.

You praise the exactness of my last description. Good heavens! It was simple enough. I was a mere stenographer who listened and wrote, as it were, from dictation. To-day, however, it is very different. I can scarcely credit the reality of all I witnessed, and yet I will endeavor to make it quite plain to you.

I rely on your indulgence and count upon your perspicuity.

Let us take up the story where we left off.

On the day following the incidents already narrated, nothing occured in my theatre. That was to be expected, for the prima donna, overcome by the fatigue and the emotion consequent upon her *début*, required a holiday.

On the next night came a repetition of the first performance, but strange to say. Rose was the warrior this time, and notwithstanding my good resolutions I awoke again just in time to see Monsieur J... turn over in bed alone.

I was furious, and you cannot blame me. That evening, to console myself, I watched my neighbour retire. Five minutes after he was in bed he was snoring loud enough to shake the house to its foundation. With him it is precisely like grand opera—performance every other night.

Yesterday therefore was opera-night. I wiped my glasses and waited for the curtain to rise.

The room was brilliantly lighted, and the lawyer, in his dressing-gown, remained up contrary to his habit.

I took it for granted that something extraordinary was about to happen.

At midnight the door of the sanctuary opened and the goddess appeared, radiant. The lawyer ran toward her, took her hands, kissed her and drew her to the bed where, in spite of protesta-

tions, he deftly removed her wrapper and chemise the only garments she bore, so that in the twinkling of an eye she found herself adorned with the charming simplicity of Eve before the fall.

Her blonde hair, unbound and floating to her waist, completed her resemblance to the mother of the human race.

What a picture presented itself to the wondering gaze of Monsieur J...!

One would say that a rich and opulent figure such as the vigourous brush of Rubens loved to paint had descended from its frame.

Rose had not the fine lines and delicate extremities, or the purity of form so remarkable in my aunt. Yet what a superb shape she possesses. — What shoulders and hips! Her thighs and legs resemble the columns of a temple sculptured in marble, and how firm and solid her flesh is! Her bust, enormously developed, hardly lowers its pink tips.

As for the lawyer he was no longer a man. He had become a satyr minus horns and hoofs. He roared with delight; his hands roamed here and there, up and down, back and front; his lips clung to every spot that he touched. Like the ogre in the fairy-tales he was gormandizing in an orgy of human flesh.

Soon these preliminaries no longer sufficed. With such an attractive Eve before him he naturally desired to use the prerogatives of Adam, and

throwing off his gown, he also stood forth in the costume of our first ancestor.

Oh, my dear, how shall I describe what I then saw? I can find no words in which to express my stupefaction. In front of me rose the formidable reality of which my aunts's consoler formed but a feeble reproduction.

What a fig-leaf Monsieur J... would have required in order to present himself decently before an outraged God!

I can now understand poor Rose's lamentations. Anybody would have complained in the circumstances.

You laugh on reading this, dear Albertine, and you picture to yourself Monsieur J... ridiculously hideous, even grotesque. But it seemed to me that his ugliness had vanished. His eyes shone, his nostrils were dilated, while the ardent passion that was depicted on his inflamed countenance, and the energy of his actions had completely transfigured him. He was almost handsome, and inspired me with two sentiments hard to reconcile—a kind of vague desire mingled with alarm.

I confess that I looked with envious eyes upon his victim.

As for her, dear girl, she was in the bed still protesting—pretending not to yield, but doing so nevertheless, while her tormentor devoured her with greedy looks, gloating over the secrets of her luxuriant beauty.

Then the little man's delirium escaped all bounds. With a spring, he threw himself *con furia francese* upon the altar of sacrifice, holding Rose in a close embrace.

She neither wept nor groaned. A voluptuous shiver ran over her splendid body. All the happy exclamations of the French language fell from her lips that smiled with pleasure, and when finally the valiant lawyer, more energetic than ever completed the act. she accepted with résignation the instrument of her martyrdom and even gave him a warm reception.

The performance over, the curtain fell.

Were the actors sleeping under their laurels? Was Monsieur J... attempting fresh feats of valour?

I did not take the trouble to find out, I no longer cared to listen. I only longed to quench as best I could the thirst for enjoyment that the scene had excited in me. It was fire, not blood, that flowed in my veins.

Ah, if Lucien had been there! But alas! he was not , so I had to satisfy myself alone.

But as you know, dear Albertine, the truly wise content themselves with little.

Yours,

ADÈLE.

LETTER XXIV

Albertine to Adèle.

Paris, 14 July 18 .

Pray believe, my dear Adèle, that I am in the highest degree sensible af the painful privations your solitude forced you to endure.

Indeed, to find myself alone in bed while a delightful duo is being sung on the other side of the partition, is to suffer the torments of Tantalus, and I pity you from the bottom of my heart.

Had I been present I should have made an effort to allay the agony which, frankly, darling, you brought upon yourself.

Listen! It was your own fault. If instead of leaving poor Lucien to pine away in despair you had taken compassion on him, your bad quarter of an hour would not have happened.

Far from watching the scene alone, you little egotist, you might have had a companion, a plea-

sure of which you voluntarily deprived yourself Then when the curtain was lowered, heaven knows the duo would have been changed naturally to a quartette with numberless repetitions. Since you did not wish it, however, blame yourself for the miserable solitude and the aching void af whieh you complain.

Profit by the lesson and do better next time. I admit, my Adèle, that were the circumstances other than they are, your Flemish portrait of the superb Rose would have aroused my wildest enthusiasm.

How impressive, how opulent! It makes my mouth water to think of her, and I should like to bite into her flesh.

But just at present, you see, all my faculties of admiration are concentrated upon one object—my looks and thoughts directed toward a single aim. I am crazy over our new boarder, the divine Jeanne de K...

Rose is the triumph of matter. Jeanne, on the other hand possesses all the perfections of a poetic ideal.

She has magnificent hair with golden lights in it, which form an aureole around her brow and falls in lovely curls upon an admirably modelled neck. Her eyes are dreamy like those of Scheffer's Marguerite, while her skin is so fine and white that the slighest emotion suffuses her cheeks with color. Her figure is slender and supple; her hands

almost transparent; her feet irreproachable, and a certain airy something is exhaled from her entire personality, giving her a supernatural appearance. It amazes me to see her tread the ground, and one is tempted to bend the knee in her presence.—Well, dare I avow it, my dear? I am meditating—No, I am resolved upon the destruction of this angel.

Yes, I want her; I must and will have her. If I do not succeed, for everything is possible, of course I may jeopardize, even lose, my coveted position. I am aware of this, yet the contingency will not check me. I do not mean to consider anything beyond the ungovernable attraction that draws me to Jeanne.

Ah, enough of this! I have heretofore been fortunate in my amorous enterprises. Why should I fail in this one? Besides, I intend to be careful, as you shall see.

Would you now like a few biographical details? I can give them to you. Mademoiselle de K... as her name indicates, belongs to an old family of Britanny. She lost her mother when quite young and her father being a naval officer and unable to take charge of his daughter, confided her to a pious aunt living in Rennes. Jeanne was brought up by this relative, with whom she since lived, with all the severity one would expect from a narrow-minded, ridiculous, bigoted old maid at that. Consequently the names of the Virgin and all the

Saints are everlastingly on the tip of her tongue. Everything, in her eye, is a sin, and she would willingly do penance for.

> « Finding a flea on her prayer-book page,
> And killing it in a fit of rage. »

In short, her simplicity is beyond expression. But nevertheless she is not wanting in a certain amount of natural cleverness which displays itself when least expected.

This is how we happen to have come into possession of this budding saint. The aunt died not long ago, and the governess, Yvonne something-or-other immediately set out with the girl and brought her back to her father, an old sea-dog who is leading a bachelor existence in Paris. The latter, not knowing what to do with her, made haste to rid himself of her company to our advantage.

In addition to his daughter, Monsieur de K... has a nephew, in the navy like himself, to whom Jeanne has been betrothed since chilhood. They are waiting to celebrate the marriage until the young man returns from some foreign expedition and as he cannot possibly arrive for two or three months yet, I hope to profit by this period of time and use it to sharpen the wits of his future charming better-half.

In her present state of primitive innocence it would be little short of murder to allow her to be

devoured by this brutal and ill-bred corsair whom she has scarcely seen three or four times and who double her age.

You will appreciate, I fancy, my dear, the motive which incites me to act, and you will approve the purity of my intentions.

You know that I am now all-powerful in the school, Monsieur J... having invested me with every right, and I am mistress of the establishment. The day after Jeanne's arrival, under the pretext that owing to her exceptional status here she could not sleep in the common dormitory, I placed at her disposal a large room adjoining my own, and installed her therein. Thus only a glass door separates us.

But like you I am tantalized every night, and am forced to fall back upon my own resources while waiting until my fiery desires shall have warmed into life the beautiful statue that reposes calm, chaste and pure a few paces distant.

Little by little I am circumventing her. I already posess her confidence, and she confides in me all her little girlish secrets. Only a few days more and I shall take a step forward.

But don't worry. I shall not move without covering my retreat. I am not taking useless precautions this time as I did with Félicie.

Adieu, dear Adèle,

ALBERTINE.

LETTER XXV

Adèle to Albertine.

B..., 20 July 18 .

My good wishes go with you in your new enterprise, dear Albertine. At last you have fonnd in Saint Jeanne a conquest worth making and I am altogether in accord with the noble task you have undertaken.

You cannot deny that it is a labor of love. You will have to submit to many annoyances besides the tiresome labour required for a complete education by means of a method that must be both solid and varied. The same lessons will have to be repeated a hundred times; a million details must be considered, all of which will be ignored by the future husband who were he informed of the trouble you have taken to present him with a perfect woman, would doubtless resent it, for ingratitude is second nature to man. Happily you will reap

your renard in yourself. Your conscience will bear witness to a duty performed, and Jeanne, the seraphic Jeanne, will be immensely grateful to you for having acquainted her with the delicious mysteries as a foretaste of the perfect joy reserved for the elect, and towards which the ethereal aspirations tend.

In the way of news I must tell you, my dear friend, that B... is becoming depopulated. Our company has lost two inhabitants.

Day before yesterday, Monsieur Y... after having read and re-read a letter that came during breakfast, announced to my aunt that important business summoned him immediately to Paris. Then he bade us good-bye and left that very afternoon.

Yesterday Rose also received a communication that she hastened to show my annt. Her mother was dying and could not pass away without bestowing a blessing upon her daughter.

Of course this admitted of no delay. and Rose took the next train.

From this double departure I naturally concluded that the little lawyer was taking his prey to Paris to devour it at his ease in some cave in Breda street which he has furnished, upholstered and gilded.

So my theatrical company has taken a vacation just when the actors were about to display their finest talent.

It is true I have still the performance in which

I am to take part to console me. The carpenters are pntting the finishing touches to the scenery, and to-morrow surely the play will be given. The invitations are out, and the audience will be composed of our neighbours more or less intimate, about fifty or sixty in all. Supper is to be served after the performance and the entertainment will be complete in every way.

I should like to describe the gown I am to wear, but have not the time. I have just tried it on and its fits to perfection. Modesty aside, I look charming in it, and I shouldn't wonder if Lucien lost his head.

But don't scold me. I really pity his martyrdom and have determined to cut it short. He is coming into port without knowing it.

I must leave you now, dear Albertine. The stage-manager's bell calls me to rehearsal, and of course I cannot keep everybody waiting. I should be fined if I did.

I shall write again soon.

Adèle.

LETTER XXVI

Adèle to Albertine

B..., 20 July 18 .

All is said and done, dear Albertine. Lucien has nothing left to desire.

Ah, the wretch—the adorable wretch! How he did revenge himself in one night for the delays I imposed upon what he is pleased to call his happiness!

You asked me for a full confession, my dear, and I am ready to gratify you; but I am still, I must confess, under the influence of all the varied emotions that have assailed me for the past three days, and I do not know where to begin.

So much the worse. I shall commence nevertheless, and perhaps my memory will come back to me on the way.

I left you the other day, you remember, just as I was going to rehearsal. This went off as usual,

but Lucien, as if premeditating an easy victory following a supreme effort, showed an ardor, a *brio* —as the journalists say—that was quite new. He was so magnetic, in a word, that forgetting my double rôle, I only thought of the one I was playing for the public. Unconsciously my eyes blazed reflecting the flame in Lucien's, and my heart beat in unison with his.

Under this excitement we played magnificently and were loudy applauded by our friends. X... enthusiastically declared that we were superior to the *Gymnase* or the *Comédie Française*.

Lucien was overjoyed at this unexpected success which foreshadowed another that was priceless to him! Almost ashamed of having, as it were, betrayed my feelings, escaped from the compliments showered upon me by pleading a headache, and going to my room, I voluptuously went over every happy detail of the rehearsal. This, however, did not prevent my remaining insensible to the mute pleadings of my handsome admirer that evening, and making myself unapproachable by taking refuge behind my aunt's crinoline.

The next day—a memorable one indeed!—was largely employed in endless preparations of which I will spare you the recital.

Eight o'clock struck. Our little drawing-room was brilliantly lighted and filled with people in full dress, while in the rear, at the doors and in

the halls, everywhere in fact where there was standing-room, our servants and those of our guests appeared at least a hundred spectators all told.

The curtain-bell rang.

I was frightened almost to death and felt myself turn pale under my rouge. Fortunately I did not have to begin. The scene was opened by my aunt and Lucien who acquitted themselves like real comedians. At my aunt's exit I heard loud applause, and that gave me a little courage.

But oh, my dear, I fear I have spoken too quickly! My turn was coming—only one more scene and I should have to appear. My legs gave way, and had it not been for X... who was behind me I believe I should have fallen. I caught my cue good heavens! I could not remember a word of my part. I turned to fly, but X... barred my way and pushed me upon the stage.

There I was facing the crowd and Lucien. A murmur rose, and I seemed to hear buzzing in my ears : " How pretty she is! " Lucien's eyes confirmed this assurance. My confidence returned, my memory came back, and I spoke. My voice, low and trembling at first, gradually strengthened. One word spoken naturally brought forth a storm of bravos. I breathed again, and the mountain that rested on my shoulders took to itself wrings. From that moment, I came and went without trace of embarassment;

my accent was assured, and when my great scene with Lucien was reached, I recovered my precious inspiration beneath the fire of his glance. Applause resounded on all sides, and we received an ovation.

It gives me pleasure, dear Albertine, to tell you of the success that crowned my dramatic effort, though I can fancy you growing impatient over it. I'll warrant you are more curious to learn the details of the other *début* which was to follow close upon this one.

Patience! we shall get there in time. The two belong to each other—are inseparable in fact, as you shall see.

The play ends in this wise. I am to give a positive answer to my lover who firmly demands it. I do not give it to him at once, however, but he guesses my love for him and looks forward to a near victory from the manner in which I utter these three words, the last I have to speak : " Until this evening ".

Well, carried away by the situation, incapable of further controlling my sentiments, dominated entirely by my passion, I put so much meaning into those syllabes and my eyes proclaimed the truth so eloquently that Lucien had not the shadow of a doubt concerning the reward in store for the conclusion of the entertainment. After having kissed my hand, he rose radiant, his face illumined. He had obtained a glimpse of the promised land.

The supper was extremely gay and lasted until midnight. The the party broke up. Horses were put in, and a quarter of an hour later, the rumbling of the last carriage died away in the distance.

Oddly enough, now that I was on the point of keeping a promise freely given, and though I was willing to give myself to the man I adored, I hesitated. No, I can hardly say that. Nevertheless, I do not know why, but I would gladly have postponed the decisive moment. I should have liked to set back the clock whose hands appeared to travel with frightful rapidity.

My aunt having risen to give the signal for retiring, I got up and instinctively approached her, as if to place myself under protection. A supplicating look from Lucien reminded me of my promise. There was no going back.

Once in my room, after hermetically closing the door leading to my aunt's apartment, I left the one opening upon the corridor ajar. Then I undressed, put out the candle and waited.

The hour which sped with such velocity a little while before, now seemed to drag itself along with incredible slowness.

Explain that if you can, I dreaded Lucien's coming and at the same time I longed for it. I only wanted to end the anxiety that oppressed me

I sat listening, one hand on my heart to stay its throbbing. I am sure it could have been heard by any one near me.

At last the door was gently pushed from without—it was Lucien!

Overcome by an irresistible impulse and without reflecting upon what I was doing, I rushed toward him, threw my arms around his neck and hid my face on his breast. An ardent embrace answered this transport. His lips sought mine, and then I felt myself lifted up and carried to the bed.

He was there, closely holding me. His hand seemed to be everywhere at once without remaining long in any spot. It paused, however, on coming into contact with one of mine that imitated as nearly as possible the position occupied by the right hand of the Médici Venus. He gently removed it and I nearly swooned with pleasure.

Every medal has its reverse, and alas I was soon convinced of this incontestable truth. An acute pain roused me brusquely from the voluptuous torpor into which I was plunged. Lucien was endeavoring to win the laurels destined for the successful lover, but oh, the injustice of it! While he gathered the rose I was pricked by the thorns.

In spite of my heroic efforts to suppress them exclamations of suffering escaped me, and he tried to quiet me with tender avowals. He regretted with all his soul the pain he was causing me; but excited by the difficulties of his task, if one may judge by appearances, he did not give me a moment's respite. He intented his victory to be complete.

How long this lasted, and what I endured, I cannot say. Suddenly I experienced a terrific shock and something seemed to break. I uttered a cry that was stifled by a thousand kisses. Then I lost consciousness.

When I regained my senses, Lucien, uneasy and troubled, was calling me by a hundred tender names, and whispered in my ear all that the most impassionned love could inspire.

Perhaps you think, my dear Albertine, that I should have been angry with him. Not at all. Indeed I loved him more than ever if possible. I was his now.—I belonged to him. So throwing myself into his arms, I give him caress for caress, kiss for kiss.

It will doubtless cause you no surprise to learn that he had the indelicacy to abuse my generosity. Not satisfied with one conquest, he won fresh laurels from my body that was yet on the defensive, for I still suffered cruelty. But what will you have? He was so insinuating, so persuasive, and he set so cleverly about the undertaking that he got all he wanted.

Happily daylight came and warned him that it was time to escape if he desired to avoid discovery. Thus I obtained the repose I greatly needed.

It was nine o'clock when I rose. The first steps I took across the floor awakened painful recollections, and my first glance into the mirror revealed heavy eyes and haggard features, recalling to mind

poor Rose's miserable appearance the day following the encounter with the lawyer. But Lucien, far from assuming the victorious airs of Monsieur J... was more tender and affectionate than ever. I read in his look all that his lips would have uttered.

My excessive fatigue was of course attributed to the performance of the previous evening, and no one suspected the truth. However, every gaze directed toward me made the blood fly to my cheeks. I could not help it.

Adieu, dear Albertine. I am writing just after breakfast, and could almost date my letter from the battle-field. Yours

ADÈLE.

LETTER XXVII

Albertine to Adèle.

Paris, 23 July 18 .

So you know the dreadful secret at last! How much you must have suffered, my Adèle, and what a barbarian Lucien must be! Still, if you are not vexed with him, I am certainly not entitled to be. Besides, I am sure he will offer you numerous beautiful compensations. He owes you that much at least.

By a queer coincidence, in the night you made your double *début* Jeanne took her first lesson under my guidance.

The dear child was not obliged to undergo the cruel experience through which you passed, but if on the next morning here face bore no traces of the exhaustion and pain which disfigured yours, you poor victim, she was none the less as confused and embarrassed as yourself. Her blushes were most

amusing. She did not dare to raise her eyes; she was an angel driven from Paradise with her wings cut.

You know I was in search of some way of attaining my end without running any risk. It was a difficult job, and I had formed and renounced several plans when chance, more skillful than I, did the business for me.

When you were causing your audience to forget the greatest artists, and I know your capabilities in that direction, we were suffocating here with the heat. Toward ten o'clock flashes of lightening and peals of thunder announced the approach of a violent storm.

Jeanne and I had retired and the lights were out. She was asleep in her room—at least I supposed was—and I was occupied with the fruitless pursuit of my fixed idea when a terrible fracas occured. The glass door opened, and Jeanne in her night gown, the picture of terror, rushed to my bedside, begging me to let her lie down near me for she was frightened almost to death.

What do you think? Had not Providence heard my prayers?

I hastened to move and make place for my pretty scared dove who slipped tremblingly beside me.

I reassured her with kisses, and at each stroke of lightning and at every clap of thunder she drew closer to me. Her alarms and my caresses redoubled.

I leave you to guess the condition I was in when I felt this delicious body, whose perfection I well knew, palpitate upon my own. The contact drove me wild, and giving way to my feelings, I rolled motionless upon Jeanne's breast. She fancied I was overcome by fright and grew almost brave in an attempt to encourage me.

Having recovered a little and calming myself, I resolved to profit by the storm without delay. I therefore began a regular course of attack. At the next peal of thunder, my hand touched the sensitive spot and remained there in spit of strong resistance.

" Albertine, what are you doing?" cried the poor girl, who found herself falling from Charybdis into Scylla.

" What do you mean, dear Jeanne? "

" Your hand "—

" Well? "

Here more lightning, and I gained a position from which I could not be disloged.

" Albertine, I implore you "—

A kiss closed her mouth.

" Albertine, you are behaving very badly. I— I do not like—I—

The sky appeared to burst into flame. I did not answer, but held the rebel so tightly that her movements were paralysed, and meanwhile my hand lost no time.

" Ah, I don't khow what I feel ", sighed Jeanne

who began to lose his head. "No—never—let me alone, Albertine. Stop! I never felt—Oh, what pleasure! Holy Virgin, forgive! Albertine, I—I am dying! Dear Albertine—Ah, what angelic delight—I die—"

The words expired on her lips, her head fell inertly on my shoulder; she shivered and trembled, stiffened. Then lay quiet in my arms.

My desires, appeased momentarily, were excited even more violently. I rolled over Jeanne's motionless body, uttering wild exclamations. My mouth sucked her breath, drank her respiration. Then panting, palpitating, I yielded once more, dominated by enjoyment, beside her whom I had now initiated into the mysteries of our gross material joys, until she was permitted to taste other and purer ones more in harmony with her nature and aspirations.

Our delightful lassitude could not last forever, and by and by we opened our eyes, and came to ourselves. Jeanne was now repentant and in tears begging forgiveness of God and the holy Virgin for the rapture I had made her experience. The ungrateful girl tried to avoid my kisses and wanted to go back to her room that she might pray at length for pardon for what she regarded as a heinous sin.

The storm had passed; not a gleam of lightning or the faintest rumble of thunder came to my assistance. I did not know what to do.

I therefore began to weep more loudly than my poor Niobe. I took God, the Virgin and the saints to witness that my intentions had been pure, and little by little I succeeded on calming her. Finally her confidence returned. I then employed all my rhetoric to prove that neither of us had done wrong, that opportunity and the storm were alone responsible for what had happened, and that there are various ways of making things square with heaven.

Persuaded by my prodigal caresses if not by my eloquence, and goaded by the passion that was roused in her, my timid penitent at last listened to reason and willy-nilly succumbed once more. From this moment my task was an easy one, and in the morning when we separated, her conversion was well under way.

Now, my dear Adèle, was I not right in saying I should succeed? It only remains for me to cultivate the excellent inclinations with which Jeanne is endowed. Try on your side to profit by your professors's lessons, and tell me all that he teaches you.

Adieu, I kiss you.

ALBERTINE.

LETTER XXVIII

Adèle to Albertine.

B..., 4 August 18

Yes, my good Albertine, Lucien has offered me very sweet compensations, and I was preparing to describe to you the lovely things he daily teaches me (for his science like his love, is inexhaustible) I had dipped my pen into the ink, in fact, when a cloud appeared in my beautiful blue sky and paralized my brain.

Yesterday came a letter from Algiers, announcing to my aunt the return of her husband accompanied by one of his young officers recently elevated to the rank of captain. This man seems to have aroused a vivid interest in my uncle who highly extols his character, fortune and physical attractions.

I am sure there is a marriage project lurking beneath all this, and to prove it, last evening in

the drawing-room when my aunt had finished dancing a polka she said gaily, looking at me :

" Gentlemen, prepare to dance. I think we shall have a wedding here before the season ends.

I do not know why, but from that moment I have been sad and uneasy. Lucien hasn ot said a word to me in regard to the incident just mentioned, but I find him changed and glomy this morning.

I was too happy as things were; it could not last. Adieu, my dear Albertine. I feel like crying without knowing the reason. Always yours,

ADÈLE.

LETTER XXIX

Albertine to Adèle.

Paris, 7 August 18 .

Oh, the horrid letter to cast a shadow on the pure brow of my Adèle and to deprive me at the same time of the interesting details I was so anxiously awaiting! I so much wished to receive at second hand your clever master's course of instruction.

Don't think any more about the matter at present. for I trust it is merely a false alarm. Moreover, your uncle has not come back yet, and in the meantime, Lucien has only to declare himself and ask your hand from your aunt. He is first on the list after all and has incontestable rights. Your uncle will listen to reason; he certainly will not force you to marry the captain unless your desire.

Courage, my little Adèle! It will turn but better than you espect. I had many things to tell

you in regard to my proselyte, but they must be kept for another time until your trouble has disappeared.

Good-bye, dear. Don't lose heart. I kiss you.

ALBERTINE.

LETTER XXX

Adèle to Albertine.

B..., 18 14 August .

I am dreadfully unhappy, my dear Adèle. Will you believe it, Lucien has gone. He left B... last evening, and I am obliged to conceal my grief and hide my tears lest someone should guess what I am suffering.

My aunt, having received another letter from her husband even more explicit than the first concerning the match in store for me, I resolved to make Lucien declare himself, as he continued to remain silent.

After evading a distinct and categorical answer when I warmly pressed him to do so, he ended by saying that he was not free to grant my request, and this was all I could get out of him. Then he observed that as he did not wish to stand in the

way of my proposed marriage he had decided to make his adieux to us that very day.

Neither tears nor prayers could alter his determination. He went¡

Ah, my dear Albertine, I shall doubtless never see him again. And I love him so! Why did he leave me thus?

I passed a frightful night, biting my pillow in order to stiple my sobs. I did not want to go down to breakfast this morning, for everybody would have remarked my red eyes.

Good bye, dear friend. Pity me; write to me and console me. I am in despair. Your

ADÈLE.

NOTE

We have not been able to find Mademoiselle Albertine's reply to the dispairing letter of her friend, but we take it for granted that it contained all the consolation that women lavishly offer each other on such occasions, accompanied no doubt by reflections little flattering to men in general and to Lucien in particular. The reader's imagination will easily fill up this vacancy which on the whole is of slight importance.

LETTER XXXII

Adèle to Albertine

B..., 20 August 18 .

Your kind letter did me a world of good, dear Albertine. In depriving me of my illusions it also forced me to see things in their true light. My head grew calm by degrees, my tears dried, and if I have not banished from my recollection him who was and is still, in spite of his faults, so dear to me, I have at least succeeded in hiding from every one the wound that I fear will long bleed in my poor heart.

Knowing its cure to be incomplete I did not care to write to you until my uncle's return which we were daily expecting. Well, I bore the test with resolution. He arrived, and while I did not appear exactly enchanted at the present he intends to make me, I nevertheless played to perfection the correct boarding-school miss who accepts without elation and minus repugnance the first husband that offers himself.

Ah, Albertine, how different he is in every respect from Lucien! He is certainly not bad-looking—a big tall fellow of twenty-six or seven, blonde, with carefully waxed moustache—in a word what is called a fine soldier. But he carries himself so stiffly—and then his conversation! Always the garrison and the regiment. I hear nothing else for forty-eight hours in a stretch, and probably I shall be condemned to listen to the same thing all the rest of my life when—. But I do not want to think of that or I shall cry, and end by becoming ugly, which will not help matters.

I try to divert my thoughs by devoting myself desperately to my painting which has been somewhat neglected of late, you know why.

In regard to amusement, I would gladly make use of my left hand observotory. The time would be ripe for that had my aunt not changed her apartment and turned her bed-room into a dressing-room. In this way I can neither see nor hear what goes on,

After all, what do I care? Nothing can happen that I do not already know.

Good bye, my dear friend. I kiss you many times,

ADÈLE.

P. S. My uncle conducts things on a military basis. In a month at latest I shall be Madame la Vicomtesse de S... The big soldier is a Vicomte

LETTER XXXIII

Albertine to Adèle

Paris, 28 August 18 .

I see with pleasure, my dear, that you are growing reasonable. Is the happy change to be attributed to my letter? I should be proud to think so. Or is time responsible? If so, better still. The chief thing however, is that you are yourself again and the best guarantee of your freely regained health is the slight desire for distraction that affects you.

Your aunt was very wrong to give up her bedroom. A little seance witnessed from your observatory would have restored you rapidly.

So your *uncle*—the false one—finds himself unemployed at present. What a wretched countenance he must have worn since the return of the real one!

Well, if I had this jewel in my possession, I should make good use of it let me tell you.

This requires an explanation.

In the first place, my dear Adèle, it is not a question of myself. Your *uncle* does not excite my envy in the least, pray believe me. It concerns Jeanne—Saint Jeanne if you please.

She has not profited as I hoped by the trouble I took with her education. The path toward which I directed her steps is not the right one I fear. I fancy she has other ambitions which I find it impossible to cultivate. She does what I ask her to do, but without animation or enthusiasm, almost with reluctance, and the pleasure she enjoys imperfectly with me I have an idea she will experience in all its fulness with her frightful sailor.

This thought exasperates me, and I curse my impotence. I begin to regard this man as an odious rival; and I cannot resign myself to the possibility of his possessing an advantage of which I am unable to avail myself. I meditate dire vengeance against him—me worthy of Atar—well.

You open your big eyes and inquire if I am serious. Reassure yourself. I am partly, but not wholly so. Sister! At the risk of making you look upon me as a lunatic, I must tell you the curious fancy which has taken root in my brain ever since I learned that your *uncle* was enjoying a holiday. It strikes me that he would admirably supply that which is lacking in me for the accom-

plishment of my purpose. With his help I should be able to pluck the blossom upon which my corsair has cast covetous eyes, and toward which his hand is already outstretched.

Do you understand the fine trick I want to play him? Between enemies it would be quite proper. You burn what you cannot steal. It is good warfare.

Yes, but *uncles* are not to be picked up in the street. Where shall I find me? Then Jeanne's scruples at the sight of my strange accomplice! How shall I dispose of *them?*

No answer to these questions.

Ah, if we were only living under the regime of the Olympian Gods! I would this evening offer a fervent prayer to Venus, and the obliging goddess would certainly not refuse to change my sex and make Jeanne wholly mine.

I close my letter for I can see you raise your shoulders at my ramblings. Adieu, Madame la Vicomtesse. I kiss you.

ALBERTINE.

LETTER XXXIV

Adèle to Albertine.

B..., 2 September 18 .

My dear friend : You will receive this evening or to morrow morning by express, a small package the contents of which will cause you an agreeable surprise I trust. It is said that little presents serve as links to friendship. Accept this one therefore, and love me as I love you.

ADÈLE.

LETTER XXXV

Albertine to Adèle.

Paris, 7 September 18 .

Thank you, thank you a thousand times for your gift, my dear Adèle. I shall make no attempt to describe my stupefied amazement. I am sure moreover, that you can picture me in your mind's eye as perfectly as if you were actually with me, and can follow my movements. I got the parcel, carried it to my room, removed the wrappings, and found inside a pretty box which I opened and —there I stood with gaping month and bulging eyes.

What sort of thing was it? I decided to take it and lie down upon my soft bed. There I turned it about in my hands, examined it curiously, and suddenly reéollecting a certain description you once gave me, I finally recognized your aunt's favorite—the double of her husband—in short,

the virginal object I mentioned in my last letter and of which I had about as correct an idea as a blind man has of colors. And here it is at last! If you want to surprise people you must do something of this kind or nothing at all.

But tell me, my dear, what will your aunt say and think? Will she not suspect? And how did you manage to get possession of the precious talisman?

While waiting for you to satisfy my curiosity on all these points, let me tell you that you have reason to be proud of your act. Your *envoyé extraordinaire* has met with enthusiastic success. He has realized all the dreams born of my imagination; he has materialized them. In fact he has thoroughly executed the mission he was intended for.

You can readily imagine the care with which I paved the way, my hesitation, my caution, and the diplomacy I had to exercise before committing myself and unmasking my batteries. But it will be more difficult for you to understand what I myself have scarcely been able to comprehend—namely that after the first astonishment had worn off I found I had the most docile, inquisitive and ambitious pupil in the world.

It was a complete revelation.

This Jeanne that I could so rarely excite—in whom I had almost despaired of arousing a long—wished—for reciprocity displayed a heroic desire

to make use of the plaything almost before I had time to show it to her. Possible risks did not frighten her. On the contrary, the danger seemed to attract and charm her.

I did not long delay you may be sure. I transformed myself at once into an impassioned lover, and with the assistance of your *uncle*, walked boldly into the arena completely armed. I will confess, however, that after the initial skirmishes were over my inexperience annoyed me considerably, and had Jeanne opposed the slightest resistance it would probably have been impossible for me to finish what I had so valiantly begun. But far from discouraging my attempt she did all she could to promote it. Pain mingled with the rapture she felt acted like a spur to her desires, and her passion excited mine. Finally, thanks to the employment of cold cream I overcame every difficulty and conquered every obstacle.

Aflame as I was by the part I was playing my own sex was entirely lost. The suffering I inflicted upon Jeanne, her cries, and the desperate embraces by means of which she strove to cut short her martyrdom, instead of arousing my pity, awoke in me an indescribable sensation of bizarre delight and keen voluptuousness.

Ah, I now understand why men attach so much importance to a conquest that is glorious in proportion to the misery it entails!

What more shall I say, my dear? I have attain-

ed my object and am satisfied. Let the sailor come when he will; the harvest has been reaped. There is only the gleaning to be done and he may glean to his heart's contents. I shall not prevent him.

As for your *uncle*, the instrument to which I am indebted for the entire possession of Jeanne, he is always ready when wanted and invariably in splendid condition. He knows no neakness, nor does he ever require rest. Surely he has reason to glory in his brilliant prowess. All the same he is not in the least elated.

Good-bye, my dear little Adèle, and thank you again many times.

ALBERTINE.

LETTER XXXVI

Albertine to Adèle.

Paris, 7 September, Evening.

There was no time to be lost, dear Adèle, and your present came just in time. I had scarcely dispatehed the letter informing you of my victory when Monsieur de K... burst into the boarding-school like a bombshell to announce that his nephew had arrived in Brest.

Jeanne leaves the day after tomorrow and will he married at about the time we are.

Only two more nights with her, and I must make good use of them. Then she and I will end our bachelor days.

ALBERTINE.

LETTER XXXVII

Adèle to Albertine.

B..., 12 September 18 .

I cannot tell you, dear Albertine, how glad I am that I came to your assistance opportunely and effectively, and that I have enabled you to discover your charming pupil's true vocation. Since, however, her departure will leave my *uncle* with nothing to do, be kind enough to return him to me immediately. I shall put him back where I found him, and my aunt who is very busy just how, will never suspect my peccadillo.

I must tell you, my dear friend, that my marriage preparations are progressing like wild-fire. You ought to see the lovely trousseau that came this morning from Paris. You cannot imagine anything more elegant or in better taste.

(We omit the minute description of the articles contained in the trousseau—two pages of fine and

cramped handwriting—at the risk of incurring the displeasure of our fair readers. As for our masculine friends their approbation is accepted in advance.)

Decidedly I was mistaken in regard to the Vicomte de S... and I confess that I begin to like him exceedingly. As a man, he is admirable. If he fails sometimes to profit by his advantages, and if his civilian's dress cannot hide a rather rough personality, he is certainly splendid in full uniform. Then his conversation which bored me so terribly in the beginning, has happily changed for the better.

Since we have become better acquainted he has admitted the embarrassment he felt during our first interviews. He did not know what to say, and my sullen air utterly upset him, for this brave soldier has little self-confidence. To day, freed from all restraint, I listen to him with pleasure.

Nevertheless, I am not saying that he is clever. He would pass in a crowd; that is all.

For my part I have put aside my discontented manner, and while I occasionally utter an involuntary sigh when I think of Lucien, I am gradually forgetting him. If I am sometimes a little stiff with my adorer my formality is attributed to excessive timidity.

He, on the contrary, is all fire and flame. He is in a hurry to be married and is expediting matters as much as possible. He spends most of his time

on the rood between B... and Paris. My uncle and aunt both encourage him, while I, with good reason, do not oppose this haste. So, on September 22nd without further delay, the ceremony will take place.

I whisper to you gently, dear Albertine, that the day will dawn none too quickly for me. I find myself somewhat in the position of Blue-heard's sister-in-law-I see no one coming!

Good-bye. I shall not write again until after my marriage. And yours? You say nothing about it.

ADÈLE.

LETTER XXXVIII

Albertine to Adèle

Paris, 16 September 18 .

The case is urgent, my dear, and you do well to hasten the nuptial benediction upon your bows.

Lucky Vicomte! No matter what happens he can be safely assured of not dying without posterity. That is the one thing that Jeanne's husband can envy you. But I only hope your soldier will not perceive that no work has been left for him to do. He might resent this excessive precaution; some people are so particular!

I rely, however, upon your talents as an actress to calm his suspicions should they by any chance be aroused. Then or never will your opportunity occur to put them into practice.

Your trousseau is magnificent, my dear, and your husband has done nobly. He is really a good fellow and deserves to be loved. I do not

doubt that he will soon consign Lucien to oblivion.

I say nothing about my own marriage simply because there is nothing to be said. I am peacefully advancing toward the goal. The unforeseen and the unexpected have nothing in prospect for me. I will tell you though, that Monsieur Y... cannot talk enough about love. He adores me—I am his idol. I really expect him to put me on an altar and burn nicense before me. But I listen to him with perfect *sang-froid.*

In spite of the best intentions in the world, I assure you I am not worth such enthusiastic worship. I do not deny that my future husband begin to inspire me with a certain affection, but when I attempt to study and analyse my sentiments toward him, I find nothing at all comparable to what I felt for you and Félicie.

For the past three months, it is true, my time has been employed in such a way as to exhaust all my capabilities of loving, and my temperament does not permit me to cherish two passions at once. But since my beloved Jeanne left me I have not indulged in the slightest distraction. Every evening I hear tender words, submit to sweet fondling and even exciting caresses, yet I remain icily cold.

Monsieur Y... moreover is not of an age to inspire love. He is still well-preserved, and I often say this to myself, but it arouses in me no warmth. Is not that strange? As soon as I am in my own

room and in bed, your dear image or Jeanne's flits across my couch, appealing to me incessantly, and before long I am obliged to pay tribute to your seductive memories.

Do me the justice to believe, dear Adèle, that I am doing what I can. What more is possible? And no matter what happens at the end of the month I shall be married.

Good-bye. I kiss your forehead, chaste *fiancée!*

ALBERTINE.

LETTER XXXIX

Adèle to Albertine

B..., 25 September 18 .

I am married, dear Albertine, and everything passed off finely. My bashful alarm was of so natural a charcuter, I appeared so well to yield simply from exhaustion, and I simulated suffering so perfectly that not the shadow of a suspicion crossed my husband's mind.

My triumph was so complete that in an access of joy bordering upon delirium he cried, covering me with kisses : " Adèle, my dear angel, you have made me the happiest—of men ! "

Poor fellow, how I have deceived him ! I really feel some remorse. But what else could I do ? It was necessary for my happiness, for I love him—love him truly. Consequently I was obliged to firmly suppress the longing that drew me to him, and feign resistance to the desires that I actually shared.

I would give you more special details, but my dear, I am no longer at liberty to do so. I cannot shut myself up in my room as formerly. I have a lord and master who is entitled to intrude upon me at any moment during the day, and ask me to account for my most trifling actions. I am profiting by the absence of my tyrant to send you these few lines.

We return to Paris next month. I shall then be able to tell you at length all that I cannot write.

Yours,

ADÈLE.

LETTER XL

Albertine to Adèle.

Paris, 8 October 18 .

Like yourself, dear Adèle, I am now in my husband's possession, unless indeed—and I am rather inclined to believe it so—he is completely in my possession.

I did not wish to write you immediately after my marriage while under the influence of sensations that I must admit were not agreeable.

I was looking forward to a long chapter of compensations similar to the one you and Lucien perused from the first page to the last, but alas, my dear, I am still in ignorance of it. Either my husband knows nothing of indemnity, or else the profound respect he entertains for my person forbids the employment of resources which would perhaps cause a shock to my angelic purity, but to which my senses would probably lend themselves better than to those he liberally grants me.

Well, I have been through the whole business and have honestly tried to do my best. But I must say that my rebellions nature is annoyed by what constitutes the happiness of other women.

I should be in despair did I not have in view for my consolatien other pleasures which hitherto have satisfied me, and which are of some value, do you not think so ?

As you are coming back to Paris, darling, we can have a long talk about this.

I await you impatiently and kiss you.

ALBERTINE.

LETTER XLI

Adèle to Albertine.

B..., 12 October 18 .

I leave B... this evening, dear Albertine, and tomorrow my first visit shall be to you. I demand the sacrifice of your whole day. After more than six months of separation I cannot do less.

I write these few words in the midst of my boxes and packing, and I shall mail them at once so that I may not take you by surprise.

I mean to monopolize you and hereby notify you to that effect. Therefore be prepared.

Meanwhile I kiss you.

ADÈLE.

CONCLUSION

With this letter the correspondence between our two young friends comes to an end.

Marriage has in no way interfered with the perfect harmony that always existed between them. They continue to communicate one to the other the various studies each has occasion to engage in; but as the post-office no longer serves as intermediary between the ladies, it is quite impossible to make public their interesting confidences.

If however, the reader has been truly impressed by what we have placed before him, certain information gathered from an authentic source enables us to acquaint him with the fate of the principal persons who have figured in this history.

Madame la Vicomtesse de S... is just as seductive as a woman as she was gracefel and piquante when a young girl. After three years of married

life she still entertains a mild affection for her husband. The Vicomte adores her and a fine boy which she presented to him in the beginning of their uniou. It is the living imrge of himself he says.

In spite of her good will and efforts, Madame Albertine Y... has never succeeded in habituating herself to orthodox love. She has remained something of a heretic and cannot resist a decided predilection for those of her young scholars who possess a pretty face and accentuated physical proportions. The boarding-school is one of the finest in Paris and affords the best possible education to its pupils.

Colonel de M... and his wife love each other as if they were in their honey-moon. Unlike Albertine, the good aunt has renounced the worship of false Gods and has modestly concealed *my uncle* in his retreat. He rests now upon his laurels.

Lucien has had a number of pleasant adventures since his experience at B.... But according to his own statement, he has never found anything to compare with Adèle. Having met her again in society he tried to renew their former relations, but the young woman told him smilingly that she was "not free". Lucien accepted this as final.

The beautiful Jeanne de N..., since her marriage to her cousin has been able to distinguish between the sham and the real, and she often repeats this line of Boileau :

"Nothing is good except the true; that alone is lovable."

She has preserved a great deal of piety, and when her husband sets out on one of his frequent expeditions the boarding-school receives a visit from her. Then she remains closeted for hours with her former teacher. Probably she consults her in regard to some matter of conscience.

Monsieur J... after installing his magnificent mistress in a pretty apartment, proved so thoroughly the violent passion he felt for her—or at least so it was said—that an inflammatory fever seized him and carried him off in eight days. Since her widowhood Rose has been beseiged by adorers. But she is a clever girl who regards her beauty as so much capital, and she takes care to make it pay a good dividend. She keeps a ledger nowadays.

We left Félicie, the dark provençale, going away on the arm of a earabinier. She rose rapidly from the ranks. Her queer face and singular expression, and more than all the indiscretions of the carabinier in regard to a particular ornament of her person, attracted the attention of a lieutenant who was succeeded by a captain, etc., etc. To-day Félicie is one of the most fashionable choreographical celebrities. She is always surrounded at the *Mabille*, the *Chateau d'Asnières*, or the *Closerie des Lilas*. She receives wild applause when in dancing she lifts her foot on a level with her

partners's eyes. Her biography adorns the windows of all the book-shops.

Is that all?

One word more. This is how the most charming poet of the seventeenth century begins one of his romances :

"I owe much to the fair sex that honors me quite
By reading these lines with an unfeigned delight.
And why not? If it happens that foolish they be
Let them laugh in their sleeves at poor luckles me.
If my story is bad and discourse not piain,
If only t'is true, I've not written in vain."

Let this introduction be our conclusion and serve as a passport for our heroines.

THE END.