

Antoine François Prévost

The English Philosopher,
or
History of Mr. Cleveland,
natural son of Cromwell,

written by himself,
and translated from the English
by the author of the

Memoirs of a Man of Quality

First complete English translation
by Philip Stewart

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Notice

Antoine François Prévost¹ (1697–1763) was a priest without a parish assignment of the kind called *abbés* in his time, and was living in the monastery of St. Germain des Prés in Paris when he began his first and highly successful major novel, *Mémoires et aventures d'un homme de qualité qui s'est retiré du monde*² (1728–1731). Meanwhile, he escaped from St. Germain and fled to England, completing that novel with its well-known final volume, *Histoire du chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut* and beginning another, this time with an English protagonist, *Le Philosophe anglais* or *The English Philosopher*, otherwise known as *Cleveland*.

As the title shows, it was ostensibly written not by Prévost at all – who was only the translator – but by the “philosopher” himself: as in the *Memoirs*, it is written in the first person, it being the subject of the story himself who narrates it. The preface goes to great lengths to shore up that fictional pretension, and some of the early reviews in France and in England show some uncertainty about whether that claim (and thus the existence of Cleveland himself) might be true. Prévost was at the same time publishing a periodical called *Le Pour et Contre* that specialized on anecdotes about English life and its world of letters.

The seven original volumes of *Le Philosophe anglais* were published in two stages, over a period of eight years, as follows:

Volume I (books I-II): Utrecht: Étienne Néaulme, 1731

Volume II (book III): Utrecht: Étienne Néaulme, 1731

Volume III (books IV-V): Utrecht: Étienne Néaulme, 1732

Volume IV (books VI-VII): Utrecht: Étienne Néaulme 1732

¹ Also called “Prévost d’Exiles”.

² ‘Memoirs of a man of quality who has withdrawn from the world’.

- Volume VI (books VIII–X):
Utrecht: Étienne Néaulme [Paris], 1738
- Volume VII (books XI–XIII):
Utrecht: Étienne Néaulme [Paris], 1738
- Volume VIII (books XIV–XV):
Utrecht: Étienne Néaulme [Paris], 1739

Prévost's publisher had expected the work to be complete in four volumes, as the contract specified, but when they were finished the end of the story was still nowhere in sight. What happened then was that he commissioned a fifth and final volume by an unknown author, and published it in 1734. (The reader will find its contents summarized in the appendix.) Since the author of this spurious sequel had mined the original preface for plot elements which Prévost had intended to include, the rightful author was now at something of an impasse, and finally completed his novel in quite different ways, while leaving a curious space in the numbering of the volumes. The upshot of this odd sequence of events was that there never was an authentic Volume V. Though the name of the publisher was retained as a cover, the three final volumes were in fact printed clandestinely in Paris.

An English translation of the first two volumes under the title *The Life of Mr. Cleveland, natural son of Oliver Cromwell, written hy himself*³ – was published in London in April 1731 by Nicolas Prévost and E. Symon; the next two volumes appeared sometime in 1732 under the sole name of Nicolas Prévost. After this, Prévost having gone bankrupt in November 1733, the rights were bought by one T. Astley, who reissued the four volumes under his own title page in 1734; in 1735 he added to them the apocryphal fifth volume, the French original of which had already appeared in Holland. He was to reissue all of these again as a set

³ “In which is contained the private history of the Usurpation, hitherto unknown; together with many incidents of an uncommon and extraordinary nature” (*The Monthly Chronicle*, 1731, vol. IV, p. 81).

in 1741.

Besides the usual liberties taken by translators at the time, no translator or publisher ever went back to include Prévost's own concluding volumes, and so it is that while there were other editions, the real sequel to *Cleveland* – books VIII to XV – has never to this day been published in English.⁴

Reference edition

Page numbers in brackets throughout the text refer to the associated pages in *Le Philosophe anglais, ou histoire de M. Cleveland, fils naturel de Cromwell* (1731–1739), which is volume 2 of *Œuvres de Prévost* (Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1977–1986) in 8 volumes. A chronology and full annotation of the novel are found in vol. VIII of the same edition, pp. 81–186.

Page references to other novels of Prévost are to the same set of *Œuvres de Prévost*, as follows:

Mémoires et aventures d'un homme de qualité qui s'est retiré du monde – Vol. I

*Mémoires du chevalier des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut*⁵
(1728–1731) – Vol. I

Le Doyen de Killerine (1735–1740) – vol. II

Histoire d'une Grecque moderne (1740) – vol. IV

Histoire de Marguerite d'Anjou (1740) – vol. V

Le Monde moral (1760–1764) – vol. VI

Reference is also made to *Le Pour et Contre*, the periodical written mostly by Prévost between 1733 and 1740; and to *His-*

⁴ For more details on the publication history, see Philip Stewart, “Prévost et son *Cleveland*: essai de mise au point historique”, *Dix-Huitième Siècle*, n° 7 [1975], pp. 181–208.

⁵ Title commonly abbreviated to *Manon Lescaut*.

toire générale des voyages, a compendium of travel narratives published in fifteen volumes from between 1746 and 1759.

Other Frequent References

Gilbert Burnet, *Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Time*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1823.

Pierre Carlet de Marivaux, *Les Aventures de *** ou les effets surprenants de la sympathie* (1713), in Marivaux, *Œuvres de jeunesse*, ed. Frédéric Deloffre, Paris: Gallimard « Pléiade », 1972, p. 1–307.

Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes* (1721), Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2013.

Paul Rapin de Thoyras, *Histoire d'Angleterre*, La Haye: Alexandre de Rogissart, 1727, vol. IX.

Jean Sgard, *Prévost romancier*, Paris: José Corti, 1968, 1989.

Denis de Vairasse, *Histoire des Sévarambes*, (1677), Amsterdam, 1715.

[9] PREFACE

I shall not imitate the affectation of numerous modern authors who seem to fear offending the public or at least irritating it with a preface, and who evince as much reluctance and unease when they have one to write as if they indeed had the displeasure and annoyance of their readers to fear. I can scarcely imagine what can cause their alarm and hesitations. For if their writings do not require the preliminary clarifications of a preface, who obliges them to take the unnecessary trouble of composing one? And if on the other hand they believe their readers require some explanation for the understanding of what is being presented to them, why fear displeasing them by offering them help they could not fail to find agreeable once they have recognized the need for it? One senses, for example, that something would be lacking in a book such as the one I am making public, were it not preceded by an introduction that can cast some light on events that are obscure or unknown till now. A work of this nature can be seen as a newly discovered country, and the intention of reading it as sort of journey which the reader is undertaking.⁶ It does not suffice to announce its name by a title; he needs to know the path and the lie of the land to enter it with assurance. He must even be informed what curious and agreeable things he will find therein, to spare him the bother of research and of uncertainties which would lessen the satisfaction he anticipates along the way. Such is the service I shall render my readers.

⁶ A striking formulation, especially when one thinks of the place occupied in all Prévost's work by the voyage, notably in *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* and *C*; after the *Voyages du capitaine Robert Lade* (1744), he was to devote fourteen years of his life to *Histoire générale des voyages*.

Mr Cleveland's history⁷ came to me from a good source. I obtained it from his son, who bears the same name, and is happily passing his advanced years in London after spending most of his life in the service of various foreign princes.⁸ I procured his acquaintance by chance. He had read my *Memoirs*, which was the principal reason that brought him to mention to me those of his father.⁹ I should like to acquaint you, he said one day in present

⁷ The English nationality of the protagonist is hardly indifferent, as it connotes for Prévost's reader an implicit characterology. In *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* (p. 235), the Marquis de Rosemont concludes his depiction of the nation as follows: "the virtues of the English are generally constant ones, because they are founded on principles; and those principles are the work of happy nature and the purest reason."

⁸ There was indeed a Duke of Cleveland, born in 1662, who lived in England until 1730. According to the novel's chronology, our Cleveland's two sons are also born in 1662 or 1663, which would make them both about sixty-eight in 1731, only three or four years younger than Renoncour himself (see following note). There is no way to tell which son it might be: they are not greatly differentiated, and only one is named in the text of the novel; but it would necessarily be the elder in terms of the preface itself, for the second son has in principle since died.

⁹ The story of Cleveland is, as the title says, "written by himself, and translated from the English by the author of the *Memoires of a Man of Quality*." But are we to understand this "author" to be the Marquis de *** (his pseudonym is Renoncour), the hero and narrator of *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, or rather Prévost? It is certain that the expression "the author of the *Memoires of a Man of Quality*" amounted to a virtual signature for Prévost, at least for his contemporaries. However, it is appropriate to take into account the presentation of these works at the moment they were published. There is no ostensible outside "author" in *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, other than the "editor" who must intervene to announce the death of the narrator. *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, the last volumes of which were published about the same time as the first four volumes of *The English Philosopher*, at that

ing them to me, with a man whose heart was much like yours, and who made the same use as you of the adventures of a most unhappy life. He lent me the manuscript, and I read it eagerly. Indeed I found so much similarity between Mr Cleveland's inclinations and my own, such resemblance in our manner of thinking and feeling, that I confessed to his son that I had recognized myself in his father's traits, and that our hearts, if I may be permitted this expression, were of the same temper and came from the same mold. I asked him what reason he had for condemning to the dark a work which likely would please the public. He answered that the only one keeping him from publishing it was the difficulty of putting the manuscript in order, and lending an air of history and sustained narrative to events the continuity of which was broken in numerous places. I would have undertaken the task unhesitatingly had I known the English language well enough to hope I could make it stylistically agreeable; but as there is a far cry from the mere understanding of a language and the talent of writing it with polish, I proposed only to undertake in French what I felt myself incapable of carrying out in English. Mr Cleveland manifested no aversion to this proposition. He allowed

moment is still ostensibly a true story, insofar as its fictional status is not openly recognized. In such a framework, nothing prevents Cleveland's memoirs from being translated by Renoncour before his death, even if it preceded the publication of the final parts of *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*. Thus, when the "I" of this preface evokes the parallel between Cleveland's sufferings and "my own," it must be recognized that the referent has to be the adventures which this "I" has purportedly published and the reader has read, in other words *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* (just as the "history of my life" in the "Notice by the author of the *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*" at the beginning of *Manon Lescaut*). The beginning of *Le Doyen de Killerine* will be similar; there, the manuscript has been retouched and is presented to the public "by the author of the *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*."

me to make a copy of his manuscript; [10] and having brought it back to France with me, I spent what freedom I was left by more important occupations¹⁰ to give it the form under which it can appear today.

The time when M. Cleveland lived is not so removed from our own that one cannot still find many who knew him. Moreover, most of his history has involves events of recent memory, so a reader need not fear being borne here into the realm of fables.¹¹ However, it must be admitted that it contains some extraordinary adventures which seem to require attestation. This I myself recognized as I translated them; and have felt obliged by that reflection to offer here some remarks to arrest the inclination of most readers toward skepticism.

I shall not have recourse to general reasons, which any author at all may invoke to lend equal credit to truth and falsehood.¹² For though it is certain, for example, that verisimilitude is

¹⁰ The “author of *Mémoires d’un homme de qualité*,” who is supposed to be a wise and serious man in his retirement, distances himself from grand, heroic adventures by relegating them to an idle pastime. He had said similarly at the beginning of *Manon Lescaut*: “A stern reader will perhaps be offended to find me taking up the pen again at my age, to write adventures of fortune and love.”

¹¹ Cleveland is born about 1642, and his main story takes place between 1650 and 1675, during the reigns of Cromwell and Charles II in England and of Louis XIV in France. The historical genre was not new: it is the one practiced by Mme de Lafayette and Mme de Villedieu, who depicted the hidden sides of court history known as *histoire secrète*, and by Gatién de Courtilz, who prefers to situate the action elsewhere than at court. Prévost, like Mme de Lafayette, invents his main protagonist entirely, while associating him closely with well-known historical personalities.

¹² Nowhere did Prévost make more adroit use of the illusion-creating technique that seeks not only to persuade the reader of the historicity of

not a necessary feature of truth, and that we daily witness things which we would label absurd or impossible on any testimony but that of our own eyes, such vague evidence entails no consequences, since it establishes at most that an obscure and unlikely fact can be true, without showing that it really is. Evidence of reason establishes nothing with respect to a purely historical point; it must be of the same nature as what is to be proven; which is to say that a dubious fact must be proven by one that is certain. One of your trees produced flowers in the dead of winter: I doubt it, despite your insistence. Will you convince me by explaining the means whereby nature could bloom before the return of the fair season? You may perhaps force me to agree that the thing is possible. But confirm this marvel to me by wise witnesses who saw it as you did, and who cannot have concerted amongst themselves to play on my gullibility; show me some of these leaves, green and fresh as they must be when they sprout, and I shall give credence to your story, without bothering for a minute to examine it. Fundamentally, I am not sure this cautious reluctance to believe the truth of facts is very glorious for mankind, and whether that men are right to take a sort of pride in it. It is clear that it assumes the poor opinion they have of one other, and their mutual distrust of their candor and good faith.

Although what I have to say in support of the truth of Mr Cleveland's extraordinary adventures does not possess the force of a decisive proof of fact, on the other hand it will not be found as vague and weak as evidence of reason alone. It is a mixture of these two kinds of evidence: (1) In all the things that Mr Cleve-

his story, but first to adopt the reader's skepticism, the better to disarm it. The author is not content with conventional pretexts about manuscripts found in cabinets or mere insistence on the truth of the events; instead he rejects "general" methods in favor of specific evidence, presented as the result of his objective research.

land relates with no other testimony than his own, I observe that he has put nothing forward that cannot fit perfectly with our most faithful and approved histories. (2) He relates a large number of facts traces of which, and sometimes even ample testimony, can really be found in contemporary historians.¹³

¹³ A long discussion on historical methodology and its place in Prévost's novels will be found in number XC of *Le Pour et Contre* (t. VI, pp. 337–360). The “translator” of *Histoire des Sévarambes* (1677) had likewise asserted that “there is much more evidence to support the truth of this relation.” Various sources could have suggested to Prévost the idea of a bastard son of Cromwell. Although Cleveland – whose given name we will never learn – is fictional, the stories circulated about Cromwell and the reign of Charles II, as well as seemingly the most trustworthy published histories, would suffice to render his existence plausible. There is scarcely a name in these entire memoirs that is wholly of Prévost's invention, beginning with that of the protagonist. There was indeed a royalist general named Sir Thomas Wentworth, earl of Cleveland, who at times shared Charles II's exile, and whose name Prévost could have read in histories of the Revolution. The hero's mother, daughter of an English officer and abandoned mistress of Charles I before becoming Cromwell's, is in all probability the simple historical transposition of the real Duchess of Cleveland who was much discussed: Barbara Villiers, born in 1641 and married in 1659 to Roger Palmer, later Earl of Castlemaine, was Charles II's mistress right after his return to England: the first night he slept at Whitehall, relates *The Secret History of the Reigns of King Charles II and King James II* (n.p., 1690), her adultery was flagrant, and all the more scandalous that she was suspected of being the king's own half-sister. She had several children, some of whom were recognized by the king, and her influence on him contributed to the downfall of Clarendon in 1667. After the king made her Duchess of Cleveland in 1670 (cf. *Mémoires du comte de Gramont*, ch. ix), she had other lovers. She lived until 1709. Her first son, Charles Fitzroy, inherited her title, and it could have been the death of this Duke of Cleveland on 9 September 1730 –

Cromwell's character is so well known that no one will accuse our author of having blackened him out of spite and hatred.¹⁴ One has only to consult the most famous English historians: it will be seen that they accord with Mr Cleveland right down to their expressions.¹⁵ "No one," says the Earl of Clarendon,

while Prévost was still in London and was perhaps beginning his novel – that attracted the novelist's attention. Charles II was known even during his exile in France for his dalliance, and had other bastard children, notably the Duke of Monmouth, son of Lucy Walters, who not only was recognized but became a pretender to the throne when Charles II died in 1685. The idea of a bastard son in the royal household was therefore in no way more remarkable in England than in France. But could, on the other hand, have appeared surprising, is that Prévost chose to attribute his protagonist's paternity not to Charles II, but to the Christian soldier and protestant hero Cromwell.

¹⁴ Cromwell's reputation in France after the Restoration was indeed very black. He was, in the first place, a regicide: a crime that made France shudder especially since it recalled the assassination of Henri IV, and France during the Fronde had perhaps come close to the same reversals as revolutionary England. Moreover, Cromwell's puritan zeal did not make him seem pious by French standards: the man who was to send an army to put out the flame of the faith in Ireland would surely be hypocritical enough not only to father bastards, but to sacrifice them for his own purposes. Prévost could find this cold, calculating Cromwell driven by frantic ambition in François Ragueneau's *Histoire d'Olivier Cromwell* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1691), and in Gregorio Leti's *La Vie d'Olivier Cromwell* (Amsterdam: Henri Desbordes), translated into French in 1696.

¹⁵ All the quotations that follow, accurate almost word for word, come from a single source, namely vol. IX of Paul Rapin de Thoyras's *Histoire d'Angleterre*, which had just appeared in 1727 (La Haye: Alexandre de Rogissart). Rather than incorporating the original text, which are subject to some distortion, the French translations are here re-translated into English to give a better idea of what the French reader

speaking of the Protector, “ever attempted anything with more cruelty, and with such disregard for religion and moral honesty; yet a cruelty as great as his could never have accomplished his designs without the assistance of a sublime mind, admirable prudence and sagacity, and the resolution of a magnanimous heart.” The same author adds further down: “In a word, as he was guilty of several crimes for which damnation is decreed and hellfire prepared, so he had some virtues for which the memory of some men in all ages has been celebrated; and he will be looked upon by posterity as an excellent and an evil man.”¹⁶ Mr Burnet asserts that his favorite principle, and the one he most frequently invoked, was that “moral laws [11] are binding on only in the ordinary conduct of life, but exceptions may be made in extraordinary cases ones and occasions.”¹⁷ It is easy to see that with such a detestable principle there are no crimes one is not capable of

found.

¹⁶ “Without doubt, no man [says the Earl of Clarendon, speaking of the Protector] with more wickedness ever attempted anything or brought to pass what he desired more wickedly, more in the face and contempt of religion and moral honesty; yet wickedness as great as his could never have accomplished those trophies without the assistance of a great spirit, an admirable circumspection and sagacity, and a most magnanimous resolution. [...] In a word, as he had all the wickedness against which damnation is denounced and for which hellfire is prepared, so he had some virtues which have caused the memory of some men in all ages to be celebrated; and he will be looked upon by posterity as a brave bad man.” (Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888], pp. 91 and 97; cited by Prévost after Rapin de Thoyras, vol. IX, p. 104).

¹⁷ “[M]oral laws were only binding on ordinary occasions, but that upon extraordinary ones these might be superseded” (Gilbert Burnet, *Bishop Burnet’s History of His Own Time* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1823], vol. I, p. 136.)

committing.

I concede that few persons have accused Cromwell of the excesses of incontinence. But everyone concedes that he was supremely hypocritical, and that is enough to understand that his secret morals cannot be judged by the outward appearance of his conduct.¹⁸ He left from his marriage six children, two sons and four daughters. The fourth, named Elisabeth, of whom Mr Cleveland speaks estimably in that latter parts of his work, lived until the time of King William.¹⁹ I have spoken in England with many persons who knew her, and who confirmed for me some of the adventures attributed to her in our story.²⁰

Two things to observe here about Cromwell. The first is that Mr Cleveland gives him the title Speaker of Parliament, although it appears in no historian that he occupied this office. We find only that he was a representative of Cambridge in 1640, and

¹⁸ Prévost has to recognize that Cromwell had a morally stern posture; indeed Rapin cites lust among the vices of which he was never accused (IX, 97), and Cleveland speaks a little later of “the regularity of his morals”.

¹⁹ Cromwell had four sons (Robert, Oliver, Richard, Henry) and four daughters (Bridget, Elizabeth, Mary, Frances), but the first two sons died before his reign; Elizabeth was therefore indeed the fourth of his children then living. Prévost thus corrects Rapin de Thoyras, who called her the fourth *daughter*, but on the other hand he respects Rapin’s erroneous assertion that she “lived unmarried until the reign of William III” (p. 93). In reality, the Protector’s favorite daughter Elizabeth, married in 1646, predeceased him in 1658.

²⁰ A familiar strategy in Prévost, who often invokes unnamed witnesses. But either because he modified the novel’s plan, or because he simply neglected various elements announced here, Elizabeth Cromwell will in fact never be mentioned. The author of the apocryphal tome V, who conscientiously studied this preface, programmatically introduces Elizabeth as friend of Fanny at the British court.

remained so until, in concert with the House of Commons, he found the means of rising in the military ranks. I consulted some persons of consideration in London about this problem, and their replies has clarified the matter for me. Cromwell was indeed named Speaker through the intrigues of several members of Parliament who thought he could make their views prevail. But he did himself justice by declining the office. However well versed he was in business, he had little talent for public speaking; and he understood too well the interests of his ambition to accept a position he did not feel he could fulfill honorably.²¹

My second observation concerns the time of Cromwell's death. It is certain that it occurred prior to King Charles's trip to Bayonne and Fuenterrabia.²² It follows that Mr Cleveland must have remained in Rouen with Lord Axminster much longer than I indicate, or at least that Richard Cromwell had by then succeeded

²¹ Cromwell ascension indeed did not come via Parliament but the ranks of the military after the outbreak of civil war in 1642. The explanation offered here for this error is imaginary, but it might be inspired by an assertion of Rapin de Thoyras relative to Cromwell's election to Parliament in 1640: "He spent two undistinguished years there, having little talent for speeches that could rival those of some Members of Parliament. His manner of speaking was rough and disagreeable, and his speeches were wordy and contorted" (t. IX, p. 96). This supposed refusal also has an historical parallel in that Cromwell did refuse the *crown* which Parliament offered him in 1657.

²² When Cleveland and Axminster, fleeing Cromwell's England, arrive in Rouen to rejoin King Charles in exile, they learn that he has left for Bayonne and Fuenterrabia to seek the support of the French and Spanish crowns. But it was historically in August 1659 that Charles undertook that journey, whereas Cromwell had died on 3 September 1658.

his father.²³ Failing one or the other of these suppositions, there will be a chronological disparity of some months. I confess that it comes exclusively from my negligence. Mr Cleveland's memoirs were interrupted at this point, and my only thought was to tie the narrative together, without taking the trouble to fill it in, or at least to point out the gap between the departure from England and the stay in Rouen. It can be seen that I have perceived my mistake: but I have preferred to let it subsist rather than introduce a disagreeable interruption into my work, or fill it with some adventure of my own imagining.²⁴

I shall not dwell on the Rumney Hole cavern, which I visited during my trip to England.²⁵ Mr Cleveland's description will satisfy the reader's curiosity. I shall simply add that in several other provinces of the island similar natural wonders are to be found. Derbyshire has many. Wockey Hole, near Wells, and Cheddar Cliffs, are rarities of the genre that merit the traveler's notice.²⁶

²³ Cromwell's eldest son was named Protector after his death, but was soon overturned (April 1659) by a group of generals alluded to in book V. Richard Cromwell himself is not mentioned in the novel.

²⁴ Prévost tries to turn the oversight into an asset by making it seem a rather facile guaranty of authenticity; but it cannot work: there is no "gap" of some months, for even if Cleveland and Axminster had remained a long time in Rouen, it is inconceivable that they (and Charles too) would not have heard of Cromwell's death.

²⁵ It must be remembered that it is the Marquis de ***, "author of the *Memoirs of a Man of Quality*," who is speaking here (see note 7 above); his trip to England is related in vol. V of *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, published in 1731, pp. 230–274. He visits Devonshire, where the fictive Rumney Hole is supposed to be located; he saw no caverns there, but does mention the copper and tin mines in Cornwall.

²⁶ These names cited in evidence for the plausibility of Rumney Hole are not fanciful; it is even quite possible that Prévost saw some of these

The Rochelle colony has caused me some perplexity.²⁷ It did not seem plausible to me that such an extraordinary settlement could have been so entirely unknown that there was no trace of it to be found in the relations of our voyagers, and I could not help suggesting as much to Mr Cleveland's son. He satisfied me forthwith by showing me some passages of a relation of the Ethopian Sea²⁸ composed by the Englishman William Rallow.²⁹

caves. Daniel Defoe's *Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724–1726) mentions two in Derbyshire, Poole's Hole and Elden Hole (G. D. H. Cole, ed., London: Peter Davies, 1927, t. I, pp. 576–578). Defoe gives also the name of Hookey Hole (which he writes Wokey Hole) which is indeed in the Mendip Hills near Wells in Somersetshire (*op. cit.*, I, 278); also James Beeverell in *Les Délices de la Grand' Bretagne et de l'Irlande*, explaining the name this way: "In the vicinity of Wells is to be found on the mountain a most spacious and deep grotto, containing numerous springs and brooks, which is called Ochie Hole, or Wochey Hole, derived from the Gallic word *Og*, which means a cave or grotto" (Leyden: Pierre Vander Aa, 1727, IV, 635). The name written Shedercliffs in French doubtless represents Cheddar Cliffs (today Cheddar Gorge). Near this village, which is also in the Mendip Hills, was a waterfall that powered twelve mills, as affirm Defoe (I, 279) and Beeverel (III, 633). It is interesting that the English publishers of *Cleveland*, perhaps not understanding Prévost's spellings, modified the list for an English reader: they put, for example, "*Wokey Hole*, under Mendip Hills near Wells in Somersetshire" and "the cave near Ryegate [Reigate] in Surrey, the retreat of the barons in the reign of King John" (cf. Beeverell, III, 774–775).

²⁷ It is in book III that we will find a colony of refugees from the siege of La Rochelle, located in the vicinity of the island of St. Helena.

²⁸ St. Helena is in the south Atlantic, at the outer limits of what at the time was called in French *Golfé de Guinée*, *Mer de Guinée*, or *Golfe Éthiopique* (cf. *Histoire générale des voyages*, IV, 442), corresponding to today's Bay of Biafra. But *Ethiopia* could designate the whole southern part of Africa, and the whole Atlantic below the Equator could

While I did not find it in the story of Bridge and his companions, I was at least assured of the colony's existence, and of the deplorable manner in which it was destroyed. I even noted numerous singularities of its situation which Mr Cleveland had omitted, and which I have added to his narration in volume three.³⁰

As extraordinary as is the story of Blood, no doubt can be cast upon it by those who have some knowledge of the reign of Charles II.³¹ I say the same of the Protestant Rye House conspir

be called the Ethiopian Sea; we find "Oceanus aethiopicus" on a map of the *Niwen Atlas* (as at the end of book III), and "Océan méridional ou éthiopien" on the African map of N. Sanson (1656).

²⁹ Since the Rochelois colony is a pure fiction, this reference, unlike all the others cited in this preface, is a hoax, at least with respect to the precise information the narrator pretends to derive from it. William Rallow is not known; the only name close to it suggested by history for this "relation" is that of Richard Rowles, whose unhappy voyage to the Indes, in the course of which he lost his life, is related in the first volume of *Histoire générale des voyages* (pp. 540–544). His crew in fact missed St. Helena, but other ships returning to Europe after rounding Cape Hope often did put in there for supplies. Or might Prévost's intention have been to exploit the reputation of Sir Walter Raleigh? Among his writings is a "Relation de la Guiane" (translation of his *Discovery of Guiana*, 1569) in t. II of *Voyages de François Coréal aux Indes occidentales* (Paris: Gabriel Amaury, 1722) – although in fact there is nothing there about St. Helena.

³⁰ Bridge will leave the colony at the end of book III, but will return there and relate its demise in book V. This is the only occasion where the fictional editor claims such direct intervention in the preparation of the text.

³¹ Another marker to which Prévost's actual novel does not correspond, but which the anonymous author of the spurious continuation faithfully develops by making of Blood an evil Jesuit, one of Gelin's multiple incarnations. But Prévost was doubtless thinking of Thomas Blood or Colonel Blood (who died in 1680), an almost legendary man of many

acy, the unhappy end of Walcot, of Lord Russel, of Colonel Sidney, but particularly of the winsome and unfortunate Earl of Essex.³² [12]

Sir George Ayscue's adventure in Barbados, and the expedition of Venables to Jamaica,³³ are attested by English writers at least for the essentials if not the circumstances. Lord Axminster's misfortunes are no less known.³⁴ As for Mr Cleveland's, they are set forth so straightforwardly that they seem to require no other proof than the candor of his heart and the invariable honesty of his sentiments. His relations with Lord Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, especially in Rouen where that nobleman spent his last years,³⁵

masks who among other things had attempted once to kidnap and another to lynch the Duke of Ormonde, and to steal the crown jewels.³² The Rye House Plot of 1683, which aimed to kill Charles II and the Duke of York near Rye House in Hertfordshire, does not in fact come into play in this novel. Rapin, who relates its principal events (IX, 537–548), is very skeptical about this supposed plot which cost several prominent Whigs their lives, and which the court was perhaps using to get rid of several of its enemies. This is likely the cast Prévost would have given the matter, but in fact the novel ends before 1683 (the apocryphal continuation, in order to respect the preface, extends through the death of Charles in 1685). Accused in June, Captain Walcot and Lord Russel were declared guilty of high treason and executed on 22 and 23 July; Colonel Sidney had the same fate on 7 December. The Earl of Essex, one of the first arrested, was found in the Tower during his trial with his throat slit; according to the official report he had committed suicide, but Rapin inclines to believe that the king and York had had him assassinated (IX, 545).

³³ In book V.

³⁴ The name is that of a town in Devon. There is nothing historical about the character.

³⁵ Cleveland will make Clarendon's acquaintance in Orleans, soon after his fall from grace in 1667, in book VI, but it is only from book XII on that the two will begin their conversations, this time in Rouen.

their conferences, their uncertainties over religion and the way they are resolved, are such unusual and at the same time such candid features that one will easily be persuaded that they could have been neither invented at will, nor feigned.³⁶

The tragic end of Mr Cleveland's second son, though it is related with sufficient detail to inspire credence, nonetheless revolted mine, because it did not seem believable that an accident occurring so close to King Charles could escaped the notice of the English historians. I have leafed through many of them in order to find at least some detail which could serve to corroborate my author. Here is what I found in Dr Welwood: the essentials of the adventure are manifestly the same; only the causes and circumstances, of which the doctor was unaware, are wanting. "There was some notice paid (he says) to an accident that occurred at Windsor some years before the king's death. The prince, having read³⁷ more than he was accustomed upon returning from the hunt, withdrew to the next room, and having wrapped himself in his coat, went to sleep on a bed.

Soon after he had rejoined the company, a servant among the king's retinue, fell asleep on the same bed, being wrapped in the king's coat; and in this situation was found stabbed to death, without it ever being known how this had occurred, or the slight-

³⁶ It is significant that, while supporting his story with authentic and fictional historical evidence, Prévost should conclude by inscribing it under the sign of sincerity. History supplies a framework, within which an essentially personal drama takes place; what matters is the empathy established with the hero, based on the conviction that sincerity cannot be feigned. Cleveland himself, on several occasions, will lend credence to a story told "candidly," with no further proof.

³⁷ The passage really should read "having *drunk* more than he was accustomed"; but since Prévost quotes from Rapin de Thoyras, he reproduces its typographical error in putting the participle *lu* (read) in place of *bu* (drunk).

est inquiry being made. But the matter was hushed up.”³⁸ One has only to compare this narrative with the young Cleveland’s adventure, and one will seek no other key.³⁹

One could find fault with Mr Cleveland for showing too little regard for the memory of King Charles, to whom he owed numerous favors, as he himself admits, and the better part of his wealth.⁴⁰ But a judicious reader familiar with the prince’s character and attentive to that of our philosopher, will not qualify this conduct as ingratitude. He will rather admire it as an effect of that generous sincerity which abhors flattery, and without the company of which virtue and wisdom are never to be found. Mr Cleveland was acquainted with Charles II’s great qualities: but he

³⁸ “There was some weight laid (he says) upon an accident that fell out at *Windsor* some years before his death: for the king drinking more liberally than usual, after the fatigue of riding, he retired to the next room, and wrapping himself up in his cloak, fell asleep upon a couch. He was but a little time come back to the company, when a servant belonging to one of them, lay down upon the same couch, in the king’s cloak, and was found stabbed dead with a ponyard. Nor was it ever known how it happened, but the matter hushed up, and no enquiry made about it.” (James Welwood, *Memoirs of the most material transactions*, 2nd ed., London: Tim. Goodwin, 1700, p. 144 (in a discussion of whether Charles II’s death was natural or not).

³⁹ In fact, Prévost ultimately leaves completely aside the tragedy announced here, and Cleveland’s sons do not die in the novel. But his imitator faithfully executed these intentions: he has the younger son stabbed, in circumstances corresponding precisely to Welwood’s text.

⁴⁰ Another inaccurate indication with respect to the story Prévost actually ended up writing, for it is only at the end of the final book that Cleveland is about to return to England for the first time since Cromwell’s reign, and he will owe his wealth, which is considerable, not to Charles but to the legacy of his father-in-law Axminster, and of Axminster’s father-in-law, Don Pedro d’Arpez.

had also observed, better than anyone, that they were, as it were, smothered and nullified by his vices. His apathy, above all, and his repugnance for anything resembling application, could not fail to offend a naturally firm and attentive mind, made even more austere and serious by continual misfortunes. The Bishop of Salisbury sums up Charles's character in a nutshell: "He had", says this writer, "so natural an aversion to all constraint that, though he had as much wit as any man, and a majestic mien, yet he could not, even after premeditation, act the role of king for a moment, either in Parliament or in Council, either in words or gesture."⁴¹ He had in addition notably libertine notions of religion and most dissipated moral principles. Mr Cleveland was not unaware that the prince had secretly abjured the Anglican religion in Fuentarrabia, and could see he was returning affectedly to his first sentiments in England. Worse still, after receiving communion from a Reformed bishop, he would go almost immediately to receive communion from a Catholic priest.⁴² Monstrous admixture, which to be sure some Jesuits were accused of encouraging him to do for political reasons, but which a man of such upright character as Mr Cleveland could not refrain from condemning roundly, even in a prince he loved. He leads us to understand, moreover, that the liberty with which he expressed his sentiments

⁴¹ "He had so natural an aversion to all formality that with as much wit as most kings ever had, and with as majestic a mien, yet he could not on premeditation act the part of a king for a moment, either at Parliament or Council, either in words or gesture." In fact, Prévost mistakes the attribution, in taking this quotation from Rapin (vol. IX, p. 581), because it follows a passage from Gilbert Burnet, bishop of Salisbury; the correct source is the memoirs of John Sheffield, duke of Buckingham (*The Works of John Sheffield*, London: John Barber, 1726, vol. II, p. 57).

⁴² Assertion of the "fact" which Rapin de Thoyras takes from Burnet; the conversion of Charles was never declared and is still debatable.

on this head to the king had more to do with his fall from grace than the Rye conspiracy, in which he was suspected of having dabbled.⁴³ Essentially [13] the same reason caused him to lose the affection of the Duke of Monmouth, provoking him to the cruel outrage of which it is surprising to find him making such a candid and sincere relation in his history.⁴⁴

I perceive I am allowing my observations to go on too much. Excessive length would be as much a defect in a preface as the ridiculous affectation of beginning a book with no preface or introduction. I would not be forgivable were I to fall into the first of these extremes after beginning by rigorously condemning the other. If there remains one thing for me to request of the public, it is to remember that there is always a very great difference between a simple translation and a work of one's own creation. I entreat them to determine their indulgence thereby.⁴⁵

⁴³ There is neither rise nor fall for Cleveland in the novel, just as there is no Rye House Plot, but we will find these elements incorporated in books VIII–IX of the spurious volume V.

⁴⁴ Monmouth, bastard son of Charles II, will play a prominent role beginning in book XI.

⁴⁵ In other words, doubtless, the reader's attitude towards the translator: after doing what he can to establish the novel's historical structure, the "translator"-author abdicates all responsibility, his last word being that the work is authentic. In the original edition, this preface is followed by a publishers notice: "Particular reasons have obliged me to delay for some weeks the printing of the last two volumes; I notify the public that they will appear as soon as they can be printed, that is, in a month or six weeks." The "particular reasons" are, it would appear, Prévost's failure to supply his publisher Néaulme with a complete manuscript. We know thanks to the *Extraits de plusieurs lettres de l'auteur des Mémoires d'un Homme de Qualité* (Utrecht: Etienne Néaulme, 1732) that a contract for about 60 sheets, or four volumes of 15 sheets each, was signed in

[17] BOOK ONE

My father's reputation dispenses me from any need to explain my background. Everyone knows the character of that famous man, who for several years held all of Europe in wonder at his virtues and his crimes. History still hesitates over the rank to assign to his name, and whether he is to be counted among the heroes or the villains. But on whichever side history comes down, she surely cannot deny him the immortality he merits on one count or the other. Being his son will not prevent my doing him justice on all those occasions which I shall have to discuss his conduct.

His affected zeal for religion had not made him insensitive to the pleasures of love. He left several children, by his legitimate wife and by various mistresses.⁴⁶ It is an incredible fact that the

December 1730. As early as 16 March the London *Historia Litteraria* announced four volumes as being in press in Utrecht (no. VIII, p. 202); on 2 April a manuscript was submitted to the censor in Paris by Didot; on 20 April (9 April on the English calendar) the first two volumes appeared in London, in English. Everything leads us to believe that the first two volumes were ready rather early, perhaps even before Prévost left England, but that Néaulme as he began printing was waiting for the two others, hoping to bring out a complete edition in four volumes. His allusion to the final two volumes sufficiently proves he had not seen them, for the two volumes are far from being the last.

⁴⁶ Despite Cromwell's austere reputation, this invention is not without foundation, and it may even be Cromwell's biographers who inspired it. Gregorio Leti relates two affairs of Cromwell prior to his ascension to power. The first is in 1629. Cromwell, who at twenty-seven has no experience with women, is threatened along with his comrade Cutler with a lawsuit by a certain Dame Dappel for having impregnated two girls named Mursel and Dappel, her pretended niece and cousin. They

descendants of such a powerful, rich, and feared man have become the playthings of fortune, and come almost every one to perish in obscurity and poverty.⁴⁷ And yet, with the sole exception of one who retained his name along with a small portion of his property, and transmitted them to his own son, who today holds a

resolved it by paying sixty guineas to the plaintiffs, and Cromwell is said to have been very fearful lest his pastoral career be compromised (*op. cit.*, t. I, pp. 184–189). The other situation had already been related before Gregorio Leti by François Ragueneau (*op. cit.*, pp. 127–128), and is not a matter of a younger man's follies: in 1644 Cromwell, who had married in 1630, has an at first secret liaison with an agreeable woman thirteen years his junior; the only problem was she was the wife of Major Lambert. These historians assert that in order to be rid of the husband, Cromwell got Parliament to send him off to command the militia on the Scottish border, and at the same time to forbid officers to take their wives with them on duty. Soon, however, her pregnancy brought a furious Lambert running, only to learn that he was obliged by law, since he had not left the kingdom, to recognize his unexpected daughter, after which he was promoted to colonel. Yet Leti remains skeptical about Cromwell's real responsibility, asserting that Lambert himself invited him to serve as godfather (I, 357–368). The English biographer Isaac Kimber, whose *Life of Oliver Cromwell* was translated into French in 1725, rejects this anecdotal chronicle and accuses foreign biographers of writing novels rather than histories (London: J. Brotherton et T. Cox, 1724, preface).

⁴⁷ *Cleveland* stems from the *nouvelle historique* or *histoire secrète* in the importance of the hero's father and of several other characters; but the hero will not himself play an historical role, a fact accounted for by the family's fall from prominence, cutting the ties between novel and history. The Doyen de Killerine too will be the representative of a family "extrêmement déchue"; cf. also the opening paragraphs of *Mémoires de la comtesse Linska* by Milon de Lavalley (1739).

modest employ in London in civil justice,⁴⁸ all the others were variously expatriated and inherited nothing of their father's legacy. My cruel destiny made me the most unfortunate of all. I now set forth for the public the history of my misfortunes.

Will the reader not ask me what sort of pleasure a wretched man can find in recalling the memory of his woes with a narrative which cannot fail to revive them? Only a contented person could ask this question, for all unfortunates know too well that the sweetest consolation of great suffering is the freedom to pity himself and show his affliction. The heart of an unfortunate cherishes his sorrow as much as a contented heart does its pleasures. If silence and solitude are agreeable in affliction, that is because one withdraws inward, so to speak, amidst one's sufferings, and has the comfort of lamenting without being interrupted. But it is a sweeter consolation yet to be able to express one's sentiments in writing. Paper is not an unfeeling confidant, as it appears to be: it comes to life as it receives the expressions of a sad, passionate heart; it preserves them faithfully, should memory fail; it is ever ready to bring them back; and not only does that image serve to sustain a precious and delectable sorrow, it also serves to justify it.⁴⁹ Thus I shall begin my story.

⁴⁸ If it is true, this detail relates not to a grandson but to a great-grandson of Cromwell. Of the Protector's four sons, only one, Henry, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, had a son who survived him; he too was named (1658–1711). At his death he left two sons, three being dead, and it is difficult to know to which Cleveland alludes; William (1693–1772) – “Mr. Cromwell of Kirby Street” – worked modestly in the chambers of justice in Grays Inn; Richard (1695–1759) married well and became an eminent lawyer at the Chancellery (James Waylen, *The House of Cromwell*, London: Stock, 1891, pp. 33–38).

⁴⁹ Similarly, the Man of Quality had begun: “I write my misfortunes only for my own satisfaction: thus I will be content if I gain, as the fruit of my labors, a bit of peace during the time I thus employ” (*Mémoires*

My mother's name was Elisabeth Cleveland. She was the daughter of one of the principal officers of the royal palace at Hampton Court. Her beauty attracted the attention and almost at once the love of King Charles I.⁵⁰ There are few women to disdain the advances of a great king. My mother took pride in meriting them. She was clever and designing. She understood very well that in such unequal arrangements, where love requires all its strength to diminish the difference of stations, the same features that were able to conquer a lover do not always suffice to fix his constancy and fidelity. To all her charms she added all the assistance her wit could provide her. She maintained herself in favor for a good while, considering the king's natural inconstancy [18], but not long enough to satisfy her ambition, which was her soul's dominant passion, so that when the monarch's ardor began to cool, she was perhaps more cast down by her fall than she had been gratified by her rise. She did not have the strength to disguise her discontent. Her indiscreet protestations and the relationships she proudly struck up with the party opposed to the royal household soon caused her to be seen as an overt enemy of the king. She lost her annuities and what remnants of grandeur she had managed to retain until then. When Mr. Cleveland, who was a zealous royalist, denied her the asylum she expected to find in her father's house, necessity forced her to follow her anger's first inclination, which was to join boldly the party of the enemies of

d'un homme de qualité, I, 13). Thus Prévost only develops here what is already one of his major themes, that of willful, therapeutic suffering. See also *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* I, 97.

⁵⁰ Charles I hardly had a reputation as a womanizer; one thinks rather of the court of Charles II (or even that of the Regent Philippe d'Orléans) for the atmosphere Prévost evokes here.

the court.⁵¹

My father was just becoming one of the first in their ranks. His intelligence, his exceptional talents, his respect for religion, his upstanding life, and above all his apparently incomparable zeal for his country, had placed him in high esteem in London, and for them he was considered by all Englishmen as the defender of their laws and the pillar of their liberty. I cannot say whether he had already conceived the ambitious views which have since manifested themselves, but in his open profession of opposition to the government he was too shrewd a man not to recognize how useful M^{lle} Cleveland could be to him. He knew the character of her mind and the role she had played, while she was in favor, in the court's most secret deliberations. It was to him she had turned. He greeted her with a distinction that flattered her vanity. He spared her from spelling out her needs by offering her his and his friends' purses. He beseeched her to leave her fortune in his hands. He so utterly won her esteem and confidence at this first encounter that almost from the start she considered him her best friend. Friendship, between two persons of opposite sex, is almost always tied to love. Their political discussions soon devolved into tender conversations. They became lovers, and Miss Cleveland, who had been mistress to her king, did not think she lowered herself by doing the same for a man such as my father.

However, her love produced an effect she had hardly anticipated. It was fatal to her ambition. The world excuses certain weaknesses in a woman when their cause seems to ennoble them. The honor of being loved by a great king in some sense compen-

⁵¹ She thus passes into the Parliamentary party, where she joins with Cromwell: the whole reign of Charles I was a constant struggle against Parliament which finally broke out into civil war. The period in question here seems to be just earlier, about 1641.

sates for the loss of virtue. But outside such an exceptional elevation which flatters pride to the extent of thus modifying our ideas, we generally look askance at all the women who forget their duty, carried off by a blind passion. I do not even excuse my own mother for doing so, although I owe my life to such improper conduct. Nor did she find greater indulgence in London. She lost the esteem, which she had held until then, of all persons of distinction, along with their closeness and their friendship. Even my father ceased to honor her once she had yielded to his desires; and considering her no longer able to serve his designs, he started treating her the same as any other mistress. To my mother this change came as a shock. It cured her of her passion. She had enough pride to leave her lover without a word, and retired to Hammersmith,⁵² whence she carried me in her womb. I do not know what her intentions were, nor what means of support she was counting on; but my father did not so utterly forget her as to fail to assure her a reasonable livelihood. Her misfortune turned out to be beneficial. Because of it she lost her taste for everything she had loved until then. She turned her back not only on ambition and love, but even on the most innocent pastimes that occupy ordinary women. She enclosed herself in a life of seriousness and application. Reading became her favorite occupation; to it, once she had given birth to me, she added caring for me in childhood, and subsequently attending to my education.

I fear I shall fail to give a notion of the wisdom and virtue of this excellent mother. She was no longer the worldly, dissolute woman who had been a slave by turns to love and ambition. Her thoughts and sentiments had become as stable as her outward behavior. No sooner had I emerged from the mists of [19] child-

⁵² A parish west of London, and under its bishop, Hammersmith is now part of London.

hood⁵³ than she herself undertook to shape my mind and values, without recourse to the lessons of a ordinary masters. She had collected all the best authors of recent centuries, and added to them the best translations of the Ancients. She had nourished herself so assiduously on such reading for several years that unaided by Latin she had acquired an extraordinary knowledge of history. She had with equal success developed a taste for thoughtful works. She read everything that was published, bringing to it her own judgment and reservations. This was the only way in which she still maintained contact with the world. But her principal object of study had been moral philosophy. All of her understanding came to bear on that. The other sciences were to her mere steps to reach that end, and she judged them worthwhile and sound only to the degree that they could help her in that pursuit. She had read in translation all the ancient and modern philosophers. With admirable discernment she had extracted from them all their most rational thoughts on happiness and truth. From them she had composed, with constant effort, a complete system of which all the parts were marvelously linked to a small number of clear and well-established principles.⁵⁴ It was her favorite book, which she never tired of reading. In it she found, she used to say, as an ever-abundant spring, her strength, her inspiration, her consolations, in short the foundation of her heart's peace and her constant equanimity of mind.

⁵³ Prévost reflects a reigning concept of his times with regard to childhood, an uninteresting and essentially empty period during which the body slowly develops devoid of reason, which comes into play only later.

⁵⁴ This system which begins with "clear principles" suggests that of Descartes, who wrote in part four of the *Discourse on Method* that "the things we conceive quite clearly and distinctly are all true." Descartes, a contemporary of Cleveland, will come up in book XV.

I was scarcely more than seven or eight years of age when she began to inspire in me an attraction to what she held so dear. She found I had favorable inclinations, or rather she communicated them to me through her assiduous attention to me and continual repetition of her principles. I had seen no one but her up to then, for, given her design of giving me, so to speak, with a heart and mind of her own making, she had withheld from me all the amusements of childhood. She had me continually in her sight. When my hands had scarcely the strength to hold a book I was already accustomed to leafing through it. I knew how to read when ordinary children are starting to talk, and because the perpetual solitude in which I was kept I acquired the habit of thinking and reflecting at an age when one does not yet know one's own nature, and in what class of animals man is to be placed. I did not learn Latin.⁵⁵ My mother said it is a language that only critics or schoolmasters need today. All of its beauties have been transmitted into the living languages by means of translations.⁵⁶ The time a child wastes learning it can be more usefully employed in the acquisition of sound forms of knowledge. In general she was strongly opposed to the study of languages. She called them the plague of reason and the ruin of judgment. The innumerable traces made in a child's brain by so many barbaric and foreign words produces an irreparable disorder⁵⁷. It would be a

⁵⁵ This detail symbolizes the enormous difference between Cleveland, who has no specifically literary culture, and the Man of Quality who, imbued with classical letters, often quotes Latin poetry.

⁵⁶ What Prévost has his protagonist say reflects a pedagogical evolution at a time when French is progressively replacing Latin in the schools, and also underscores the importance and value of the translator at time when, with the translation of *Historiae sui temporis* (1546–1584) by Jacques Auguste de Thou, the author was launching into that career.

⁵⁷ According to Malebranche (*Recherche de la vérité*), children's brains are made of "very soft and delicate" fibers on which "all exterior

great shame, she used to say, if one were able to progress in the sciences only after devoting part of one's life to the study of languages: but since we can get along without their support, it is a huge folly to clutter one's mind with a useless burden. Five or six years spent in youth learning to translate a little Latin contribute in only a very small and indirect way to leading men to their principal goal, which should be to become wise and happy. It is not memory, she added, but the heart and mind which must be cultivated at that age; on them depend on the entire edifice of happiness and virtue. She was satisfied to have me learn my native tongue very exactly, because it is essential for a man of some breeding to express himself, as well as to write, gracefully. In addition to that she had me study the French language, as if she had foreseen that I was not destined for a peaceful life. Some day, she said, you will perhaps find yourself having to leave your own country: you will need a language that can make you understood to foreigners, and you could hardly learn a more universal language than French.

The occupation of my early years was thus a simple imitation of my mother's studies. I learned like her the elements of the sciences, and with the same purpose. I [20] applied myself particularly to history, which is the practical part of moral philosophy. Nor did I neglect its sources: I had only to have a look at my mother's abbreviated system, the golden book that was always open on my table. I had copied it in my own hand. I compared my historical readings with her principles; I judged virtues and vices in accordance with her notions; and, whether because she had simply followed the right sentiments of nature, which are the same in all men when they want to observe and follow them, or whether the habit of living with her and continually hearing her

objects make [...] deep impressions" (*Œuvres complètes*, Paris: Vrin, II-I, VIII; I, 257).

lessons had accustomed to thinking like her, I could sense the truth of her principles, and found in my heart all those same sentiments that had come from hers and which she had ordered on paper.

While we were thus leading a solitary and studious life, our poor country had been rent from within by civil divisions. My father, whom I continue to call by that name (although I was then unaware whose life I had been given), my father, leading a band of crazy citizens, had lit the fire of discord in every part of the island. For several years they had spread throughout the horrors of war. It had ended only through a crime that surpassed all the others, which has never been given a specific name in any language, for the probable reason that no name is horrible enough to express it adequately.⁵⁸ I refer to the unhappy death of King Charles, our legitimate ruler.⁵⁹ Although our retreat was so remote that the news of war had not even reached us, we could not fail to learn of its dreadful culmination. The cry of the good king's blood rose to heaven, and the wailing of all true Englishmen carried all the way to our distant abode. My mother inquired

⁵⁸ To designate the person who kills a king, the word *régicide* seems to have existed in both English and French well before 1600; to designate the crime itself, it enters the English language in 1602 (*Oxford English Dictionary*). But it is not certain the word had this second meaning in French before the execution of Charles I, and the English application of the term specifically to that event probably contributed to extending its use in French. Up to then, the usual term for murder of a king was *parricide*.

⁵⁹ Captured by the Parliamentary forces after years of struggle, Charles I was condemned by a Parliamentary court and beheaded on 30 January 1649. To Cleveland, the king's blood legitimacy seems an irrefutable right, as in *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* where the narrator pities King James II, "about to lose a throne that legitimately was his" (*Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* I, 54).

into everything about this fateful episode. She lost no time relating it to me, and her philosophy could not keep her from shedding abundant tears as she began the story. Listen, my son, she said, listen to a calamity without precedent. The king has died on the scaffold, and it is your father who sent him there. Oh God, she added, proportion not thy punishments to this horrible crime, and at least extend them not to us! Since nothing had ever happened to cause me the slightest distress, and my mother had always appeared as tranquil as I, her tears, the disarray in which she had begun to speak, and the name father which I had never heard spoken, made such an impression on me that I fell unconscious. When I came to, I stood staring at her as if I awaited the continuation of this extraordinary preamble. She obliged by telling me about her adventures, about my birth, the rank to which my father had risen, and everything she had herself had just learned from those who had told her about the convulsions of England and the tragic end of our unfortunate king.

I was still young, but my mind was precocious. My mother's story had been intense and emotional. When she had finished, I was in a sort of transport which prevented me for some while from noticing anything about me. It was as if I was frightened by so many new images which acted all at once on my mind. Not that I had not read histories of states overturned, upheavals, and bloody wars; but one is hardly stirred up by a past event coldly related by an historian.⁶⁰ It seemed to me I was involved in the present revolution, in the person of my father. The impulses of nature seemed opposed to my ideas. I felt an urge to love him and

⁶⁰ These remarks testify to the fact that Prévost was already reflecting on the principles of historical narration and the manner of infusing into it a more dramatic and striking interest. Cf. what he writes later on the same subject in the preface of *Histoire de Marguerite d'Anjou, reine d'Angleterre* (V, 10).

desire to see him, and at the same time I loathed him as a monster guilty of the most ghastly of all crimes. Moreover, his conduct with respect to my mother utterly turned me against him. All my sentiments were still simple and natural.⁶¹ I had no inclination or admiration for anything but wisdom and virtue; I could not conceive how one could willingly depart from both of them. And so I grew to despise the author of my birth from the time I first learned of him, and the sweet name of father was immediately linked in my mind to notions of aversion and hatred.

[21] I must nonetheless do my mother justice that as soon as she noticed my dispositions, she spared nothing to counter them. But first impressions are hard to erase in the heart of a young man. In vain did she bring to bear the very principles she had taught me to embrace. We must hate crime, she said; but in human society we sometimes have to put up with it. That applies above all to persons to whom we owe affection and respect. All we can then do is bear it bravely and devoutly wish for them to change. Their misconduct never authorize us to refuse to them what nature or other duties oblige us to render. She even pointed out to me that my own best interest necessarily required me to adopt such sentiments for my father; that my only hopes lay in him; that she owed to his generosity what little she had for us to live; that because the stipend she enjoyed was committed only to her, I would be totally destitute after her death; and that I must consequently have recourse to him, to engage him to setting me up and induce him to recognize me as his son. Although I understood very well the importance of all these reasons, they could not alter my basic sentiments. As several years went by when nothing could make me emerge from my isolation to go solicit advantages

⁶¹ Prévost (as Rousseau would famously do later) adds to Locke's *tabula rasa* a moral axiom: it is the good that is original in man, and it will prevail as long as it is not spoiled by acquiring knowledge of evil.

on which I placed no value and which I did not wish to obtain from the hand of a man whom I was loath to regard as my father. I had become convinced through my reading and reflection that happiness does not require abundance. Virtue, I said, does not depend on one's possessions; and it is virtue alone that makes a just man happy.

No doubt my mother had the same sentiments as I about that, since it was, so to speak, with her milk that I had imbibed mine; but in addition she had some experience of the world, which made her see things in clearer perspective. She knew that the weakness and bodily needs are in constant opposition to the tranquillity that makes for inner happiness; that philosophy, while alleviating the passions, makes one no less sensitive to the necessities of nature; that there are extremes in ill fortune that consternate the wise man and make him forget his principles; and finally that, although a virtuous man should not desire such plenty as might make him sluggish, he must if possible avoid excessive indigence, which is demoralizing and discouraging. She repeated this reasoning to me so many times, and so effectively renewed her urging, that she got me to agree to head for London to present myself to my father.

He was then at the height of his fortune. All his enemies had perished or fled. Parliament was made up only of his partisans, and the military filled with his creatures. Never had any king seen better established. The modest title of Protector of the Anglican Republic seemed to assure his remaining in power,⁶² because the people, who are always the dupes of appearances, had allowed themselves to be persuaded that such a moderate man had no

⁶² The Instrument of Government promulgated in December 1653 constituted Cromwell "Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland." Cleveland's visit to his father therefore takes place about 1654, when the boy would be about twelve.

other motivation than love of country, nor anything other purpose than the public welfare. He was affable, popular, loved by most Englishmen, and respected or feared by foreigners. We learned in London of all these changes. My mother, who had long known his character, easily saw through the artifice of such conduct; but containing all her sentiments in her heart, she imagined that even his hypocrisy could hold some advantage for us. It was unbelievable that he could treat his children harshly while affecting such indulgence and affection toward the public. She petitioned him for a private audience, which was quickly granted. We were ushered into his palace, and a moment later he appeared alone before us in the room where we were waiting.

He recognized my mother, despite the interval of several years' absence. He greeted her politely, and asked what he could do to help her. The sight of a man she had once loved to the point of sacrificing all her ambition to him stirred her so that she could not hold back her tears. He seemed to be moved, and repeated his offer to be of service. She told him straightforwardly that heaven had granted her to bear [22] the offspring of their relationship; that she had taken care to raise him until now out of the public view; that she believed she had made him worthy of his father's acceptance; and that she was taking the liberty of presenting him that day so he might accede to the advantages that the honor of being his son might confer. These words made him pensive for a few moments. Then his face seemed suddenly to change. He shot at us a proud and scornful glare. No, said he to my mother, the subterfuge is too crude: be thankful that I am kind enough not to punish your audacity, and be sure you never repeat this imposture to anyone if you want to avoid being treated with all the severity you deserve. After this unkind reply he turned his back on us, and left us disarmed and consternated, as can easily be imagined.

It was you who wanted it, I said to mother; now you see whether I was right to resist your urging and refuse to follow you.

She remained so overwhelmed that she lacked the strength to answer me. She leaned on my shoulder as we left, and we reached the street without her yet being able to speak a word. Whether by chance or her own choice, we passed in front of Whitehall palace, the square where the unhappy King Charles had lost his head on a scaffold. There we paused. Her anguish returned so bitterly she was unable to support herself longer and had to sit down on a stone bench in front of the wall. She remained there a long time, bemoaning the horrible injustice of men and the harshness of her fate. I entered into her grief. My loathing redoubled against the man who was causing our pain; however denatured this sentiment, I did not feel that my reason opposed it. In the midst of this sorrowful exercise, Fairfax,⁶³ my father's intimate confidant, passed opposite us on his way to Whitehall. He had seen my mother so often before she left London that he had no difficulty recognizing her. He seemed surprised to find her in such a situation, and was civil enough to stop to address her a civil greeting. Her dismay was so evident that he noted it. He urged her to tell him the reason for it; and as a person is hardly capable of dissimulation amidst great suffering, she unreservedly opened her heart to him. He listened closely, and whether out of compassion or of some political intention in the interests of his master, he promised her to take up our interest so forcefully that our situation might take a better turn. Wait here, he said; I am coming on purpose to see the Lord Protector, and I beseech you to take hope in my intervention. He went on in. I urged my mother to withdraw.

⁶³ A name possibly inspired by Baron Thomas Fairfax (1612–1671), head in 1645 of the Parliamentary New Model Army, and later a member of the council of state; but in fact that Fairfax was not a confidant of Cromwell, and resigned in 1650 to retire to Yorkshire for the rest of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, returning to Parliament only at the Restoration.

Why, I said, expose ourselves a second time to the mercilessness of a brute who is oblivious to pangs of blood and nature? He does me a favor by refusing to recognize me as his son; he spares me the shame of having such a criminal and contemptible father. She did not yield to my desires. We awaited the return of Fairfax. He appeared with a mein of satisfaction that caused us to augur well for his intervention. Indeed, he told us that he had enough influence over his master's mind to make him see that he dishonored himself by refusing to recognize me. Nobody had been unaware of the liaison he had had with my mother, and her pregnancy been no less well known to everyone before her withdrawal. The life she had led since then shielded her from any kind of suspicions. So Fairfax, who was the deftest man in the world, had caught my father by his weakness, pointing out to him that his callousness towards me was going to destroy the public opinion of his righteousness and goodness which he had so far taken such care to maintain. He therefore invited us on Cromwell's behalf to return to his home. Along the way, he told us that what had so biased the Protector against us was another visit just like ours which he had received that morning. Another of his mistresses, whose name was Molly Bridge, had come to see him with a son about my age which she had had by him. He had seen her reluctantly, for he feared giving a bad impression of his morals; and his alarm only increased with a renewal of the same risk.

Fairfax took us into an apartment more secret than the one to which had first been conducted. We were not there long before my father appeared. [23] His countenance was untroubled, and his greeting gentle and civil. After a brief apology to my mother for what had transpired an hour earlier, he assured her that he had fully the same esteem for her as before, and was prepared to make this clear to her. Then he turned to me, and calling me his dear son, he promised to see to my future, and to grant me his friendship. Meanwhile I remained silent with my eyes downcast. My heart

failed to open to the tug of nature. I remembered the death of King Charles, and thought I was looking at the executioner who had covered himself with that innocent blood. All the woes my mother had suffered came again to mind, and I realized I was speaking to her persecutor. I remembered the offensive and disdainful way he had rejected us the first time. His face, moreover, seemed to coincide with the way I had imaged him, and what I saw in it terrified me. Mother said to me: Embrace your father's knees, my son, and strive to be worthy of his kindness. I made not the slightest movement to embrace him. Mother assured him that I was timid; he did nothing to embolden me. After our conversation, however languishing, had gone on for some minutes, he took upon himself to propose to my mother a position most advantageous, he said, both for her and for me. I take a great interest, he said, in the colonies in Jamaica and New England. I offer you the choice of settling in either one. I will provide you possessions and honors that will exceed your expectations. I need to have there a person of confidence there who manage his own interests as well as mine: you are both well suited to help me, since you are so close to me; and you will reap from it advantages so certain that you may already depend upon an assured fortune. Fairfax undertook to persuade my mother that this proposal was an extraordinary favor from the Lord Protector, and that the preference he accorded us over so many others who solicited such a commission clearly demonstrated his confidence and his affection for us. You shall be honored, he added, and you shall become rich in a very few years, after which you shall return to enjoy your wealth tranquilly in England.

My mother instantly saw through the crafty design of these offers. But however far she was from accepting them, she understood that it could be dangerous to reject them outright. She could easily see, indeed, after what had befallen us that day, that my father was inconvenienced by our presence, and that his sole

intention was to be rid of us. She was in no way tempted, to be sure, by a trip to Jamaica: what satisfaction could a woman have expected going into voluntary exile in this way with a child of my age? But we had to fear exposing ourselves to something worse. She therefore expressed her gratitude for his kindness in thinking so advantageously of us. He was persuaded by her reply that she espoused all his designs, and unable to disguise his contentment, he showered praises on her which might have been sincere, insofar as they were an effect of his joy at having deceived us. The only subjects after that were the timing of, and preparations for, our departure. It looked to us as if he intended to spare nothing to make our voyage convenient. Heaven knows in what manner he would have carried his promises out, but my mother's to him were equivocal, and when she thanked him for his kindness it was on the assumption that he manifest it in ways more in line with our inclinations.

We left him, first giving him our address. I had not spoken one word during this conversation. For this my mother chided me. I told her candidly what had gone on in my heart, and in return indicated to her my surprise at seeing her consent so readily to leave England to pursue uncertain riches in an unknown land. She explained to me the motives that led her to act; and since the only one I had for opposing this plan was my limitless disregard for fortune's favors, she pointed out to me all of what she had perceived in my father's proposition, that is, his indifference for us and his intention of being delivered from with us both. My simplicity and lack of experience [24] had not equipped me to understand so much. I could feel my aversion for him growing. So that, I said, is what the name and title of father comes down to. Let us go to America, I continued; if it is a wild and uninhabited land, we will live far from men. I abhor them if they are all like the man who just recognized me as his son. Mother still attempted to moderate these impulses. I sometimes reproached myself for

them as at the least an excess that seemed to go against nature; but I could not help it, and what happened thereafter only increased them.

Before returning to Hammersmith to make a final resolution on our course of action, my mother thought it opportune to pay a visit to a London lady whose friendship had not cooled with her ill fortune. Not that she had maintained the least contact with her since her retreat to the country; but knowing her character, she still depended on her loyalty. This good friend was named Mrs Riding.⁶⁴ She greeted us with considerable joy; but when my mother had confided to her our troubles and designs my father had on us, she went pale, as happens when one learns the worst possible news. I thought you were dead, she said to my mother, and I was so happy to see you that at first I did not permit me to interject anything dreadful into our conversation. But what you are telling me obliges me to change my tone and give you sad insight into the fate awaiting you. You and your son are finished if you place the slightest confidence in the Protector's promises. I am going to tell you an adventure so horrible it alone will attest the danger you are in and to serve as an example to you. Then she asked her if she had ever known Molly Bridge, who too had been one of my father's mistresses. No, replied mother; but Fairfax spoke to me of her: he told me that she had come this very day to the house of the Lord Protector with the son she had by him. Fairfax has deceived you, replied Mrs Riding. I do not know what

⁶⁴ Prévost sometimes forges foreign names a bit arbitrarily using nouns or syllables from the language in question. *Riding* seems rather strange as a proper name, as do the names of Bridge, Youngster (book IV), and Drink (book V). The name Riding is however attested as a variant of *Reading*: see Charles Bardsley, *A Dictionary of English and Welsh Surnames* (London: Henry Frowde, 1901); cf. "the riding of Parliament" in Scotland, glossed in *Le Pour et contre* IX, 92 (1736).

his intentions were in speaking to you of that unfortunate girl; but she has been gone these fifteen years. I do not believe her son either is still among the living. Listen to their sad story.⁶⁵

Molly Bridge was delightful creature, with the most attractive character. She had allowed herself to be seduced by Cromwell's hypocrisy back when he was just Speaker of the lower house of Parliament.⁶⁶ His passion for her lasted no longer than his later passion for you. She, like you, was abandoned during her pregnancy, and she subsequently led an obscure and languorous existence with the fruit of her unfortunate love. I chanced to make her acquaintance three or four years after he left her. He had already treated you with the same treachery,⁶⁷ and as you almost immediately disappeared, people assumed that you had died from the sting of rejection, or that you gone abroad to take refuge among our neighbors. I esteemed Molly Bridge as soon as I knew her, and became her intimate friend. I comforted her for the dismay which she still felt because of her fall from favor. I led her to hope for a better fate when her son would be ready to appear before Cromwell, by his presence and reawaken his former sentiments for her. The young Bridge (for she had not dared let him

⁶⁵ The picaresque procedure of interpolating stories in a frame narrative is a familiar one in all Prévost's long novels; but in this one, unlike *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, the story is always directly related to the main plot.

⁶⁶ Other temporal indicators place this liaison around 1637–1638 (see next note), although Cromwell had been a member of Parliament only in 1628–1629, and would not be so again until 1640.

⁶⁷ As there is an interval of three or four years between these two liaisons of Cromwell's, and the second takes place at the time he is asserting his dominance, thus probably about 1641, that of Molly Bridge must be situated in 1637 or 1638.

bear his father's name)⁶⁸ was a child endowed with fine qualities. She loved him with all possible tenderness. The idea appealed to her of presenting him to his father, who could not, unless he was the most brutal of men, refuse his affection to such an amiable son. We discussed what means she could best employ to get a private meeting with him. The quickest and most convenient was to invite him to her own home, and I rightly thought that he would not refuse so slight a favor to a person whom he had for some time thought worthy of his affection. An appointment was made. She request this favor of him by means of a note which she sent at a moment when she was assured he was not busy. He came very soon thereafter. I had gone to her house. We had dressed up the young Bridge a bit to make him look appealing. When I saw he was coming, I withdrew into a side room, where I could listen in on this important conversation. She greeted him silently and with [25] great modesty; and bringing her son forward, whom she presented to Cromwell with a grace that could have melted the heart of a beast: I give you the fruit of our love, she said. May he have the good fortune of pleasing his father, after all the tears and care he has cost his unfortunate mother! I gathered from the slowness of his response that a scene so unexpected made him somewhat uncertain. He was totally unaware that Molly Bridge had a son by him; and the strict morals he was beginning to affect made him fearful of anything that could in any way harm his reputation. He made his choice like a consummate

⁶⁸ Bridge, like Cleveland, has no given name in the novel. The name Bridges or Brydges is common enough, and there was a William Bridge (who died in 1670) who preached often before the Long Parliament of which Cromwell was a member. But it is also possible that the name of Cleveland's half-brother was suggested by that of Cromwell's eldest daughter, Bridget. If we assume that Bridge was born in 1639, he would be two or three when he is presented to Cromwell.

politician. He assured Molly that he was devastated at being so long unaware that she had this cherished token of their love. He embraced the child and the mother again and again. He talked to them in the tenderest way; and protesting that he could not tire of seeing them, after the conversation lasting more than an hour, he proposed to assume the care and education of a child he would love as much as those he had had with his wife, and for whose establishment he would be no less zealous and attentive. As for you, he said to the mother with feigned tenderness, I fear you have been wanting for much since I had the misfortune of losing sight of you. I intend, if it is possible, to make you forget the past; and I promise you today, and for the rest of your life, an annuity of two hundred pounds sterling. As easy as Molly Bridge had always been to persuade, she was put off by the idea of being separated from her son. She tried to avoid it by replying that the child was used to living with her; that nothing was more dear to her than him; that he would be better raised under her watchful eye than in a school among strangers; that he was a most delicate child, one still requiring a mother's attentions. Cromwell was so insistent, and flattered her with such promises, that she finally surrendered to his deceitful reasons. They agreed that he would send for young Bridge the day after next, and that he would begin from that very day to pay her two-hundred-pound annuity. After embracing her and her son once more, he departed.

I confess that he had dissimulated so artfully that I was uncertain what reply I ought to make to Molly when she asked me what I thought of all I had heard. He might be sincere, I said, and it would surely be tremendously advantageous for you if he were; but if he is not, you are most pitiable for having so rashly committed yourself, and so is little Bridge. She asked me what I hence thought she should do, and whether it seemed likely Cromwell could be so depraved as to have conceived some cruel design against his son. I dare not so suspect, I replied; but I advise you at

least to inquire diligently of the place where they propose to put him, and not to rely entirely on the zeal of anyone else. The two days passed. On the third morning, a most prepossessing man came in a coach, bearing a note in Cromwell's hand. He brought Molly Bridge a portion of the annuity. I was with her. I hardly left her side during this anxious moment. The note contained only a few words of civility, with a request to place the boy in the hands of the emissary. It was then that poor Molly's distress redoubled. Ought she to deliver her son over to a stranger? Did she have something to fear from the hand of a father? Her situation was indeed so ambiguous that I would have preferred to excuse myself politely from taking any part in her deliberations by giving advice. She insisted I tell her what to do. You should follow only your own inclinations, I said, to spare yourself the anguish of having perhaps to blame someone for your sufferings. However, if you are asking me, my answer is that it is too late to break the commitment you have made to Cromwell. He is a man to be feared. Who knows but that he might resort to violence? Would you have the means to resist? Your son's fate and even your own might be the sadder for it, and the damage less subject to remedy. No; but while you entrust your son to the stranger who seeks him, let us have a faithful servant keep an eye on him: in this way, we shall learn to what destination his father is sending him, and after that we will lose no time being informed of [26] his situation. She found this advice to her liking, we at once put carried it out. Cromwell's emissary took the young Bridge. We saw him to the carriage door in tears. That amiable child, not yet able to fear the danger for himself, seemed aware only of his mother's tears.

It was one of my own servants whom I sent after the coach. I had a faithful and astute fellow who could with a word grasp the intention of such a mission. We impatiently awaited his return. He came back in two hours; and as I had withheld nothing from him about this business, hoping to motivate him to success by my

confidence, he lifted his eyes toward heaven as he entered the room where we were, to imply that he was bringing disturbing news. Speak up, I said, and do not frighten us unless you have good reasons. Oh, Madam, he cried, while I have nothing to tell that should frighten you, it is certain I will at the least cause you much anguish and compassion, were you to experience only as much as I have already. He recounted to us with tears in his eyes how, after following the coach for a long while, he finally saw it stop in a side street; that Bridge's escort had got out with the child, and having sent the coach away, disappeared into a house further down the street; he had spent about a half-hour there, and then had sent for a coach for hire, and climbed into it with his innocent prey; that he seemed not to have been harmed; but in the place of the tidy, spiffy clothes he was wearing when he left us, he had been covered in tawdry rags, such as people wear in the direst poverty; that the coach then went from there to the other end of town, near White Chapel; there the escort again dismissed his coachman, hard by an asylum where orphan children are raised by means public charities; that since he entered there, and he came out alone, there could be no doubt that he had left young Bridge there to be raised alongside many other waifs of his age; that he had not dared, without our orders, to speak to the director of the orphanage or to seek any information at all, for fear of committing some indiscretion.

It nearly killed Molly Bridge to listen to this account. Although I was almost as affected by it as she was, I consoled her by pointing out that there was nothing to lose hope over, since at least we knew what had become of her son; to be sure Cromwell's barbarity was worse than anything I had imagined, but it was beneficial for her to have this opportunity to know who he was, because she would never again be duped by his clever tricks; since he had no reason to suppose we had discovered them, we would doubtless find it easy to prevent the sequel by secretly

withdrawing the young Bridge from the orphanage; there was no cause for fear they would refuse to give him up when it was his own mother who asked for him; fetching him by her own authority was nevertheless to be put off until the last minute so that Cromwell, if possible, would never learn that he was back in her hands. I said I would undertake this mission, and thought its success assured. I promised I would myself have him brought up with such secrecy and care, at a property I own in Devonshire, that it would be virtually impossible for Cromwell ever to be informed of it; should the traitor still have the impudence to come see her, she must receive his visit without affectation, whether he was unaware that she had recovered her son, or seemed to have learned it; but it was quite unlikely he would have the effrontery to appear again in her presence, should he indeed learn she had discovered such a cowardly and repulsive deception.

Having thus done my best to reassure her, I prepared to leave indeed to carry out my plan. I wanted to end her anguish before evening, and spare young Bridge the discomfort of spending it at the orphanage. But just as I was about to leave, I spotted Cromwell's carriage coming toward Molly's house. I had no doubt he was paying her a call. He had had time to learn the success of his designs from his agent, and was doubtless coming to observe the mother's dispositions, [27] and allay any suspicions. I at once went back in, and after alerting her to this unpleasant scene she could not avoid, I advised her to remain in command of her every word and sentiment. I also thought it appropriate not to leave her side, so as to lend her strength by my presence. He entered as confidently as if he had only virtues to boast of. I noticed nevertheless that he appeared surprised to find me there. He knew me.⁶⁹ Since his sole aim was to bury his

⁶⁹ We will never know anything more about Mrs Riding's past, despite the important role she will play in the novel. Whatever her exact age,

mistakes, he took care not to explain himself in my presence. After a few minutes' indifferent conversation, he bade me allow him to speak privately with Molly. I was obliged to withdraw into the side room. My fear lest he wring her secret from her, and again manage to deceive her, caused me to listen very carefully. First he spoke of her son as an admirable child, for whom he instinctively felt every fatherly sentiment. He fed her a fable of the advantageous situation where he had placed him; and when he had said enough about that to satisfy a mother's affection, he adopted a gentler tone to make her see that, as determined as he was to spare nothing later for the fortune of his dear son, the present state of his affairs did not yet permit him to claim him overtly as his son; there were precautions to be taken with the public; his affection would be all the warmer, being confined within the bounds of secrecy; it was not even necessary that she see her son often; he could give her that satisfaction from time to time, and she should during this time depend upon his boundless tenderness for her and for him. Molly contained herself enough to thank him for his kindness, and to assent to everything he proposed. He believed he had thus made sure of her at little expense; and he withdrew laughing, doubtless, at her simplicity.

Is it possible, I said to that excellent woman as I rejoined her, that you had the strength to bear that horrible web of malice and imposture! I could not have done it myself, even though it was I who advised you to. I would have stared down a hypocrite who mocks with impunity the patience of heaven and the rectitude of men. How can it be, I continued, that you ever had an intimate relationship with a man whose character is so unlike your own? Alas, good souls do not meet. A proper fellow will be wrong twenty times in the choice of a woman, while what is most

she is clearly mistress of her own life and property, which is considerable, and will not appear elderly until twenty years later.

lovely and perfect in our sex is the prey of a hypocrite and a villain. I made Molly see that since Cromwell was capable to carry artifice so far in this sort of affair, it was quite certain that he was very set on it, and would consequently be furious at me were he to discover that I had helped his plan to abort. My purpose is not to valorize the service I am prepared to render you, I said; but you will allow me, with no lessening of my commitment, to take every precaution that wisdom dictates. If I succeed in getting your son out of the orphanage, you must sacrifice the pleasure of seeing him until I have got him to Devonshire. I shall remain a while in London after his departure, and shall make a point of avoiding you, as if we were on bad terms. Then I shall set off for my estate, and you can come join me secretly when the time seems right to you. She put herself entirely in my hands. I embraced her tenderly in farewell until we should meet again in the country. Her heart seemed so heavy that I augured ill for the outcome of this business. I left her with tears in my eyes, as if I had intuited that I was speaking to her for the last time.

I went forthwith to the orphanage. I went inside as if I were led there solely by curiosity. I asked to be allowed to see the children, and cajoled the most amiable of them in order to make my way in unnoticeably to the young Bridge. I finally found him, in a state that filled me with pity. I was going to ask the director for him; but remarking that that man, who appeared very unprofessional, had left me alone in the midst of this little band, so no one was left in the room but myself and my manservant, I quickly communicated to the latter the hope [28] which I conceived on the spot of absconding with the young Bridge without being seen. I told him to lead him toward the door, and if he found it open to take him outside and put him in the carriage that awaited me. I stayed behind a minute to make sure he had escaped unobstructed; and seeing no one come, I also made my way to the street, and from there we sped away without incident. These sorts

of places were so disorderly then, and the children so carelessly watched, that there is nothing surprising about the ease with which I succeeded. I went directly to my home. Daylight was ending. I did not fail to pack the child off before nightfall with the same manservant who had abducted him, and sent a note to inform his mother of the happy conclusion to my enterprise.

I remained for a few days in London without seeing her, as we had agreed; and after writing down for her the day I would be leaving, set out for my estate. I expected she would not take long to follow me. But I had been in Devonshire scarcely three days when I received a letter from her bearing the most terrible news. Cromwell had been informed of her son's abduction, though she knew not how. Having no doubt that this was her doing, he went to see her in his first burst of anger; and far from proceeding, as before, with caution, he had threatened her with the gravest effects of his wrath if she refused to return the child to him. She held her own at first, protesting that she did not know what had become of him; but lacking the strength to withstand such pressure for long, she admitted everything that had taken place. This discovery had made him furious. Although she had repeatedly refused to tell him who had assisted her, he had suspected me of being involved in her endeavor. He had left her with renewed threats, and in an attainder without precedent in a free country, left behind two armed men to keep an eye on her until he could resolve this business to his satisfaction. Molly was without protection against violence. She remained alone, with a girl who served her. She thus found herself a prisoner in her own house, unable even to inform the neighbors of the indignity with which she was being treated. But that was only the prelude to the horrors she would have to undergo. The two men to whose watch Cromwell had entrusted her were thugs, who did not spend the night in the room of such a pretty woman without conceiving designs worthy of themselves and of their master on her. They dishonored

her, and her servant too; and fearing no doubt, after such a deed, the resentment of even Cromwell, whom they perhaps did not think as wicked as themselves, they disappeared at dawn in order to avoid punishment. Molly, despondent at such ignominy, resolved to kill herself. She had enough power of mind remaining to write to me all of what had happened before she carried out her dismaying intention, and quickly taking advantage of the moment when her servant was carrying her letter to the post office, she ended her woes and her life by strangling herself with her belt.

Although her letter made clear that her intention was to die, I supposed that her affection for her son would keep her alive despite her despair. She commended him to me so tenderly that I could not imagine she could determine to die without embracing him at least once last time. I expected every day to see her arrive; but I saw only her servant, who came soon thereafter, and related to me the tragic circumstances of her mistress's death and its consequences.

Cromwell's purpose in having her guarded had been to prevent her from informing me that he had hold of our secret. After leaving her he had gone to my house, probably hoping either to win over me with his promises, or to fool me with his dissimulations. But after learning that I had left several days earlier for the provinces, and informing himself enough in various ways to be assured that I had broken off all relations with her some time before, he ceased to suspect me. Since it was late after all his investigations, and he relied on his two guards, he put off seeing her again until the next day; so when he came to see her the next morning, he reached her house at the very time her servant was returning after carrying her mistress's letter to the post office. The girl, who had shared [29] in the calamity, and was quite aware that Cromwell was its primary cause, began to weep bitterly when she saw him. This sight took him by surprise. He learned from her what had happened. He pretended to be

grieved to hear it; and hurrying up to Molly's apartment in order to comfort her, he had what must have been genuine astonishment at finding her dead. He prevented the servant from crying out. He tried to get her to agree that he was not guilty of such an unfortunate event; he persuaded her that it was in both of their interests to keep it quiet; and the better to seal her lips, he gave her a quite considerable sum for a girl of her sort. So Molly was buried secretly, and this sorry episode has never come to public knowledge. The servant, who was not unaware of my tender friendship for her mistress, set out immediately for Devonshire to inform me of her fate. She was not in on the business regarding young Bridge. Nevertheless, having recognized her character, which seemed to me discreet and loyal, I judged that she could be of assistance to me in raising the boy. She was delighted to have this opportunity to demonstrate the gratitude with which she remembered her dear mistress. I took her into my household, and put her in charge of my pupil. Thinking that the danger was past, I would have left her there on my estate and gone back to London; but a letter which I received from my family, informing me that Cromwell had come asking for me and inquired curiously into my whereabouts, made me change my mind. He was beginning to be so powerful that I had no doubt, since he could dare whatever he wanted with impunity, that he would find a way to do me in if he so resolved; and I knew his character so well that I was certain he would so resolve if he in the least suspected what I was doing for young Bridge, and the part I had played in foiling his plans. Thoroughly undecided after this reflection, I would perhaps found it difficult to come to a resolution, had I not remembered that I had on my property the means of ending all my fears. My country house is in a most curious location. It is at the far end of Devonshire province, which is separated from Somerset by extremely high mountains, most of which consist of one giant rock that seems to be all of a piece. There are, however, down in a little

valley that is on my land, various openings that give subterranean access to the very center of some of these mountains, so that, since the spot moreover is uninhabited, since it is barren, it would be difficult to find a place better suited to serving as a refuge from violence and persecution. I decided to choose one of those dark caverns as a place to raise young Bridge. It was a way to shield him from all searches, and to avoid myself what I might apprehend from Cromwell's ability to have me watched, or from betrayal by my servants. I had no distrust either of Molly's servant, or of the manservant who had served me faithfully so far. I shared my design with no one but them; and finding them disposed to follow it, I ordered James (this was my manservant's name) to bring secretly to the deepest recess of this wilderness all the conveniences that could make it habitable. He was able in five or six days to fashion a small room where the essentials at least were not wanting. I was curious to see it, and was so satisfied with it that, never having found human society much to my liking, I very nearly opted to close myself in there as well, and personally supervise the education of young Bridge. However, since it would not have been easy for me to remain there with all the secrecy I wished for the child and his governess, during the night I put the two of them in possession of their domicile, and left James in my house, to visit them from time to time and bring them the provisions necessary to live there. I felt quite at ease after this arrangement, and set off tranquilly for London.

Knowing Cromwell's ardent and vindictive spirit as I did, I was quite sure he would have his eye on my movements, at least through his agents and emissaries.⁷⁰ I would have stopped worrying after Molly Bridge's death had I been up against [30] anyone other than him. His wrath should have been buried with that

⁷⁰ Cromwell was reputed to surround himself with spies; Leti asserts that he personally maintained about a hundred (*op. cit.*, t. 11, p. 191).

unfortunate girl, and there seemed to be nothing for his hypocrisy to fear concerning her. But I knew too well what he was capable of to let down my guard on false appearances. I already had understood his character. As he was incapable of regret and reconciliation, it was enough to have had just once the misfortune of opposing or displeasing him to be the eternal object of his wrath. All his impulses are violent passions, the effect of which is all the more dangerous that he is extremely deft at disguising them. I lived very discreetly. I even appeared to be unaware of Molly's demise. He sought the opportunity to see me, and since he did so more than once, I could see how keen he was to observe my eyes and countenance; but he found me always on guard against his gaze and his devious questions. In my view I was entitled to use dissimulation in the defense of innocence, in other words, the same weapon by which he sought to oppress it.

Several years went by, during which he seemed to have completely gotten over his suspicions. I occasionally went to my estate; I took pleasure in seeing how young Bridge was growing. Although his governess was unable to provide him the instructions that shape the mind of a young man, she at least put him in a position to receive them from another, by teaching him early to read and write. He stuck me as naturally quite gifted. He took a liking to reading. Serious and contemplative by dint of the continual solitude in which he lived, he made remarkable progress, assisted only by his books and his own reflections, in many useful kinds of knowledge. He seemed surprised, once his reason was beginning to develop, to find himself confined in an awful cavern, far from the contact and habitations of other men. He had a dim recollection of what he had seen in his earliest years; and having learned moreover from his readings that the world was full of people like himself, he often asked his governess and me why we confined him in such a strange manner of living. I would answer that we would not keep him thus forever; that he would

thank us for keeping him there, when the day came for me to tell him the reasons for it; and that they were so convincing that he must continue to submit to it for a while. Because of his natural docility, and the fact he was accustomed to living in isolation, he suffered this constraint patiently. However, when I thought he was strong enough to do without the help of his governess, and reasonable enough to hide the manner in which he had been raised, I decided to place him in a school, and have him receive regular instruction. I sent him to the well-known Eton College,⁷¹ after making him aware that he had fearsome enemies, and that for his own sake he must speak to no one of his time in the cavern, because his life depended on this secret. Indeed such an extraordinary adventure could not be known without provoking reflections that would help bring it to light. Cromwell was becoming more powerful by the day. His ambitious designs were beginning to flower. His hypocrisy was more egregious than ever; and while I was not absolutely certain that he would be a threat to Bridge's life should he discover him, it was enough to know his inflexible character to be assured that he would never have a father's sentiments for a child he had wished to suppress.

With our domestic upheavals and the overthrow of King Charles coming quickly thereafter, Cromwell soon found himself at the pinnacle of glory. The absolute power of which he took possession changed nothing in his outward composure. He undertook to be known as the reformer of religion, morals, and the state. At first I had hoped that the opposite would occur: that is, that having no need of pretense once his designs had succeeded, he would doff the mask and surrender openly to his dissolute inclinations. Assuming such a change, I had even conceived some hopes favorable to young Bridge. But I realized that such damna-

⁷¹ The College of Eton was founded in 1440 by Henry VI, near Windsor, at the same time as King's College at Cambridge.

ble and constant hypocrisy closed every resource to us. After that my only thought was to procure an honest establishment by my own means for the unfortunate youth, fulfilling thereby as a faithful friend what I thought I owed to his mother's memory. I called him home from Eton after he had spent a few [31] years there; and finding him sufficiently mature to be kept no longer in the dark about his birth and the state of his fortune, I revealed to him all of his misfortunes, which until then he had not known. The effect which this knowledge produced in him was wholly opposite my expectation. He asked first for some time to reflect on what he had heard; and when he came back to see me after two days' reflection, he bade me relate to him once more all the circumstances of his mother's death. At bottom, he said after I had satisfied him, I see nothing in what you have said to prove my father desired my death, and contributed to my mother's. He wanted to protect his reputation by having me raised in the orphanage. Perhaps he intended to withdraw me later, and set me up in some way. As for my mother, it is not credible that he could have had any part in the crime of two villains under whose guard he had left her, nor that he would have employed them if he had thought them capable of such an outrage. Thus I cannot imagine, he added, that my father hates me, nor that he has designs on my life. I want to see him, and tell him I am his son. I shall promise him to keep my birth secret, if his situation does not allow him to recognize me; but I shall never accept that he could consider himself offended by the deference of a son, or refuse to provide me a livelihood, and find a use for me suited to the honor of being his son. In a word, Bridge was ambitious. Being the son of a man like Cromwell had blinded him; and as he was not experienced enough to see the danger, he determined to go to London, despite all my warnings and advice. For a week I tried a hundred ways to alter this idea of his, but in his obstinance he counted all my fears for nothing.

I pitied his fate, for I foresaw all the misfortunes that threatened him. I was in tears as he set out. I gave him James to escort him, and reminded him as we parted that it was against my desires and premonitions that he was exposing himself to danger. I had offered to accompany him myself; I would at least have procured him some powerful protector who could facilitate access, and Cromwell might have been ashamed to exercise violence against his son if there had been some witness to his actions. But it was precisely in this regard that Bridge differed from my thinking. He founded his hopes principally on the secrecy with which he would present himself to his father. My presence, he said, will unfailingly move him, and he will not be reluctant to follow the impulses of nature once I have assured him of my discretion, and he sees that he runs no risk by yielding to them. So Bridge set off, and left me in a state of anxiety from which I did not recover until a week later, only to be replaced by much sadder thoughts. It was James who brought me the news of his sorry fate. Despite the obscurity of his story, I learned enough from it to make me almost certain that Bridge did not have a happier end than his mother. Scarcely had he arrived in London than his impatience took him to his father. He asked unguardedly to be taken to him. James, who had followed him to the door, saw him leave flanked by five or six guards who took him to one of the city's most secure prisons. No one ever knew how he was treated there, such was the loyalty and discretion that fear of Cromwell had instilled in his emissaries. However many times James went to the prison gate, he was neither allowed to speak with him nor given any definite information relative to his fate. He hastened to come tell me all this. I was panic-struck at this news, and flew to London to be of some assistance to my poor friend's unfortunate son. I went directly to his prison. I spoke to the porters, whom I tried to sway by my entreaties and offers of gifts, not to obtain his freedom or the satisfaction of seeing him,

but to be informed at least of his condition and whereabouts. My efforts were utterly vain. The only response I could get from those brutes was that they were not allowed to reveal their master's orders, nor the prisoners' sentences. That of the unfortunate Bridge, I am persuaded, was cruel; I have altogether too certain a proof of it in my knowledge of his father's pitiless heart. Such are the paths the tyrant takes [32] to glory. After spilling the blood of his king to satisfy his ambition, he could well spill that of his son to assure public opinion of his continence and the holiness of his morals.

Therefore fear his cruelty and his wiles, added Mrs Riding when she had finished her story. I have only told you this so you could see through another's misfortune the danger you find yourself in. I see, she further stated, what Fairfax's purpose was in speaking to you of Molly Bridge and her son as two living persons, and telling you that Cromwell had seen them this morning. It was surely to make sure you had no knowledge of their fate, and that he would therefore find it all the easier to deceive you. I also understand why Cromwell, when he refused to recognize your son at your first audience, did no more than forbid you at great peril to boast that you had had the child by him. Be sure that you would not have left his home if he had thought he could have had you arrested without attracting attention. But fearing, apparently, lest news of a woman and a young man arrested in this way help bring to light of day what he had a great stake in hiding, he chose to get rid of you by means better suiting his designs. Do you think it was chance that brought Fairfax after you a moment later? It is clear that he was following you on Cromwell's orders, after concerting with him what he would say to you. It is heaven that brought you here to receive from me the important knowledge I have just provided you. Make good use of it, as I hope you will, and try if you can not to involve me.

A service of this magnitude richly deserved my mother's

energetic expressions of gratitude to Mrs Riding. You are our tutelary genie, she replied. I see the depth of the chasm: we were on the edge of it, and I admit it was owing to my imprudence that we were about to fall in. But now that you have made us aware of the danger, your friendship must also help us avoid it. Our salvation will be your doing. Dear God, she added, dazed by so many fears, is this what comes of the innocence of my life these fifteen years? And if my earlier errors still deserve such harsh punishment, what has my unfortunate son done to offend you? For my part, perceiving no lack of virtue in my thoughts and sentiments, I could not understand how a man could be as evil as my father was being portrayed. I carefully reviewed what I had just heard; I combined it with everything I had learned previously; and I wondered why the love and the practice of virtue are so urged upon us, since there is so little advantage in it, and all of fortune's favors are reserved for crime. Finally, as my mother had entreated Mrs Riding to open to us some path to safety, this faithful friend told us plainly that she could see no security for us in rejecting my father's proposition, and even less in accepting it; that it seemed to her that the only means of preservation we had left was to get outside the kingdom, or to find a retreat so undiscoverable that it could hide us from our persecutors; that both of these two paths were fraught with difficulties, because it must be assumed we were being watched; but that we must rely upon some assistance from heaven, which never utterly abandons innocence. I again spoke up. What more secure retreat could we seek, I said to Mrs Riding, than that remote cave where you so generously raised my brother? I feel rather attracted to such an abode. I will spend my whole life there; for if all men are made like my father, there is no desert so hidden that I would not prefer it to mingling with this miserable race. My mother immediately approved this idea: it was a prompt means of avoiding the most pressing of our perils. She proposed it seriously to Mrs Riding. It was agreed to

in no time; and for fear of exposing us by the least delay, we determined not to delay its execution. Mrs Riding herself advised us not to return to Hammersmith. She promised to take care of our furniture, shings, and [33] have it safely put away by persons worthy of trust. She gave us James, who had quickly found us a coach, and set off with us for Devonshire. We arrived without incident. James took us straight to the cavern, making sure we were seen by no one. We entered it with some foreboding, which the natural disposition of the place could not fail inspire; but I felt even more joy at finding myself protected not only from any effect of my father's wrath, but from the eyes of everyone else. I began to see them as so many persecutors and enemies. With set with James the times at which he would render us his services, and bring us our food. He spent the first few days furnishing our room quite comfortably, and bringing us all the conveniences that Mrs Riding's house could provide. He brought them in at night. Our most abundant provision was that of candles and books. There was never a ray of sun in our dwelling place; we needed to be illuminated continually by candle light.

Thanks to a remnant of good fortune, I said to mother, the earth opens its bosom to us to protect us from the evildoing of men. She was more intensely distressed than I. She replied: Alas, when will it open up to take me into my final resting place? Her favor to us is wanting in one thing. The earth has opened her bosom to us; would she had as quickly closed it again to serve as our tomb!⁷² I tried to comfort her. It is not life we should abhor, I said, you taught me that yourself; but the miseries to which it

⁷² The cavern is at once a place of security and a tomb, by turns serene and horrible. The theme of the tomb is recurrent in Prévost's novels; cf. Sélina's "tomb" in which the Man of Quality willfully encloses himself for a year (*Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, p. 97); in the same novel, Nadine enters the cloister as she would a tomb (p. 332).

exposes us. Men would not complain of their condition if they knew how to take advantage of all that can contribute to their happiness. They willfully make themselves unhappy with their mutual acts of injustice, their jealousies, hatreds, and all the other uncontrolled impulses in their souls. Imagine men without passions on earth: you will have a society of happy people.⁷³ Why then can we not be happy here, we who shall find here no obstacle to it, and can constantly put to use the simple and innocent means which nature offers us for contentment? Are not the contemplation of the eternal principles of truth and virtue, our meditations, and the pleasure of writing them or communicating them to each other, sufficient sources of happiness which we bear within us, and which depend neither on the men we have left behind, nor on fortune whose whims need not worry us here? The very obscurity of our dwelling can contribute to our peace of mind. Our imagination will have nothing tumultuous to anticipate. We shall not have to fear involuntary impulses stimulated by the presence of objects, since we will perceive nothing in our extreme darkness; and we will learn to control ourselves well enough to avoid conceiving futile desires willingly. These very thoughts provide me with a foretaste of the happiness I hope for here. I am persuaded, I added, that my dear mother will find many other resources in her wisdom and virtue, she to whom I owe this faint portion of both that is going to give me such satisfaction in solitude.

My mother appeared to be pleased with my words. She replied that she felt great joy to see me enter thus into her thoughts, and answer so faithfully to her hopes. Indeed I had done no more than repeat what I had heard her say so many times at

⁷³ Passion takes on here its tragic fullness: it is fatal, it is undergone and not willed; though it can sometime bring joy, it also makes one vulnerable and brings unhappiness.

Hammersmith. But she reminded me that her situation and mine were entirely different. I think as you do, she said; I have the same notions of happiness and wisdom; I have the same opinion of the foolish turbulence of men, and the obstacles they willingly create to their peace. The continual turmoil of their hearts is their own doing; nature did not make them to be unhappy: they accuse her unjustly. If only they followed her innocent guidance! She would put them on a simple path which they would ever find agreeable and easy to follow, and which they would follow without going astray.⁷⁴ Yet it must be admitted that while it is easy to lead a tranquil and happy life by following nature, that applies when she has not yet been altered by the passions. [34] This remark, she added, concerns me; and it will make clear to you the real difference there is between you and me. You are young; you have been raised in the calm of utter isolation; your heart has never experienced a violent passion, and your brain has never received traces that could make too great an impression on your soul. Thus, the principles of natural innocence⁷⁵ remaining entire in you, all your desires are right, and you feel nothing in yourself to resist their realization. Add to that the care I have taken to inculcate early in you the soundest notions of virtue, and thus to reinforce nature with the help of education. If happiness and peace were difficult to acquire for a heart like yours, then they would truly have to be considered as fantasies and impossibilities.

Look how far I am now from finding such favorable disposi-

⁷⁴ This clearly stated principle of the primacy of nature was destined to become the basic premise of Rousseau's moral philosophy: the judgment of the heart is infallible, and one has only to listen to it.

⁷⁵ This expression is surprising, the very notion being diametrically opposed to the fundamental Christian notion of original sin; Rousseau will assure the fortune of this postulate, but no other such occurrence is attested prior to this date.

tions in myself. For a long time I was prey to many lively passions; I followed the rush of the world and of its most corrupt principles. It was an act of desperation rather than of deliberate resolution that led me to Hammersmith; and if I adopted there almost at once the plan of a more orderly life, that was less by natural inclination than the effect of beneficial necessity. I realized that, having nothing more to expect from the world, I needed to develop new tastes, and seek elsewhere the pleasures it denied me. Heaven sent me a ray of its light: I saw clearly what was in my heart; I found there some vestiges of the very goods you possess,⁷⁶ remnants of righteousness and attraction to virtue and truth, but such feeble and disfigured remnants that, comparing what they were with what they must once have been, I greatly lamented having allowed such rich gifts of nature to become corrupted. Thus I recognized the things I had lost, and resolved to repair them. But what an undertaking, and what efforts could I not tell it would cost me! What struggles against a multitude of wicked inclinations which a long delinquency had favored, and which had spread their pernicious seed into every corner of my soul! How much reading! How much contemplation! What application! And after such endlessly renewed and constantly sustained efforts, what obstacles to obtaining even an imperfect victory! Nevertheless, I flattered myself I had attained it. I had acquired enough philosophy, not only to furnish a remedy for my past miseries, but also, as I thought, enough to meet all future needs. You know how tranquil the days were that I spent at Hammersmith. Alas, I could have been happy had it had lasted forever. But I confess that our most recent ordeal has taken its toll

⁷⁶ The remnants of original virtue are unalienable in Prévost, and, as the fate of more than one character in this novel shows, no one is such a scoundrel that he is not capable of repentance and redemption. The irreducibly evil are not part of this world vision.

on my courage. I do not find in my heart the peace I see to prevail in yours. My memory constantly brings up the past; and though I may have strength enough to bear it still as I have for the last fifteen years, I fear it will fail me when the past combines with the sentiment of my new sufferings.⁷⁷ And so, I am right to wish for death: not because I hate life, which is a gift from heaven; but because I fear that all the sufferings that come with it will make it unbearable to me.

They will diminish, I replied, and you will see them slowly fade away. On the contrary, wisdom and virtue constantly grow. For this reason it seems to me, I added, that a wise and virtuous soul can scarcely be unhappy for long. It has two infallible resources: the nature of woes, which is to lessen gradually on their own, and the nature of wisdom's remedies, the strength and efficacy of which steadily increase. Besides, if the tenderness and compassion of a son are a balm to a mother's heart, I will have something to contribute to your consolation. I have a father, but he is cruel. All the affection I owed to him is added to the affection I have for you.⁷⁸ What woes will you feel that I will not share with all the ardor and compassion in my soul?

Despite her strength of mind, and my continual consolations, my dear mother did no more than prolong for several years a sad and listless life. Mrs Riding came expressly to her property to see us, and when she found her friend very much changed, she

⁷⁷ This is the first example in the novel of a fundamental psychological point, which is that there is a *quantitative* aspect to emotions which influences the individual according to his or her affective *capacity*. Additional suffering at a time when the capacity is already exceeded overflows and precipitates crisis.

⁷⁸ Another example of the quantification of emotions: Cleveland loves his mother as much as nature and habit dictate, and *in addition* with all the love that in normal circumstances would have gone to his father.

entreated her to leave [35] our cavern in order to recover by taking the outside air. She could not make her consent to this. It is unlikely, she replied, that I would now run much of a risk in being seen, for it is not believable that Cromwell is still thinking of looking for me. But what reason would I have for returning to the light of day? There is no satisfaction for me to expect there. I would have to make new acquaintances, and lead a life for which I have no inclination; or if I go only again to flee human intercourse, I will never succeed as well there as in this dark cave. I have here the only things I care about, she continued, addressing Mrs Riding: the presence of my son, books, meditation, and the pleasure of occasional conversations with you. If there is something else for me to desire, I am too out of sorts with fortune to obtain it. So let me end my life here. I am half-buried already; I will have less far to go to my grave. Mrs Riding combatted her resolution, but in vain. I for my part, knowing her principles, made no attempt to alter any of her intentions. I simply rendered her, until the end of her life, all the duties of a tender and virtuous son. Her death came two years later. As she lay dying, she repeated her instructions to me. There is no other legacy, she said to me just before she expired, that I am allowed to bequeath you; but you are rich enough, if you never lose the love of virtue I have tried to instill in you. Do not regret the fortune your birth seemed to promise you; only pity your father's cruelty, which unjustly denies it to you. What is a crime for him has been the cause of your happiness and mine; for I see from your tranquillity that you are happy; and despite my despondency since our most recent misfortune, I assure you there is no place on earth where I could have found more satisfaction than in this cavern. Farewell, she added with fading voice. I wish to be buried here. Do not leave while your father is alive. With that she expired. I had only James with me; he lent me his hands to bury her. I had him open a trench in the very room where we were dwelling, so I could

continue to live by her side,⁷⁹ and have her in a sense as witness to all my actions and feelings. I sent James back to carry this sad news to Mrs Riding, who had returned to London a fortnight earlier.

Whatever courage I had shown in losing that incomparable mother, nature claimed her due. No sooner was I alone than I shed an abundance of tears. I did not attribute them to weakness in myself. All the feelings that are divided up in a large family because each member owes some to all the others, I concentrated in the person of my dear mother, who alone was my entire family. Our affection was cemented no less by the blood than by the conformity of our tastes and inclinations; and given the way she had accustomed me to thinking about things, the life she had given me was not her the most precious of her legacies. Thus I found reasons in my philosophy itself for mourning her. But when, after these first reflections, all of which dwelled on her, I began to turn my eyes toward the state in which I was left by her death; if I did not continue to shed tears of compassion for myself, at least I found myself in a quandary which it was not easy for me to end. Whatever pleasures I had so far enjoyed in my retreat, a sort of trembling I experienced when I reflected that I was here alone made me realize that the greater part of them had been owing to my mother's company. I was obliged to remain there, if only to respect her last wishes. Besides, where would I have gone, I who was devoid of relatives, friends, and even acquaintances; for I had none other on earth than Mrs Riding. In my whole life I had never addressed anyone other than that lady; I must nevertheless add James, and a girl who served us in Hammersmith. I was not wearying of solitude. Nor did I desire to

⁷⁹ The proximity of the dead, and thereby of intimacy with death, earlier provided one of the most striking episodes in *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, and will reappear in the procession that ends book XV.

leave it. But in order to continue finding it agreeable, I would have required a person of my own humor who could take my mother's place, to continue sharing my thoughts and inclinations, as I had hers. I sensed that I could not possibly [36] live without that consolation. By probing my own heart in this way, it occurred to me that I did not abhor mankind as much as I had previously thought; or at least my abhorrence was only for their flaws, since I was disposed to cherish someone who loved virtue as much as I. I gained thereby a better opinion of my character; for I must confess that I had happened more than once, in reflecting on my sentiments, to be distressed at discovering some in myself which did not accord with the kindness and humanity, various aspects of which I admired in my readings, that should be the fruit of true philosophy. I had been alarmed, for example, to find such a hardened loathing against my father that I would not even have consented to accept favors from him. I began to persuade myself that if I hated him, it was more his fault than mine; and I found, by sorting out my emotions better, that I would with no difficulty have learned again to love him, had he been capable of returning to the rules of probity and virtue. I cannot express what satisfaction this discovery gave me.⁸⁰ No, no, I exclaimed, I am not a monster who detests creatures of my kind. I love mankind. Like them I appreciate the enjoyments of society; all I ask is rectitude and virtue; and I promise my full esteem and even affection to those in whom I shall perceive these qualities.⁸¹ Oh

⁸⁰ The word *discovery* is significant here because the phenomenon is interior. Feeling, which is instinctual, does not provide comprehension; to look at oneself reflexively to identify what had happened is an intellectual, secondary act.

⁸¹ A wholly intellectual and abstract discovery: it is not "men" he loves but the idea of men. Like Lancelot or Gawain, Cleveland has been raised in the most total isolation, and entering the world of men at

heaven, I continued, will you not make me encounter some virtuous and loyal friends to whom I can confide the sentiments of my heart? I ask for just one; but one such as I feel you have made me: loving, sincere, generous, with some discernment and taste for fine and useful knowledge. Wherever on earth he be, I shall fly to his side the moment you let me find him.

I mulled over these thoughts for several days, and soon came to the realization that I was not born to live all alone. Yet I felt no attraction to the multitude; on the contrary, the very thought frightened me; and I am persuaded that if at that time when I had yet seen but very few men, I had suddenly found myself transported into the midst of a large crowd, I would have fainted away from horror and shock. That is practically what had happened in the streets of London on the only occasion when I had gone there with my mother. Yet it will subsequently be seen that timidity was never one of my weaknesses; daring to live alone, as I was doing, in one of the most awesome caverns one can imagine, was proof enough of that. My mother was so lacking in curiosity, and her indifference inspired just as much in me, that it had never occurred to us to examine the meanders and immense cavities of our dwelling place. I decided to do so when I found myself alone. This somber place is called Rumney Hole by the inhabitants of the region.⁸² The surroundings are uninhabited. Its

sixteen constitutes a true birth. Jean Sgard compares these circumstances with one possible source, the case of Andrenio, raised by animals in a cave, in *L'Homme détrompé ou le criticon* by Balthazar Gracian, translated by Manoury in 1696 and 1708 (*Prévost romancier*, p. 199).

⁸² Mrs Riding earlier evoked the site of Rumney Hole, which seems to be located below the Dartmoor mountains (“very high mountains”), indeed with majestic rocks towering overhead. On the western border of Dartmoor there are small, steep valleys, like the Lid, which Prévost discusses at length in *Le Pour et Contre* (t. VI, p. 243 and ff.). But in

entrance is located at the bottom of a valley so narrow that there is almost nothing in it but a stream which emerges from the foot of the mountain beside the cave opening. Its source has still not been found, though the stream bed can be followed fairly far into the bowels of the mountain. The natural stone vault comes sometimes so low to the ground, and the banks of the stream are so steep in those places, that there is no way to advance further without exposing oneself to obvious risk. But the cavern is so vast and rises so high to the left and right that one never ceases to admire nature, which created, for purposes unknown, immense chambers which one tires of surveying. Yet the cavern narrows at certain points, where one finds sorts of parlors and closets; some communicate with other rooms as large as the first ones, others have no other opening than their entrance. It was one of the latter category that James had made suitable for living. It was in one of the deepest recesses of this underground place, such that, as the

the same issue of *Le Pour et Contre* Prévost gives us rather different indications of the site of Rumney Hole: “Leaving the province of Cornwall to enter Sommersetshire, you have on your right the county of Devon, which here offers only sterile, uninhabited mountains. If you have enjoyed reading *Cleveland*, you will not go this way with being tempted to visit the Rumney Hole cave, which is not far from there. But if you go to the left, you encounter Tavistock, a site well known for its copper mines” (VI, 245). The topographical details given by Prévost are plausible: coming from Cornwall via Carington to go in the direction of Bristol, one will leave on the right the steep spurs of the Tamar valley, known since the thirteenth century for its silver, lead, and copper mines, and for that reason still visited (Musée de Morwellham). Prévost moreover had mentioned the surroundings of Tavistock in the English voyage of *Mémoires d’un homme de qualité*: “the copper mines, especially those we saw near Tavistock, caused us wonder” (p. 1266). The name itself may be invented, but shrewdly so: there exists a Rumney near Cardiff, and a Romney Marsh in Kent.

outside air could not easily circulate that deeply, we were in a sort of perpetual springtime. One day, as I was exploring some deep recesses which had struck me more than others, I spied by the light of a candle I was holding in my hand some letters carved in the rock. Curiosity brought me closer in order to read them. These are the words they formed:

[37] *If fortune leads after me some unfortunate person to these parts seeking an asylum, let him take comfort in learning that his woes could never equal those I suffer here, nor his tears those I constantly shed. So has heaven willed, which determines our destinies by its unfathomable judgments.*

This melancholic inscription gave rise to many reflections. At first I had no doubt at all that it was by the hand of Bridge, who had spent so many years in this dark place, and had had good reasons enough to lament his fortune to imagine she had never treated anyone with more rigor than him. However, remembering that, according to Mrs Riding's narrative, he had begun to realize his misfortunes only after his return from Eton College, it seemed to me quite unlikely that he could have grieved so excessively at a time when he was wholly unaware of his fate, and at an age when he was little more than a child. There was no contradiction in thinking it was by someone else. Rumney Hole is not an unknown cave, although it is in a barren region; it could be that someone had taken shelter there before us, for unfortunates rather often hit upon the same ideas. The only difficulty I found was that the letters seemed recently carved; and estimating as I did the time covered by Bridge's retreat and mine, I could not reconcile such a fresh imprint with such a large number of years. Thus reasoning, I kept on walking, and looked all about me for some other inscription that might further enlighten me. I was paying so much atten-

tion to this task that I forgot that which I had always had of noting exactly the places I passed through, for fear of losing my way back; so that when I decided to go back to my dwelling, after a lengthy and fruitless search, I found myself extremely hard put to figure out which way I had come. I prayed for help from heaven, which alone could get me out of this labyrinth.⁸³ I tried several paths in succession: some led nowhere, and finding no way through, I was obliged to retrace my steps; the others only increased my anguish because, splitting into various branches, I had constantly to deliberate as to which one I should take. Worst of all, the candle I had brought was burning low. Yet it was so necessary to me in this utter darkness that I was hopelessly lost if it were to go completely out. I sensed how great the danger was, and I admit that, however little I held to life, I was unconsolable at being reduced to ending it so pathetically. Finally I had the misfortune of seeing the light from my candle expire. I instantly lost all hope. I stopped, as much out of weakness brought on suddenly by excessive fright, as from my inability to proceed in such darkness. I sat down on the ground. All my feelings, no doubt, were baleful and anguished; but none were violent, as occurs in despair. I even recovered slowly from my initial terror, and summoning every principle of constancy that philosophy affords, I prepared for death with complete resignation. I spent scarcely less than twenty-four hours in this situation; and surprising as it may appear, I spent part of that time in peaceful sleep.

A power more real than fortune was keeping watch over my preservation during that time; that was doubtless why I drifted off to sleep to keep away the sinister thoughts which I might have

⁸³ The labyrinth is a sort of symbol of the complexity of life in which the unexperienced protagonist lacks guidelines for conduct; it is only after he finally finds a sure guide that he can retrace his steps and sort out the “innermost reaches” of the cavern, and go outside.

been unable to fend off until the end. I woke up. I experienced upon awakening something like the sentiments I had felt before falling asleep, which is to say at first acute fear, and then a gradual sense of courage and strength against impending death. I am, I said, a true child of the earth: I emerged from her bosom, I have lived here, and here I die. Let her have me then, and may I never leave! An indistinct noise I heard suddenly distracted me from these meditations. I listened carefully. At first there was only an echo within the cavern. I did not know what it could be. But as the [38] sound became more distinct, I thought I heard the footsteps of a person walking: I got up, and without taking the time to pay further attention, I ran with unbelievable speed, as if by the natural instinct for self-preservation, in the direction from which the sound seemed to come. Fortunately, the ground was level, and my feet struck no obstacle. I kept my hands raised before me as I ran, to avoid running into the stone. After I had advanced in this way perhaps a hundred steps, I thought I could see a hint of light. The cavern curved about. I followed that ray of hope, which seemed to be increasing. It finally became light enough for me to see my surroundings. I no longer heard footsteps; but as I continued to see more clearly about me, I had no doubt that by going a few steps farther I would finally discover the source of my salvation. I was not mistaken: I saw a man, a creature like me. What a joy for an unfortunate who no longer has anything but death in view, and such a horrible and grim death at that!

Nevertheless, my troubles were not quite over. This man, who had halted when he heard me coming, was trembling with fright as much as was I with joy. He was holding a flaming torch; but almost the minute he saw me he put it out, and believing me apparently to be a thief, or some monstrous denizen of the bowels of the earth, he stood silent and still in the darkness, to escape the danger that seemed to threaten him. Then all my fears again took hold of me. That something so cruel should occur, at the moment

when I thought my salvation certain, plunged me into an inexpressible consternation. So I must perish, I exclaimed. Oh heaven, you desert me, for I see there I have no hope left. I figured that everything I had just seen was a mere illusion, a dream, the prank of some evil genie who had wanted to mock my death by offering me false hopes of salvation. Nevertheless I advanced several more steps, and when I thought I was about where I had seen the phantom who had tricked me, I spoke in pathetic strains: Whoever you are, a charitable man or a demon adversary, if you refuse to let me see you, at least allow me to hear you. Alas, I ask nothing more than a word of consolation. I could scarcely utter these words, so altered was my breathing from running and fear. I waited some moments for a reply, but none came. I repeated sadly: If you are a man, why do you refuse to answer me? Could you have the cruelty to allow me to perish in this place of horror, if you can help me find the way out? What do you fear from an unfortunate whose life depends on you, and who begs you for it as a favor? He then answered me in a very gentle voice that if I had no evil intentions, he would render me all the services I might desire. I could easily tell that the person speaking to me was but ten paces away. I came closer, and told him briefly, in order to encourage him further not to abandon me, how I had lost my way in this vast cavern. Give me your hand, came the reply; we are not far from the entrance to the cave. You will see daylight in no time. I followed my charitable liberator, who indeed brought me, more promptly than I hoped, to the light I thought I had lost forever.

At first I divided my words of thanks between heaven, which was doubtless the primary author of my deliverance, and the instrument it had pleased heaven to use for my preservation. I did so with an air of naïveté that seemed to surprise my unknown friend. He looked at me closely: If you have no reason to prevent you from telling me who you are, he said, and what brought you

to want to venture into this horrible cavern, you will gratify me by satisfying my curiosity. I hesitated over my response. I knew that in general most men are false. My secret was crucially important. I had no idea what a man could be whom I had found alone, torch in hand, in the place of my dwelling, nor what design could have led him there. Moreover my surprise had been extreme to perceive as he was speaking that the [39] area around the cave was nothing like the surroundings where I had first been introduced. Instead of a narrow, deep valley, there was a wooded mountainside. Finding myself therefore in an unknown location, with a person I knew no better, my inexperience of the world made me fearful and mistrustful. I simply replied that I was an unfortunate young man whose deeds and birth were unworthy of anyone's curiosity. I thank you from the bottom of my heart, I continued, for the service you have rendered me; and I hope you are rewarded with a fate better than mine. I do not know whether these words, or the plainness of my physiognomy and manners, gave him an impression of me which I was not seeking to convey; but holding onto my hand, he asked me as a favor to tell him at least where I lived and what I was to become. This insistence disconcerted me. I in turn looked at him intently. He was crudely dressed, and his face to me seemed pale and downcast; but the gentleness in his eyes reassured me. I even felt my heart naturally inclined to wish him well. You ask who I am, I said, and you wish to know my dwelling place and my station. Then tell me also who you are, and how I should understand the curiosity you manifest. Is it enmity, or affection? Are you among the trustworthy and sincere men who are said to be so rare on earth, or among the false men who seek only to deceive the innocent, and whose malignity I try to avoid? Explain yourself. If you are what hope you are, I shall regard our acquaintance as a favor from heaven, and open my heart to you without reservation. For now I will tell you that I have no home but this cavern. He remained silent for a

few moments, as if contemplating my reply. My terms, and the voice in which I had uttered them, seemed to him to differ from normal usage. He continued to look at me, and being unsure how he should judge me, he was in some perplexity about answering me. He later told me that his uncertainty had been so great that he was on the verge of leaving me without another word. However, the same feeling that had predisposed me in his favor was acting on his heart as well. He embraced me. You are not capable of deceit, he said, since you have such an aversion for artifice and treachery. Come, you will see my dwelling as well. He led me into the cavern. I followed him through sinuous, dark passages which finally led to a sort of room much like mine. This is my home, he said, or my tomb, if you prefer to call it that. See whether you find it is something like yours. I replied that aside from a few more furnishings in mine, there was very little difference. Then there must also be little difference in the disposition of our souls; for only a very similar fortune could have inspired in two persons at the same time the plan for such an extraordinary sort of life. I am all the more surprised by this, he continued, that you appear much less advanced in age than I, and that it seems improbable you could have lived long enough to suffer many setbacks and agitations. My life would have been simple and tranquil up to now, I replied, had I had to bear no burdens but my own: my character being what it is, I would have forgiven fate for them. But the woes of a mother whom I dearly loved, and the crimes of a father who has become the horror of nature, have caused me the only sadness I have been able to feel. These two causes together are why I have remained buried for several years in this cave. I no longer refused at that point to tell him who I was, and the kind of life I had led up till then. I added to my story the recent misfortune I had of losing my mother, her dying order not to leave my retreat until after my father's death, the difficulty for me in remaining there alone, and the joy, on the other hand, I

would now feel at living there with a companion like himself, if I was not mistaken in the opinion I had already come to of his trustworthiness and virtue.

As I was speaking from an overflowing heart, and my mind was entirely occupied with my own thoughts, I did not realize that he shed a stream of tears as I [40] spoke. When to my great surprise I noticed this, and asked him what could be causing him such extreme anguish. Oh! he answered with a sigh, what an abominable father you have! Come, come, he went on, taking up the torch that illuminated his dwelling, I am going to give you further examples of his virtues. You are his son; but since he has no more spared you than us, and the candor you have just shown assures me of your sincerity, I do not wish to defer a response to your confidence. It is heaven that sends you to console me. Perhaps you also will take some comfort from knowing that there are men infinitely more unfortunate than you. He walked ahead of me, torch in hand. I followed him fifteen or twenty paces into the cavern. He halted at a narrow opening, where I saw a small wooden door which he opened with a key. We entered a room hewn, like mine, from the stone, but much more regular, so that being hung with a tapestry, and adorned with very fine furniture, it could have passed in all sorts of houses for a magnificent apartment.⁸⁴ The surprise provoked by this unexpected vision was magnified by the sight of a girl of nine or ten, who came to embrace my guide, and a sort of chambermaid or governess, who was leading her. He closed the door tightly, and taking me by the hand, he led me toward a bed which was at the far end of the room. My dear, he said, opening the curtain, I bring you a young

⁸⁴ This mysterious and somber decor recalls the crypt of Tusculum discovered by Renoncour in *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, a chamber carved in stone where a coffer bears only the inscription *Furori sacrum*: see Jean Sgard, *Prévost romancier*, p. 140.

man who will share your sufferings, once he learns of them, and help comfort you by recounting his own. He is a son of Cromwell. Let not this name frighten you, he added; he has received from his father the same favors as we, and has been reduced for several years to living as we have in this cave, where it was my good fortune to encounter him today.

I inferred that he was speaking to his wife. She replied only with a deep sigh. We sat down. He had his chambermaid serve me some refreshments which he rightly judged I needed after a fast of over twenty-four hours. Next he bade me tell his wife about my mother's misfortunes and mine. The lady seemed to listen intently: but I could tell from the violence of her sighs that her soul was prey to a strange agitation.

Her husband motioned to me to follow him. We exited the room, and then the cave. We walked a while in silence in an open space of this uninhabited mountain. It is fair, he said finally, that I should tell you who you are with, and recognize with a confidence equal to yours the straightforward account you have given me of your unhappy situation. You were born to misfortune, and being accustomed to it from your childhood keeps you from feeling it. You utter the word *misfortune* almost without knowing what it means; and your equanimity tells me that even this cavern and the dreadful life you lead here do not so much diminish your tranquillity as establish it. It is quite different with me. I was the most fortunate of men. Only an unprecedented adventure reduced me to living in this darkness, which redoubles the horror that continually prevails in my soul so that every minute I spend here seems a cruel martyrdom. Prepare yourself for the compassion that my sufferings merit. My story is brief, but none was ever so dreadful. These words, spoken in the saddest voice, and the esteem I already felt for this unknown person, put me in the frame of mind he desired for listening to him. He began his narrative as follows:

My name is Viscount Axminster. I was born in England; but as my father was appointed governor of Florida and New England by Queen Elisabeth,⁸⁵ I crossed the ocean as a child, and lived thereafter in that part of America. I was raised there as I might have been in Europe. My father's benevolent government caused me to be widely liked in the colony, even by the savages, to whom his kindness extended as well. I reaped the benefit of it, through the devotion and [41] attachment everyone took pains to show me. In a sense, I reigned in this country, such obedience and affection did I encounter in all the peoples under my father's authority. Many were the proofs of it on various occasions, but especially in an enterprise on which I staked the happiness of my entire life. I had made a voyage to the island of Cuba in the interest of the trade we carried on with the Spanish. There I had seen the governor's daughter, whose name was Teresa d'Arpez: and just as her beauty kindled a violent passion in me, so did my good fortune let me succeed in pleasing her. I had returned full of love, and resolved to solicit my father's permission to return

⁸⁵ This imaginary character takes his name from a town in Devon, near Exeter, which is mentioned in *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* (p. 265). According to Paul Vernière, Prévost's model is probably governor Berkeley of Virginia: see "L'Abbé Provost et les réalités géographiques", *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France* 73, pp. 630 and 635. Provost pays little mind to American history here, insofar as each colony had its separate origins and there never was a governor general. *Florida*, moreover, is not an English name, nor did England in the reign of Elisabeth have a colony there; but on the maps it applied to an ill-defined region, as did *Carolina* in English and *Louisiane* in French (a book by Daniel Coxe in 1722 bore the title *A Description of the English Province of Carolina, by the Spaniards called Florida and by the French La Louisiane*). According to Ogilby, Carolina is part of Florida, and Prévost in book IV includes Carolina and Virginia in Florida.

promptly to Cuba to ask the governor for this charming person and make her my wife. I would doubtless have obtained her; but as war had just broken out between the English and the Spanish,⁸⁶ this happenstance unfortunately undermined all my expectations. However, as nothing could diminish my passion, I determined, as an ardent young man, to make the war itself abet the success of my desires. I was much relying on the affection of Doña Teresa. I had no doubt I could prevail on her to leave her father for me. The only difficulty was to find the means of reaching her, and abducting her from the hands of the Spanish. I confided my love and my intentions to a few young men from the colony's most prominent families. My confession seemed to leave them indifferent. I could not understand such cooling of their loyalty, and was even so disappointed as to reproach them bitterly for it. They accepted it with no response. A few days later, it was reported in our largest settlements that the greater part of the youth, and all thought to be up to a dangerous enterprise, had disappeared as if by design, though no one could guess which direction they had taken. There could hardly have been fewer than two hundred of them. Next it was learned that they had taken with them an equal number of stalwart savages, and went to the neighboring port; they had taken over two English vessels which had arrived a few days earlier, and headed out to sea. My father was extremely upset by this news. The Spanish had already begun the hostilities. We remained almost without defense after the departure of so many fugitives, and had no doubt that they had abandoned the colony never to return. We spent two months or so in this apprehension. Happily, the Spanish left us alone. My father did the best

⁸⁶ James I made war against Spain, in league with the United Provinces, after the failure in 1623 of his negotiations to marry his son to the Infanta; peace was to come in 1636. This seems to be the period in question; Axminster could have been 20 or 21 in 1623.

he could to provide for our security. He had a small fort built at the mouth of the river. I was helping the effort along with him when we spied two vessels heading toward us at full sail, with a most favorable wind. Their being too far away for us to identify their flag, our fear was extreme, which is to say equal to the danger. We took up arms alongside all those who were able to defend, determined to resist the landing vigorously. The two captains of the ships with which our youths had stolen were with us. They were the first to recognize that it was their own vessels that were approaching. The joy this reassurance procured us was still mixed with reasonable fear, for we absolutely did not know what we should expect. Finally, when they were close enough to be seen distinctly, we recognized our friends and compatriots on the decks, extending their hands to us in a sign of peace and friendship. They were very soon on the shore. My father received them with a stern and discontented mien. The leaders approached us submissively. They excused themselves, acknowledging the temerity of their conduct, which could be justified only by success, and by their intention of being of service to their governor's son. In a word, they had undertaken to abduct Doña Teresa, upon the confession I had made to them of my passion; and my good fortune had made them succeed. They brought with them the most charming of all captures. I was so transported with joy when I heard them that I threw myself at my father's feet to implore him to pardon their offense, and allow me to claim my felicity. Where is she? I cried. Oh my loyal friends, how [42] shall I repay such a service! They told me she was alone in the vessel's cabins, and that she was rather sad, because they had kept from her until now where they were taking her, so she would be agreeably surprised when she found herself in my arms. Whatever cause I had for depending on her affection, I feared she was offended by such a peremptory abduction, which could lead her to fear a lack of respect in my love. I was hesitant to face her, and first asked to

be told how they had gone about seizing her, to assure myself that there had made no outrage to which she might object. They had captured her without violence, in the course of a walk she was taking with her father and some lady friends. I bowled her over by appearing before her. Her fears doubtless dissipated when she saw at her feet a suitor whose tenderness and loyalty she was aware of. But as she finding something rough and strange in the means she imagined I had employed to obtain her possession, she at first received my protestations rather coolly. It seemed to her that at least I ought not to have deferred to strangers the task of abducting her. I easily justified myself by explaining to her the heart of the adventure; and we soon agreed to thank heaven, which had brought about our happiness in such a strange and unexpected way. I brought her onto shore. My father, who was perhaps during that time undecided about how he should deal with her and with me, promptly decided, upon seeing her, to grant me her as my wife. For my sake he forgave the young men who had served me with such zeal; and with everyone sharing in my joy, my happiness followed with the celebration of my marriage soon thereafter.

After that my satisfaction only increased. I adored my sweet wife. I had a daughter by her whom you have just seen in the cave. We lived peacefully for a few years in Florida until my father died; and I might have been able to succeed him had I been inclined to stay longer in America. But I had long since decided to return to Europe, as soon as I found myself free. My wife desired it no less than I. I loaded my wealth onto a vessel and headed back to my dear country with my family. Do men know what they desire, when they chose their own forms of contentment? What seems most likely to make them happy becomes for them a source of misfortunes and miseries. They renounce assured tranquillity of which out of inconstancy they tire, and the illusion they pursue leads them to their ruin. So it is that I contrib-

uted to my own undoing, thinking I was working to augment my pleasures. I lived peaceably in Florida; there I was esteemed by my friends, beloved of my wife, and favored by fortune: what need had I to return to England, to fall into an abyss of misery and shame from which there is no longer any arm strong enough to lift me?

I arrived in London about two years ago. I found the form of government changed, and Cromwell's authority well established. Whatever compassion I was made to feel by the fate of our poor king and the story of all his executioner's violent acts, I thought I had to go with the current, and submit like everyone else to tyranny. I first used part of my assets to purchase several large properties in this county. Then I set up my residence in London, where, without taking any part in public affairs, I limited myself to meeting a few former friends of my father and to the company of my wife. For fifteen months we were undisturbed. Meanwhile crime and fury were preparing all their darts for me. Aberdeen, Cromwell's favorite and worthy confidant,⁸⁷ saw my wife at the theatre. He conceived for her a mad passion. He sought the means of speaking with her, and used everything that artifice can invent to seduce her. She alerted me to it. I needed no other guarantee of her conduct that her love for me and her virtue. Nevertheless, Aberdeen's impetuosity having exceeded all measure, I thought it appropriate privately to inform Cromwell and entreat him to put a stop to his favorite's insolence. He listened with affected aston-

⁸⁷ The name of a city in Scotland which was taken by Monck in the great campaign of 1651 (see Rapin de Thoyras, IX, 46). The character is fictional, but his name may come from George Gordon (1637–1720) who, made chancellor of Scotland in 1682 under the title Lord Haddo, was created Earl of Aberdeen; yet that Aberdeen, son of an officer of Charles I executed by the Covenanters, was rather a royalist and anything but a confidant of Cromwell's.

ishment. He replied [43] that, knowing Aberdeen as a man of great restraint, he could hardly believe him capable of the excesses of which I accused him; that conjugal delicacy perhaps made me too quick to take alarm; that one must not always trust appearances, nor yield too lightly to suspicions; that he almost dared answer me that I had been deceived by false reports, or was being misled by my own jealousy. I am not repeating to you what I have heard from someone else, I said to him rather heatedly; I am telling you what I have seen with my own eyes. Aberdeen has had the audacity to come to my home; he even came at night; I was there, although he believed I was away, and were it not for the respect I had then for you who esteem him, I would have put him out of condition ever to renew his effronteries. I implore you, I added, to subdue them should he repeat them, or else to permit me to punish them.

We were interrupted, and nothing more came of this conversation. That very evening, Aberdeen accosted me in a public promenade. My Lord, he said, I know you complain of me. Perhaps I have given you some cause for doing so. But I shall never again do anything to offend you. I respect the bonds of marriage, and beg heaven to punish me if it was ever my intention to violate them in any way. I love your wife: this I confess; it is madness, or illness. But I consent to be punished by your hand, if you ever perceive that I aspire to anything more than the innocent pleasure of seeing her. Do not refuse me that, and grant me your friendship. Such an extraordinary instance of civility made me ponder a bit before responding. I could quite understand that a man could be smitten with a violent passion, and still have sufficient virtue to resist it; but could I reasonably expect such great courage from an Aberdeen, that is to say from the slave and satellite of a tyrant? Virtue is not the effort of a moment. It must have planted deep roots in the heart to produce effects on which one can unflinchingly rely. What bonds would have so attached Aberdeen to Cromwell,

if not the similarity of their inclinations? I could have no more confidence in the one than the other. However, not wishing to pass for a peculiar and jealous husband, I answered him politely that I could take no offense at someone's loving my wife, but that I thought him reasonable enough to see what boundaries such a love must respect. He seemed satisfied. I was amazed when he called the next day. I again spoke most civilly with him. He asked, after a few moments' conversation, whether he might not have the honor of greeting my wife. I did not object. But as I had apprised her the day before of what had occurred between us, she refused to appear, on some pretext of indisposition. He left angry, which did not prevent him from returning a few days later, and continuing several times the same thing, although he was met each time with the same refusal. Finally the villain, no longer having the strength to dissimulate, took a horrible resolution, which justly caused his death, and plunged me into irreparable misfortunes.

My wife loved the theatre, and attended it often.⁸⁸ She had gone there one day with several other ladies, and I expected her return at the usual hour, when one of my servants arrived, out of breath, to inform me that my carriage had been stopped in the streets, the horses' reins cut, and his mistress abducted by several masked persons who had swiftly put her into another carriage and fled with her. I was so stirred up by this news that I almost rushed out like a madman, without no forethought; but just as I was leaving the house to search in all the streets of London, the ladies who had accompanied my wife to the comedy drove up. They were in a hired coach, since they were unable to come back in

⁸⁸ This takes place about 1655. The London theatres were officially proscribed by the Puritan parliament from 1642 to 1660 but did not totally disappear; although performance by actors was forbidden, there could be music, and by extension musical drama.

mine. The tears they shed as they approached me were confirmation of my servant's sad report. Cruel friends, I said wildly, oh, give me back my wife! It was to you I had confided her. I meant to leave the immediately. They stopped me to say that I should soon have news of her, and that wherever her abductors could take her, they would inevitably be discovered. Indeed they had retained enough [44] presence of mind to order my coachman to follow the carriage that bore away his mistress, which he had easily done on the very horses whose reins, as I have already said, had been severed: thus that precaution, which my enemies had thought their security required, serve to hasten the discovery and punishment of their crime. But it was a feeble consolation, since they had plenty of time to carry it out!

I went back into the house to await my coachman's return. I was torn by countless cruel passions, and lacked the strength to utter a single word. He came back about an hour later. He had been unable to learn the names of the abductors; but having followed them for a mile from London to an isolated house where they stopped, he noted precisely the location and its surroundings. My hope was somewhat renewed. It was easy to guess that the perpetrator of the crime could be none other than Aberdeen. I gave him to all the Furies, and swore to slaughter him, be it in the arms of Cromwell himself. I immediately rounded up my friends. We set off twelve strong not counting our menservants, all men of the highest birth and secret enemies of Cromwell and his partisans. It was about ten o'clock when we reached the house where my coachman led us. I asked eight of my friends to surround it, so no one could escape us. We forcibly broke down the door, and I was the fourth to enter, sword in hand, determined to spare no one. The first person we encountered was a servant, who tried to flee as soon as he saw us. I stopped him. Speak, I yelled at him; where are Aberdeen and milady Axminster? He rather well feigned surprise, as if I had spoken of some unknown person. But

with my coachman, who was behind me, assuring me that he recognized him, and that he was among the abductors, I pressed the point of my sword into his stomach: Speak up, I repeated, or you die. He told me in trembling that his master was in an upper room with my wife. I asked him if they were alone. He said they were in bed together. In bed together! I cried. Ah, dear friends, avenge me. As I uttered these words I fell unconscious. My friends, assuming I had merely fainted, ordered my coachman to look after me, and went upstairs to the room where the criminal Aberdeen was. He had heard the noise downstairs; and in his fear of the punishment that threatened him, he was trying to barricade the door from the inside. It was broken down in an instant despite his efforts. My friends did not kill him, intending to leave me my choice of vengeance. I went upstairs a moment after them, for I quickly regained consciousness, and fury could not fail to restore my strength at once. I found Aberdeen naked, on his knees, groveling to spare his life. I was about to pierce him through a hundred times; one of my friends restrained my arm, saying that, since we were in charge, there were many things he should be questioned about before being put to death. I desisted. In my distraction I was quite unable to speak. I looked about for my wife. She was still in the bed. My fury, which had not been allayed on Aberdeen, suddenly turned on her. I eluded my friends, who suspected nothing, and ran her through several times with my sword. She had enough strength, despite her wounds, to seize my arm on the fourth blow I delivered. She pulled me down on the edge of the bed, and in a trembling voice called me her dear and cruel husband. My friends approached and disarmed me. She continued to hold back my hand and tenderly chide me for my heartlessness. My irrationality at first kept me from hearing her; but various protestations she made of her innocence and this cruel death, which bore willingly, she said, although unjustly; her languishing sighs, and the tender name of husband which she

repeated a hundred times, finally struck my hearing, and from there quickly found the path to my heart. I opened my eyes, as one does in emerging from a dream; I saw the unfortunate half of myself bathed in her own blood which was flowing all over; I saw her pale and dying, her eyes fading: and all these horrors were my doing! I could not utter a word, nor a sigh. It was impossible, among so many fatal feelings [45] that beset me all at once, for a single one to find its way into expression. I turned toward my friends: Come help her, I said with an appearance of composure that surprised them; see if something can be done for her; and hasten, if it is possible, before I die, to help me understand this chaos of dreadful things that horrify me. Tell me, my dear friends, I added hoarsely, looking at them wild-eyed, did you not find her in bed with that villain? Ah! cried my poor wife, he forced me to it with a knife to my throat. One of my friends said to Aberdeen: Speak up, you traitor; make us a confession of all your crimes. The wretch, appalled by all the weapons and his impending death, replied in trembling that he begged heaven, me, and my wife, to forgive his crime; that he had indeed used extreme force to make her submit to his criminal desires; but that maybe he deserved my compassion, if I took into consideration that he was young,⁸⁹ that he had been impelled by an unbridled passion, and that he had done what Cromwell suggested. The whole assembly shuddered at that name. The friends I had asked to remain outside had come inside once they saw that we met no resistance, and, satisfied with arresting some of Aberdeen's servants whom they left under the guard of ours, had joined us upstairs: so being all present when he uttered the name of Cromwell, there was not one who did not manifest much desire to make him explain further the

⁸⁹ These events seem to take place about 1657: the historical Aberdeen, who in fact was a student at King's College in Aberdeen, would have been twenty years old.

relations he had with him. He revealed to us injustices, acts of violence, and iniquities without number: I leave aside that story, which has no connection with mine. With respect to my wife, he repeated that he would never have thought of obtaining her favors by force, had Cromwell had not urged him to do so; that the tyrant, in proposing this means, had assured him that it had succeeded for him more than once; but that besides the corruption in his heart, he had had two reasons for suggesting a design so fatal to my honor: that he had been shocked, when I returned from Florida, to see me flee his presence, and refuse to inflate the number of his flatterers; and that he was no less shocked subsequently by the boldness with which I have complained to him on the subject of my wife; and that, suspecting that I held him in contempt, he had seized this opportunity to humble what he called my pride and arrogance.

Once my friends had extracted from Aberdeen an ample confession of his master's crimes and his own, they asked me what disposition I would like them to make of him. Oh, I replied, I will leave my vengeance to you. But which of you will take care of punishing me? Am I less guilty than he? He has dishonored my wife; and I have cruelly slaughtered her. We both deserve to die. I beg it as a favor. They tried to comfort me by arguing out that after the terrible accident my wife had suffered, I should perhaps not consider her death as the greatest misfortune I could suffer; that I should thank heaven for making her innocence known to me, and find less harsh pain a separation to which I must now resign myself whatever my current situation, but which would be infinitely more difficult for me to bear if this dear object of my pain and my love were not taken from me by death.⁹⁰ Yes, I answered, you instruct me in what way I should understand my

⁹⁰ The point is that a woman's honor can never be reestablished, even though she has been taken by force.

misfortune: but first you would have to give me the strength to endure it. The most useful thing you can do to help me would be to take my life promptly. At least give me my weapons back; I shall soon find the only remedy that can end my sorrows. They took the cruel precaution of taking away anything that could favor my despair; and perceiving that the sight of Aberdeen only sustained it, they conferred on how to be done with him. None of them wanted to assume the responsibility of killing him in cold blood. They debated whether it would be better to keep him to perish publicly at the hand of a hangman: but fearing lest Cromwell's favor spare him from punishment, they finally decided to take him down to courtyard, naked as he was, and have his throat slit in their presence by our servants.

[46] In the meanwhile they had dressed my wife's wounds; but she had not yet regained the consciousness she had lost with the greater part of her blood. I thought she was dead. I was determined to die also, and thinking of a means of being unnoticed by a few of my friends who had stayed behind to keep watch over me while the others punished Aberdeen. However, in recalling all the circumstances of my misfortune, it occurred to me that I was only half avenged by Aberdeen's death, since Cromwell had had no less a part in his crime. I clung avidly to this thought, and immediately conceived the plan of devoting my life, which I no longer wished to preserve, to the tyrant's punishment. I will do my country a service, I said to myself, by delivering it from a monster who is oppressing it; I shall avenge my honor, the death of my king, and that of my wife. My quarrel will become the quarrel of all England. I am sure of the applause of all good people; if I perish in my undertaking, it will be the end of my woes, which it is now my intention to prolong only in that hope. This resolution, which I committed myself to carry out with a hundred vows, brought a prompt tranquillity to my mind which surprised my friends. They asked me in vain to explain this

transformation. I did not wish to make them privy to my design, not only because I worried they would oppose it, but through of a sort of jealousy that made me wish to share with no one the glory and peril of such a grand undertaking.

The execution of Aberdeen over, our only thought was to leave the impure place where we were, and have my wife's body transported. All my friends were persuaded, as was I, that she was lifeless. However, as they continued to attend to her because of some residual warmth in her body, they noticed that she was breathing slightly. They intensified their aid, and little by little she regained enough strength to open her eyes and glance about her. I started to approach her bed, but was prevented; not because they feared some new violence from me: I had not been more moved by fury than I was now by love, pain, and pity. Dear, unhappy wife, I exclaimed, you are still breathing! You return to life to feel all the horror of your dreadful fate! Oh heaven that restores her to me, what should I call the gift you give me? My friends conferred over this new event, which made our departure more difficult. She was in no condition to be removed to London and suffer the motion of a carriage. Happily, we were very near the river. It occurred to Lord Terwill⁹¹, who was one of our associates, to take her by water to Kingston, where he had a house. Boats are easily found along the Thames. He immediately sent two of our servants prepare one, and not wishing to expose himself to the indiscretion of a boatman, he took upon himself to do the rowing, along with those of our group who might wish to accompany him. Those generous friends carried my wife in their arms to the river. Three of them joined Lord Terwill to take her to Kingston. I let them depart, it being my intention to return to

⁹¹ It is uncertain whether Prévost had someone particular in mind in naming this character: it could be a simple transposition of Tréville, a historical character who will figure in book XIV.

London to get my daughter out of the city before the night was over. I nevertheless re-entered Aberdeen's house, with the rest of my friends, and we deliberated together over what might be the consequences of this terrible adventure. It is certain that under a just government we would have nothing to worry about. Aberdeen's deed was one of those crimes the punishment for which belongs by natural right to the person offended. But Cromwell's conduct could not be judged on principles of equity. He loved Aberdeen with a passion; he had played a part in his venture: this was quite enough to leave us no doubt that he would seek to avenge his death, and that his hypocrisy would further find a way to confer a semblance of justice on his resentment. I would have been devastated if the eleven lords who had lent me their support were to risk the least danger for rendering me this important service. Would it be impossible, I asked them, to keep the affair secret? This house is isolated. It is easy to see that Aberdeen had rented it specifically in order to carry out his damnable design. No one at all has seen us. It is true [47] that his death will be reported; but who will know in what way and by whose hands it occurred? I at least will be the only one Cromwell will have reason to suspect; and it is not for me that I fear his wrath and vengeance. My only concern is for you, my dear friends, who so generously put yourselves at risk for my interests. They thanked me for this thought; and while they were disposed to continue their services with the same zeal, they approved the measures I wished to take for their safety. The problem of secrecy was not insurmountable. They had enough confidence in their menservants: the only dilemma had to do with Aberdeen's, whose silence nothing, no doubt, could promise. We were holding them confined to a single room. There were four of them, the same ones who had participated in my wife's abduction and their master's crime. They are guilty, said one of my friends; there is no country in the world where their crime does not deserve death:

what injustice would we be committing by punishing them ourselves? It is a service to the humanity to purge the earth of four rascals. However cruel this proposal at first appeared to me, I approved it, because it seemed to me necessary for my friends' safety. Those four unfortunates had the same fate as their master. We had our menservants open a broad pit, which could hold the five bodies; and after washing away every trace of their blood, we tightly closed all the doors of the house, and set off back to London.

I immediately sent my daughter off to Kingston, accompanied by a faithful servant. With her I sent my money and all my most precious possessions. As for me, who was turning over some very important plans in my mind, I remained in London, and feigning a departure the next morning for the country, I did no more than change houses, to be safe from all the pursuits I was expecting. I spent the first few days inquiring into the effect Aberdeen's disappearance had made. Cromwell may have been the only one who suspected the truth of his adventure; but with a political design I had not anticipated, he disguised his suspicions and his sentiments. He pretended to share the public persuasion that his favorite had secretly left the realm,⁹² or had been assassinated by some hidden enemy. I learned nevertheless that he had quietly had my servants interrogated, and had spared nothing to learn what had become of my wife. A week went by, during which I saw no one I knew. The tyrant's death was resolved in my heart. My only occupation was the means of assuring my success. Getting into his home was not a simple matter. His conduct had completely changed of late. In lieu of the populist manner he had affected during his first years of rule, he had become shadowy, unapproachable, and almost inaccessible. He

⁹² The term is inappropriate, insofar as the "realm" was at this point a republic; but Cleveland retains a rigidly royalist view.

did not trust even his own guards. His cowardice went so far that he had his children shave him, not daring to entrust his head to the hands of a barber.⁹³ I remembered the difficulty I had had obtaining a secret audience with him when I had taken to him my complaints against Aberdeen, and I was persuaded that suspecting I was responsible for his death, he would never allow me to get near him. It was thus not by ordinary means that I could clear a path to him. I learned that he was to spend part of the fair season in Windsor.⁹⁴ I immediately went there, in the hope I would find more easily there than in London the opportunity to pierce his heart. He arrived soon after I did.

I allowed no one to see me. I had only one loyal and fearless manservant to whom I had confided my intentions, and who was prepared, to serve me, to expose himself to all sorts of dangers. I used him to inform me of all my enemy's activities. I conceived various plans which I was unable to execute, because in his decisions the suspicious tyrant was inconstancy personified. He lived in perpetual fear which made him do in the evening the opposite of what he had planned that morning, with the intention,

⁹³ Isaac Kimber indeed states that around 1658 Cromwell became fearful, seldom went out, and even wore a coat of mail (*The Life of Oliver Cromwell*, London, 1724, pp. 348 et 355). Rapin similarly asserts: "For some time, Cromwell seemed more uneasy and fearful than he had ever been before. That is not too strange, since he had warnings from various quarters that some of those who had been his most zealous partisans had decided to assassinate him. This made him take precautions he had never taken previously, such as never sleeping on two successive nights in the same room, and never going out without being surrounded by many guards" (*Histoire d'Angleterre*, IX, 95).

⁹⁴ Windsor, on the Thames in Berkshire, not far from London, is mentioned in Renoncour's itinerary (*Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, I, 268). Windsor Castle had been a royal residence since the days of William the Conqueror.

apparently, of foiling the schemes he rightly imagined were being laid against his life. Nevertheless, I learned one day that he was hunting in the park of the castle. I instantly mounted up, armed with two pistols, and went after him. I bypassed the hunting party, [48] and by darting constantly around the fringes, I observed the moment when he took off alone along a row of trees to cut off a stag being pursued by the piqueurs. I caught up with him by crossing his path. He was mounting a very fast horse, with a plain saddle without stirrups, of the kind that is customary in England. He was unarmed, so nothing would have been easier than to put an end to his crimes and his life with a single shot. But at this moment which I had so desired, I had not foreseen that my magnanimity would betray my enmity. I stopped him nevertheless, pistol in hand. He understood that his life was at stake, and his cowardice turned him suddenly pale and trembling. Tyrant, I thundered at him, where are your weapons? He had scarcely the strength to reply that he had none and that he believed me too magnanimous to kill a defenseless man. Take this then, I replied, handing him one of my pistols; defend yourself now and take my life, if you can, as you have taken my honor and tranquillity. I spurred my horse to put a few paces between us; but having spurred his at the same moment, he took off at a gallop, dropping as he ran the pistol I had given him. His cowardly deceit inflamed my anger; I fired at him as I followed him. He owed his safety to my rage, which caused me to aim poorly. The sound of the shot attracted several of his hunters. I was obliged to take to flight through the forest, and was fortunate enough to get a considerable distance away before his guards had received the order to go after me.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ There are a number of sources that might have suggested to Prévost this story of a failed assassination, situated around 1657. François Raguenet and Gregorio Leti relate the attempt by a young woman

The despair which this failure caused me might have made me turn my weapons on myself, if the thought of my wife and daughter had not attached me to life despite myself. Thanks to Lord Terwill, I had received news of them several times since leaving them. He had informed me that my wife's wounds had not been found fatal; but that because of her great loss of blood the surgeon despaired of her ever recovering; her extreme sorrow moreover hindered the effect of remedies; and that she bade me at least return to be with her in her final moments, since my prolonged, deliberate absence made her too sure that I imputed to her the crime of her ill fortune, and no longer had for her any feelings but those one would have for a woman who was guilty. I had been stung by this reproach; for heaven is my witness that, not only was my affection for her in any way lessened, but never had that virtuous wife been dearer to me than since the atrocity committed against her. Aberdeen's crime was in my eyes a sort of mystery of horror, which I dared not contemplate; but I had constantly in view the innocence of that dear half of myself. I could hear her cries, her tears, all her resistance to a vile rapist who gave her no other choice but death. What a recompense for her struggle and her virtue! No, I said, I shall not love her less

whose lover Cromwell had killed in battle: trying to shoot him in public, she was jostled and the shot missed (François Raguenet, *Histoire d'Olivier Cromwell*, Paris, 1961, pp. 307–309; and Gregorio Leti, *La Vie d'Olivier Cromwell*, Amsterdam, 1616, II, 308–312). The conspiracy of Sindercombe in 1656 (related by Kimber, p. 313) also made some waves, and Rapin mentions two other conspiracies discovered in February and April 1657 (IX, 82). A former officer named Edward Sexby, having become a republican but conspiring with the royalists, went so far as to publish, under the pseudonym William Allen, a famous broadside intitled *Killing No Murder*, in which he manifests the same attitude as Axminster: to kill the Protector would not be a crime, but a service to England.

because of this. Her innocent charms have been the prey of a faithless adulterer; but he could not diminish or defile them. How unfortunate would a virtuous woman be, if the opinion of her honor depended on the violence of an animal who at any moment could cover her with shame and infamy! A just distinction must be made between misfortunes and crimes. The only weaknesses a reasonable husband will ever punish in a woman are those which with proper conduct she might have avoided.

Therefore I was so far from having cooled toward my wife, that only my overwhelming loathing for Cromwell could counter for so long my impatience to see her again; or rather, the very loathing I bore toward that tyrant was simply a violent effect of my love for her, since I had no more urgent motive than my impatience to avenge her. Upon leaving Windsor Park I set off for Kingston, and covered the entire distance at full gallop. Yet I did not enter Lord Terwill's house without great precaution. As Cromwell's wrath no longer wanted for a pretext, I had no doubt he would have me pursued with the greatest vigor; and I expected the [49] cruelest effects of his brutality if I had the misfortune of falling alive into his hands. Indeed Lord Terwill was apprised by letters from London the next morning that the tyrant had returned there right after his adventure; his terror was so visible that even his friends scoffed at his cowardice; he had dispatched orders in every direction for my arrest, and had already announced the kind of torture I should receive.

It was nighttime when I arrived in Kingston, so I had no difficulty crossing the city and the bridge without risk of being recognized. I entered Terwill's house silently, and being fortunate enough to run into him, I told him quickly how important it was that I remain hidden, even to his servants. He led me to my wife's apartment. The effect of my presence on her was so moving that the thought of it still causes me some emotion. She raised her eyes and her hands toward heaven. So I see him once more! she

cried, tears streaming down her face. No, he does not hate me, since he grants me the joy of seeing him again. Alas, why would you hate me? she continued, addressing me. I must indeed have offended heaven, which has treated me so cruelly; but you whom I have always loved more than myself, you, the master of my heart and my dear husband, how have I deserved your hatred? I feel death coming, she added, and I do not ask heaven to delay it; but if I must die without being loved by you, I must then give up all expectation of happiness in an afterlife, for it is not with horrid despair that bliss can begin.⁹⁶ She uttered these words so sorrowfully and with such feeling that Lord Terwill, who was beside me at her bedside, and believed as she did that her misfortune had altered my feelings, could not help reproaching me for my injustice and cruelty. If only they both could have seen my heart! Oh, what extraordinary movements were taking place there! I fell silently to my knees beside her whom I loved more than anything; and laying my head on that bed of sorrows, I plunged for some time into a vast contemplation of my woes. I rose up again, but only to lament aloud, with as little restraint as I had done within. God of wrath! I cried, how can we continue to respect thy will, when we cannot see its justice, yet are subject to its terrible and deadly effects! I went on and on with the same vehemence; but as my heart gradually melted under the fury, my eyes filled with tears. I no more did anything but weep and sigh. I stayed the whole night at my wife's bedside, at times bemoaning her fate and mine, and at others comforting her with protestations of everlasting love, but basically as disturbed and inconsolable as she.

The situation of my affairs did not permit me to remain long in Kingston, where at every moment I ran the risk of being recog-

⁹⁶ She thus implies awareness that despair is a mortal sin, which unforgiven would impede her path to heaven.

nized. In vain did Lord Terwill urge me to, for fear I would be even more exposed by leaving his house. My intention was to withdraw to this province. Although I was not yet thinking of choosing my retreat in this cave, I knew that the terrain of my own properties, where there are numerous uninhabited mountains, could provide me more than one refuge. I came here to scout for the most secure one. I traveled by night, and avoided being seen by anyone here. I spoke only to the priest of a parish I own, a man of honor and good sense, whose advice has since been most useful. It was he who first mentioned to me this vast, empty region, and made me desire to come and live here. He was familiar with it, less for having explored it himself than by tradition. We came together to examine all its branches. I found so many convenient places created, so it seems, by natural design to serve as the ultimate resource to some unfortunate, that I decided on the spot to adopt one of them to inhabit. The priest took care of preparing it in secret, while I would go back to Kingston to fetch my wife and daughter, whom I wanted to have with me in my retreat. I asked the priest make two of these chambers habitable, the first being the one where I first took you, and the other deeper in the tunnel, where you saw my wife and daughter. It provides double [50] security against anything unexpected that might occur. I live in the first, like a sort of vanguard, and from there I assure the safety of all that is dearest to me. The priest's zeal had the job finished in little time; so when I arrived with my little family, which I had brought in a litter, still making a point of advancing only at night, I found our dwelling ready to receive us. We have been living here for over five months. I have seen no one in that time but two or three of my most loyal friends, who came expressly from London with Lord Terwill to bring me some refreshments and help in any way friends can. We are served by two devoted domestics, a woman who is constantly at the side of my wife and daughter, and a manservant who lives in the same

chamber as I, and goes out every night to fetch the provisions we require from the priest. Our occupations are such as you can imagine, gloomy, and suited to our fortune and lodgings. You have seen my wife. She will not be able to regain her strength. Her life force has been undermined by her wounds and loss of blood. She is forever pale and languishing. Her sorrow further consumes her. I no longer hope I can keep her long. My daughter grows amidst her mother's continual tears and sighs. The poor child, whose birth and, if a father may be permitted to say so, many endearing qualities promised her such a happy station in life, finds herself reduced, almost at the outset of her life, to suffering all the rigors of consummate misfortune.⁹⁷ For my part, I who constantly join with own sufferings those of two persons so dear, shall not attempt to explain the nature of my feelings or the violence of my woes. Heaven knows them; heaven knows how long they will last, and has doubtless taken care to proportion its assistance and my strength to them, since I have been able to bear them so long. I nevertheless confess that I am not always as steadfast as I now try to appear. I have many times experienced emotions approaching extreme despair, and which only a superior power could have made me withstand. I read a good deal; reading calms the occasional excesses of my turmoil; it changes them to muted melancholy, which makes me like my solitude. At such moments, if I set foot outside the cavern, every object I encounter appears somber and murky. My sorrow seems to extend itself over all of nature, and that everything about me grieves and

⁹⁷ Fanny's life, like Cleveland's, is in large part determined by her heredity on the one hand and the circumstances of her childhood on the other: she is half Spanish, and the innocent victim of the most awful dramas, living for a long time in the presence of a half-dead mother. For each of the protagonists life hardly looks promising; from their own relationship they derive their only concept of happiness.

sympathizes with me. This sight plunges me into contemplations that renew my sufferings. I enter my tomb, I explore all its innermost reaches, I trace my misfortunes on the hardest stones, and wash the letters with my tears. It is surprising that having lived for so long in the same dwelling, you have not yet noticed some of these melancholy sites. I find this activity not without its charms; my sorrow seems to find release through expression. I return to my wife's chamber; I comfort her; I instruct my daughter, I wish her all her mother's virtues, with a happier fate. Such have been my use of the half-year I have spent in this isolated spot. If encountering you, added Lord Axminster, at first caused me surprise and even some fright, I now regard it as another effect of the protection of heaven, which does not will I should die here of sorrow, since it affords me the comfort of meeting an good man.

I thanked his lordship for the favorable opinion he had formed of me, and assured him I would try to sustain it. Of integrity and rectitude, I told him, you will find an undying fount in my heart. But I fear that a man accustomed as you are to the ways of high society will be dissatisfied with my simple and perhaps somewhat crude manners. You see, I said with my usual naiveté, I heard my mother say a hundred times, and have read in the best authors, that nothing is more dangerous than a polite man who is not honest, because he knows how to assume all the appearances of kindness, but never has its sentiments. I am very far, I added, from having this opinion of you. But if you wish us to become friends, you must promise never to deceive me. [51] He replied most kindly that he so promised, and that I must easily judge from the reciprocal candor with which he had just revealed everything about himself that not only had he recognized my own, but that it was the only thing that made him desire my friendship. Praised be heaven, then, I replied; you are the kind of friend that I have prayed for! My heart had indeed made me sense that the first

moment I saw you. I promise you in turn that you will always find me sincere and faithful in loving you, and will gladly put my life itself at your service. He could not help smiling at the candid and affectionate tone with which I uttered those words; and embracing me tenderly, he assured me that I too was the kind of person he desired to hold and cherish as a brother; that inasmuch as our captivity could be expected to end at the same time, since it had the same cause, he would like me to bind my fortune to his; and that he pledged to love me, and render me his services, with the same zeal as I had offered him mine. Governing the world would have flattered me less than what I felt I had gained by this assurance. My joy was visible, and so natural that it had the power of assuaging the bitter sufferings of Viscount Axminster. He attested that he too could feel a change in his heart, and that he owed it to this cause. We continued our discussion, which reinforced that initial ardor of esteem and reciprocal friendship with the satisfaction I had to learn of his interest in the sciences, and the satisfaction on his part to discover that there was no form of learning in which I was not more versed than can commonly be found in one so relatively young. He believed me nevertheless older than I was. My serious occupations had early traced the lines of my face. He was surprised to learn that I was no more than sixteen years old, and was indulgent enough to tell me that I was perhaps a unique example of such wisdom and maturity of mind for that age.

With night coming on, I told him I would be hard pressed to find my way back to the cave entrance that corresponded to my dwelling. His proposal was that I remain with him until the next day; but the fear of inflicting too much worry on James, who was surely surprised by a two-day absence, made me insist on returning that very evening. The viscount had no more idea than I did of the proper direction in which to look for Mrs Riding's little valley; however, since he had gone quite deep into the cavern, he

had the idea of asking me whether I did not remember some memorable spot where he too might chance to have gone. I spoke of the river: he had never gone that far. I remembered the inscription I had seen on the wall, which for fear of interrupting him I had not mentioned when he alluded to it in his narrative. I even repeated the words to him, which I had remembered. He was perfectly familiar with the cavern up to that spot; and as I assured him that from there I could easily get to my chamber, he offered to lead me there forthwith.

He called his manservant, whom I had not yet seen, and after ordering him to light a large torch and lead the way, we plunged into the depths of our murky home. In a half-hour we reached the spot of the inscription. Along the way the viscount pointed out several others to me which were not less moving; as soon as I began to recognize my surroundings, I urged him to return; but he was too generous not to accompany me all the way to my chamber. When we were nearly there, I asked him to allow me to walk a few steps ahead of him, in order to verify that nothing had changed during my absence. The door was closed, although I had left it open. I assumed it was James who had taken this measure. But as I was about to open it, I was surprised to hear the voices of two people in heated discussion. I lent an ear, and recognized that it was Mrs Riding who was upbraiding James for his negligence, to which she attributed my demise, which she deemed certain. Mrs Riding had just arrived from London. I did not think I should let her know I was so close by without first alerting Lord Axminster. I turned back to him; he expressed some uneasiness at learning that he was to be seen by people he did not know. [52] However, once I had explained Mrs Riding's character to him, and the fact that it was this very woman whom I had to thank for my life and safety, he consented to see her. We knocked at the door. She was beside herself with joy when she saw me. I related my adventure to her, and my good fortune in encountering

Viscount Axminster, who had saved my life, and granted me something still more precious by promising me his friendship. She was extremely surprised to find someone of his rank in such a sorry state. She was not unaware of the misfortune which forced him into hiding; but she was persuaded, like Cromwell and everyone else in the kingdom, that he had fled to a neighboring country. The generous lady paid him such unfeigned signs of respect and compassion for his ill fortune that she instantly elicited his confidence. He embraced me with tears in his eyes, saying that by saving my life he had gained as much as I, since with my friendship he also acquired that of such an endearing lady and one of such excellent character. He did not hesitate to inform her that he, like myself, had taken shelter in the cavern; he even told her about his wife and daughter, and invited her, if she thought she could do so secretly, to go sometimes to comfort by her presence and conversation two unfortunate women who for six months had had no contact with the world of the living.

Mrs Riding was completely taken back to learn that Lord Axminster and his wife and daughter had been living in this grim dwelling place for six months. Although his lordship had considerable holdings not very distant from her own, she had never seen him, because he usually resided in London. But her generosity, which made her the friend of all unfortunates, caused her to take a keen interest in the ill fortune of this aggrieved family. She expressed to the viscount a great eagerness to see his wife and daughter, and requested for that satisfaction that very evening. He bade her defer her visit until the next evening, with the intention of preparing them for this interview. As I was henceforth to live on close terms with him, I would asked him to let me accompany his return, had Mrs Riding not wished to speak with me privately, and bade me remain that night with her. Lord Axminster left us.

When I was alone with the lady, we began one of those conversations where the mind has less part than the heart. I

had not seen her since my mother's death; pressing business had retained her in London. This was the first time she came to her dear friend's grave to render her last duties of esteem and friendship. It was, as I have said, in the middle of my chamber; James had already shown her where. She had me approach it, taking me by the hand: So it is here, she said, that you have seen fit to entomb the ashes of your unfortunate mother. This is where constancy, rectitude, kindness, all the perfections of the body and the virtues of the soul are buried with this dear person. The earth here should produce nothing but flowers, and exude pleasant fragrances. Heaven, she continued, lifting her eyes upward, thy rewards must be magnificent for virtue, since thou dost so neglect it here below! Otherwise how could we explain thy justice? Her share no doubt, is in a happier life; in thy bosom dost thou crown her; in that fountain of glory and bliss my dear friend finally enjoys of the sweetness of an eternal rest, having so being so long the object of the men's malevolence and the plaything of thine enemies and hers. May her happiness therefore be now the care of thy love, and the work of thy power! And you, she added, turning towards me, you who have remained beside her to provide perhaps an even longer carrier of misfortune, what wishes should my friendship make for you? Shall I wish for you prosperities which your mother's example and instruction have taught you to scorn? It would ill honor her intentions and your sentiments. Whatever fate heaven reserves for you, may you be as virtuous as she! That is the will of my affection for you.

After this effusion of tenderness and devotion, Mrs Riding sat down to talk more at leisure with me. She told me that, although her principal desire for me was that I should [53] faithfully follow my mother's lessons, it was not her opinion that I should utterly neglect to attend to my own fortune; now that I was master of my own conduct, it was time to make a plan of wise designs for the future; prudence, to be sure, did not permit me to

appear in England so long as my father lived, although the danger, she added, was not so great now that I was alone as it was when I had my mother's company; but there were other means than isolation to keep me safe, and she knew of one which she advised me to adopt: it was to leave the kingdom and go join King Charles II, our legitimate master, and attach myself to his service⁹⁸; by taking up arms in his following and engaging in his struggle, I would have a heavenly-approved way of avenging my father's cruelties; the English would ultimately open their eyes and recognize their duty; the usurpation would sooner or later end in the overthrow, or at least the death, of Cromwell; it would then be a immense advantage to me to be able to return to England with my king's acquaintance and the merit of having embraced his cause; she would cover the expense of equipping me, and would put me in a condition to appear honorably in his retinue; it was necessary for me to decide something promptly, because there was talk of a general peace among all the European powers,⁹⁹ and she thought it opportune that I offer my services to the king before the war was over; and if I saw things as she did, she would so hasten the preparations for my departure that it was in my power to leave the kingdom before the week was out.

This proposal was not easy for me to espouse. I even found it frightening. Such a sudden transition from the isolation in which I was accustomed to living, to the life of a man of war and

⁹⁸ Charles had joined his mother, Henriette de France, in exile in Paris in 1646; after several dramatic adventures and a flight in England and Scotland, he displaced his court for the rest of the Protectorate to various parts of Europe. Another British king in exile, his brother James II, will be found holding court in Saint Germain around 1690 in *Le Doyen de Killerine*.

⁹⁹ Allusion to the peace conference between Mazarin and Don Louis de Haro in Fontarabia, which will be mentioned further along.

a courtier, gave rise to so many new thoughts that they cause me almost to tremble. I did not disguise my unease from Mrs Riding. I can admit the truth to you without shame, I said, since you know the manner in which I have been raised. I have spoken to scarcely two men in my whole life. What kind of figure will I cut in an army or court, knowing nothing of their manners and usages? It is not that I think I lack courage and determination, but I can tell that the way I have lived until now does not adequately prepare me for the intercourse of high society. The conversation I have held today with Lord Axminster, I added, has made me perceive much that is awkward in my manners, by the extreme difference I noted in his. Mrs Riding began to laugh. She replied that in truth I was something wanting in polish, but that a little experience would train me sooner than I was expecting. Nevertheless, I could not promise to carry out her plan without taking some time for reflection. I entertained this thought all night. Lord Axminster returned to my chamber the next morning. I was still undecided. I was glad for his presence. I shared my quandary with him, and invited him to give me his opinion of my personal qualities, and of my aptitudes for society. He found this question amusing. However, after smiling modestly at my naïveté, he said: I would be deceiving you if I assured you that you want nothing to appear with distinction in a certain kind of society. The virtues to which you have applied yourself are a feeble merit in the eyes of those who do not possess them. Even those who esteem them do not want them too severe and too austere. They must be able to bend a little to the weakness and corruption of men. Basically, your character is gentle and human, he added; I have already seen you enough to recognize that; but your rectitude expresses itself perhaps too directly. You have developed the correct notion of men, by supposing they are for the most part mean and deceitful; but this opinion must be kept strictly to yourself to serve only as rule and motive the prudence of actions. As an example, he cited

the manner in which the day before I had gone about asking for his friendship. At first, he continued, you betrayed misgivings and a fear that were a bit [54] offensive; and then going suddenly to the opposite extreme, you opened up unreservedly, simply on my assurance of my forthrightness. There you have two excesses at once. The first could have put off anyone but me, and drawn an unpleasant reply; the second made you put your life in danger, by revealing your secret too easily: a traitor could have made use of such openness to deceive you. Now I, who have some experience with my sincerity, immediately recognized the essence of your principles, and did not hesitate in turn to confide in you with the great confidence, especially after I had heard the story of your misfortunes and those of your mother. But what I did with discernment, you had done with some imprudence and temerity. I embraced my dear friend warmly, and thanked him for advice that I recognized as important. How much additional advice would I not require, I said, to become fit for human society? Yet Mrs Riding wants me to leave for the court of King Charles. Whereupon I related to him the lady's discourse and her proposal. He was surprised at it. The fact was that she had been too easily persuaded by her own zeal. She herself admitted as much that same evening, when at my behest the viscount discussed it with her. Indeed I have a hundred times since been astonished, recalling how naive, I could even say crude, my manners were then, that this lady, who nevertheless had as much polish and wit as kindness, could have conceived designs on me that I was so incapable of fulfilling. I have no less difficulty understanding how it had come about that my mother, who had been raised at court, and who doubtless lacked none of the qualities that make a lady attractive, since she had been worthy of a great king's affections, could have so utterly neglected that important part of my education. The great devotion she had developed to study led her to regard whatever was unconnected to that with indifference. She

was no doubt persuaded that age and opportunity would allow me to acquire little by little what she deemed irrelevant to my childhood. Her whole concern was to inculcate sound principles of virtue in me, and constant rules of reason and wisdom. It will be seen in the course of my story that her efforts were not completely futile, at least if we believe the testimony of a powerful king, who later honored me with the glorious title of philosopher.¹⁰⁰

Lord Axminster having thus, as a true friend, confirmed me in my misgivings about myself, I entreated him to continue his favors and use my every mistake as an opportunity to instruct and advise me. Though I could be wrong, I told him, I believe my basic sentiments are such as befit a gentleman. I only required a friend to guide them. As for my outward manners, I shall have a sure method for polishing them, which is to pattern them on yours. He promised me his help. I proposed that, to facilitate for me the pleasure of seeing him continually, he allow me to leave my chamber, and have my bed brought to his. He seemed to assent happily to this. The change was carried out that very afternoon, as soon as James had brought me my provisions. The viscount made do with a frugal repast which I invited him to share with me, and we then awaited Mrs Riding, who had promised to return to the cavern.

She came in the middle of the night: this was a precaution she always took, to avoid her servants' suspicions. We set out for Lady Axminster's quarters. Along the way, I renewed with her our conversation of the day previous, and invited the viscount to explain to her what he thought of her proposal. He did so openly.

¹⁰⁰ We can suppose this was to be Charles II, and that after his restoration he would speak in this way of Cleveland; but that is a scene that will never be recounted. In book VI Cleveland will also see, but only briefly, Louis XIV, whom he calls a "great prince".

She confessed that she had not sufficiently considered the reasons that should hold me back, and marveled at Lord Axminster's kindness in condescending to assume for me the role of preceptor.¹⁰¹ That generous friend, wishing to be helpful to me in every way, asked her whether she could obtain for us a horse, some foils, and various other educational instruments which he wished to teach me to use. She promised what he wanted. We indeed received them a few days later: and so it was that in the most desolate and isolated place [55] there was, I received, thanks to his lordship's generosity, examples and lessons equaling what I could have hoped for from the best masters.

We came to milady's chamber. She had been told we were coming, and about the character of Mrs Riding. The ceremonies were brief. Confidence and friendship spring up quickly among hearts of similar kindness. Her ladyship was in her usual languor. While the conversation was tender and affectionate, it was joyless. My lord was incapable of remaining strong in the presence of his dear wife; nor were we able to see him so grief-stricken without sharing deeply in his suffering. He drew Mrs Riding aside, and as he had easily perceived her as a woman of wit and experience, he asked her opinion of his wife's health. She answered forthrightly that she augured ill of her extreme lack of strength, and that, though she did not know the cause of the

¹⁰¹ Almost all of Prévost's novels depend in part on the role of a mentor-father figure: the Man of Quality for Rosemont in books VI–XV of *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*; Axminster for Cleveland; le Dean of Coleraine for his brothers and sister in *Le Doyen de Killerine*; the ambassador for Théophé in *Histoire d'une Grecque moderne*. The influence of Fénelon's *Télémaque* on Prévost is certain; the *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* (and, to a lesser degree, *Cleveland*) are logically part of a lineage going from *Télémaque* to *Julie*; note also that when Prévost in 1764 translated the *Letters to a Young Nobleman*, he gave them the title *Lettres de Mentor à un jeune seigneur*.

illness, she thought it to be fatal. She added that a more comfortable lodging, or at least healthier air, might help her recover; and she offered her own house for her, pressing him insistently to accept. He seemed not opposed to this offer. It would not have been difficult to have her ladyship transported there in a carriage, and pretend she was a friend of Mrs Riding arriving from London. It was a matter of obtaining the consent of the afflicted lady, who adored her husband too much to leave him for an instant. The viscount was not unaware of this. He was even concerned lest such a proposition cause her some dismay. Nevertheless, he put it to her. But how right he had been to fear it would devastate her! She at first responded only by an abundance of tears she shed on his hand, which she took in hers. It seemed her grief could not express itself otherwise. But her mouth finally opened to the tenderest protests. Alas, she said, you want my life, I see that; it burdens you! Nature was going to reclaim it: why do you tire of waiting? A moment more, and you will be free from me forever. Tears streamed from our own eyes, seeing hers which continued to flow; and Lord Axminster, as moved as she and all of us together, remained almost motionless listening to her and watching her. Mrs Riding, who was the innocent cause of this turmoil, spoke up to excuse herself to her ladyship, and ask her to pardon her imprudence in favor of her zeal.

Nevertheless, this visit was useful for more than one reason. It provided the viscount with a new remedy for the excesses of his sorrow in the agreeable conversation of Mrs Riding, and her ladyship with care not easily available to her previously. Mrs Riding let few nights go by without coming to see them in this same manner, or sending to each of them whatever she thought most appropriate to their health or consolation. For my part, whose friendship for Lord Axminster only grew by the day, I also constantly received new tokens of his own. We became inseparable. His dedication to my instruction never slackened for a mo-

ment. With him I made more progress in a very few months than one can make in a year in the best academy.¹⁰² I myself could see the change in my manners. Although reading was always my preferred activity, I willingly left my books behind to practice my new exercises. I was learning to ride and use various weapons, to carry myself gracefully; I was becoming civil, considerate, eager to oblige; and I recognized more and more that there is something wanting in the most serious sciences, and even in virtue, when they are not accompanied by some *savoir-vivre* and by the polished air that makes them agreeable and attractive.

A second revolution that took place in my sentiments served greatly to hasten the success of my illustrious master's efforts. This is a circumstance of my life which I wish to explain carefully, because, however slight it was in its beginnings, it has given rise since its inception to such considerable events that they make up the most intriguing part of my story.

[56] I was living on such intimate terms with Lord Axminster and his wife that I regarded myself less as a stranger than their own son. My time was spent taking instruction from Lord Axminster, or helping Lady Axminster pass time by reading a good book to her, or imparting in turn to their endearing daughter some inkling of the kinds of knowledge that are befitting to her sex. Her name was Fanny. This young person was extremely eager to learn. She was not yet ten; but nothing so opens the mind as misfortune. She already possessed an understanding that allowed her immediately to grasp the meaning of my lessons and

¹⁰² The academy is a place where young noblemen learn to ride, handle arms, and all the exercises with which a young gentleman must be familiar. Cleveland's studies are almost always abstract and, at least for the reader, void of precise content, whether in the cave with his mother or with Fanny in Cuba: only this program for learning the courtly arts represents an explicit form of study in the novel.

her reading. Nothing entered her memory that she had not digested it with attentive reflection. She would have refused to learn anything she did not perfectly understand. Thus, all her ideas being clear and interconnected, she drew from this method considerable keenness of mind, and a surprising ability to express herself. I marveled at her natural talents, and spared nothing to cultivate them. She was moreover admirably gentle, and thankful for the slightest favors, for which she attached the highest value to my efforts. Her gratitude was constantly manifested in her innocent marks of affection, and her tender and flattering words of thanks. I renewed my lessons to her several times a day¹⁰³; and although by ten a girl rather ceases to be a child, I displayed the same affection for her without precaution. I often took her onto my lap, I embraced her with the sort of guileless innocence that never even imagines reasons for concern. For a rather long time I maintained the same behavior, never giving it a second thought. However, during that time a hidden flame was kindling in my veins, which I felt before I understood the nature of it. The first illumination I had on the subject came from a sort of quivering I felt when she was close to me, which then became a delightful sensation when I had her on my lap. I could not bring myself to leave her when I held her in this tender posture. I pulled her close to my heart, as if spontaneously and without reflecting. It seemed to open up for her; it close up again sadly when she went away. When I would have her read something by my side, I gradually lost the attention I owed to her reading. I fell into a deep distraction from which I emerged with no memory of what my mind had

¹⁰³ Before falling in love, Cleveland is a preceptor: the situation foreshadows that of the ambassador in *Histoire d'une Grecque moderne*, who instructs his "dear pupil" Théopé before he decides to seduce her, and that of Brenner with respect to Mlle Tekely in *Le Monde moral* (*Œuvres*, vol. 6).

been occupied. I surprised myself with my eyes fixed on her dreamily, and quickly lowered them with a kind of shame. Afterward I wondered with amazement what could be the cause of it. Soon I took not a step either inside or outside the cave but that her image was constantly before me. I dreamed about her; my thoughts were filled her upon awakening, and I burned with impatience to be back with her; once there, I was attentive to everything she said. I was stirred by the very sound of her voice. Everything she had touched seemed to me to have taken on a new quality. In short, love has no symptom which I had not experienced before I realized that I was indeed prey to that violent illness.¹⁰⁴ Not that I had not learned from my reading, as well as from listening to various stories, that there was a passion bearing that name; that it was dangerous; and that one was often afflicted by it, unable to have foreseen it or to protect oneself against it; but since sentiments cannot be represented by ideas, I required experience before I could know them. I thus acquired it at a time when nothing was more contrary to the interests of my fortune and tranquillity.

I do not presume to give myself credit for my struggles and my resistance. I admit frankly that if love is a flaw for wisdom, it is unjustly that I have been called wise, and thought to possess some virtue.¹⁰⁵ It took over my heart by a sort of stealth, but I was

¹⁰⁴ As in Marivaux, love is a “surprise” which manifests itself well before the character can manage to identify it. The text would lead one to believe up to this point that love is natural, that is, spontaneous and precultural. But we will soon see that Cleveland’s notion of love is none the less literarily inspired: see Philip Stewart, “*Vox naturæ*: a reading of Provost,” *Romanic Review* 71 (1980), pp. 141–148.

¹⁰⁵ Thus this happy little society, although protected from the hostile outside world by the security of the cavern, is unbalanced by an internal movement: love, which Cleveland, as he ceases to feel innocent, tries wilfully to keep in check. This development raises doubts as well, for

not frightened to discover it there. I was persuaded, following the principles of my mother's philosophy, that the simple impulses of nature, when it has not been corrupted by the habit of vice, are in no way contrary to innocence. They need not ask to be repressed, but simply to be shaped by reason. Far, then, from faulting myself for weakness, or feeling some shame for succumbing, I confess that I felt happy at the change I was experiencing. One need only recall the manner in which I was raised. My whole life had been spent in gloomy [57] solitude. I was scarcely aware that I had a heart, so rarely did I feel it stir. Study has its pleasures, but are melancholic ones, ever uniform. I even had experienced only imperfectly the tenderness of nature, for my mother was a philosopher even in her caresses and affection. I could count myself among the unfortunate children whose parents had never smiled at them. Thus nothing equalled the eagerness in my heart for the first movements of love. Oh God, I exclaimed after some reflection which led me to discover the true situation of my soul, I know not what thou hast in store for me; but what I feel surely cannot be an effect of thy wrath, nor an omen of ill fortune: it is felicity itself that seems to suddenly to fill my heart. How can I for so long not have known I was capable of such happiness, and why then do men complain so about nature? And yet, I added inwardly, let us proceed cautiously.¹⁰⁶ Love is a charming passion, I can tell that much: it is an innocent passion, at least with respect to me, who have not sought to give rise to it, and have

the first time, about the simple system of wisdom held by Elisabeth Cleveland, a fundamental dilemma in the novel, as Cleveland's ambition is to apply it consistently to everything in life.

¹⁰⁶ This technique by which the narrator addresses himself in familiar style is rather rare in Prévost, but reminiscent of *Gil Blas* (by Alain-René Lesage, 1715–1735) and *Le Paysan parvenu* (by Marivaux, 1734–1735).

lived up to now with sufficient virtue not to have anything in my heart that could come from an evil source. But they say it is a dangerous passion, which must continually be kept in check; and that if it is not thus restrained, it gradually puts virtue to sleep, even when the two are not in conflict, and ultimately betrays and destroys it. Let us therefore indulge it only with the precautions it requires. The first of these shall be always to take great care to control it, since that is so necessary. I shall hardly find this difficult, I continued; for what would be the fruit of my studies and of my mother's instructions, if I did not derive from them enough strength to achieve some mastery of myself? I shall constantly find in my books, in my contemplations, and in the rectitude of my heart a counterweight to the dangers of love. Study shall serve, if possible, to make me prudent, and love to make me happy. Another precaution I wish to take, and which can reassure me alone against all sorts of misgivings, is to reveal frankly my inclinations to Lord Axminster. I would have him as my judge. He loves his daughter, he loves me, he has the experience of the world and of love; it is his counsel that will guide my conduct and sentiments.

Such were my first resolutions. I went back over them after formulating them. They seemed to me wise and virtuous. I was quite sure they were sincere. I had not the least scruple thereafter over my passion, and rushed back to her ladyship's chamber to enjoy the satisfaction of being with the person I loved. It seemed to me that after this examination of my sentiments I would feel less embarrassed with her, and caress her more freely than ever. I entered. But though I was beginning to know from experience what a feeling of love was, I still was ignorant of the strange effects of that passion. The easy and familiar air with which I was preparing to rejoin sweet Fanny abandoned me once I was with her, and she had looked at me. I stood silent and trembling, unable to make an effort to overcome this attack of timidity. My

intention had been to embrace her, as was my wont; I felt that I lacked courage, and found my arms unwilling to obey me. She noticed the turmoil that appeared in my eyes, and thinking perhaps it was owing to something that was disturbing me, she came to me herself to distract me with her caresses. Her hands had no sooner touched mine than my face flushed bright red, as if it were the involuntary effect of some shame. I disengaged myself with more respect and reserve than she was accustomed to see in my manners. She asked me the reason for this apparent coolness, which she took for sadness, and was astonished to find me as consternated in my answer as I was in my actions.

Being extremely surprised myself by what had just happened to me, I decided to leave almost immediately, and go walk alone at the cave entrance to seek some insight into my own dispositions and the reason for such a strange transformation. I am cured of love? I asked myself; is this the passion [58] I thought so tender and fervent, and from which I anticipated such pleasure? Far from loving Fanny, I added, I must assuredly loathe her; for only loathing can inspire the emotion and constraint that just came over me in her presence. I am quite unlike other men; I am a monster, just as I used to think: for it is not naturally that one pass suddenly from love to loathing. Thereupon I fell back into all the notions I formerly had had about my character, and long complained of nature, much more than fortune. After all my complaints, I did not sense that my inclination to return to Fanny's side was lessened. On the contrary, my heart flew to her. It objected to my having left her so abruptly, and having responded so badly to the obliging concern she had shown for my health. I was taken with an urgent impatience to return to her chamber, throw myself at her feet, and cover them with kisses. This I was about to do, without taking the time to examine these new sentiments, nor wonder why I was thinking of falling at her feet rather than embracing her in my customary way; but upon seeing the

viscount who was returning from a walk near the cave and, like me, about to go back inside, I was obliged to join him.

Running into him like this was not unpleasant, although it prevented me from following the impulse of my heart. I decided when I saw him that I would reveal my situation to him, as I had had in mind. I went up to him, and invited him walk a little longer with me. He was agreeable. But as I was about to open my mouth to explain myself confidently, my voice suddenly failed me, and I became almost as tongue-tied as I had been with Fanny. My lord, who thought he had detected from my mien that I had something to communicate to him, studied me, as if he had been surprised by my silence. I could not prevent myself from blushing; and failing to muster enough courage to speak up, I uttered sighs despite myself that betrayed the troubled state of my soul. He pressed me to tell him what caused them. Nothing, I replied sadly. In vain did he urge me to tell him more. I gathered my mind and strength, but it was only to distract him from the thought that I might have intended to discuss anything with him beyond matters of indifference. He went back into the cavern. I remained alone outside, for a few moments, to question myself again about this episode, for which I could assign neither a cause nor a name. Was anything ever so strange? I said. Why then did nature give me a tongue, if not to express myself? Who kept me from opening my mouth? Was it not to tell my lord of my love that I had invited him pause? Finally, by dint of examining every cranny of my soul, I thought I figured out that it was shame that had held me back, and this insight also cast some light on what had come over me in the presence of Fanny. Well, I said then, let us invoke my rule. If it is true that all my natural sentiments are still proper and well ordered, this one must have a just cause, which I must try to examine. I sought it with innumerable reflections: and since the simplicity of my mind did not prevent it from being, if I may say so, keen enough and discriminating enough, I finally discovered that

the shame that kept me from explaining myself to Lord Axminster was not only correct, but the effect, albeit in an contorted and uncertain way, of a principle of reason and equity which I ought to have obeyed in any case, had I paid more attention to it earlier. In a word, I was struck, as I thought about it, by the disproportion between the viscount's fortune and my own. His birth and rank placed him immeasurably above myself. I would not have been his equal had I been the fruit of Cromwell's marriage: how much less so being but the son of his mistress. It is true that we were companions in misfortune; but the point of difference between us inherent in our persons. I was my crude credulousness which had deluded me into seeing only his kindness and his friendship, while it hid from me the inequality of our conditions. I attributed my timidity with his daughter to the same cause, that is, an implicit, natural respect that [59] high birth elicits, and which I could not resist at the moment that I was going to violate it so by crudely revealing my passion.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps I was wrong with respect to her; or at least I was attributing my silence to only half of its cause, when I attributed it solely to the respect inspired in me by his lofty birth: my affection had doubtless been the principal factor. But though I was now able to reason correctly with respect to concepts of order, I was still too much a novice with respect to sentiments to know that true love inspires more respect for a beloved shepherdess than noble blood for the most exalted prin-

¹⁰⁷ As was the case with love, Cleveland pretends to find this sentiment in himself, which would make it not a social convention but a natural given. Nevertheless, he recognizes explicitly in the following paragraph that what is in question is an order established among men – the only explanation which can make it possible for nature, which justifies his love, to avoid contradicting herself. The text's logical position remains ambiguous, despite a rhetoric tending to valorize the preeminence of the inner voice.

cess in the world.

This discovery effected considerable change in my original thoughts. At first it made me unsure whether my love itself was not contrary to order, and consequently to duty and virtue. Attached as I was to my principles, I would incontestably have undertaken to do violence to my heart if I believed it could not suffer my passion without criminal indulgence. But it seemed to me, after sincere examination, that nature's rights being the first of all rights, there was nothing strong enough to prescribe against them; that love was one of the most sacred of them, since it is, as it were, the soul of all that is; and therefore all that the reason or the order established among men could do to oppose it was forbid certain of its effects, without ever being able to condemn it in its source. On this basis, I determined not to combat my inclination for Fanny, and to derive from my affection all I could expect from it for my happiness. But I promised heaven no less firmly that I would let nothing show that could violate order, and make me blameworthy. I adhered unshakeably to these two resolutions. I had too little knowledge of the nature of the heart to foresee the price I would one day pay for my constancy in observing them; but it sufficed that I had recognized my duty for me to remain not for an instant undecided about obeying it.

The first fruit of my resolutions was to make my manner more reserved and circumspect, both towards his lordship and towards his lovely daughter. According to my plan, he was never to perceive the sentiments I had for her; and I was to make her aware of them only through attentions and services, more ardent and assiduous perhaps than those that come from an indifferent heart, but less overt than those of a suitor who is entitled to hope. I condemned my tongue to everlasting silence. What I had felt made me think it would have no trouble maintaining it. I returned to the cavern after fortifying myself in these speculations, and immediately began to apply them to the letter. I accosted Fanny

with less consternation than I had had an hour earlier,¹⁰⁸ but with a more composed and serious demeanor. I cut out the excessive familiarity I had practiced previously: it seemed to me that the nature of my caresses had changed along with my sentiments, and that I could no longer regard them as innocent. My dedication to her instruction only intensified; but the effort I put into it could not betray its cause, for it was natural for his lordship to understand it as an effect of my gratitude for his to me. However, since he was astute, and since I on the other hand was not skillful enough to assume the easy manner without which one cannot long maintain a feigned character, he figured out from my constraint that I was wracked by some extraordinary emotion. He urged me to open my heart to him. His encouragement was so affectionate that more than once it nearly wrested my secret from me. I had the strength nonetheless to resist it. Almost a full year went by during which I constantly observed the same conduct. I saw Fanny continually, I admired her charms, I secretly allowed myself the pleasure of loving her; and the only sign I gave her of my love was to eliminate those I had accustomed her to receive of my friendship.

Lady Axminster's death finally verified Mrs Riding's prediction. Heaven did her a favor by ending to her lethergy and her woes. It was also one for the viscount, for the continual sufferings of his cherished wife made his life so sorrowful and unhappy that it would have been difficult to find him at peace for a single

¹⁰⁸ One of the most original aspects of Prévost's psychological realism is that thought occupies time, not merely at the level of narration, but also in diegetic chronology. Here it is not a matter of the logical, retrospective development of a thought which at first was confused; it is a real conversation of Cleveland as young protagonist with himself, which lasts an hour. The same phenomenon can be found in *Manon Lescaut* (p. 388).

minute. Yet he felt her [60] death as deeply as if he all his happiness had been lost with her. For a long time he was inconsolable. Mrs Riding's good offices, and his daughter's ministrations and mine, gradually pacified the bitter sentiments in his soul. We got him to consent to suffer life; and to complete his healing, Mrs Riding suggested he leave that gloomy dwelling, where for so long he had known nothing but anguish. A return to London was out of the question, as was the idea of remaining in England. Cromwell's wrath had not subsided: the viscount still had the same perils to fear. But as he had stayed in the kingdom after the Windsor affair only in order to remain with his wife who was not in a condition to accompany him, Mrs Riding urged him to leave an abode that was henceforth as unsuited to the situation of his mind as to that of his fortune. I will lose those dearest to me, said this good friend, when I see you leave with your daughter and Cleveland: but it is your best interest that calls for it. I advise you to adopt the proposal I made to Cleveland a year ago, which was to go to France, where they assure that King Charles is now. He will be happy to see such illustrious servants, and at least with him you will have an agreeable refuge. At first this proposal held no interest for Lord Axminster. The aversion he had retained for life made him want to end his in the shadows of our solitude, and beside the tomb of his wife.¹⁰⁹ For my part, having no desires beyond his presence and that of his daughter,¹¹⁰ I cared little

¹⁰⁹ This association of the cave as asylum and the earth as last asylum is reinforced by the two mothers who are buried there.

¹¹⁰ Wholly lacking in ambition, Cleveland asks of the world only that it leave him alone; his quest, when he sets out in both the Old and New Worlds, is for Fanny and not adventure: traits that Voltaire may well have remembered from *Cleveland* when he wrote *Candide*: see Philip Stewart, "Holding the Mirror up to Fiction: generic parody in *Candide*," *French Studies* 30 (1979), pp. 411–419.

whether we moved somewhere else, provided I was entitled to accompany those two cherished persons. I left him to examine the matter with Mrs Riding. She finally brought him around to her point of view. But by an about-face she hardly anticipated, he urged her to leave England herself along with us. He reminded her that, given her dispositions with respect to Cromwell and tyranny, nothing ought to attach her any more than us to our unfortunate country. Come, he said, wait in France for heaven to grant us a more just government and happier days. Whatever our fortune may be there, we will share it with you. You will be a mother to my daughter. I will always have for you the friendship and consideration that your kindness and the inestimable services you have rendered to my poor family deserve. I added my entreaties to his appeals. After a few days' deliberation, she relented. We turned all our attention to preparations for our departure. She sent James to the nearest ports to find the earliest opportunity for a ship bound for France. He found one such at Topsham, which is only two miles from Exeter.¹¹¹ We praised his cleverness in going directly to that small port, because there we had less to fear being exposed to the searches of Cromwell's emissaries. Lord Axminster and Mrs Riding had their most valuable possessions sent there secretly. Everything worked out so well that we were ready to set forth just a few days later, and reached Topsham and the vessel without impediment. Thus our resolution was carried out almost as soon as it was conceived.¹¹²

¹¹¹ These two cities in Devon, on the Channel, are on the itinerary of Renoncour and Rosemont in *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, where a description of them can be found (p. 265).

¹¹² The Rumney Hole episode, which ends here, seemed rather far-fetched even to Prévost's contemporaries. In the preface of *Les Égaréments du cœur et de l'esprit*, Claude Crébillon advocates a purified kind of novel free from either extraordinary events, or

[61] BOOK TWO

It was not without regret that we left our beloved cavern, the abode, to be sure, of our sorrow, but at the same time the asylum of our woes and the source of our salvation. There the viscount and I left two precious monuments, the memories of which would stay with us many a day. He had buried there the body of his wife, as had I that of my mother. It was not without shedding tears over their graves that we left this remote place, not without commending them to the tutelary gods who had protected us there for so long, to watch over and protect them from the profanation of the unjust.

I repeat: despite the gratitude that attached me inseparably to the viscount's fortune, and even despite the passion I had for his daughter, which made me more than happy to follow her, I could not help a keen sense of sadness the day we left Rumney Hole. I could have explained it naturally, as an effect of the impression which the thought of the new sort of life I was about to begin was already making on me: but upon examining my soul's disposition more closely, I thought I detected something more serious than simply the play of the imagination. It was not a superficial sadness, which can arise and disappear in a single moment. I was deeply sorrowful. I sighed as I surveyed the tranquil place I was about to leave behind, like a sailor who has to leave port in stormy weather, and who casts a wistful eye at the shore before he turns toward the vast spaces of the sea, where a fatal shipwreck may await him. My life had begun too unhappily

seraglios, or "unforeseen deaths, and immeasurably fewer caves." Prévost indeed took this remark as intended for himself, in his own review of Crébillon's novel (*Le Pour et contre*, VII, 355). Prévost seems to have taken inspiration, for certain aspects of this first book, from a story of life in a cave by Penelope Aubin intitled *The Life of Madame de Beaumont* (1721); one thinks also of *Télémaque* and *Robinson Crusoe*.

for me to expect fortune's favors in the future. My mother's example, and that of the Viscount which was still before my eyes, were two sinister omens that foreshadowed my destiny for me. For each reason to hope I could see generally and confusedly a thousand reasons to fear. Where am I headed? For what purpose? With what hope? Such were the questions I asked myself a hundred times the day of our departure, yet nothing came to mind which could answer them. I was depending on Lord Axminster's certain assistance; but were his hopes better founded than my own? It was not experience, as has been seen, that suggested these concerns: they came from some soundness of mind which I had received from nature, and which made me reason at least about the possibilities of things I did not know in themselves, for want of worldly experience and intercourse with other men. If it be thou, I said to heaven after these reflections, that sendest me forebodings of all the woes that threaten me, grant at least thine assistance along with thy warnings, and expose me not to miseries that surpass the modest portion of strength thou hast given me. From thee, I know, I have received from rectitude and reason; I hope I shall give thee a good account of them. If I have need of something more, it too must come from thee, and I ask it of thee.

I thought of nothing else along the road to Topsham. We set sail almost immediately. We were on a ship from Nantes that was to stop at Brest, where we intended to disembark. We sailed along part of the day with [62] a favorable wind. Toward evening it suddenly changed, and the weather became so rough that our sailors told us to fear a furious tempest. Such was to be the first favor which fortune had set in store for me. Since the captain had seemed to us a man of refinement, we had not hesitated to inform him of the name and station of Lord Axminster. He had used this awareness to treat his lordship with great deference; so that when he began to perceive some danger, he came to beseech him and all of us who had the honor of accompanying him to descend into

the safest part of the vessel, where he himself took us. We stayed there for a couple of hours. The horrible groaning of the waves, and the shaking of the vessel, made us realize the magnitude of the danger. Love, much more than fear, was my soul's dominant passion; for the only anxiety I felt was for Fanny. She was half dead from fright. Mrs Riding was not less alarmed than she. His lordship kept talking in an effort to reassure them, while I was reasoning inwardly about the danger, and trying to think of some way in which I could be of assistance to the object of my tender affections. While I was looking into every part of the chamber where we were, I spied a long rope, which immediately reminded me of an example of a shipwreck I had read about in my books, and the skill with which a fortunate husband had made use of such means to save his own life and his wife's. I grabbed it furtively and put it in my pocket. The captain entered at almost that very moment. Alarmed, he told the Viscount that his vessel was doomed; that it could not hold out ten minutes against the storm; that we must either prepare for death, or plan to escape it through some daring resolution. Mrs Riding and Fanny fell unconscious at this sad declaration. Just one thing, though, the captain added: I have two longboats on board, and I offer one of them to you and your family. My lieutenant will go with you; it is already in the water: hurry, and do not lose a second. The Viscount ordered his servant and James to pick up Mrs Riding, who was a heavy woman, and take her to the boat. He was going to carry his daughter himself; I had seized her. In the name of God, I said, let me perish saving her. He tried in vain to take her from my arms. I rushed to the deck. Never did a burden seem lighter. The extreme lurching of the vessel did not prevent me from getting down into the lifeboat. His lordship was right behind me. There were eleven of us, counting the lieutenant, two oarsmen, our menservants, and two women who served Fanny and Mrs Riding. The violence of the sea swiftly bore us away from the ship. We had no light than

that of a sorry lantern. The wind was blowing with inexpressible fury, and were constantly deluged by waves that rose a hundred feet overhead and fell violently down upon us. I refused to let go of Fanny, however much the Viscount insisted. I held her tightly in my arms, as a mother holds her dearest child. Neither respect nor decorum now mattered: only love was heard. She had not recovered consciousness; or if she came to for a moment, her fright at such horrible danger made her pass out at once. As the storm seemed not to abate, I resolved to use the rope I had brought along for the purpose I had had in mind. It was heaven itself that inspired me with this idea, for otherwise sweet Fanny and I were both surely doomed. I tied the end of the rope tightly around her waist, did the same for myself, and attached the other end to the boat, so that between the boat end of the rope and the end tied to me there were five or six feet of rope, and about the same length from me to Fanny. It will be clear from this what I was hoping. I had barely finished tying and carefully tightening the knots when a horrendous wave put out our lantern and shook the boat most violently. Mrs Riding's maid ran toward me, beside herself with fright. With the movement of the boat accelerating her forward motion, she fell into the sea, pulling Fanny and me after her. We fell so swiftly, and the darkness was so [63] complete, that at first no one noticed our mishap. There was more than enough time for us to drown. The chambermaid perished. I myself was unconscious for some time; but the continual shaking I received from the boat to which the rope attached me, and even the way it pulled me out of the water whenever a gust of wind thrust it forward, sufficed to bring me around. I opened my eyes without perceiving anything at all, and, though it may be difficult to believe, I could tell despite being stunned by the fall, and despite the shock of the waves and my loss of consciousness, that I had constantly kept my dear Fanny in my arms. I say I could tell, because I at first could hardly believe it myself, and could

only persuade myself of it several tests. I gathered all my strength of body and mind to withstand the repeated buffeting of the waves. At times I found myself on the surface, as if suspended by the rope between the longboat and the sea; at such moments I had some freedom to breathe, and lifted Fanny up as much as I could to allow her to breathe freely too. The next minute, I seemed to be buried under a mountain of water rolling over me, and despite my efforts was swallowing an abundance of salt water. I tried to yell a few times to attract the attention of the boat: but with the noise of the sea, thunder itself could not have been heard. It was inevitable that my stamina would finally give out, or that the rope would prove insufficiently strong to hold us up, if the storm had remained so violent for a few hours longer. Toward daybreak the wind slackened, and peace slowly descended once more over the waters.

We had been thought irretrievably lost. Lord Axminster as an inconsolable father was grieving for his daughter; and far from rejoicing at the end of the danger, he was begging heaven to open for him as for her a grave in the bosom of the sea. As the daylight increased, he looked this way and that with a faint hope of finding at least our bodies afloat. The sorry shape I was in did not keep me from seeing him distinctly, as he was standing in the longboat, and seemed to be searching about for us in the distance. I tried to cry out, but I had no voice. The water, moreover, was so thick and mixed with sand that even if he could have imagined that we were close to him and within reach of easy rescue, it would not have been easy for him to spot us until the darkness was fully dissipated. It occurred to me to raise my hand several times. The lieutenant was the first to see me; and leaning over, in hopes of being able to reach me with his, he was surprised to find a taught rope that seemed to be connected to something. He at once tugged at it, and after easily drawing me to him, he just as easily brought both me and my beloved armful into the boat. This action took

place so quickly that Lord Axminster, whose back was turned to us to search the sea in another direction, did not have time to notice it. The lieutenant cried out: My lord! Heaven has brought your daughter back to you! His surprise cannot be described. He did not know whether to believe his eyes, nor how this miracle was to be explained. However, since it was uncertain whether she was alive, he dared not yet give way to joy. First he wanted to take her into his arms. Although fully stretched out in the boat, I was still holding her in mine. He had some trouble taking her away because, all my spirits having flowed into that part of my body I had used to hold onto her, the nerves were so stiffened that they were for some time all but inflexible. Fanny was completely unconscious. I still had partially awareness when I entered the boat, but I quickly lost it. Nevertheless, they managed to bring us both around in less time than one would normally have expected. I opened my eyes, and my first curiosity was to learn whether Fanny was dead or alive.

Lord Axminster was beside me when I asked this question, for his friendship had him dividing his attentions equally between his daughter and myself. He told me she had given some signs of life, and he was beginning to hope for the best. Indeed she slowly revived once they had made her cough up all the water she had swallowed. The sea soon became so calm [64] that we had no further danger to fear; and since it was now fully daylight, we saw the French coast, closer by than the lieutenant had imagined. He had his men row with all their strength toward the nearest point of land. Thanks to his knowledge of these waters, he could see that we were not far from a small Norman port they call Fécamp. He had his sailors steer for it.

Very soon we were within view of the city's steeples. Unfortunately, it happened that the tide was beginning to ebb. The river being narrow, and the reflux consequently very rapid, we risked being exposed to remaining four or five hours more at sea,

which greatly grieved the Viscount, less from fear of some new danger than from the pain he felt at being deprived of all the assistance that Fanny's recovery required. While he was lamenting heaven's mercilessness, and exhorting our two oarsmen to redouble their efforts to overcome the swiftness of the water, we could see a small vessel exiting the river's mouth, and seeming to be hurrying towards us. It approached so quickly that we needed little maneuvering to join it. Coming alongside, we thought we recognized our captain. It was indeed he, although he was on a different vessel. He had watched his own perish in the tempest; and having escaped in his longboat along with the eight sailors who made up his crew, he had been ferried to Fécamp by the same wind as us. His generosity and attention for Lord Axminster had immediately prompted him to board the first vessel he had found at the ready, and come to see whether we were still in a condition to receive assistance. We crossed onto his ship. He had us ashore in no time.

We shed tears of joy when we touched land, which we had had so little hope of seeing again. Fanny and Mrs Riding had only half recovered from their fright and weakness. We had to carry them on sedan chairs to the inn. I had enough vigor to make my way on foot; but upon arrival I took to bed, and stayed there for a fortnight without for a single moment being in a condition to go out. The two ladies were abed no less long. Finally, when heaven had restored our strength, we began to discuss the present situation of our affairs, and the shape our fortune was to take. Fear was not the only price we had paid. The shipwreck was almost as baleful for us as for the captain, who had lost half of his possessions in it. Among many precious things, the Viscount and Mrs Riding had been able to salvage only their money and a few jewels, part of which they had taken the precaution of placing on their persons at the storm's outset, giving the rest to their menservants. We were without furnishings, clothing, or linens. The

Viscount thought we should go first to Rouen to get outfitted and find out for certain where King Charles was at that point. We set out for that city. There we found many Englishmen who had left their country with the king, and were impatiently awaiting his restoration. They gave us all the information we sought concerning the state of his fortune, and consequently what fortune we had to expect in his entourage. The unhappy prince was anything but well-off. We were told that his retinue was barely that of an ordinary gentleman; that he increased it when he was in Paris or at a neighboring court, but in his travels from one place to another to seek assistance from various princes and engage them in his cause, he was generally accompanied only by two or three servants; that he was reduced to such a spare following by an almost continual need for money¹¹³; if we had any to offer him, or at least if we could accompany him at our own expense, he might be delighted to see us join him; but that if we were seeking him with the intention of drawing our subsistence from his liberality, we were advised to abandon a journey as long as it was futile; that he was believed to have set out some time earlier for the borders between France and Spain, where peace talks were to take place between Cardinal Mazarin and Don Luis de Haro¹¹⁴; that the trip

¹¹³ The assertion is accurate. His mother, in Paris, enjoyed a pension from the French court; Charles, who was dependent on the sometimes limited generosity of various sovereigns, maintained a small court but lived with continual money worries until the restoration. One of his solutions which did not succeed was to marry the Grande Mademoiselle, daughter of Gaston d'Orléans.

¹¹⁴ Also at stake in this negotiation was the marriage of Louis XIV with the Spanish Infanta. The talks took place on L'Île des Faisans, near Fuenterrabia, a Spanish city between San Sebastian and Bayonne, where Charles had gone in hopes of obtaining some leverage with one or the other of the ministers. Prévost gives the impression here that Charles usually resided in Rouen and had gone directly from there to

there was at least two hundred [65] leagues, and it was for us to see whether we were in a condition to undertake such a long journey, with so little expectation.

Lord Axminster had identified himself to those who gave him this opinion only as an Englishman who had left for the king's cause. He thanked them, without explaining further. But far from losing confidence in his plans, he judged on the contrary that if there were favorable moments for a man like himself to forge a path to his master's friendship, he could not hope for happier circumstances than those he had just heard described. Despite the losses he had taken in our shipwreck, he still had large sums of liquid, and he expected subsequently even more considerable transfers thanks to Lord Terwill. He had written to him before our departure to ask him to take charge of his affairs, as he had up till then. What more glorious use could he make of his wealth than to assist his king? I even noticed that this thought gave him an air of satisfaction I had never seen in him before. He pressed the orders he had already given for our clothing and conveyances. His plan was to go all the way across France rather than to voyage again by sea; that would have been shorter, but

Bayonne, but in fact he came to Rouen in 1659 and thence to Saint Malo, perhaps to prepare an invasion of England; he returned to Brussels, then went via Saint Malo and La Rochelle to Saragossa, where he arrived on 15 October. His mission to Fuenterrabia was hardly successful: Mazarin refused to receive him, and de Haro, although he granted him an annuity, refused more concrete assistance and dismissed him; he departed on 8 November. Most of his trip is recounted by Rapin de Thoyras (IX, 131). It was according to some sources in Fuenterrabia that Charles attended a mass, thus creating the impression that he had converted (see Hester Chapman, *The Tragedy of Charles II*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1964, p. 349 sq.). At the time of this trip to Spain, Cromwell had already been dead for a year: this is the chronological error mentioned in the preface.

Fanny and Mrs Riding were reluctant to expose themselves so soon to dangers which they had so recently experienced.

I was not idle in Rouen while the Viscount was getting himself outfitted. For me it was such a novelty to walk in a big city and mix with other men, that I seldom let a day go by without affording myself this diversion. It was no less useful for my instruction as to satisfy my curiosity. I spoke the French tongue fairly easily, having learned it in my childhood.¹¹⁵ The first use I made of it outside the Viscount's presence was with several merchants to whom I had myself driven to buy various odds and ends which I needed. I knew in general that in big cities there was a large number of obliging persons who stock quantities of things that can be useful to other men, and who are ever ready to dispense with them for some sum of money, for which it is only fair to compensate their trouble and the value of their merchandise.¹¹⁶ I marvelled, as I entered a jeweler's shop, at the order and variety of gems of every kind that were on display. Since I associated everything with my principles of generosity and fairness, I could not help a feeling of respect for the master of the house, considering dedicated he must be to the good of human society, to work so diligently to satisfy the needs of all who sought his assistance. What gratitude is sufficient, said I, to recompense such services?

¹¹⁵ French was the only foreign language his mother taught him. Knowledge of another language is often crucial in Prévost's work: the protagonists of *Le Doyen de Killerine* know French even though they are Irish (*Le Doyen de Killerine*, 111, 21), and the hero of *Histoire d'une Grecque moderne* knows Turkish.

¹¹⁶ The naiveté of the terminology betrays here not the wiser Cleveland-as-narrator, but the young man he once was. This procedure was familiar to readers of Marivaux, especially of *La Vie de Marianne*, recalls the ingenuous descriptions of *Lettres persanes* (1721), and foreshadows the deliberately naive analyses that Voltaire and Diderot lend to their innocent or noble-savage protagonists.

My wonderment grew further when I observed his eagerness to offer me everything contained in his shop, and the obliging civility with which he presented me with whatever I could make use of. He seemed to divine my needs and inclinations. Sheathes, knives, containers of all sorts; a hundred pretty baubles, the very sight of which was for me a most agreeable spectacle. I took them from his hands as he offered them to me. I asked what they were for, which he then explained with great ease of expression, and I set them beside me to take others that he brought me in the same manner. Finally, since I could not have enough of looking and listening, he asked me if I wanted to take from him all of the items I had around me. I looked them over. There were quite a lot of them. I hesitated whether I would accept so many things, most of which were more pretty than useful. However I considered that it would be rather crude to refuse what was offered to me so graciously. His generosity was so visible in his eyes and on his lips that I even feared he might come to the point of insisting I take his jewels for nothing, and purely out of the goodness of his soul. I hastened to tell him that I would accept it all, but that it was only fair that he should receive from me some return of esteem and gratitude. In good conscience, he replied, my final word is ten pistoles.¹¹⁷ I would fear heaven's wrath if I cheated a young gentleman, and especially a foreigner. I once again marvelled at his integrity; and after counting out the ten pistoles, I left him with [66] many expressions of sincere esteem. James, who accompanied me, picked up the jewels. I do not know whether it was out of respect or for some other reason that he disguised his sentiments from me; but when I said to him, on the way home, that there was more probity among men than people thought, and I had just had an example of this, he was content to

¹¹⁷ A *pistole* is ten livres.

reply that sometimes it could be found, even among merchants.¹¹⁸

Lord Axminster and Mrs Riding were at the inn when I arrived. I was eager to show them the burden that James was carrying, and tell them what I thought of the honest merchant to whom my good fortune had directed me. I praised his goodness so naively that they could not help looking at each other with laughter, as surprised by my terms as they were already at this mound of trinkets I was showing them. The Viscount asked how much they had cost me: Ten pistoles, I replied. He could hardly believe me. I assured him that they were perhaps worth more, but it was certain they were not worth less, since the merchant had sworn by his good faith and conscience. Yet it was so evident that they were not worth a third of this sum that his lordship, who had to know what was in my purse, since it was he who had filled it, bade me let him count how much money I had remaining. Maybe you have forgotten, he said, what the coins are worth, although I taught you before you left. You think you have paid more than you actually have. He examined what I had left, and found my report inexact in only one point: which was that rather than the ten pistoles I thought I had paid, the merchant had received from me fifteen. He took the opportunity, not to chide me for buying such baubles, which he was sure I did not value more highly than he, but to instruct me about many things that cannot be learned by studying books. I had some difficulty recognizing I had been so egregiously deceived. Do not be ashamed, he said: your ignorance

¹¹⁸ This episode recalls the way the innocent Gil Blas is fooled when, like Cleveland, he first ventures into the outside world. A similar instance is Delisle de La Drevetière's play *Arlequin sauvage* (see Jean Sgard, *Prévost romancier*, p. 198), performed in 1721. Prévost had already created an analogous situation in book II of *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* where Rosambert is piteously victimized by Parisian musketeers.

on one matter is less dishonoring for you than for those who can deceive you, because you are not on guard against them, and have not yet had the opportunity to know them. It is the misfortune and shame of men, he very wisely added, that one should need some other pursuit than that of virtue, and other principles than those of innocence, to know how to live and act with them. It is not enough for an honest man to pity or disdain those who are not like him; he must also know how to protect himself from their wiles. As there is a science that teaches us to do good to others, there is also one that teaches one to avoid the harm they can do to us. This one you lack; but a little experience will soon teach it to you. I replied that my regret was not exactly to have been deceived, but that it was by the appearances of kindness and virtue. That will happen more than once, he replied, if you always reckon by first sight.¹¹⁹ This science of which I speak, and which you require, consists precisely in identifying outward appearances which are often deceiving, or at least in remaining reasonably on guard with respect to those whose intentions you have not had time to figure out. However skillfully and however carefully vice is disguised, it never stands up long to examination by a true and scrutinizing eye.¹²⁰ It has very few marks in common with virtue,

¹¹⁹ The fundamental goodness of Prévost's protagonists makes them vulnerable, and they must learn through their own mistakes to be on guard against the apparent sincerity which their instinct is to believe completely. The Doyen de Killerine cries out: "Throughout my life, nothing as so contributed to my errors and sufferings as this too credulous penchant to make a favorable assumption of other people's virtue" (*Le Doyen de Killerine* III, 42). It is a lesson that Cleveland never wholly learns – for until the end of the novel he is often fooled by good actors – because at bottom he never manages to believe in the meanness of others.

¹²⁰ An important maxim: the feigned, according to Axminster, cannot by its very nature, sustain examination; despite efforts, the person who is

and the difference is not hard to perceive. The Viscount added that the rules he was giving me were general and applied to all men, but that with respect to merchants in particular there were others which were easier to follow; that fraud and dupery had more or less become standard practice in that profession, which made them less dangerous; that deceiver and merchant being two synonyms whose meaning was understood by all, one did not enter a shop without being armed with precaution; that no one is deceived who is not willing to be, because there is no one who is not aware of the danger. This lesson was extremely useful to me, because I could easily apply it on a hundred occasions which arose every day. If I was simple enough to be easy to deceive, I had received from heaven enough good sense to be deceived once; which is to say that, reflecting on everything that was happening to me, I drew enlightenment from it which I put to good use in the same circumstances. [67]

As for the five pistoles I had given in excess of the price I had agreed to, since it was just a mistake in counting, Lord Axminster assumed that the merchant would not object to giving them back. He advised me to return right away to his shop. I did go; but the only satisfaction I could derive was to receive new civilities. He assured me he had received nothing in excess, and that we were both too accurate in our calculations to have committed so considerable an error.

Although I recognized each day that it helped me to frequent

false cannot imitate the true, thus the perfect crime would be a contradiction. This is to say that fundamentally evil is not real, and in this context that conclusion would be accurate: it is as though Prévost, who fills his novels with misfortunes and moral suffering, cannot manage to take human vice tragically. Villains are false good men, or good men temporarily gone astray, and as sicj are never utterly irrecoverable.

society, and even sometimes to be deceived, I nonetheless felt a sort of shame when it happened to me again on some occasion I had not foreseen. The Viscount, who considered me as his son, and would have been most pleased to see me purged of a number of things that remained to be corrected in my thoughts and manners, urged me to go out often, and visit the city's most notable features. He exhorted me to make my way into groups, and always took pleasure in hearing the observations I did not fail to make on everything that had come to my attention. He even remained in Rouen, to this end, longer than he had planned. Since he did not know the language, he could only know the country, he would say to me, through my narrations; and inviting me to tell him about even the slightest trifles I had observed, he pretended to receive as a favor from me what he incited me to do simply for my own good. Although he had not the least suspicion of my affection for his sweet daughter, he had noticed that my respect for her made me extremely submissive to her every wish: he used this means to hasten the change he desired in my person. He ordered her to tease me gently, whenever I let loose some ingenuous remark in her presence; and she acquitted herself in a way that succeeded beyond his expectations. At first I could not easily understand what Fanny's purpose was, and, surprised to see her adopt a tone with me to which she was not accustomed, I sought for several days the reason for this new behavior. I thought I had it figured out. I even flattered myself that besides following her father's orders, which I thought to be her primary intention, she added an unspoken gratitude for my attentions which made her wish to see me soon become what I was capable of. This was a goad which gave me more zeal than ever to seek out opportunities to learn things. I had myself introduced into the city's best homes by a few Englishmen who were frequent guests in them. There I found not only models that could serve to improve me in matters with which I already had some familiarity, but also countless

matters that seemed new to me, and provided at least as much entertainment as instruction.

The French are polite; one must give them credit for that. They are particularly polite with foreigners. But I am not sure how one might properly define their politeness. It consists not only in their outward manners, which are gracious and considerate; they make a point of extending it to their sentiments, or at least to a certain way of expressing them that is uniquely theirs. If all the protestations of friendship and assurances of esteem, zeal, and attachment one receives in France were sincere, one would have to consider that nation a society of chosen men, who possess in the highest degree all the fine qualities of the soul, and who have not a single one of the flaws common to other men. I had no sooner entered one of the principal homes where my countryman introduced me than, having nothing to recommend me except that I was English and a natural son of Cromwell, they eagerly showered me with civilities. They asked when I had arrived in Rouen, and as soon as they learned I had been there for a fortnight, they protested over and over that I should have kept myself hidden for so long. I should have had every residence in the city notified of my arrival; they would have anticipated my visit by calling on me first. What a loss, to have met so late a person of my merit! They made me offers of service that would have forever preserved me from every need, had they been faithful to [68] carry them out.¹²¹ They marveled at my good looks; and since I made no reply in the initial surprise caused by this deluge of compliments, three or four ladies, who seemed to hold the first rank in the company, held a long conversation about my fine qualities, which they assuredly had not had time to know. Embarrassed at this effusion

¹²¹ One can recognize here the tone of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (see e.g. Letters 72 and 85), which Prévost perhaps consciously imitates in descriptions of French society.

of favors which I was receiving without deserving them, I finally expressed in few words the strong feeling I had about them. Whereupon they marveled at my wit, though I had said the commonest things; and the four ladies began again their praise of me with an even greater abundance of flattering expressions.

I confess that hearing them continue in such a serious way, and considering that they were persons of distinguished rank who had no interest in deceiving me, I allowed myself the inner pleasure of being praised by such lovely lips. I even persuaded myself that I had received from nature qualities I had not heretofore recognized, and was thus for a few minutes the dupe of my pride. But fortunately it happened that another of the city's ladies, who too was coming to call on the mistress of the house, was introduced into the room where we were. Everyone rose to greet her. During the shifting that resulted, I distinctly heard one of the four ladies say quietly to her neighbor: Admit that this is one slow-witted Englishman. I was so stunned I blushed in shame. She did not notice; and the strangest part is that next addressing the lady who had just arrived, she started in again praising me with the same stream of expressions. I found something so offensive in this double character that I was about to protest loudly, but a moment's reflection restrained me. I scolded myself for my credulousness simplicity, and realized better than ever that there are few occasions in which one can have confidence in men's words and actions, since they are so naturally untrustworthy that they deceive even without self-interest, and without cause.

I was nevertheless avenged before the end of my visit. I had remained silent as long as the conversation dwelt on my merit, and after that on the fashions or stories of the moment. One serious observation, which a gentleman of the company made perhaps on purpose, opened the way to a more sensible conversation. Little by little I conquered my timidity, and expressed myself from the start felicitously enough to attract some attention. I

became so animated as I continued to talk that I finally got the upper hand thanks to many excellent things which the memory of my studies or reflections brought to mind. I could see that I was listened to agreeably, and glancing from time to time at the lady who had not so much praised as mocked me, I had the satisfaction of seeing that she looked at me with apparent surprise and wonder. As I was leaving the company, I received marks of esteem in which there was more sincerity than the first ones had been; but they did not move me much. My honesty did not permit me to enjoy praise which I did perhaps deserve, but which had been lavished on me with as little reservation when they were convinced I did not.

Lord Axminster seemed highly amused by my adventure. It was immeasurably useful to me. The effort I had made to open my mouth freely in this company began to give me a boldness which I had never previously felt. I was very pleased by this transformation. I had been distressed since my arrival in France, in other words since I had begun conversing with men, at feeling in their presence a certain discomfort I could not get over, even after a long conversation. My timidity appeared on my face and in my every movement. Not that I had a sense of fear in my heart; on the contrary, I was firm and resolute; I kept all my freedom of mind and judgment. But that was precisely what made me uneasy, thinking rightly and soundly in every situation, and not being able to accompany the expression of my thoughts with the open, confident manner that lends weight to wisdom and reason. If I chanced to be speaking with a foolish or ignorant man, I quickly discovered his weakness, and my superiority over him: nevertheless, I was [69] constrained and all but tongue-tied in his presence. I could barely look him in the eyes. His slightest movements disconcerted me, and I virtually quaked to his face, while inside me I did him justice, and placed him in the contemptible class where he belonged. Thanks to the mockery to which I was

subjected in Rouen, I rid myself almost immediately of this weakness. It is not for nothing that I make this observation here, and have related some of the minor circumstances of my story which have given rise to it. An enlightened reader would doubtless inquire where I acquired all the assurance which will be seen in my later life, if I did not point out by what steps I lost the weaknesses and trepidations of my childhood.

Fanny contributed a great deal to curing me of these puerile imperfections: it would have been enough for her to seem to notice and frown on them to encourage me to combat them and make me succeed in overcoming them. She used such skill at it, and her inclination was so perfectly in accord with her father's orders, that it is to her I must attribute the rapidity of my progress. My ardor was greatly increased by a fortunate encounter which gave rise – to what, shall I say? – let us say to the felicity of my life: for all the torments and turmoils of which it was also the origin are unworthy of comparison with the rivers of joy and happiness to which it opened the source.

Up to then my love for Fanny had been contained within the limits I had prescribed myself in Rumney Hole. Not a minute passed that did not feel my love for her. She was constantly in my thoughts. I attended to her with all the ardor of a perfect passion. But nothing had yet betrayed my heart's secret. I did not know what she had thought of the change in my demeanor in the Rumney Hol cavern. She had been content to put more reserve also into hers, without making it appear that her feelings for me were lessened. She knew the obligation she had had to me at sea, and joyfully recognized that she owed her life to my precautions. Her father often reminded her of this event. He repeated to her that she should love me like another father, since giving someone life or sparing her from death are two roughly equivalent favors. Ah! I said to myself, when he said such things to her in my presence, would she would look on me rather as her tender suitor! I do not

desire a title that would give me her heart to share with another. Yet I dared not conceive any expectations, and I was even further from making her aware of my desires. It is true that I had neither the hardship of absence to bear: I was constantly with her; nor her coldness and disdain to fear, for I was at least assured of her friendship even if I dared not pretend to her love. Thus I was as tranquil as one can be with a heart that feels nothing it can complain of, yet has not what it desires.

Such was the gist of my sentiments, when I happened to become the plaything of the four French ladies. However great the displeasure I had first experienced, it did not prevent me from returning the next day to the same gathering. The company was composed of the same persons, and I was no less civilly welcomed than the first time. The success of my boldness the day before inspired me to continue that day: I had enough share in all the pleasant things that are said in conversation to assure myself I had made the ladies adopt a favorable opinion of my wit. Before the day was over, I received signs of this that were not deceiving. The character of French ladies, so far as I have been able to tell in the limited time I have spent in France,¹²² is a composite of every extreme. They are indifferent to nothing. They must either scorn or esteem, mock or approve, love or hate. They are pitiless for the ridiculous, and the world's most adept at detecting it in persons for whom their heart is not well disposed. They need all the politeness that is more or less natural to their nation to overcome their itch to laugh, mock, and abound in witticisms, which are all the more stinging when they issue thus from lips full of charm. Should, on the [70] contrary, their heart declare for someone, they

¹²² At the end of the novel, his time in France will have been relatively long, since he spends three or four years there beginning in book VI. This first stay in Rouen lasts just a few months according to one mention, but only six weeks soon thereafter.

carry indulgence and kindness to the point of blindness. Everything changes to perfection and virtue in those they love. They are tender and passionate, they praise, approve, admire; in sum, their mind always guided by the heart, and the heart is never moderate in its sentiments. One of the four ladies who had mocked me the day before, the very one who had called me slow-witted, suddenly entered into this disposition for me. I might have noticed this before I left the gathering, had I been capable then of such observations; but taking her constant glances, and even the assurances of esteem which she found the means of conveying to me in secret, for ordinary civilities, I returned home without giving her reason to believe I had understood what was flattering to me in her manners. Some time went by, during which I did not fail to be assiduously present at the gathering. This lady's compliments, her glances, and her praises increased by the day. The only effect they produced on me was to make me forget entirely the first reason I had had for resenting her. Finally, one day when I was talking with his lordship, I was told that a manservant wished to speak with me. He had a letter for me. I took it; and since that he withdrew immediately without suggesting that he was expecting an answer, I returned to his lordship, and opened the letter in his presence. He was as eager as I to learn the mystery of this message. It was a note of a mere five or six lines, inviting me to come that very evening to a specified location, to receive assurances of esteem from a person whom I perhaps would not find unworthy of my own. I explained the meaning of these words to his lordship. He congratulated me on my good fortune, and, delighted at this adventure which he judged apt to further my initiation, he advised me to go faithfully to the designated assignation. I replied that it was not my intention to miss it. Fanny was present at our conversation; she appeared to take no notice of it. But as the Viscount left soon after, and I found myself alone with her, I noticed that she maintained a silence which for her was not cus-

tomary with me. I was the first to break it, to allude laughingly to my having the good fortune to please a French lady. She said, in a manner that seemed timid: Have you then decided to love this lady, and to go where she told you? I was moved by her tone of voice. I looked at her: our eyes met; and by a movement that is more easily conceived than expressed, we remained some time looking at each other thus with a tender dreaminess. She finally lowered her eyes with a blush, as if she were somewhat ashamed at what she had just experienced. I, who was deeply stirred, rose without speaking, and picking up the letter which was open on the table, I tore it into a hundred pieces. Our silence continued until his lordship, who had left just for a moment, returned. He was surprised to find the letter in shreds on the floor. Is that, he said, all you make of love's favors? I replied that I had changed the way I felt about the rendez-vous; or rather that, having no inclination for an amorous intrigue, I had not seriously considered responding to the advances of this unknown lady. He repeated his first advice, and added every reason that could persuade me to follow it, independently of love. I declared to him that his insistence was vain, and indeed let the day go by without leaving the house.

I was too attentive to Fanny's every alteration not to recognize that she was satisfied with what I had done, and appreciated the meaning of this sacrifice. I nevertheless consequently become neither more forward nor less respectful with her. It was enough for me that I might glean from her eyes a ray of hope, and might have reason to believe that she was partially aware of my sentiments. She notices my attentions, I said to myself, when they proceed from passion; she explains them; maybe she has the kindness to approve of them. Who knows what love has in store for me? The tender glances she allowed herself the other day, were they not well beyond my pretensions? I shall never ask her for anything, my duty commands eternal [71] silence; but if

heaven inspires in her some kindness towards me, why should I not try to be worthy of it? Could his lordship himself condemn sentiments as pure and controlled as mine? It is a most perfect passion that would have nothing to fear from a father's scrutiny, and nevertheless remains so respectful and so timid that it dares not even reveal itself to her who inspired it. I resolved anew always to preserve this innocence in my desires.

The next day did not pass without my being enlightened about the letter I had received, and the character of the person who had sent it. Being in the gathering at the usual hour, I noticed that one of the ladies I had always seen there was missing. I was notified a moment after my arrival that a person of my acquaintance wished to speak with me at the door. I went immediately downstairs, and there I indeed found the same English gentleman who had first introduced me into this house. He bade me step away some distance with him so he could speak with me. I waited for him to explain. I have been charged, he said, with a peculiar mission. Do you remember a lady whom you have sometimes seen in this company, the tall, handsome brunette, who stares at you so intently that you were able to notice that she likes you? She is a friend of mine. I am here on her behalf, to protest in her name an affront she pretends to have received from you. In a word, he added, interrupting himself, I am persuaded that she loves you passionately, and wants to use me to put her in relation with you: for under the pretext of the supposed affront which she did not explain, she insists that I bring you to her house, and commit you to offering her some satisfaction.

I had no difficulty judging what affront she was protesting. However, I kept from my friend, for discretion's sake, that I had received a letter that had doubtless come from her; and having no intention of establishing any kind of relationship with her, I bade him transmit my excuses himself, if it was true that I had unintentionally had the misfortune of offending a lady for whom I had

great respect and consideration. He did not let me off the hook so easily. I promised, he said, to bring you. I must honor my word, and not let English be thought crude and unsocial. I yielded to his insistence. He told me along the way that this lady was the widow of a counselor at Parlement, and enjoyed a considerable income. Inasmuch as he was aware of my birth and the state of my fortune, which I had not the same reasons as Lord Axminster to hide, he intended to be giving me friendly advice in exhorting me to take advantage of her affection for me. We entered an attractive, well-furnished house. My friend, who went there every day on a familiar basis, thought he could take me inside without having his visit announced. An indistinct sound we heard from the ante-chamber caused us to pause to lend an ear. It was the voice of two persons who seemed to be speaking heatedly, and who repeated my friend's name several times. Curiosity led him to come closer so as to catch something of a conversation that seemed to concern him. After listening for several minutes at the door, he returned toward me blessing heaven which had guided him so opportunely to learn of a horrible plan being plotted against him. Let's get out of here, he said; I shall never again set foot in this house, and I regret having proposed that you come here.

On the way out, he told me his real name, which I did not know. He was Lord Omerson. He had been in Rouen for three months, after being forced to leave England to avoid the resentment of my father, whom he had gravely offended. No one there knew his name or nor his title, except for that lady, whose brother he had seen in London. The brother's name was M. Lallin.¹²³ Lord Omerson had obtained from him letters of recommendation for his sister; and having fled to Rouen, he had established such a close relationship with her that he had not refuse to confide in her

¹²³ *Omerson* is one of the names that has not been identified. Yet Prévost rarely invents. The same goes for *Lallin*.

the secret of his situation. Indeed there was no reason why he should have mistrusted her: she was generous and reliable; but her brother was a traitor, who based his hopes of [72] fortune on Lord Omerson's ruin. Once he was assured by his sister's letters that this gentleman had reached Rouen, he so cleverly found his way into the London court that he managed to gain access to my father. He informed him that he knew where his enemy was living, and promised to deliver him to his vengeance for the sum of four thousand pounds sterling. It is well known that my father was implacable in his rancor. He accepted this offer. But after inquiring into Lord Omerson's place of asylum, and the means Lallin meant to employ, he conceived the idea of turning his plan into a more extensive plot. Lallin thought simply to return to France, and secretly arrest Lord Omerson, after first making an agreement with the captain of some English vessel, such as are found in great number in the port of Rouen. It would not have been difficult for him to bring the gentleman aboard the vessel, and hold him there without anyone's knowledge. My father approved this plan, and trusting Lallin's assurance as to how its ease of execution, he imagined it would be just as easy to spirit away at once twelve or fifteen of his mortal enemies who had chosen the same city as asylum. He broached his idea to the treacherous Lallin, who at once applauded this horrid plan, doubtless in the hopes of a larger reward. Thus, what had at first been no more than a villain's personal plot became a considerable enterprise because of the part taken in it by the leader of one of Europe's more powerful states. Lallin, to assure its success, suggested to my father that there would be some risk to be run by using the captain of some ordinary vessel, not to mention the difficulty of sequestering and guarding so many people on a small merchant vessel, which is normally manned by no more than five or six sailors. He proposed to dispatch from London for this purpose two of the largest vessels that could go up the Seine to

Rouen, and put on it, along with the merchandise that would serve as pretext for the voyage, a certain number of stout and daring soldiers dressed as sailors, not only to guard the prisoners once they had been seized, but also to arrest them one by one and bring them aboard the vessels. As the arrangement of this plan seemed plausible to my father, he secretly had prepared what was required for its execution. The two vessels left London, and Lallin headed for Dieppe, so as to be in Rouen before they arrived. He had entered the city the very day that Lord Omerson took me to his sister's house.

His lordship was quite right to consider as a favor from heaven his good fortune in overhearing the details of part of the plot. He had learned enough about it to be justly alarmed; and although he had reason to assume, based on the objections he had heard made by Lallin's sister, that she did not approve her brother's plan, he no longer mentioned either of them except with detestation. After spending an hour of discussion at his house, we were about to separate, he to take measures against the treachery of his enemies, and I to go share this news with Lord Axminster, when a manservant of Lallin's sister came to ask him on his mistress's behalf to come see her immediately. He was unsure how he should take this request, and his first inclination was to believe it was a trap Lallin was setting to arrest him. However, after reflecting that he had only just arrived that very day, and that the vessels were not yet in Rouen, he thought there was no risk, and hoped he could learn some new circumstance that would be beneficial to his situation. He proposed that I accompany him. I could not honorably refuse him, if only to help him out if he found himself in some danger. We found Lallin's sister impatiently awaiting him. Her brother having left only a moment earlier, she had hastened to have Lord Omerson alerted so as to inform him as a good friend of what she had just learned. She did not expect to see me come with him; but despite the satisfaction

this appeared to afford her, she bade me leave her the liberty of speaking with his lordship alone. He replied that, having no secrets he was not prepared to share with me, she could explain herself freely in my presence. This put her in a [73] quandary, since she knew I was Cromwell's son; but as Lord Omerson assured her in general that there was nothing to fear from me even where my father was concerned, she told him with the most generous candor the reason for her brother's trip, and all the specifics that his lordship had only imperfectly overheard. I tried my best, she added, to talk him out of this evil intention, and I rebuked him for it, which so angered him that he threatened to take my life with his own hands were I to betray his secret. But were he to carry out his threats a hundred times, they would never keep me from opposing such a horrid venture with all my strength, and doing for you on this occasion, my lord, what I think I owe you out of honor and friendship.

Such noble and generous conduct caused Lord Omerson to lose the resentment he had first inconsiderately felt toward the lady. He thanked her effusively, and pretending he owed this revelation to her alone, he obtained from her all the enlightenment that could contribute to his security. As he was not the only one whose ruin was being plotted, he asked her whether she had learned from her brother the names of those who were included in Cromwell's order. She named some she remembered, among whom was Lord Axminster. I shuddered when I heard it. I could not understand how my father could be informed that his lordship's was in Rouen, especially after the care he had taken to disguise his name and stay inside almost all the time. I had no doubt that my sentence had been pronounced along with his, and have always believed that it was for fear of alarming me that Lallin's sister hid from me my share in the danger. I asked her if it was known that Lord Axminster was in Rouen. Everybody knows it, she said. Lord Omerson confirmed the same thing; and

as I expressed some surprise that he had never let me know this, he said that he had done it out of civility, and not to disillusion him in his opinion that he was not known in the city. We long debated what measures we ought to take for our common safety. The swiftest means was to turn in Lallin, whose betrayal would certainly have been punished; but the consideration we owed to his sister obliged us to some circumspection. We deferred to such time as we could deliberate over this matter with those of our compatriots who were in the same danger.

Before we left the lady, I had an explanation with her over the note she had written me the day before. Lord Omerson had the discretion to leave us alone for a moment. She protested that I seemed to attach little value to her esteem. I assured her that no one had more sincere esteem for her than I; but I declared to her with my usual candor that I had such strong engagements, without being explicit as to their nature, which did not permit me to enter into new ones with her. My straightforward and respectful manner of expression made an impression on her mind. I am honest with myself, she said; I do not deserve for you to break your bond with someone else in order to form one with me; but you could have come and said yesterday what you are saying today. Do you think it is easy for a person of my sex when she makes certain advances, and is it not always the duty of a gentleman to respond at least civilly? There was such decency and good sense in this reproach that I apologized for the uncivil manner with which I had responded to her kindness, and beseeched her to maintain her esteem for me, which I would always be most satisfied to deserve. As Lord Omerson soon returned, we left her, and the misfortune that befell her two days later did not allow me to see her again. I have done you a disservice, he said to me as we left, by interrupting so early the conversation you had begun with this lovely lady. The anxiety her brother's plot is causing me did not permit me to wait longer. It is not only my own interests that

are cause for hurry, he added, but those of twenty good men who are exposed to the same danger as I. He decided to send for them to meet at Lord Axminster's house to come to a common resolution. He stopped by his home to give his manservant an order to that effect, and then accompanied me to our lodging.

[74] Lord Axminster learned with extreme surprise, not only that his name was divulged throughout the city, but that even in England his arrival in France was already known, as well as his sojourn in Rouen for the last few months. He was even more surprised when Lord Omerson, whom he had not known in London, and had taken for a commoner since he had met him in Rouen, disclosed to him his name and the reason for his visit. His initial anger provoked an outburst of imprecations against the tyranny of Cromwell; and as this continuation of ill fortune recalling to mind the cruel sufferings he had experienced, he fell back into such a deep sorrow that I do not remember ever seeing in him, from that moment on, the slightest appearance of joy for the rest of his life. Seven or eight of the Englishmen Lord Omerson had sent for having arrived more quickly than we expected, we informed them of the calamity that threatened them. The sentiment in favor of having Lallin arrested was so unanimous that Lord Omerson had some difficulty obtaining from them that they seek some alternative means. He called attention to the generosity of his sister, to whom we were indebted for our safety; and it was agreed that for the honor of the English name, nothing must be done that would violate the obligations of gratitude. Her brother's shame would have redounded to her own and that of her whole family, which held a distinguished place in the city. Lord Axminster broached a short and simple solution, which was to leave Rouen; but most of them would have been reluctant to agree to this, since they were used to the life there. Sir William Cromby, who was among those assembled, proposed the only action that was approved by all: it was to publish Cromwell's plot

throughout the city, as if one of us had been informed of it by letters from his friends in London, and to appear not to know that Lallin was involved in the enterprise. It was clear that it would necessarily fail once it was revealed, and that each of us would then be entitled publicly to take measures to assure his security. This is what was settled on, and it worked just as we hoped with respect to our safety, but produced an appalling effect which caused us intense displeasure.

The governor of Rouen having learned by word of mouth, and confirmation by our Englishmen, of the bold plot that was contemplated against us, gave orders at the entrance to the river and at the port for all foreign vessels to be very thoroughly searched. At the same time he renewed his assurances of esteem and protection to all persons of our nation who were then in the city. The citizens themselves were indignant to learn that we were being threatened with some peril within their walls; and this consideration reinforcing the zeal which the French naturally manifest for foreigners, there was not one of them who was not prepared to come to our defense if need be. The traitorous Lallin was alone in casting a dissatisfied eye on the movement under way in our favor. However carefully we had hidden his name, he could not bring himself to believe that his plan could have been discovered without divulging at the same time that he was at its origin. There being no one for him to suspect but his sister, he accused her of betraying him; and in a transport of rage, apparently caused by fear of punishment or spite at seeing his hopes dashed, he inflicted on her a sword wound that nearly cost her life. He fled after this deed, and was fortunate enough to find in Dieppe a vessel ready to set sail, by which he escaped execution by returning to England.

The misfortune of this generous lady having almost instantly become public knowledge, its cause was not long in being discovered. She herself told anyone who wanted to hear. Every English-

man who was in Rouen felt obliged to offer her distinct signs of their gratitude by their civilities and their presents. I did not see her again, because we left but days after she was wounded. In Bayonne we received a letter from Lord Omerson, who informed us of her recovery and the conclusion of that miserable episode. The two vessels arrived at the port of Rouen. Their existence was too well known for them not to be recognized. The governor had the captains [75] arrested; but as they insisted on denying their commission, and the evidence available against them was insufficient to convict them, it was necessary to set them free. The French minister,¹²⁴ who was informed of this business, protested to the English Protector. It was futile, because he disavowed the role attributed to him by Lallin in his enterprise.

This event led Lord Axminster to precipitate our departure. We left Rouen, after a sojourn of about six weeks.¹²⁵ All the news having assured us that King Charles had gone to the Spanish border, we headed directly there. Our horses were robust and our carriages so comfortable that we made the journey in almost as little time as it can be done by sea with the most favorable wind. We paused in the cities only as long as necessity required. I found few during that long journey to rival Rouen, either in terms of size or the number of inhabitants. Neither did I see anything to cause me surprise or wonder. The stay in Rouen had so perfected my manners and opened my thoughts that I had finally managed to think and speak like all the others. If there was one thing that still struck me, it was now not the daily sight of new vices which offended my principles: I knew their source lay in the corruption that is common to all men, and well understood that according to

¹²⁴ If the prime minister is meant, it is still Mazarin (who died in 1661). Cromwell in fact had died in September 1658, but his son had succeeded him as Protector.

¹²⁵ Cleveland had indicated earlier that it had lasted several months.

place and opportunity, their effects can be infinitely varied. But I could not help marveling that within the space of two hundred leagues there was such diversity in outward manners, dress, and the language of a people who are subjects of the same monarch, profess the same religion, and obey the same laws.¹²⁶ I could not make myself understood in all the regions of Normandy, Maine, Poitou, and other provinces that we had to traverse. I had occasion in every village to ask whether I was still in France, I who spoke the language well and did not recognize it in the strange jargons I heard constantly changing. Nor are the costumes and manners more uniform. Something of this variance can be noticed even in the cities. Aside from persons of a certain rank, in all the cities of that great kingdom that I have visited, all the others are a composite of crude people, who speak no fixed language, and have no more taste than resemblance in their manners of dressing and all their appearance; so that the only true Frenchman in France are the small number of those who are in charge of the others, and who are distinguished from what are called the common folk.

Once we arrived in Bayonne, we asked, as was our wont, to be shown to the best lodging in town; and the first thing we learned upon exiting there was that the king of England had been there for several days. Great prince, exclaimed Lord Axminster at this news, how lowly art thou brought, whilst thy palaces and thy throne are occupied by rebels and scoundrels! He was there incognito. His suite was not much larger than that of Lord Axminster, who in Rouen had taken on four menservants and a squire. We needed only a moment to rest from the fatigues of the day. His lordship's eagerness to embrace his master's knees did not allow him to wait for the next day. He had never seen him, having returned from America only after the death of his father

¹²⁶ Adaptation of the slogan "*Un roi, une foi, une loi*".

the king. He forthwith requested the liberty to appear before him, letting his name be declared to him. Permission was granted. He told me to go with him. All the experience I had acquired in Rouen and during the journey could not prevent a hidden trepidation on approaching the chamber of the great king. It was less timidity than a vague sentiment that mingled respect, affection, and compassion. I imagined at once his misfortunes and his grandeur. There was still in my heart a remnant of the impression his father's bloody death had made on me when my mother told me about it. I had moreover of royal majesty the notion which a young man creates from a distance. I entered the chamber as one enters a temple. He was standing, and conversing [76] with two Englishmen of his retinue. I was immediately reassured by his physiognomy, which was gentle and winsome. There was nevertheless something melancholic and somber in his eyes, which was doubtless the effect of his anxieties, and of his continual sentiment of his father's and his own misfortunes.

Lord Axminster threw himself at his feet. He raised him up and embraced him. My lord, he said with great gentleness and grace, we know each other only by name; but if you have as great an attachment for my person as I have esteem for you based on what I have been told of your merits, we shall not be long in becoming friends. I know a part of your misfortunes, he added; and I have several times wondered why, having left London more than a year ago,¹²⁷ you had not yet made your residence with me. If that is now your purpose, you may be sure I shall attempt to make it agreeable to you. Lord Axminster made a respectful reply to this obliging welcome. He attributed his tardiness in taking up his duty to the just causes which had retained him in England; and

¹²⁷ After leaving London, Axminster has spent nearly a year in Rumney Hole, and several months (at least two) in France before joining the king in Spain.

expressing to him passionately the zeal and impatience with which he had come, he put his fortune and life at his entire discretion, as his legitimate king and sovereign master. Ah, my lord! the prince rejoined with a sigh, how gladly I would employ my own as well to deliver our poor England from the tyrants who sadden her! When will she open her eyes to recognize a king who would shed all his blood to make her happy? But I regard the arrival of people like you as a good omen. Her misfortune and ours are not yet beyond remedy. Thereupon he inquired about a hundred specifics on which Lord Axminster could inform him. He was astonished to learn of the danger to which we had been exposed in Normandy. He himself had risked some of similar nature, and he assured us that without the manifest support of heaven, he would more than once have succumbed to various attempts which had been made on his life. After a rather long conversation, he said obligingly to his lordship that having just arrived, he needed rest, and he advised him to go get some, and they could talk later of greater and more serious matters. I did not leave the chamber without embracing his knees. This is a young man who lacks nothing, said Lord Axminster, his father excepted, to deserve to be called one of your most devoted servants. He is a son of Cromwell. A son of Cromwell! exclaimed the king, gripped by a kind of horror. Aye, Sire, the Viscount went on with the same kindness; but a son worthy of a better father, and such as I would wish for myself. He then summarized for him my mother's history and mine. This story seemed to interest him, and was listened to with great attention.

He had scarcely finished before the king intervened to ask my mother's name. The Viscount had intentionally refrained from naming her, because insofar as she had for some time been mistress to the deceased king, he did not think respect permitted him to recall this memory to his son. But as he was urged to speak, he answered that her name was Mrs Cleveland. Good god, what are

you saying? exclaimed the king. I suspected as much. Quickly, send for old Cleveland: this news will make him die of joy. He ordered one of the two gentlemen with him to call one of his officers who was this Mr. Cleveland himself, in other words my dear mother's father.¹²⁸ While they were fetching him, he told us that the old guy (that is what they called him) had attached himself so inseparably to him since the death of his father the king that he thought he had no servant more devoted and loyal; that he enjoyed talking with him and hearing him tell stories of olden days, but he had repeated nothing so often as his daughter's liaison with the departed king: her misfortune in losing his favor, and seeking out Cromwell's; the futile attempts she had made to return to her father's house, and the sorrow he had subsequently himself felt for treating her so harshly, when, after he losing all his other children, he came to realize that she was all he had left; that he at that time had tried every effort to discover where she had gone; that unable to find his [77] beloved daughter, he had never ceased reproaching himself for her loss, and that he blamed himself for it as a cruel and unnatural act. While the king was telling us this story, Mr. Cleveland entered the chamber we were in. He had not been told what he was going to find there. It is certain that I felt deeply moved when I saw this good old man. I looked at him avidly, and only my respect for the king prevented me from running to embrace him. Cleveland, said the king, what will you give me if I find your daughter for you? Oh, Sire! he replied almost with tears in his eyes, heaven has not reserved such happiness for my old age. Not herself, no, the king replied; but something that much resembles her, and was very close to her. Turn around, he added, and embrace this young man, who is her

¹²⁸ Cleveland earlier indicated that his grandfather was an officer of the king and a devoted royalist, who for this reason had refused to take in his daughter because of her ties with the Parliamentary party.

son by Cromwell. Whereas the word daughter had at first made a tender impression on Mr. Cleveland, it was as if the name Cromwell suddenly nullified it. Instead of coming toward me, he quickly took several steps backward. He began to study me intently. The king seemed to be watching his attitude with pleasure. He kept one leg forward, and his whole body was resting on the other one that was behind. His eyes were wide open, and fixed on me. He did not even appear moved, as if his heart had hardened by looking at me. Nevertheless, nature was slowly working to soften it. His tears began to flow. My uneasiness and flush seemed finally to win him over. Ah, Sire! he exclaimed, looking toward the king and then throwing his arms about my neck, let me embrace him a hundred times over. He is the son of my good master's executioner; but he is also the son of my dear daughter. Though he received bad blood from his father, he will shed it for the cause of his king. Is it not so, he went on, hugging me with all his strength: speak, my dear son, wilt thou not love the man heaven would have thee recognize as thy master, and wilt thou not shed the last drop of thy blood for his struggle?

An indifferent observer (if there can be one in a scene where it is nature that is acting) would have found it difficult to judge from Mr. Cleveland's expressions and glances which, of his king or his grandson, was the dearer to his heart. He remained several long minutes in this violent state, first turning his eyes on the king and begging him to adopt some feelings of affection and kindness toward me, then turning them on me to exhort me never to stray from the strictest duties of zeal and fidelity to my master. The prince took such satisfaction in hearing him that it was only out of kindness that he made him stop, fearing lest such intense emotion produce some dangerous effect on a man of his age. He promised him he would look after me, and be a father to me in lieu of

Cromwell.¹²⁹

We found ourselves then in Bayonne as in known territory. Mr. Cleveland was thrilled to see himself reborn in a grandson. Lord Axminster was no less thrilled with the presence and continual conversation with his king. He always accompanied him when he went to the Island of the Conference, or to visit privately with Cardinal Mazarin,¹³⁰ who was more or less the center of all the great affairs of Europe. I was no better informed than the public of the essence of their consultations and deliberations; but as even the most skilled politicians commit slight indiscretions which foment the conjectures of interested observers, I remember having heard the king say, complaining about France and Spain equally, that although the conduct of those two crowns was entirely different with respect to him, it was in on one point, which was to look very coolly on his interests. France treated him outwardly with all sorts of civilities. Everyone took pity on his misfortune. He received considerable gifts under the table; and when he was in Paris, he was begrudged neither honors nor pleasures. But at the same time the queen and the cardinal were fully in complicity with his enemies. The war against Spain had been waged in concert with Cromwell. It was for him that the French army had prevailed on the dunes, and that it had taken

¹²⁹ It is a paradox that Cleveland should be the son of Cromwell, of whom he is the reverse image; in this sense also he is an “illegitimate” son, a “son worthy of a better father,” as Axminster said to the king. Charles in a way corrects nature’s mistake in taking the place of Cromwell for Cleveland, who has in addition found another father in the person of his maternal grandfather.

¹³⁰ *Île de la Conférence* is another name for *Île des Faisans* (‘Isle of Pheasants’), located in the middle of the Bidassoa on the border between France and Spain, where the Treaty of the Pyrenees was signed. In reality, Charles II never had the honor of meeting with Mazarin.

Dunkerque.¹³¹ He was recognized as the legitimate head of the Republic of England: ambassadors had been sent to him, and his were received. [78] Spain's took just the opposite course from this. While she was affecting complete indifference for England's business and the person of the king, she was secretly offering to arm for his restoration. But that was upon such exacting and disadvantageous conditions for him that it was quite clear she was little moved by his misfortune, and had nothing in view but her own interests. Don Luis de Haro, who so neglected him outwardly that he had not even dispatched a gentleman to render what was due to his royal dignity, nonetheless maintained a secret contact with him through which he made him new proposals daily. But they were so unreasonable that the king often objected to them as so many insults. At issue was nothing less than the cession to Spain of all the most southerly English possessions in America; and not merely to give Dunkerque back after the king's restoration, but to help the Spanish recapture all that the French army had taken from them in Flanders. Don Luis's ridiculous solicitations finally ended in the conclusion of the peace treaty with France, and the marriage of the Infanta with King Louis XIV.¹³² After that, much less attention was paid to business than to pleasures.

¹³¹ Cromwell was to receive Dunkerque in return for the alliance concluded in March 1657 with France against Spain, which had held the city since 1652. Turenne besieged it in 1658 and defeated on the dunes, on 4 June, the Spanish army coming to relieve it; Dunkerque surrendered a few days later (see Rapin de Thoyras, IX, 95). Charles II was to sell it back to France in October 1662.

¹³² The Peace of the Pyrenees was signed on the Île des Faisans on 7 November 1659. It provided for the marriage of Louis XIV with the Infanta Maria Theresa, who, on condition of an enormous dowry, was to renounce her rights to the Spanish crown. The marriage took place at Saint-Jean-de-Luz on 9 June 1660.

Meanwhile, Lord Axminster's continual conversations with the king gave the prince an idea from which he hoped to derive great advantages. He knew how much consideration his lordship and his father had enjoyed in America. The great settlements the English have in that part of the world make up a considerable portion of the strength of their kingdom. That is the source of their trade, and consequently of their wealth. On this basis the king conceived the intention of sending his lordship to undertake to rally as his subjects all those who still fundamentally respected the name of their legitimate master.¹³³ This project did not seem unrealistic to Viscount Axminster. Far from feeling reluctant to carry it out, he subscribed to it as much by inclination as by the submission he owed to the king's wishes. There was nothing to attach him to Europe, after the cruel misfortunes he had suffered there, except his zeal for his master's service. There was ample opportunity for putting it to work in America; and he hoped that the sight of a place where he remembered having lived happily would help to restore peace to his heart, and help him forget thoughts that the proximity of England would always sustain. I was immediately informed of this resolution. It caused me great discomfort. I anticipated all the obstacles I would have to face, either from Mr. Cleveland, to whom I had become so precious that he would never consent to my leaving with Lord Axminster, or from my own heart, which even less allowed me to abandon Fanny, my sovereign mistress, and to separate myself for a single minute from her father, my tender and beloved protector.

¹³³ This development is likely inspired, as Paul Vernière suggested, by the resistance of the Virginia colony under its governor Sir William Berkeley ("L'Abbé Prévost et les réalités géographiques", *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France*, 73, n° 4, 1973, p. 630). But the chronology is highly inaccurate, for in fact all the American territories had been reduced under the Republican government by 1652.

The battles I foresaw were as soon begun as Mr. Cleveland was informed of the Viscount's voyage. No sooner had he learned this news than he came running to me with an air of alarm. I assume, he said, that you have no thought of leaving Europe. His lordship has been a father to you until today; it is I will now take his place, and you remember moreover what the king has promised you. He pronounced these words so forcefully and affectionately that the fear of upsetting him kept me from answering. He took my silence for acquiescence, and the joy it gave him led him to publish abroad that I was going to leave Lord Axminster to follow the king, who was preparing to return to Flanders. I spent several hours pondering the behavior I should adopt; and as this meditation caused me some sadness, I went down to Fanny's room to be consoled with her. The impassivity with which she listened to my vague talk about her father's voyage indicated to me that something extraordinary was happening in her mind. I asked her whether anything had occurred to upset her. She gave me an equivocal answer, which could not enlighten me. Mrs Riding, who was present, did not seem to me in a more favorable disposition. As we were all in the Bayonne hotel, and the great number of [79] foreigners who continually filled it made things very crowded, we ordinarily spent the day in the room of our two ladies. His lordship came in at the moment when my uneasiness caused by their dark humor was about to make me leave. He spoke of the king's departure, which was delayed until the beginning of the following week; and turning his eyes indifferently toward me, he asked me whether I was thinking of the preparations required for me to go with him. This question, asked in a manner that supposed our separation was settled, and in a voice that seemed to wish for it, so confounded me that I was left speechless. Lord Axminster took my discomfiture for an effect of my embarrassment for having made various projects without his

participation,¹³⁴ and switching the conversation to another subject for a few minutes, he left without further clarification between us. Such a bitter feeling arose in my heart when he left that I was no longer able to hold back some tears. So his lordship is wearying of me, I said to Fanny. It would be better, I added in a transport which did not let me consider that Mrs Riding was present, it would be better for him to kill me than force me to leave you. These words, although vague, were intelligible enough.¹³⁵ Mrs Riding seemed taken aback, and Fanny so upset that her face turned red. I rose to leave, and to be alone with my mistress.

Mrs Riding followed me out. I no longer recognize you, she said as she led me to an adjoining room; I always thought you were prudent and reasonable, and supposed you wanted nothing more than some experience of the world to improve you. Yet before you have scarcely begun to acquire it, all your good sense deserts you. At least allow me once more, she continued, the liberty of explaining to you what I think of you. First of all, you are short on gratitude and forthrightness in planning to leave his lordship without having informed him. Secondly, could anything be so horrible and contrary to the principles you have so long professed than not only concealing from us your intrigue in Rouen, but protesting in the presence of his lordship and Fanny that you were determined to have no ties to that lady who wrote to you, whereas you were on close enough terms with her to promise to marry her? His lordship and Fanny were fond of you,

¹³⁴ There are other instances where the disarray of Prévost's characters in the face of an accusation is interpreted as a proof of their guilt: "Doubtless she took my silence and astonishment as a confirmation of that very disdain she accused me of" (*Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, p. 287).

¹³⁵ In his despair, Cleveland allows himself to cheat somewhat on the vow he had made to impose an "everlasting silence" on his tongue.

she added; but their sentiments are much changed. As for me, who loved you as a mother, I confess that I no longer have for you the same affection that I would like to have preserved for you my whole life.

Had I had less respect for Mrs Riding, I would at first have treated her words as preposterous. Not a single one she said could I understand. I have deliberately refrained from preparing my reader about this episode, so as to leave him, as he begins to read it, in the same confusion I was in when I heard it; but I shall now briefly explain its source, lest a longer delay render my narrative obscure.

Lallin's sister, whom I had entirely forgotten upon leaving Normandy, and with whom moreover I had had no doings that could have incurred reproach, had not lost, upon ceasing to see me, the kind sentiments she had for me. I shall henceforth call her by her brother's name, to conceal, as I have done up to now, that of her husband, whose family is among the most distinguished in Rouen. This lady had given the meaning most favorable for her desires to the simple, direct answer I had made to her reproaches. Her misfortune, which had taken place two days after the visit I had made to her with Lord Omerson, had not allowed her to explain her sentiments to me further before my departure. She had even been unaware that I had left Rouen until, partially recovered from her wound, she was visited by numerous Englishmen who had informed her of it. Whatever resentment she felt at my having left her without taking my leave, she attributed it to the necessity for me to follow Viscount Axminster; and continuing to confide in Lord Omerson, she confided to him that she esteemed me highly enough [80] to consent to marry me. Lord Omerson, bore me some affection, and who, not unaware of the miserable state of my fortune, saw a solid advantage for me in that marriage, had contributed in every way he could to confirming her in this thought. He flattered her every day with the hope

of seeing me again upon King Charles's return, and promised her in my name all the fervor with which she had reason to expect I would recognize her favors. Indeed, he considered my consent as something so infallible that, having written to Lord Axminster, he spoke of Mme Lallin and me as two persons destined for each other, who awaited only the opportunity to be united by the bonds of marriage as we already were by esteem and love.

This letter had arrive the very day when Mr. Cleveland had taken my silence as assurance that I had no interest in travelling to America. On his way out of the room he saw Lord Axminster, who was reading; and taking a sort of glory in plucking him, so to speak, from his hands, he had bluntly announced to him that I had decided to accompany the king to Flanders. Independently of the new views of kindness and friendship that his lordship had for me, he was right to be shocked by conduct that offended every rule of gratitude and propriety, for there was no one in the world to whom I had so great obligation as to him. His resentment at my ingratitude was therefore proportionate to his favors. He had communicated this forthwith to Mrs Riding, and to his daughter, who justly censured me. Nevertheless, friendship still speaking in my favor, he had gone to find me and provide the opportunity to for some explanation. As chance would have it, I entered his daughter's room without his noticing me; but returning himself a moment later, and seeing not only that I persisted in concealing the supposed design of my pretended marriage in Rouen from him, but also my departure with the king, which I seemed to be making a point of not mentioning, he had left again more discontented and irritated than ever.

The reader can now judge how confounded I was after hearing the obscure but stinging accusations of Mrs Riding. I was as much in the dark concerning what was happening in Rouen as of the news Mr. Cleveland had spread about my departure: thus I stood looking at Mrs Riding for some time unable to decide what

to answer her. Finally, reassured by my innocence, I told her that her eloquence would not be required to make me conscious of my failings, once she used it to make me know what they were. It was nevertheless only after a multitude of questions and replies, more obscure the ones than the others, that I succeeded in obtaining a clear and cogent explanation. She reported all my offenses to me, and from what witnesses she had learned them. Whatever satisfaction it derived from finding myself all of a sudden innocent, I nonetheless felt a great anguish at the very thought that his lordship could have thought me capable of ingratitude, and dear Fanny capable of loving anyone more than her. O heaven! I exclaimed, what is the misfortune of an upright and generous heart, in having only words to express itself with, that is, a means which ingratitude abuses, and which treason itself can turn to its own purposes! As for Rouen, I said to Mrs Riding, looking at her sorrowfully, given how far we are from that city, I can justify myself only by the appearance and the cry of my innocence. If his lordship believed me capable of the shameful deceit of which he accuses me, then no doubt he will also believe I am capable of lying justify myself. Thus I see no way to clear myself in his mind. As for my departure with the king, that is a false opinion which I can easily destroy, and which I would label imposture in anyone other than Mr. Cleveland who spread it. Heaven! I continued, seeing that my anguish was moving Mrs Riding, I once more attest thee: why dost thou take no care to manifest my innocence, since it is thou who hast made me as I am, sincere and incapable of artifice?

That good lady, who knew me too well not to rely unhesitatingly on my assurances, at once reverted to the good opinion she had [81] always had of me. She said she was going promptly to undeceive his lordship and Fanny. If Fanny thought me guilty, I replied with an impulse quicker than my reflection, I am of all men the most to be pitied. Mrs Riding had not forgotten what she

had heard me say to Fanny a quarter-hour earlier. These last words were all it took to open her eyes fully, and she asked me rather mischievously why I was so troubled by the fear of having displeased Fanny. I myself recognized that I had too much committed myself; but it was not with a lady who had almost always been a mother to me that I needed to repent of my indiscretion. On the contrary, I was thrilled that an opportunity had so naturally arisen for me to reveal to her the state of my heart. I confessed to her my passion, disguising nothing of the manner in which I had dealt with it up to then. She smiled after hearing me. Well, there is our philosopher! she said. Beware the shipwreck of reason among the shoals of love. I begged her to tell me seriously what she thought of this disclosure. She was a woman of great good sense. Always love virtue, she answered me, and never disdain love or fortune. She absolutely refused to explain herself more fully.

We returned together to Fanny's chamber. The sight of that dear person revived the pain I had just felt. As an effect of that feeling, and perhaps even more of a sort of confidence that came to me from the avowal I had made of my love to Mrs Riding, I fell at her feet, and remained there in silence while Mrs Riding undertook my justification. She seemed extremely satisfied at such an unexpected clarification. I seized the opportunity to tell her a hundred tender things about the pain that the sole fear of deserving her coolness was capable of causing me. I was moved to the point of shedding a few tears; and progressively leaving behind all my resolutions, I so forgot myself that I vowed, kissing her lovely hands, to worship her religiously all my life. I had not finished these words before, reflecting on what I had just blurted out, I cast a timorous eye upon her. She appeared embarrassed. I have said too much, I said, lowering my eyes: but it is you, as mistress of my secret, to dispose sovereignly of my life. For a while she did not speak; then turning toward Mrs Riding, she

asked her wistfully what answer she thought she should give me. I can see, said that lady, who had her reasons for not disapproving of our love, that you have not waited to consult me before making up your mind. Answer him what your heart dictates, in other words, that you are very far from detesting him. May you, my dear children, she added, love each other as long as you merit each other's affection! Love each other, you are of an age to love. Heaven approves it, and his lordship will not disapprove.

I was so surprised, and at the same time so enchanted, at what I was hearing, that never did a truth seem to me so like a dream. The very movements my heart felt seemed of a different kind from those one experiences when awake. It was something that seemed to me superior to nature, something of a state above man's ken: it was... I cannot possibly express it, and it was the most delectable moment of my life when I experienced it. I took Fanny's hands again, and in an exaltation expressed only by my tears, I kissed them a hundred times, nor did she for her part think to withdraw them. I rose with the same ardor to embrace Mrs Riding, and begged her to confirm the wonderful approval she gave me, and explain further what hope I might place in his lordship's goodness. She replied that it had perhaps been wrong of her to confide in us so readily, but that she could not regret it; Fanny and I must have the prudence, however, to moderate our sentiments until she had been able to renew with his lordship a conversation she had had with him a day earlier about me; that his lordship, speaking to her for the first time about his voyage to America, had asked her first whether it was her inclination to accompany him; that having responded that she had attached herself to his person never to be separated, he then put to her the same [82] question with respect to me; that being unable to answer absolutely for my disposition, she had offered to sound me out, but that he had only wanted her to observe carefully how I would take the news of his departure; that he thought he had

noticed I had some affection for his daughter, and that himself having a great deal for me, he would willingly consent to give me the station of his son-in-law, and take me as the companion of his fortune and his voyages; but that for my part he desired there should be nothing that was not spontaneous and willing in my determination; that he had insisted that she, without revealing to me his affectionate designs on me, should try to read what was in my heart, and my true sentiments for him and his daughter.¹³⁶

Thus, she continued, I have ventured nothing except what is supported by sound reasons by promising you that his lordship will not disapprove of your love: nor have I broken my word to him by revealing his designs for you, since I did so only after being sure that you loved Fanny. Nevertheless, I would be sorry to deprive him of the satisfaction he surely promised himself of informing you of your good fortune. You must pretend not to know about it, and receive your first assurances of it from his lips. I shall go get him, she said, so as to cure him entirely of the disagreeable notions which your grandfather and Lord Omerson's letter have given him of you, and then to tell him that your feelings for him and his daughter are as he desires and has always believed. Go, I said, speechless with joy and wonder, and make sure his lordship understands that if he allows me to love Fanny, he will be doing more that heaven and Earth together can do for a man's happiness.

I remained alone with the mistress of my soul. Her unease and mine were extreme for the first moment; but since we were

¹³⁶ The extended use of indirect discourse to relate the tenor of a conversation is frequent in this novel. Vivienne Mylne has observed that Prévost avoids long passages of direct quotation in *Manon Lescaut* although half the text is composed of conversations (*The Eighteenth-Century French Novel*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1965, p. 96).

merely overwhelmed by our feelings, it soon gave way to the most tender and passionate conversation. The treasures of love that silence and constraint kept buried and seemingly piling up in our hearts for so long, no longer feared to expand freely. I obtained from sweet Fanny confessions that would make a suitor's felicity a thousand times, and yet it could have seemed they did not satisfy me, so eager was I to have her repeat them. I told her about the origin of my passion, its effects, my timid and respectful hopes; the intention I had formulated to hide them my whole life, or at least to wait before explaining them for felicitous circumstances which I did not foresee, and which I scarcely had the boldness to desire. My affection had seemed enough for me, even when respect kept it bottled up in my heart: to what excesses of happiness did I not now find myself suddenly raised by the assurance of being loved, the liberty to express my love, and the hope it would soon see all its desires fulfilled! Such joy surpassed not only my expressions, but even the range of my sentiments and notions. Fortune which had so long mistreated me, and heaven which until then had never seemed to look on me except sternly; love, friendship, everything joined in my favor to lift me forever from the ranks of the miserable, and found for me a destiny worthy of envy. Heaven, exclaimed I twenty times blissfully, I did not ask you for so much, you give me too much all at once; moderate your blessings: I am too happy to be tranquil. And then, immediately switching desires, I prayed heaven on the contrary to increase my felicity further, if it were possible, and to make it ever endure in that excess.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ One of Prévost's most frequent dramatic devices is the sudden reversal of fortune, the abrupt passage from an "excess" of happiness to an "excess" of misfortune, and vice versa. "I have observed," says the Chevalier des Grieux, "that heaven has always chosen to strike me with its harshest punishments moments when my fortune seemed the most

Fanny listened to me with a satisfaction that answered to my sentiments. She spoke little: but to accept and approve my tender expressions was to say much to me who knew her. As guarded as were her glances, they were none the less penetrating and passionate. She never once fixed her eyes on mine without communicating to my heart a hundred flaming darts and kindling therein some new emotion I had never yet experienced. She thanked heaven for making me as tender towards her as she had wished. She assured me modestly that if I were such as I was trying to persuade her, we would become two examples of a perfect passion, and that if it depended only on her we would also be two examples of everlasting fidelity and constancy.

[83] Mrs Riding was not long bringing us news that confirmed our joy. If you are not the world's happiest couple, she said as she entered, it will be neither the fault of his lordship nor mine. You shall be united before we leave Bayonne, and his lordship made no secret of the fact that it will give him as much satisfaction as it will you. She added that he had gone to see the king, to bid him to honor our marriage with his blessing, and to do something in my favor to make up for my lack of fortune.¹³⁸ Indeed his lordship appeared a quarter of an hour later, with a face so joyous and delighted that I did not doubt the king's kindness had fulfilled his hopes, and surpassed mine. His friendship was first satisfied by his embracing me, and bestowing on me the name of dear son. Then he took his daughter and me by the hand, and after leading us to the king's chamber: Here they are, Sire, he said, my two children. I can barely distinguish which of them is dearer to me; so that such a distinction need no longer be made, I have decided to unite them so firmly that they shall be as one.

assured" (*Manon Lescaut*, p. 410).

¹³⁸ It is more a question of rank than wealth; he is to be knighted, not endowed.

The king replied that he shared his joy and ours, and wished to begin to showing this by dubbing me a knight. He forthwith conferred that dignity upon me with the usual ceremony. This is the first degree, said the king after giving me the accolade: you are young; I would have the hope of obtaining much more from me might spur you on for a few years, and I give you my royal word that I shall reward your services beyond your desires. I have learned from his lordship, he added, that you are disposed to go with him to America. Go; and depend, both of you, on your king's gratitude. The king had in his manners and his expressions an air of kindness that is rare in a sovereign. His lordship was deeply moved by the tokens he received daily of his esteem and confidence. In his extreme impatience to depart and become useful to his service in America, he asked him to allow our marriage to take place in his presence, so we could then embark before his eyes, before he left for Flanders. It was decided we should be married on the morrow. Although the preparations could not be magnificent in so short a time, the orders given by the king and by his lordship would have made the event quite brilliant, had heaven allowed them to be carried out. But I was about to see my life take a new turn: my destiny had waited until then to reveal itself.

It can be seen from all I have recounted of my story up till now that there had been nothing absolutely unfortunate in my early adventures. From birth I had experienced instances of ill fortune, but almost without feeling them. I had even become more or less accustomed to them, until the time when I began my acquaintance with Lord Axminster. His company and friendship had made me lead a most pleasant life. My passion for his daughter had done even more: it had made me happy. The immediate expectation of marrying her was about to make my happiness complete. Thus I had no cause for complaining much of the past, and could see in my present situation only good reasons for joy.

However obscure the future might be, I would have been wrong to worry about it, since my happiness was about to be founded established on the soundest foundations. In short, I was content with my situation. My soul was at peace, or at least it was agitated only by the delightful emotions of pleasure.

However, this whole edifice of tranquillity and happiness was a vain phantom, which had grown progressively only to vanish in an instant. My name was written on the blackest and most ominous page in the book of destinies; it was accompanied by a multitude of fateful decrees which I was condemned to undergo in succession. My good genie had striven in vain to protect me from them; in eighteen years all it had managed was to delay them. Oh God, who hath given me the strength to bear them, give me enough now to recall them to memory! I have forced myself to hold them at bay in telling this first part of my story; it is a truce I was strong enough to make with my woes. I can feel them now returning to flow in great number through my pen.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Cleveland insists several times on this mass of sufferings which seems about to rupture the dike and flood the narrative. By asking God for the strength to relate them, he distinguishes himself from the Man of Quality, who once skips over a story because it is too painful to relive (*Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, p. 183). This is a far cry from Cleveland; in this novel sadness pre-exists, and events then come to justify it.

[85] BOOK THREE

I enter the vast sea of my misfortunes. I begin a narrative which I shall accompany with my tears, and which will bring them to my readers' eyes as well. This thought gives me some satisfaction as I write: I shall obtain the pity of tender hearts. I make them the judges of my sorrows; it is to their tribunal that I present them. But I invite them to judge my suffering less by appearances than by their own feeling, which is to say that if they find in me, in the course of my misfortunes and losses, more outward assurance than they feel themselves capable of having, I do not ask that they form upon these deceiving outward signs the idea they will hold of me. In truth, the courage and unflinching constancy I have manifested in all my adversities has earned me the name philosopher; people did not think that my ever-steady patience and the apparent serenity of my temperament under fortune's most unkind blows could be the effect of an ordinary virtue. They honored them with the name of philosophy. Presumptuous name! Alas, how dearly it cost me! Those who gave it to me have never known the secret of my soul. I have, indeed, drawn from philosophy all the support it can offer: it has enlightened my undertakings, prescribed my demeanor, sustained my prudence, provided consolations for me against despair. But it has never diminished the inner feeling of my woes, and has not kept me from recognizing that a philosopher is always a man at heart. Let us unfold this sorry series of adventures, whether affective or tragic, but all so sad and so engaging that they promise me the compassion of my readers.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ In this paragraph Cleveland modifies the pretext he had given at the beginning, which was that he confided in the paper solely for his personal satisfaction; like the Man of Quality, he writes for "sensitive hearts" (*Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, p. 119). As judge entre

The king having consented to my marriage, and his lordship showing as much eagerness as I to see it realized, it seemed nothing could happen in the space of twenty-four hours capable of disrupting such a pleasant expectation. I spent a part of the afternoon talking with Fanny, and the rest reflecting on this unhopd-for good fortune which suddenly elevated me to the peak of happiness. While exulting privately, I did not fail to preserve enough command of myself to include some serious considerations, which were always suggested to me by the long custom I had adopted of meditating and collecting myself in my thoughts. My desires and plans, I said, are now realized. I desired to know happiness through love: I am almost there; and my heart is so pleasantly full that I can easily tell it was not a false happiness to which I had aspired. I had two goals, I added; what was the other? To strive endlessly to acquire wisdom with the aid of study and reflection. In this I have so far not wavered, nor, I am resolved, will I ever. But my condition is changing; I have other rules to follow. Although wisdom is always the same, it assumes different forms in the different states of life. I have already had occasion to make enough observations on that variety of situations and duties to form a plan appropriate to the condition where I am about to enter. Let us see: and let us always keep wisdom and love as united as they can be. Thereupon I really fashioned, I do not say an order of occupations, for I could not foresee events accurately enough to be sure I would have the liberty of following it; but a stock of new [86] principles that seemed generally suited to the state into which I was entering, and which I would need

protagonist and the world, it is the reader who must understand and decide between them: this strategy is used even more explicitly in *Histoire d'une Grecque moderne*, where, the reader being constituted as tribunal from the beginning, it furnishes the entire framework for the narrative.

only to apply in various circumstances. I was plunged into this serious revery until I was notified that his lordship was asking with some urgency to speak with me.

It was James who came for me. His sad expression made me augur ill of his errand. He did not await my questions to tell me that my marriage was, if not entirely broken off, at least deferred until Rouen, at the request of Mr. Cleveland, who had thrown himself at the king's feet to ask for this delay as the greatest of favors. That is all I have learned, said James; his lordship will explain further. I went at once to see him. I found him distracted and upset. Your grandfather is a brute, he said when he saw me entering. Only his age, and the king's favor, have kept me from treating him as he deserved. He told me at the same time that Mr. Cleveland had come to chide him, mockingly, for his intention of giving me his daughter without consulting him, and taking me with him to America; that he had told him crudely that it was in vain that he so flattered himself, since he had obtained quite contrary orders from the king; that he was there to announce them personally on the king's behalf, and to forbid him to contemplate his daughter's marriage before his arrival in Rouen, where the king proposed to pass on his way to Flanders, and where he desired we should follow him. Offended, continued his lordship, by his rude manner of addressing me, I could not help expressing some resentment, and informing him that it was nothing less than a dishonor for you to enter into my family. He had the impudence to reproach me thereupon for my wife's unfortunate adventure, which I too inconsiderately divulged to the king, and which it would appear the king has not kept from him. I admit, the Viscount continued, that had he not left promptly after insulting me in this way, no reason would have been strong enough to check my initial burst of anger. I contented myself, after his departure, with conveying my protests to the king. He called him in to apologize to me: but he reiterated the order to defer your mar-

riage, on the pretext that the ceremony can be done more conveniently in Rouen, and that I will then find in the Havre de Grâce¹⁴¹ a vessel for America which will take me closer to our colonies than the one that is about to leave from Bayonne. Lord Axminster was honest enough to concede after this account that he had made a mistake in proposing my marriage to the king without notifying Mr. Cleveland; and since he attributed his opposition to his supposed spite at being overlooked, he told me with his usual affection that for my sake he was willing to overlook his resentment. He even exhorted me to try to placate my grandfather's mind by some civilities which he recognized that I really could not avoid.

I went at once to see him. He complained bitterly of my lack of consideration for him; and after setting forth all the affection and attachment I owed to him as his grandson, he then explained to me, in severe tones, the authority which his position as grandfather gave him over my person and my conduct. I contested nothing; I merely spoke to him of the honor and the advantages that would benefit me from being allied with Lord Axminster. I continued to interact properly with him until the departure, without his having made the slightest allusion to his cruel intentions for me.

As I had no reason to distrust him, I took comfort at Fanny's feet for the delay imposed upon my desires. His lordship himself was so far from foreseeing Mr. Cleveland's intentions that he was easily reconciled with him and got along properly. We left Bayonne, and reached Rouen almost as soon as the king. He received great honors and a suitable lodging in the city. We and Lord Axminster returned to his lodging in the hotel. It was an acute mortification for Mr. Cleveland, who expected I would remain with him, and had even had a lodging designated for me with the king. The news of our return with the prince having

¹⁴¹ *I.e.*, Le Havre.

quickly spread, we received the visit of Lord Omerson and our other friends. They thought to [87] please me in complimenting me on the favorable disposition Mme Lallin had retained toward me. Lord Omerson strongly encouraged me not to put off calling on the lady. I surprised him by announcing my engagement to Fanny, and the expectation of our eminent marriage. There is no reason to think that Mme Lallin, who doubtless learned this news, would have persisted in her design for me, if she had been allowed the freedom to consider that my ingratitude made me unworthy of them: but her misfortune and mine made her to lend an ear too easily to pernicious counsel, which caused her ruin, and was scarcely less calamitous to me than to her.

Mr. Cleveland's true purpose in obtaining a delay of my marriage from the king had been to seek the means of breaking it off entirely: not that he failed to consider Lord Axminster's daughter a match infinitely above me, and consequently flattering to his ambition; but his extreme affection for me did not allow him to envision my departure for America without distress. He looked on me as the sole remnant of his family. He was so advanced in age that the pleasure of seeing me again on my return was not a benefit he could hope for. He wished at whatever cost to attach me to the king's retinue, so as to have me constantly nearby. It was only the day after we arrived in Rouen that he informed me of this desire for the first time. I was sympathetic, as I ought to be; but after expressing my gratitude, I explained myself so emphatically about the engagements I had taken with his lordship and Fanny, that he understood he would never get me to break them off willingly. He learned at almost the same time about Mme Lallin's affectionate intentions for me. That was enough for him to form the plan for a new artifice which was only too successful in the execution. He called on the lady, and identifying himself as my grandfather, he thanked her for the kind sentiments she had towards me. She did not disguise it. She even

manifested some displeasure at seeing my respond to them so uncivilly. He took advantage of this candor to offer his efforts to get me to open my eyes to her charms, and to the value of her favors. He explained to her that, if she would only lend herself to the plan he had, he would certainly take snatch me away from her rival: for she was already informed that she had one, and that this was the cause of my coolness toward her. He so manipulated her mind that, after managing to persuade her that her reputation would in no way be compromised, and that what he had in mind would be known only to the king of England, he induced her to pretend that I had made her a promise of marriage, and to entreat the king to interpose his authority to make me honor it. This plot was communicated only to Lord Omerson and a few Englishmen, who willingly subscribed to it, as much in recognition of the obligations they had to the lady as because they were delighted to see her so favorably inclined toward their nation. Further, Mr. Cleveland had the cleverness, that same day, to extract my signature from me. I gave it to him unsuspectingly, on a faint pretext he offered me. He used it to draw up a promise in the legal forms, and gave this authentic document to Mme Lallin.

During that time I pressed Lord Axminster to conclude my marriage with Fanny. He rightly answered that having his hands tied by the king's order, he dared not waive it without first knowing his wishes. This was, naturally, an errand for me. I went to the king's lodgings. Seeing me, he guessed the purpose of my visit; and without raising the least objection, he told me that he consented to my desires, if Lord Axminster and Mr. Cleveland were in agreement to approve them. I feared some opposition on Mr. Cleveland's part. The king, who noticed this, said he would call for him to learn his sentiments from himself. He appeared, and far from refusing his consent, he congratulated me on the charms of Fanny, to whom he already referred as my wife. I left the most contented of men, and went to spread my joy through the Vis-

count's family. A few hours later, I received an order to appear again before the king. I found him with a paper in his hand, his expression less friendly than the one he had when I had left him. He ordered me to step forward, and after showing me my name which was at the bottom [88] of the paper he was holding, he asked me in a stern voice whether the writing was by my hand. I could not refuse to recognize my writing. I answered that it was, but that I could scarcely understand how it could have come into his. I imagine, he replied, that you must be surprised: that you have recognized it is at least something. He then made various inquiries about my relations with Mme Lallin, and the reasons I had had for abandoning her after having so sacredly committed myself to marrying her. I could not reply clearly to questions that were so obscure to me: my surprise doubtless resembled the confusion of a man who is guilty. The king took sharp offense at a silence which he regarded as an effect of obstinacy. He spoke to me in the harshest manner, ordering that I be held in his own lodgings. Mr. Cleveland came to see me right away in the room where I had been ordered to remain. He feigned grief, and asked me with an air of affected compassion what had called down the king's wrath on me. I told him what I could recall of a conversation the subject of which entirely eluded me. It was then that the cunning old man called on every bit of his artfulness to bring me gradually around to his purpose. After pretending to reflect on my story, he told me that he had a notion of what it was about; that he had heard, since his arrival in Rouen, of a document by which it was bruited about that I had committed myself to marry Mme Lallin; that some ill-intentioned person must have informed the king of it; that I must know as well as anyone what truth there was in this matter; that as for him, he had not seen fit to tell me earlier what the public thought of it, since being on the point of marrying Fanny, it had seemed to him I had little reason to fear Mme Lallin's resentment; but that things changed now, since it

was that lady, no doubt, who had decided to appeal directly to the king; that the prince, equitable as he was, and moreover jealous of his reputation in a foreign kingdom, would never suffer a woman of Mme Lallin's rank and merit to be betrayed and affronted with impunity by an Englishman; that even if he were not so motivated by the love of justice and of glory, he owed this consideration to a good number of his most illustrious subjects who were in exile in Rouen, and who needed the protection of the city's inhabitants. In sum, added Mr. Cleveland, the more I think about this matter, the more danger I see in it for you. But no, he as soon interrupted himself, there is a simple way to protect yourself, and one without risk to you, which is to discharge the promise you made to Mme Lallin. In this way you will satisfy your honor; you will stop her appeals, and the king's anger. Besides, she is rich and appealing enough for a gentleman to accept her hand without aversion. Take my word for it, he said, embracing me, marry her: I shall myself be more satisfied to see you marry in Rouen than to see you run beyond the seas to a far-off land from which it is uncertain that you would ever return, and where it is quite assured you would have a hundred discomforts to bear.

I had listened to Mr. Cleveland most intently, and perhaps he flattered himself that his words had shaken me; but my only intention was to become fully informed of the dark design which I could all too clearly see being plotted against me. The letter which Lord Axminster had received in Bayonne was a key that gave me some insight into the mystery. I easily realized that Mme Lallin was doing me such harm only because she was too fond of me. But that promise signed by my hand was an abyss I could not fathom. I had not the least suspicion of Mr. Cleveland, which he further forestalled by the air of sincerity with which he asked me a hundred questions: for the minute I had protested with an oath that the writing which the king had showed me was a forgery and had never come from my hand, he asked whether I had not

indiscretely signed some bill, or written some letter, from which the signature could maliciously have been detached. I was sure I had never written even a single letter in my entire life. The certainty with which I assured him of this seemed to quite astonish him. Then, he said, your writing must have been counterfeited. French ladies [89] have wondrous artifices in gallantry. And yet, since I would be as determined as anyone to dissuade you from marrying Mme Lallin, if she were a match that was disadvantageous to you, I believe that in your present circumstances, wisdom obliges you to accept the hand she is offering you. Mr. Cleveland's reasoning made so little impression on me that did not even pause to reply. I merely bade him have Lord Axminster notified of my misfortune. This confidence which I manifested in the Viscount, whereas I showed so little for him, stung him to the quick. He replied that I was thinking like a young man, in other words I was very mistaken, if I thought that his lordship would preserve some esteem for me, and persist in the intention of giving me his daughter, once he learned of the quarrel I had with Mme Lallin. You may be sure, he said, that whatever turn this matter takes, it is a blot that excludes you from the expectation of marrying Fanny. And that, he added with a sort of indifference, is one of the principal reasons that incited me to tell you that your own interests oblige you to take advantage of Mme Lallin's kindness.

This malicious reflection on Mr. Cleveland's part was his most deadly blow. It seemed to me only too plausible; and as I was beginning to consider the misfortune which had just befallen me as the downfall of my love, I felt my heart freeze with fear and tremble with emotion. My pitiless grandfather was very content with this strange effect of his affection. I was in the situation where he had undertaken to place me, in other words about to lose the hope of belonging to Fanny and the confidence I had in Lord Axminster's friendship. He perceived this, and he

was mean enough to leave me just then, to allow the poison time to spread and act in with all its power. I begged him as he left not to fail to inform his lordship of my captivity. He gave me his promise; but the way he carried it out consummated my ruin, and was the most dangerous of all his tricks.

I remained alone, in an oppression that cannot be expressed. I pictured what the astonishment of his lordship and Fanny would be when they learned from perfidious sources the subject of the king's wrath and the reason for my imprisonment. I could expect nothing but their loathing and disdain. What a notion must they not form of my character! I had been fortunate enough to persuade them of my innocence in Bayonne; but with this latest episode reviving the former one, they were going to find me guilty, not merely of deceiving them, but also of adding hypocrisy and perjury to duplicity in order to abuse their forthrightness and their friendship. I was therefore about to lose everything most dear to me, his lordship's esteem and Fanny's affection. I was losing them through a horrible malignity that simultaneously cost me my reputation; and I was so unfortunate that I was not even allowed to make an effort to defend it and to justify myself. Indeed, my enemies were employing to consummate my undoing every minute I was spending ineffectually deploring it. When he left me, Mr. Cleveland had gone to see Lord Axminster. He did not inform him of my misfortune, because he was already informed of it; but seeing he was reluctant to believe in my guilt, he was not short on invention to destroy that remnant of good will that still argued in my favor. He pretended to be too sadly persuaded himself of the odious deceit of which I stood accused. He confessed to his lordship that he believed himself obliged to apologize for it, and had come to see him for just that purpose. He seemed astonished that at my age, and with outward appearances that seemed to promise honor and rectitude, I had been capable of such artifice. I would never believe it, he added, unfolding the

pretended promise, which he had made sure he obtained from the king's hands, did I not see his name written in his own hand. There it is; he himself dares not disavow his handwriting. I am consoled by the fact that he appears prepared at least to submit to the orders of the king, who absolutely insists that he fulfill his promise.

His lordship was a man of intelligence and experience, who had a hundred times scolded me for my credulity, and had even cured me of some by dint of telling me about the corruption of men and the wise wariness one constantly needs in living amongst them. Nevertheless, he was the dupe of his enemies and mine. The accusation seemed to him so well proven that he did [90] not even want to see me for a minute to clarify things with me. He knew that Mme Lallin had appealed to the king, and that she had left the promise in his hands; he saw it in those of Mr. Cleveland; he knew my hand: that was too much, indeed, to leave him the slightest uncertainty. He now regarded me as nothing but a monster of ingratitude and betrayal; and he thought he could exact no better vengeance than by abandoning me completely, and ordering his daughter to forget me. As he had had no other reason than my marriage to postpone his voyage to America, he decided to remain in Rouen only as long as was necessary to retain a vessel for departure. He immediately sent to Le Havre de Grâce, and happening to find one planning to set sail five or six days later for Martinique, he decided to take this opportunity to embark. His farewells were brief. He received from the king the title and commission of governor general of the English colonies in America¹⁴²; and after receiving his prince's final instructions, he left with his daughter and Mrs Riding. His retinue was composed only of his own servants, and five or six English refugees

¹⁴² A fictional supposition, of course, since each of the English colonies had its own history and leadership.

who allied their fortunes with his.

While my ill fate was thus preparing for me the cruelest causes of suffering, there was a change in my living quarters, and in Mr. Cleveland's conduct. The constancy he observed in my inclination for Fanny causing him to fear I would seek the means of escaping from the king's lodgings, and would then find a way to justify myself in the eyes of Lord Axminster, he had judged it better to transfer me to a place where he could be assured, not only that I would not succeed in escaping, but that I could not even be informed of the imminent departure of his lordship and his daughter. It was apparently in concert with Mme Lallin that he made this decision, since it was that lady's house itself which was chosen as my new prison.¹⁴³ He had no difficulty obtaining from the king total authority over my conduct. It was a weakness the king has shown his whole life, to allow himself to be almost wholly governed by those who had once acquired some sway over his heart or mind. I was therefore transported that evening to Mme Lallin's, and firmly locked in a room. I was brought there with such precautions that it was impossible for me to recognize the place to which I had been taken. I was very well, even sumptuously, treated. But for several days I saw no one, except Mr. Cleveland, who came to spend a part of his afternoons with me. I begged him a hundred times to tell me what was to be the outcome of such strange conduct, and give me at least some news of Lord Axminster and Fanny. To the first question he answered that they were merely carrying out the king's orders, and he had not

¹⁴³ The choice of place might seem strange, but it must be remembered that, since Charles is not in fact king, and especially not on French territory, there is nothing really legal about the arrest, which, being clandestine, depends on strength and secrecy. Nevertheless, the role played by Mme Lallin in this whole episode may seem at the least curious.

been able to learn exactly what those intentions were. As for his lordship and his daughter, he assured me, as he had done the first day of my captivity, that I could not reasonably flatter myself that his lordship could countenance at this point accepting me as his son-in-law. Despite the terrible anguish which the continual repetition of this reply caused me, I continued to entertain a remnant of hope. I knew his lordship's kindness, and I counted completely on his daughter's affection. It was implausible that I would forever be held captive. I only hoped for a moment's liberty to disabuse those two beloved persons. I felt certain that my innocence would win out over Mme Lallin's tricks: for I had never yet suspected anyone but her, and was so far from conceiving the slightest distrust of Mr. Cleveland, that being persuaded moreover of the extreme affection he bore me, I thought he was nearly as dismayed as I by my misfortune and captivity.

But the end of my error was approaching. The day of Lord Axminster's departure was announced to me by Mr. Cleveland. The fatal day, from which I must date the course of my deplorable adventures! I was in my room, rehearsing my sad thoughts. Mr. Cleveland came in with an air of contentment that led me to anticipate some good news. You will be free, he said, whenever you wish. The king consents to your liberation, because he hopes that with Lord Axminster departed for America with his [91] daughter, you will no longer object to marrying Mme Lallin. He started to embrace me as usual; he did not notice that his words left me lifeless, and I needed to be supported. Oh, leave me alone! I said with broken voice; do you not see that you have cruelly killed me, and I have scarcely the strength to breathe? Indeed I was indeed so pale that he thought I was about to faint. I nonetheless refused his assistance. Leave me alone, I repeated, pushing him away; I detest anything that can prevent me from dying. If his lordship and Fanny have gone, I have definitively lost their esteem and affection, the two possessions without which it is

impossible for me to live. I sat down, unwilling to look at or listen to him. His affection for me, which was beyond all expression, genuinely took alarm when he saw I was determined not to speak and in a motionless posture that made him wonder whether my life was not in the gravest peril. He hurriedly called the servants to send for some assistance. Mme Lallin was the first to come. If I had indeed lost some of my strength, I recovered it all of a sudden on seeing her, only to hurl a hundred barbed accusations at her, and call her all the hateful names I thought her cowardly artifice merited. The lady truly loved me. I must confess also that, despite the weakness she had shown in lending herself to Mr. Cleveland's design, she was honest and generous. My accusations moved her so intensely that, melting in tears, she turned toward my grandfather to protest bitterly the shameful procedure in which he had involved her. Her protests, and the apologies she offered me, opened my eyes on all that had taken place. It was then that, sensing more than ever that I was undone, betrayed, scorned by Lord Axminster, and abandoned by Fanny, I fell without strength and unconscious at Mme Lallin's feet.

This scene moved her so immoderately that, after trying in every means of bringing me around, she invited Mr. Cleveland leave her house and never return. He thought it best to yield for a moment to this storm. He withdrew. I remained alone with her. Her tears, which flowed abundantly, and her tender apologies, persuaded me of her remorse. Alas, I forgive you, I said; I see only too well that you were induced to partake in my ruin. But if you have been the instrument of my undoing, there is still a way to make me forget the harm you have done me. Obtain for me the freedom to leave this city. I am in your house, or so I judge by the manner in which you have just addressed Mr. Cleveland: open the doors of my prison, and far from regarding you as an enemy, I will consider I owe my life to your kindnesses. It was easy for her to judge that my intention, in desiring my freedom, was to follow

the footsteps of Lord Axminster and his daughter. My flight was too contrary to the interests of her love. She replied, lowering her eyes, that she had expected I would otherwise recognize the sincere regret she had shown for causing me distress; that in truth she had been made to act against her character and inclination, by having her enter into the black plot that had produced my imprisonment; but that she nevertheless could not regret having taken me away from a rival who had never had for me as much affection and esteem as she promised me; that there being nothing in her fortune or her person that could merit my disdain, she assumed the boldness of offering them both to me; and that she was persuaded that once I got to know her heart, I would not regret having become its master. She accompanied these words with a hundred tender glances, and with everything a modest woman can call upon to move a man she loves. Given my character, this honest frankness was better chosen to make an impression on my heart than all the meanders of artifice. I said so candidly to Mme Lallin. I assured her that I she had my esteem back, and that had I been free, I might have felt something more like affection for her. But I adore, I added, that rival whom you wish to supplant; I had the good fortune to be loved by her; it is you who have stolen her love from me; there is nothing that can keep me from running after her, to justify myself in her eyes, or to die there. If you are tender and generous, I said further, grant me my freedom. That is the only mark of kindness I ask of you, and for which [92] I can feel grateful. She reflected a moment on this proposition. I cannot let you leave, she replied, in your present condition. You lack everything, and you are too dear to me to see you depart without the necessary preparations for the voyage you contemplate. Allow me, she said, blushing, to propose to you in turn an alternative. I offer to go with you. I am rich enough to put together quickly a considerable sum, which will put us beyond all worry, wherever fortune may cast us. Astonished by such an extraordinary pro-

posal, I expressed to her the most intense surprise. But, what would be your expectations? I said. Are you aware, Madame, that I cannot possibly belong to you, and that all you will gain from following me is that fatigue of a futile journey? She protested that she pretended to nothing more. Yet do not think, she said, that I make this strange decision entirely without reason. I have two very good ones, besides that of following the invincible penchant that causes me to love you. One is the loss of my reputation, which I cannot possibly repair unless I become your wife. Despite Mr. Cleveland's promises,¹⁴⁴ the whole city is informed of the actions I have taken, at his persuasion, to break off your marriage with the daughter of Lord Axminster. They even know, despite my every precaution, that you are presently locked up in my house. I am the subject of conversation and the fable of every company. To counted this misfortune for nothing, so long as I had the hope of marrying you: a solemn marriage would have redressed everything; but if you absolutely refuse me your consent to do it, I can no longer remain in a city where I am irretrievably dishonored. Another reason, she continued, which is scarcely less determinant, is the constant threats I receive from my brother. His wrath for me has been extreme ever since he suspected me of betraying him. He would have made sure I was dead had he not thought I died of the wound he inflicted on me before he left. He has learned of my recovery, and of the close ties I have maintained since then with his enemies. With every mail, I receive from him letters full of accusations and terrible oaths with which he protests he will take my life sooner or later with his own hands. I know him; he is capable of doing so; and I do not doubt that his hatred will redouble when he hears about this latest

¹⁴⁴ Cleveland had promised that only the king would know about the document by which Cleveland supposedly promised to marry Mme Lallin.

episode. I am therefore reduced to leaving Rouen, she added, as much to save my life as for my honor. Where shall I flee more happily than with you? If I succeed, by my affection and attentions, in appealing more to you, I shall find my happiness in having followed you, and you will grant me elsewhere the title you refuse me here. If you persist in your constancy to Lord Axminster's daughter, I shall accompany you at least as far as her side; there I shall bear witness to your innocence, and shall be proud to have provided you some assistance in finding with her father a haven and protection. Mme Lallin concluded by asking me what I thought of all this.

It is certain that, whatever extravagance I had found at first in her proposition, it seemed to me quite different when put this way. My own interests seemed to require me to accept it, for she was right to point out to me that I had nothing to my name. Mr. Cleveland was the only person from whom I could hope for the assistance I needed for the voyage, and one can easily see that it was not from him I could expect it. However, the sole consideration of my convenience would not have sufficed to make me agree to Mme Lallin's plan. Moreover, I could see that her usefulness to me to help prove my innocence to his lordship and Fanny might not match the negative effect produced by her presence, and the thought that she would not have undertaken to follow me unless she were attached to me by love. I put this objection to her. She answered only with her tears, saying that so slight a reason should not prevent me from granting her a favor which assured both her happiness and her life. I allowed myself to be moved; and heaven is my witness that in consenting to her entreaty, I only followed the impulse of that natural kindness which moved me at the sight of others' misfortunes, and made me wish to be helpful all the forlorn.

[93] All that remained was to take measures to gather some money and keep our departure a secret. Mme Lallin told me that,

in a city such as Rouen, she needed no more than an hour to put together in liquid currency the value of all her holdings. Indeed, leaving at once, she obtained from various merchants about a hundred thousand crowns¹⁴⁵ against her signature. These loans would be prejudicial to no one, since by her departure she abandoned to them properties considerably exceeding this sum. She spent the rest of the day having a coach secretly prepared for travelling to Le Havre, where we flattered ourselves we would find some vessel ready to set sail. She confided only in one manservant and a girl who were to accompany us. It was the following night that we planned to leave. Mr. Cleveland came to see me late in the day, despite the lady's request that he never reappear at her house. He was surprised to find me more tranquil than usual. Since he had left me alone with Mme Lallin a few hours earlier, he attributed this change to the conversation I had had with her; and imagining that she had managed to inspire some love in me, he was so satisfied at this that he promised to have me liberated the next day. I did not let him go without inquiring adroitly about the direction which Lord Axminster had taken and where he was to begin the mission he had undertaken in the king's service. I thereby learned that he had gone straight to Martinique, because no vessel had been found which could take him closer to our colonies; from there his intention was to go to Jamaica, or to New England, according to the earliest and easiest opportunity.

After nightfall, Mme Lallin being now as free as I, we left her house, carrying assorted parcels, and accompanied only by our two servants. We went on foot to the city gate, where the coach was awaiting us. Our trip to Le Havre went well and without incident. It was only seven in the morning when we arrived. We immediately sought a ship ready to sail for the islands. We were told that the last one expected to make the voyage that year

¹⁴⁵ An *écu* (crown) equals three livres (or francs).

had set sail several days earlier. That was Viscount Axminster's ship. We deliberated whether we would go down to La Rochelle. Some Englishmen who were in Le Havre advised us, as the simplest and surest choice, to go rather to London, where we would surely find daily departures for America. Mme Lallin feared the mischance of being recognized there by her brother; I too had my fears. However, since our most pressing peril seemed to be on the French side, we embarked on the first ship that left for England. We were there in less than two days; and by the happiest coincidence, we found upon disembarkation at the Tower of London a warship that was weighing anchor to sail to Jamaica. We went aboard, having set foot on land. The captain was delighted to take on two additional passengers who bore some marks of distinction. Four days later we lost sight of the coast of Europe.

I must confess this: amidst the bitterness that filled my heart, there was still room for feelings of joy when I stopped to consider that I was on the path that would take me to Fanny. I forgot, for a while, that his lordship and his daughter were irritated with me, and so much so that they had left Europe without even bidding me a final farewell. My hope was that on the contrary that they would share with me the pleasure of meeting again, and that, enchanted by the ardor that had led me to fly all the way to America in pursuit of them, they would give me back their esteem and affection. I note this brief joy, which I owed to my imagination, only because it was the last uncompromised one I have tasted. The course of my misfortunes had begun, and the only changes heaven was to make would be to increase them day by day. If it still held some pleasures in store for me, they were to turn to sorrows; and, by a strange disposition of my destiny, what awaited me was a felicity so bizarre that it was to cause my cruellest woes, and could be extreme only when it was attended by unbearable torments.

[94] The first days aboard a vessel are spent in making acquaintances.¹⁴⁶ I made a very close one with the captain, whose name was Mr. John Will. I thought I perceived honor and generosity in him, the two things on earth most apt to win him my friendship. I studied him before becoming too friendly with him, and satisfied myself, after applying all the rules of prudence, that I could chose him to be a friend. I have never been able to believe, even after experiencing his black betrayals, that I was mistaken in my judgment, and that he was a natural deceiver. He was an upright and sincere man when I first got to know him; I still think that. But of what do passions not make us capable when we allow them to take over our heart?¹⁴⁷ He betrayed me; he exposed me to inexpressible sufferings; I feel I have the strength to forgive him. He abused my confidence to doom the kindest of men and the dearest of my friends: I have left the vengeance to heaven, but I cannot help hoping it comes to pass.¹⁴⁸

The friendship that we made was soon so close that I passed with him all the time I did not use to read or talk with Mme Lallin. He revealed to me all the secrets of his heart. The affairs of his family and his own, his pains and his joys, were all deposited in my breast as in the sanctuary of friendship. At first I did not confide in him so unreservedly. I had not forgotten Viscount Axminster's precepts, nor the fruit I had derived from a few

¹⁴⁶ This aspect of real life is exceptional; most of the voyages in this novel are instead rather abstract.

¹⁴⁷ Nothing ever confirms this subjective judgment. But Cleveland believes in the terrible power of passion, and prefers to attribute Will's betrayal, despite his ferocity, to a passion that overpowers his natural goodness, rather than believe he was himself so duped by evil dissimulation.

¹⁴⁸ The sequel only indirectly corresponds to this anticipation, and the notion of vengeance on Will does not recur.

months' experience. However, once I found him to be of serious and sound character, I did not refuse, after a few weeks' navigation, to tell him who I was, and to recount to him a part of my adventures. He received this disclosure as I had his own, in other words by taking personal interest in it, and by renewing his assurance of undying affection. Until then I had revealed to him only those aspects of my life that concerned me alone. The names of Lord Axminster and of Mme Lallin had never left my lips in his presence. I knew the distinction that a gentleman is obligated to make between his own secrets and those of his friends. But as it was impossible for the conversation not to return often to my father, it appeared to me that, far from being one of his devoted partisans, he like all good Englishmen deplored the oppression of our unhappy country. I was pleased to find him in these sentiments; and once long familiarity had confirmed me in the opinion he had given me of himself, I fancied I could engage him bit by bit in the interests of King Charles, and consequently in those of Lord Axminster. My first attempts on his mind were so successful that I no longer doubted my conquest. I confided to him the secret of his lordship's voyage, contenting myself to take his word and oath as warrant for his loyalty and discretion. He agreed to join interests to those of his lordship as soon as he could encounter him. Everything, his vessel, his strength, was to be put to his service; he even wished he could have gone to fetch him in Martinique, had he not feared such outward display might harm the king's interests, which he was beginning to regard as his own. But having no pretext for such a departure from his route, we determined together that if the Viscount took long to reach Jamaica, we would dispatch from there, for some commercial reasons, a light vessel that would soon bring him to us. I repeat, Mr. Will was sincere in this resolution; and if my confidence was misplaced, it was neither inconsiderate nor imprudent.

Mme Lallin was all the while leading a rather tranquil life

aboard the ship. My esteem for her had grown enormously since we had joined together in misfortune. I admired her spirit, her refinement, and her good attitude. Although she still had the same basic kindness and inclination for me, she no longer hoped to kindle in my heart anything more than respect and friendship. I had so often declared to her that I was attached for life to the daughter of Lord Axminster, that she seemed [95] to have given up her pretensions. Now it was only by means of her thoughtfulness, and signs of continual attention, that she made me aware of what part of her heart was still devoted to me. In short, she faithfully kept the promise she had made to me in Rouen. Captain Will had not failed to find her appealing, too much, indeed, for a seafarer. Perhaps he had no illusions during the first weeks after we sailed. His manners had always been respectful. He helped me to teach her our language, which she would necessarily require in Jamaica. But with familiarity gradually taking the place of respect, he so changed conduct with her that one day she complained of it to me. I had such perfect consideration for the lady that I would have risked anything to save her from an offense. I had a very serious talk with Mr. Will. He seemed to take no offense at my message. He even joked about some of the innuendos he had allowed himself to utter; and after assuring me that his respect for her was boundless, he comported himself for a few days with more reserve. However, though the manners he adopted with her were more measured, I noticed that those he adopted with respect to me were cooler and more mysterious. Mme Lallin told me one day with tears in her eyes that he had queried her curiously about the relationship we seemed to have with each other; and when she replied that she was my aunt, as we had agreed to do on boarding the ship, he had shaken his head, saying that he knew many relatives who were not more so than we, and that if she was my aunt in that sense, he hoped she would be willing to become at least his cousin. He then renewed his insinu-

ations, she added, and gave me to understand that a woman who hazards to board a ship must have certain indulgences for its captain.

I marvelled that a man whom I believed honest and generous could be capable forgetting himself to this point. I had another talk with him. He listened impatiently, and answered me quite gruffly that he had been noticing for some time that I was behaving like a master on the ship, but he invited me to remember that he was mine. My master! I said, looking at him. No, Mr. Will, you are my friend; you are a gentleman, whom I like and sincerely honor: but I invite you in turn to remember that you have no power over my aunt, nor over me. He left me without a word more. I made no change in the behavior towards him that I had followed until then; but I could easily recognize from his somber humor and deep reveries that he was contemplating some extraordinary design.

We had been at sea for six weeks, and far from having storms to fear, for a fortnight we had been short of wind, which greatly slowed our progress. One morning we perceived a vessel crossing in front of us, about a canon shot off. It was flying English colors. Our captain at once turned sail in its direction, with the purpose of drawing alongside. Having quickly closed the distance, he went down into his longboat, and refused my offer to accompany him. All I could imagine was that he was going to seek news of these waters, and of the other captain's course. He was not gone over a quarter of an hour. I saw him returning with several persons who were not with him when he had left us. I supposed it to be several of our compatriots, whom he was bringing aboard by way of civility. They reached us, and the Mr. Will's first act when he set foot on his ship was to grab me by the collar and tell me he was arresting me in the name of the Lord Protector and the Parliament. He had me tied up on the spot, my state of surprise not permitting me to utter a single word. I was

quickly taken to the longboat, and at once transported to the other ship. This execution was so rapid that I scarcely had time to see Mme Lallin, who was extending her arms toward me from the deck, and to hear her piercing cries at the sight of my misfortune, and no doubt by a premonition of her own.

I was immediately locked up in a deep place, where they left me bound as I had been upon arrival. I was left alone there for as long as the two vessels, which had dropped [96] anchor, required to weigh them. There was nothing mysterious about my misfortune. It was clear that Captain Will was a traitor, who was turning me over as an enemy of the Protector, and that the motive for his betrayal was his love for Mme Lallin. My compassion went first to that unhappy lady. What a fate for her, to find herself in the absolute power of a man capable of such dastardly treachery! I commended her to heaven, which alone could save her from such dangerous hands. I had not willingly contributed to her misfortune, but I was obliged to recognize that I was its 'first cause. She would have remained tranquilly in Rouen had she never known me; or at least she would not have made the decision to risk at sea all the hardships she was perhaps about to undergo. The gratitude I thought I owed her was caused my heart almost as much disorder as remorse would have, if I really had to blame her calamity on myself.

But what was I, occupied as I was with another's fate, to make of my own? I was betrayed by a traitor; but into whose hands had he delivered me? My chains were indication enough that I was to be treated as a criminal. It was doubtless to England that I was to be taken. I rightly surmised that the vessel I was on was returning to London, and that the faithless Will had given the captain all he needed to know to assure my punishment.¹⁴⁹ I must expect to die, and even more distressingly to me, to lose the hope

¹⁴⁹ We have seen that this ship was crossing in front of Will's.

of regaining before I died the esteem of Lord Axminster and the heart of Fanny. They will not even know of my disappearance, I said; or if they learn of it, they will feel no pity. What hope have I now that they will ever learn of my innocence! As overwhelming as these thoughts were, they were nothing compared to another that came to me immediately afterward. It occurred to me that Will's betrayal would not stop with me, and that since one is never but half a traitor, he would not fail to envelop Lord Axminster in my undoing. This thought struck me so suddenly and in a manner so frightening that it instilled a sort of silence in my soul and in all my senses. I focused on it, so stunned I did not move. Oh what a crime, and oh what anguish! I exclaimed: I have betrayed my dear patron, my father, my benefactor; I have betrayed Fanny, Mrs Riding, all I should love and respect on earth. My indiscretion will cost them their lives. Ah! it is I alone who now deserve to die; if it is not to atone for my crime, let it be at least to hide my shame and infamy from my own eyes. I wished I were already in London, and my head already on a scaffold. Was there anything, indeed, as cruel as my fate? I found myself exposed for the third time to an accusation of betrayal, which was the thing farthest removed from my character. My crimes, false or involuntary, produced the same effect as if they had been real and committed on purpose. The most mortal enemy of the Viscount and his daughter would not have succeeded better than I in condemning them. And yet what was more dear and precious to me than the lives of those two wonderful persons? For whom would I have shed all my blood as willingly as for them? One had been a father to me; he had all the sentiments of one. The other was mistress of my heart: alas, there had been a happy time when I was entitled to believe I was master of hers!

I know not how far these morose reflections would have carried me, had my new captain not come to see me an hour later in my cell. The anchor was weighed, and the vessel was continu-

ing on its course. He told me as he approached that he was extremely impatient to learn from me the truth of Captain Will's accusations. Take heart, he added; you have fallen into better hands than you imagine. But I beseech you to be sincere in the account I ask of you. Such a pressing interrogation placed me in a new quandary. I feared offending him if I failed to repeat exactly all he might have learned from the traitor Will, and I was even more worried about going too far in trying to be precise, and revealing to him, with respect to Lord Axminster and myself, details of which he might not know. There was, in truth, something prepossessing in his [97] face and in the sound of his voice that seemed to incline me to trust him; but what confidence was I henceforth to place in men's outward appearances, after an example of betrayal as black as Will's? These thoughts quickly took shape in my mind. My decision was to be sincere even in the slightest circumstances with respect to myself, and to abstain entirely from naming Lord Axminster or mentioning his plans unless I was forced to do so by his questions. I began by stating forthrightly that I was the son of Cromwell: but an unfortunate son, proscribed by my father, and abandoned even before my birth. I energetically portrayed my father's inhuman cruelty, to justify an aversion that was as natural to me as affection is to other sons. I told him of my mother's misfortunes and of her deplorable end. And since my heart had not had enough time to recover from its disarray it was in a minute earlier, the memory of my dear mother so totally upset me that my eyes filled with tears. I interrupted my story to wipe them, and then, raising them onto the captain, I was astonished to see that, watching me intently, he too was in tears. I attributed them to his compassion. May heaven, I said, reward this generous pity that makes you enter so into my sufferings! I was about to take up my story narrative again: Stop there, my fine young man, he interrupted, his voice broken with sighs; stop. Allow me to remove these bonds unsuited to your

hands, and which I regret having left there so long. He personally unties the knots that were holding me tightly. Then he took me by the hand, and after leading me to his room, he had me take a seat beside him, having first tightly closed the door.

He seemed to ponder, and scrutinized me for a few more moments. His sighs betokened a heart in tumult. Now let me know more clearly who you are, he said finally, and tell me by what whim of fortune all the early stages of your life are almost exactly like my own. You are a son of Cromwell: but what was the name of this mother who suffered so from your father's injustices and cruelty? I replied that her name was Cleveland. Alas, he said, that name has never reached my ears. This will not surprise you once you know in what grim manner I was raised. But can it be that you have never heard of Molly Bridge and of her unfortunate son? My astonishment told him as quickly as my reply that I was acquainted with his name and his misfortunes. Bridge! I exclaimed; who lived in Rumney Hole, Mrs Riding's pupil! You are looking at him, he said, embracing me tenderly; I am the one. I in turn put my arms about him: Dear Bridge! I said, what debt do I not owe to heaven, for giving me a brother in a man to whom I was delivered as an enemy! The designs of the traitor Will are indeed well foiled. But will you not tell me how it can be you are still alive, you whom Mrs Riding believed dead, and whose dreadful story she told me over and over? He promised to tell me about the miracle heaven had performed for his salvation. But rejoice in it, he added, only because I am fortunate enough today to be of help to you; for to me life is so heavy a burden that I cannot consider as a blessing the luck that has preserved it.

He encouraged me to explain to him the present state of my fortune, and for what reason Captain Will had delivered me to him to be taken to London and put into the hands of Cromwell. I told him briefly of my relations with Lord Axminster, and the

purpose that led me in his wake to America. I confessed to him that his lordship was bearer of the king's orders to restore our colonies to his obedience; that being wholly in his interests, I had tried to win Captain Will to the cause, in which I had happily succeeded; but that immoderate love for a lady I had taken under my protection had suddenly drawn his ire on me and made him a traitor. I then gave him a description the lady's character to him, and the story of the obligation I had to her; and I [98] incited him to such resentment against Captain Will that he was the first to express regret that his ship was unarmed, nor in any condition to offer the slightest resistance to a warship.¹⁵⁰ This declaration caused me much displeasure, for my intention had been only to persuade him to rescue Mme Lallin. I even again so urged him. But when he had shown me that his vessel was without cannon, although it had thirty gun portals,¹⁵¹ and that he even had very few other firearms, I was obliged to settle for lamenting the lady's destiny, and making wishes for her. It pleased heaven to grant them at least in part. The disarray of my brother's ship increased my curiosity to know his adventures, and the destination of his voyage. He obliged me in the following terms¹⁵²:

I will not relate to you the story of my early misfortunes and those of my mother, since you have learned it from Mrs Riding. I

¹⁵⁰ There seems to be some confusion of categories here, nothing heretofore having indicated anything about the military nature or configuration of Will's vessel.

¹⁵¹ It will be clear why a little later; the Dutch captain from whom Bridge purchased the ship had taken the cannon with him. Cleveland had supposed, based on appearances, that it was a warship capable of taking on Will's.

¹⁵² Bridge's story is virtually a novel apart; it is nonetheless organically linked to Cleveland's because their two stories, both incomplete, are to be joined from this moment on.

will begin my narrative only with the final circumstances of the visit I paid to our father, or rather our tyrant. I had foolishly persuaded myself, despite Mrs Riding's continual warnings, that it was impossible for nature to fail in a father.¹⁵³ My mother's woeful death did not seem to me a crime that could reasonably be blamed on him; and even had he had some part in it, I did not think it sufficient to dispense me from rendering the duties I owed him as a son, nor to prevent me from expecting from him the kindnesses of a father. I even imagined that he would count as a sort of merit my preference for seeing him in secret before claiming publicly the honor of being related to him, and serve further to affect him in my favor. I presented myself at his door in that confidence. The pretext of a secret matter I had to communicate to him easily obtained me admission. He was alone. I started to throw myself at his feet. But the eager motion I made as I approached him to assume that posture made him think I was attacking him. He called his guards, and ordered them to seize me. He had them examine every part of my clothing in his presence, to make sure I bore no concealed weapons. I had already undergone this ceremony before being admitted into his chamber. Once he believed he had nothing to fear from my intentions, he had his guards withdraw. I approached him a second time to fall at his feet, and explained with a modest audacity on what grounds I dared to appear before him. I had no sooner pronounced my mother's name than I clearly read his uneasiness on his face. He glanced all about him, to ascertain whether anyone might have seen and heard me. Then he came up to me, and taking me by the arm: You miscreant, he said, you deserve to die for the imposture of which you dared to speak to me. I forgive you in consideration

¹⁵³ This conviction on Bridge's part arises from an important psychological difference between him and his brother, who in his early childhood did not even know his father's name.

of your youthfulness; but I will find out who has put you up to this. In the meantime, take care to tell no one about this insult, unless you wish to die of torture. He called his guards once more, and ordered some of them to take me to the most secure prison in the city. I left him trembling. His eyes and tone of voice had frightened me as much as his threats.

At first I was locked up in one of the prison's ordinary rooms. But I had spent an hour there before a new order came to transfer me to one of the darkest cells. There I remained for several days, receiving no visits. What little food I was allowed was given me by means of a cord that was lowered through an opening in the vault. I expected to die at any moment, although I did not know my crime, and assuredly had none to reproach myself for. Animals and wild beasts, I repeated in the bitterness of my heart, have affection for their young; and I am the son of a man who condemns me cruelly to die because I dared to call him my father! I remembered Mrs Riding's advice, and regretted my foolish presumption, which had made me neglect it. I invoked my mother's ghost to my rescue, and asked her in tears to forgive me for not for my own safety having believed in the terrible example of her death. Finally, after a week of this miserable life, I was taken from my cell and led to a room where I was awaited by two [99] men who appeared to be persons of some distinction. They questioned me deftly about the place where I had been raised, and the persons who had superintended my education. I was not capable of betraying Mrs Riding. They concluded from my obstinate silence, and from my lack of fear when confronted with their threats, that they would waste their trouble by pressing me further. Their orders, apparently, specified only to frighten me. One of them told me I would be free, and that the Protector was good enough to spare my life; but that should I allow myself to repeat the insult I had committed against him, there was no torture I should not expect. They did not name my crime, nor the insult I

had committed against the Protector.

Meanwhile, I was led out of the prison.¹⁵⁴ The freedom they had promised me consisted of being taken immediately aboard a vessel setting sail at that very hour for the island of Nevis, where a colony was in the process of being formed.¹⁵⁵ I was indeed set free aboard the ship, but thrown in with a bunch of rascals most of whom had been sentenced for various crimes to the same punishment as I.¹⁵⁶ It was a mixture of the sexes. I was made to remove my clothing and change into things more befitting my situation. No imagination could conceive to what excess my heart was heavy and discouraged. I was in no way informed what was to become of me. I heard my companions in misery discuss Nevis as a small island, uninhabited and barren, where our fate would be to be treated as slaves, and forced to clear the land with our hands. So dismaying a destination made me wish for my life to end, as the sole remedy for sufferings I could not avoid. I spent day and night lamenting alone, in some corner of the ship, and rarely did I joined in the conversation of those very persons whose presence I could not avoid.

I still do not know whether it was naturally, or by miraculous assistance from heaven, that I suddenly found a new avenue

¹⁵⁴ There is here a fairly serious chronological lapse. Bridge's narrative is situated in 1660, and Mrs Riding already knew he had been imprisoned when she related the story of Molly Bridge around 1654. Yet he was in prison only a week, and the adventure he will now relate lasts only about two years. There is therefore an error of at least two or three years in the fit of the two stories.

¹⁵⁵ Nevis is a small island in the Lesser Antilles, called Nieves by Christopher Columbus, who discovered it in 1493; an important market for slaves for the West Indies, it had belonged to England since 1628.

¹⁵⁶ Bridge's situation here is fairly comparable with that of Des Grieux, who accompanies Manon Lescaut when she is deported to America; even the route followed is the same.

of hope open before me, in the middle of such a deplorable state. Everything is so surprising in what I have still to tell you, that my simple protestations of truth do not suffice to persuade you. Only your encounter with my ship in this vast sea, and the testimony of my men, can shake the disbelief that will be your first reaction. After that, if you remain with me a long time, and we are fortunate enough to find together what has for three months been the object of my search, the sight of the very marvels I shall declare to you will convince you completely.

I had thus been living aboard ship a listless life which could not long sustain itself with such sadness and lassitude. One day as I was alone, and venting the weight of my woes by shedding some tears, an old woman, whom I had not yet noticed, approached me amicably. She was not dressed like English women, and though she spoke our language quite well, it was easy to tell that she was a foreigner. Her face appeared friendly, even beneath the wrinkles of age, and her eyes still had some of the sparkle that seems to be the very substance of the soul, or what is in any case the closest material thing to it.¹⁵⁷ I was so struck by her demeanor that, despite her simple dress, I stood up to show respect for her, and to speak with her more civilly. She asked the reason for my tears. I answered feelingly that I was an unfortunate lad, a reject of fortune and nature; and that however many tears I might shed, they would never equal my woes. I have been closely observing you for several days, she replied, and I have been surprised to find you constantly in the same state of dejection. Nor does it appear to me you were made for such clothing and for such company. Would you refuse to open your heart to me? I am able to help you, if I be not mistaken in the opinion I have of you. Alas, I said, the secret of my fortune is not of a nature to cause

¹⁵⁷ A deliberate paradox, in Cartesian terms, insofar as matter and soul are two opposing substances.

me shame: would to heaven it should cause me no pain either! But the cruel men who condemn me to the sorry state where you find me also [100] threaten me with death should I reveal their injustice. And so I find myself reduced to suffering ills I have not deserved, and to depriving myself of the very consolation of lamenting them. What you are telling me, the old woman replied, only provokes my curiosity. If you are not, as it appears to me, born for this miserable condition, and have done nothing to condemn you justly to it, I find you so deserving of compassion that I shall think I cannot offer you enough.

These obliging words were such solace to my gloom that I decided to ignore all the fears that obliged me to remain silent. I related all my life's misfortunes to this charitable comforter, not even hiding those of my mother. She seemed gripped by pity and wonder as she listened to me. She added few words when I had finished my story was finished, but they were a brief exhortation to take heart, and her assurance I should receive from her assistance which I was not expecting. She left me, without further explanation. I could not resist a tug of curiosity that led me to inquire who she was. No one could tell me anything about her, except that she was a foreigner who had arranged with the captain for her passage to the island of Saint Helena, where the ship was to stop on its path.¹⁵⁸ I saw her again the next day, and the days following. She got in the habit of coming regularly to finding me in the spot to which I habitually repaired. There was wisdom and

¹⁵⁸ One need only look at a map of the Atlantic to realize how far a vessel headed for Nevis must have deviated from its normal path to stop at Saint Helena, which is in the South Atlantic. The currents and winds indeed made such a voyage particularly difficult; vessels that put in there (especially Portuguese, English, and Dutch ones) were almost without exception returning from the Indies, stopping to rest their crews and to take on water and fruit, as Bridge says at the end of book III.

modesty in everything she said. She had me often repeat my story; she enjoyed having me explain every last particularity. My long isolation in the Rumney Hole cavern was the part of my life she most liked to hear. She would ask me whether I was still able to enjoy solitude, and whether what little intercourse I had had with men had not sullied my innocence. Occasionally she brought the conversation around to the most sophisticated matters; and whether by her intention was to test my mind or exercise her own, she seemed to derive great satisfaction from that sublime sort of conversation.

We passed about two months in this way, without my receiving from her any consolation beyond what her visits and conversation gave me. From time to time she renewed the promises of an assistance which she did not explain. As I saw no hope for a change in my fortune, I did not humor myself with vain expectations, and thought I would never be in her debt for anything more than her good will. However, as we were beginning to approach Saint Helena, she asked me a question that surprised me. You have appeared upright and virtuous, she said; but are you a man of resolve? What is at stake is not only to save your life, which you would not fail soon to lose given the fate assigned to you, but to bring you instantly happiness beyond all your desires. I replied that I believed I was up to any challenge to avoid being taken to the island of Nevis. Listen then, she responded, to what I can do for you. The ship is to drop anchor in the port of Saint Helena. I will go ashore. For three days you will see nothing of me; but on the night of the fourth day, I will be back to deliver you. You will see me first at some distance from the ship, in a longboat with sails. I will have a lantern to direct your eyes in the darkness, and make you able to see me coming to rescue you. I will put it out after letting it glow for a few moments. The difficult part will be to find you the means of getting to me; for there is a watch on board ship during the night, and they will be much

more attentive while it is so close to land. I have been trying without success, since I conceived the plan of rescuing you, to think of some way of facilitating your exit from the ship. The risk to you would be too great if I came alongside the ladders; in any case, they are withdrawn at night, and you could now lower them again without being seen. I will leap into the sea, I interrupted eagerly; you need only be close enough to the ship to come to my assistance. That, she said, is just what I feared to propose to you, and yet what is absolutely necessary. I will come up to the side where you have seen the lantern, and if you have courage enough not to fear casting yourself in the water, you can be sure you will be pulled out quickly. If the [101] lookout spots my boat, we will disappear into the darkness more quickly than we can be pursued.

Everything seemed to me possible, and even easy, in this plan. The only danger was drowning in the sea¹⁵⁹: but that could only be fortunate for me, if I missed this chance to be saved. I thanked the old woman a hundred times, and without even thinking to inquire what would become of me once I got to her boat, I promised her to place the life she was to save entirely in her hands. In a few days we were at Saint Helena. The ship dropped anchor. The passengers left on the longboat, and my guardian angel with them. The captain himself went ashore, with some of the crew, so that the wretched band to which I belonged remained on ship with only as many men as were required to guard them and prevent disturbance. I awaited with the greatest impatience the happy night when my life would end, or my freedom begin. If I had some anxiety, when it arrived, it was because I had forgotten to ask my foreign friend by what means she proposed to fetch me from the water; but even that thought did not deter me much. One is not so meticulous in examining the means of salvation, when one envisages death as his last resort. Toward the middle of

¹⁵⁹ Bridge will state further on that he does not know how to swim.

the night I spotted the lantern, and soon thereafter saw it go out. I pretended to fall asleep on the same side of the ship. It was not long before I heard a stirring in the water below me. It seemed likely that it was caused by the approach of the boat; but the darkness was so complete that nothing could be made out, and I was for a while uncertain of the proper moment when I should leap. I feared, moreover, falling onto the boat itself, which would most certainly have broken my head and all my limbs. Just a few feet from me were three or four sailors, whose presence did not permit me to risk calling out. Nevertheless, having reflected that, whatever notion they might form based on a few words they might hear me utter, they would not imagine that I was about to jump into the sea, and that they could not even be quick enough to prevent me, I cried out, leaning my head toward the water: Are you there, madame? Yes, came the answer; I am dreadfully sorry I did not foresee that it might be so dark out: mark carefully the direction from which you hear my voice, and jump directly toward me; fear nothing. The sailors, who heard these words as distinctly as I, rose from where they were seated. I do not know what they had in mind; but seeing them approaching, I hurled myself bravely into the water, invoking heaven's assistance.

My spirits,¹⁶⁰ which were excited by the vivacity of my action, sustained me in such vigor that I did not for a single instant lose consciousness, despite all the sea water I was swallowing. I kept it so completely that when I resurfaced, I heard the voices of people speaking in the boat. However, since I did not know at all how to swim, I would still have been exposed to some peril, had my liberators not taken a precaution unbeknownst to me, with the help of which I found myself all at once safe. I was surprised and even frightened to feel myself being lifted above the water, unsure how I was being supported; and at almost the

¹⁶⁰ Animal spirits, that is: the forces within the body.

same time, I found myself in the middle of the boat, in the arms of four men, who congratulated me on my courage and the success of my daring. Their only thought after that was to make off quickly. While they were busy deploying their oars and sails, the old woman who had guided their undertaking was expressing to me the joy my deliverance gave her. I asked her first by what enchantment I had been lifted so lightly into the boat. She told me that after communicating her plan for saving me, and the means to which we had agreed, to the four men who were with her, they had decided that a large net used for fishing might well serve to favor my fall at the moment when I would leap into the sea; that after approaching the ship with great difficulty because of the darkness, they had been greatly concerned lest I be unable to find them; that she had nonetheless assured them that [102] I was waiting, and that at the merest sign they could give me of their arrival, they would doubtless receive one back from me; that before giving it to me, they thought they should take advantage of the darkness itself to set their net; that they had the idea of attaching a good part of it to the ship, and then pulling back while holding the other end, which formed between their boat and the ship a broad sling, which would hold me up without fail if I was fortunate enough to fall into it; that for fear lest it break under my weight, they let it down into the water, so it could give with my fall; that they were about searching for the means of attracting my attention, when I had begun to speak to them; that I had fortunately followed the direction she had given me, and that once I had fallen onto the net, their only remaining problem was to pull it in by moving towards the ship: as a result of which I found myself suspended over the water, and was then in the middle of the boat which had come up beneath me.

Although I felt much indebted to their ingenuity and effort, it is clear that this enterprise had succeeded only with special protection from heaven, which I thanked from the depths of my

heart. My companions relit their lantern once we were a certain distance from the ship, and reckoning we had nothing more to worry about, they left off rowing and let the boat glide by sail alone. They came over to me. Until then I had taken them for mere sailors; but although their clothing did not designate them as anything else, I could not mistake their demeanor and their manners. They looked me curiously. They asked me various questions, by which I learned that the lady had told them a part of my adventures. Then they discussed my answers, with an appearance of satisfaction. The language they used among themselves was unfamiliar to me, although they spoke our tongue correctly when addressing me.¹⁶¹ Finally, after overwhelming me with compliments and civilities, one of them told me he was surprised that curiosity had not yet led me to inquire who they were, and where it was they intended to take me. I answered them that after escaping so happily from the most dreadful of all states, there was nowhere on earth I was not willing to go with equal indifference. As for them, I said quite honestly that I could only have formed a most advantageous opinion of four persons who had just rendered me such an important service, motivated by their generosity alone. We hope, replied the stranger, that this indifference for the place you live will not last long. The happy part of the earth where we are taking you will become a part of you. Nor will you consider your escape from the ship your greatest good fortune, unless you call it that only as the means heaven has used to provide you the one that awaits you. We ask of you nothing more, he added, than docility and virtue; your physiognomy, and Mme Eliot's report, guarantee us that you have always possessed these, and will never want for them. Leave it to heaven and to us to make you happy.

¹⁶¹ Unlike Cleveland, Bridge does not know French at the point when he leaves England. Mme Eliot, who has saved Bridge, is French, but we shall see that English and French are both used in the colony.

I heard the same kinds of things from them throughout the night. I did no more than express in general an immense gratitude, unable to comprehend what they were so vaguely promising me. Mme Eliot (this was the name of the foreign lady, which I first heard from them) never tired of praising to them my gentleness and modesty, and repeating to them how it came about that she had made my acquaintance on board the ship. In a word, she said, I am content with the success of my mission, and persuaded that all our brethren will be as well. I bring only a small number, but they are of a kind that is better weighed than counted.¹⁶² To me this conversation was an endless enigma. Night was beginning to wane: after four or five hours' navigation I could make out a shoreline so steep I could see no opening that could serve as a port or harbor. My liberators said to me: Give thanks to heaven; you are now safe. Nevertheless they seemed to advance only with great caution, for fear of running onto the rocks that appeared just below the surface on every side. We reached shore without incident. They hoisted the [103] boat out of the sea, and sliding it along the sand, hid it under a vault that appeared to have been prepared on purpose to hold it. I looked all around for the opening through which we could reach land; I did not perceive it, and the rocks around it were so high they seemed to me impossible to climb.¹⁶³ Mme Eliot, who was observing my astonishment, took

¹⁶² Her justification makes no sense, insofar as the dilemma she was to remedy was a matter of numbers and not quality; and so it is that her compatriots are much less satisfied than she with the outcome of her mission.

¹⁶³ The rocky and apparently unapproachable coasts of Saint Helena are described in various travel narratives which Prevost might have known; or he might have drawn most of his information, as Jean Sgard has suggested, from the *Dictionnaire universel géographique et historique* (1708) of Thomas Corneille (PR. p. 201). François Leguast, for example, describes the island as appearing to be surrounded by

me by the hand, and leading me a few paces through the sand along the coastline, took me near a vault similar to the one where our companions had stashed their boat. We entered it. It was a sort of doorway, beyond which we found ourselves in a fissure that wended crookedly from the foot of the rock to its summit. The light came from above. We continued forward thus for five or six minutes through various meanders. The passage was so narrow that three persons could scarcely have walked abreast. You are surprised, said Mme Eliot; but be patient for a bit; the destination will satisfy you better than the way there. Finally, the fissure in which we had been walking gradually widening out, we soon reached the exit on the side of the land. The sight I beheld filled me instantly with wonder. Mme Eliot had me mount a small rise for a better view. It was a plain, perhaps four leagues wide and five or six long.¹⁶⁴ It seemed to be surrounded on every side by rocks similar to those through which we had just passed. They were not so much high as rugged and steep. The line of sight was

extraordinarily steep cliffs coming right down to the oceanside, and virtually inaccessible (*Voyages et aventures de François Leguat*, Amsterdam: Jean-Louis de Lorme, 1708, II, 168). The Nopande kingdom in book XIV is similarly protected behind high mountain walls, and like the La Rochelle colony might have inspired the El Dorado of *Candide*, perched high in the Andes.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. the description of the same site in book V. For this landscape, Prévost seems to have made use of another “philosophical voyage” found in the *Voyages et aventures de Jacques Massé* by Simon Tyssot de Patot (Bordeaux: Jacques l’Aveugle, 1710). Massé is withing sight of Saint Helena when a cyclone carries the ship away; and when it comes aground a thousand leagues away, he finds nothing but daunting cliffs; but by climbing a little he and his companions discover, just as Bridge does here, a fertile plain. Similarly, the capital of the Sevarambians, which Sermodas calls “Paradise”, is located high in the mountains (*Histoire des Sévarambes*, 1677, part II).

thus bounded in every direction. But nothing on earth is more delightful than what my eyes beheld in that limited space. The whole countryside appeared to me an enchanted garden. Art and nature seemed joined to beauty it. There were rows of trees as far as the eye could see, small woods, an orderly combination of prairies and farmlands, houses on either side, symmetrically opposite, and apparently placed as much for the pleasure of the eyes as for the settlers' convenience. In the middle of the plain rose a vast edifice. There was nothing striking about it as far as magnificence goes, but it enhanced the landscape, because it seemed to be the center of all the other houses, which were approximately equidistant from it. The sun, which was beginning to spread its light, gave such a pleasant appearance to every part of this lovely countryside, that I thought myself transported into a new world,¹⁶⁵ and my eyes could not take in enough. Behold our abode and yours, said Mme Eliot: this is the happy corner of the world which the goodness of heaven grants you, like us, as your asylum. I will tell you now, she continued as we walked on, with whom you are going to live, and what kind of happiness you may expect here.

You have no doubt heard of the famous siege of La Rochelle, and of the horrible extremities to which that unhappy city was reduced.¹⁶⁶ Most of the people you will see here are its for

¹⁶⁵ Although this "new world" is figurative, the situation is largely parallel to that of Des Grieux in the New World: "It is to New Orleans one must go, I often said to Manon, if one wishes to enjoy the true blessings of love" (*Manon Lescaut* p. 435).

¹⁶⁶ To put an end to this Protestant stronghold, Richelieu, after occupying the Island of Ré at the end of 1627, had a dike constructed in front of the city's port and personally supervised the siege, which lasted close to a year. The inhabitants showed great courage, constantly hoping for relief from the English – long promised but never received – whilst their number dwindled from 25,000 to 5,000. On 28 October

mer inhabitants. It was, as you know, religious fervor which armed us for its defense. The intractability of the court, the bad faith of the Cardinal de Richelieu, the violation of all our privileges and of the rights that had been granted us by the most sacred promises,¹⁶⁷ our miseries, and the injustice of our tyrants which increased by the day, had reduced us to most extreme despair. We determined to risk anything in the interest of our conscience and our freedom. Our endeavors were more just than successful; they culminated in the utter loss of every advantage of which it had been our only purpose to preserve at least a part when we took up arms.¹⁶⁸ After sustaining a siege which for a thousand dreadful circumstances will long remain memorable, we were forced by hunger to yield to our conquerors. They took such harsh advantage of their victory that we could not bear the arrogance with which they compounded our sufferings.¹⁶⁹ Eighty or so of the city's wealthiest and most distinguished citizens gathered together¹⁷⁰: we discussed our misfortunes, and envisaging no fate that would not be preferable to the one we were made to experience, we resolved to abandon our poor country and seek a

1628, the city surrendered.

¹⁶⁷ Mme Eliot in not speaking here of religious freedom as such but of "privileges," which is to say specific rights granted to certain protestant cities (La Rochelle, Montauban, Nîmes) to arm and govern themselves, in numerous treaties and edicts during the sixty years prior to the siege.

¹⁶⁸ These three sentences, casting the Protestant cause in too favorable a light, were cut from the Paris edition of *Cleveland*.

¹⁶⁹ In fact no particularly oppressive measures were taken, but the fortifications were destroyed and the city definitively deprived of its right of self-governance.

¹⁷⁰ Only those who can pay their own way are involved in this project; they will take care of their servants but not their compatriots. This social selection is very important, for it means that the colony's egalitarianism will represent an equality only of the wealthy.

place where at least we would be allowed to live and serve God in freedom. Our first intention was to go to England. There were few among us [104] who did not have some experience there. Most also knew its language: the merchants of La Rochelle have their children learn it to facilitate trade. Each of us hurriedly gathered together his most valuable possessions, and after agreeing to meet again in a particular neighborhood in London, we split up into several small groups, to leave France in stages, as opportunities for departure might arise. Heaven so seconded our designs that we were happily reunited in London in less than six weeks. The heads of our assembly forthwith presented an humble request to the king to be allowed to create a church according to our usages. They did not find this as easy to do as they had hoped. England was then nearly as divided as France where religion was concerned. There were two parties at each other's throats under the hateful distinction of Presbyterians and Episcopalians; or rather, the archbishop of Canterbury, jealous of his authority and that of his bishops, pitilessly persecuted all those who held to the principles of the reformation established in France. He had acquired such influence over the king that the disposition of all ecclesiastical matters was left to him, and his zeal was daily violently unleashed against those who did not recognize the hierarchy. We learned that many Presbyterians, weary of his persecutions, had like us left their country, some bound for Holland, others in greater number to settle in America. The archbishop having no more consideration for us than for them, it was at his request that the king denied our request, and urged us to join the religion established in England. Not one of us was disposed so to make such a change. We had been so little time in London that we had not yet been able to put down roots in a way that could retain us there. We took in common the decision to embark once more, and seek some other refuge. A few English Presbyterians who learned of our intention offered to join with us with their posses-

sions to share in our destiny.¹⁷¹ We shared the cost of purchasing a ship, and having made the unanimous choice of going to America, we took on board everything that could be useful for the founding we were planning of a new colony.

There were no fewer than two hundred of us, counting our children and servants. Our voyage was smooth the first six weeks; I can even say it was the whole way, since the mishap that befell us led us to the happiness we now enjoy. The wind, which had been favorable for more than a month, abruptly changed, and became so violent that our sailors told us to expect a tempest. Imagine the immediate grief of the multitude of women and children who made up half our troop. We thought we would surely be buried by the sea. Indeed we were so furiously tossed about for several days that we could no more hope of salvation, when a gust of wind cast us onto the shores of this island. Our ship was broken up on the rocks you have seen. But by miracle of Providence, the tide, which was ebbing at that very moment, left us so dry that instead of being drowned in the ship herself by the water that had poured in on all sides, we saw it flow out on its own through the gashes which the jagged rocks had rent in her. We got down onto the sand without difficulty. Everyone set to work salvaging the most precious items in the ship. We would not have taken this needless trouble, had we noticed that she had been driven so high up the shore that it was impossible the sea water would ever have enough force to pull her back out. Her cargo, on the contrary, would have helped her even more, by making her

¹⁷¹ The history of the establishment of this Rochellois colony by refugees from Catholic and Protestant persecution indeed resembles that of the Puritan colonies in New England; moreover there was near Nieuw Amsterdam a colony named La Nouvelle Rochelle (1689). The one in this novel might have been inspired in some respects by the colonization of the Island of Eden related by François Leguast.

heavier. Be that as it may, the return of the tide did us no harm; it did not prevent us from saving not only our possessions, but the longboat too, and all the debris of the ship.

It was nevertheless a piteous sight, to see all our trunks and our furniture randomly scattered across the sand along the rocks, and us sitting on them with our children, waiting to see what decision our husbands would come to. The shore being steep, as you have seen, they were obliged to dispatch a few of them to [105] follow it until they could find an opening to the interior. Their report was sorry when they returned. They told us the cliffs were equally vertical for a half-league, and they were unable to go further, because the water was rising right up to the coastline. So we found ourselves on a small stretch of beach, hemmed in by the sea on one side and forbidding mountains on the other. Our husbands had only two options remaining. One was to figure out some way to scale the cliffs: but even could they themselves have succeeded, they could not do it for us and our children. The other was to get into the longboat, at the risk of perishing a hundred times on the sharp black rocks they saw everywhere at the water's surface, and to seek, if it were possible, somewhere about the island for a more favorable landing spot. They were about to take this latter path, when heaven led one of our Englishmen to notice the narrow passage through which I have just led you here. At first he followed it alone, as far as the entrance to this countryside; and immediately retracing his steps, he came with great joy to announce his happy discovery to us. We regarded him as our savior, and this service subsequently earned him one of the most prominent positions in our society. We thus entered this plain as a sort of Promised Land. The men's first care was to explore its entire area. They reported back to us with great surprise that it led nowhere, and that after going all around it carefully they had observed not a single opening in this ring of cliffs that encircles it. Most of the women at first lamented a situation which was

going to exclude all intercourse with the rest of the world; but when our husbands had added that the land seemed to them excellent, and that they had found there a hundred kinds of fruit which the land naturally bore, we changed our thoughts, and began to believe it was not without particular intent that heaven had guided us to a spot so suited to our settlement. Time only confirmed us in this sentiment. You will be able to judge the love we have for this solitary place by the effort we have put into embellishing it. Nature helps us, for she is nowhere more generous and fertile. In all the years since our settlement was founded, we have known no other season than an endless springtime, which is always accompanied by the riches of autumn.¹⁷²

I will not for the present, added Mme Eliot, go into the order we created for our behavior after taking possession of this happy land: I wish to leave you the pleasure of learning everything with your eyes. It only remains for me to tell you the reasons that made me undertake the voyage to Europe, and which led me subsequently to offer you my services aboard the ship that brought us to St. Helena: this is a point on which you need to be informed. This land, she continued, favored as it is by heaven and nature,

¹⁷² Numerous travel accounts celebrated the advantages of Saint Helena's climate, and the great proliferation of all sorts of fruit, game, even pigs and goats; often they also note the large number of rats which alone diminish its appeal. "The air is so fine in Saint Helena," records the *Histoire générale des voyages*, "that two sailors from Lancaster, one of whom suffered from scurvy, and the other with a flux of nine months' duration, were almost instantly cured" (I, 340). This halt of James Lancaster in 1593 was followed by another in 1603 which is also recounted in *Histoire générale des voyages* after Purchas (I, 401-402); another similar narrative which Prévost perhaps knew is of the stop which Thomas Cavendish (or Candish) made there in 1588, reported by Hakluyt (v. *Hakluytus Posthumus, or Purchas His Pilgrimes*, Glasgow: James MacLehose, 1905, II, 182-184).

has in its air, or in its soil, some infection which opposes the propagation of the colony.¹⁷³ I do not mean that the women are barren; on the contrary, they almost all possess a happy fertility: but they give birth only to girls. We have had scarcely one child of your sex born to four of mine, in the space of twenty years.¹⁷⁴ It is true that our girls are simply lovely creatures; it is as if nature in forming them gives them in charms everything extra she should have used to make a boy.¹⁷⁵ But you can well understand that with most of them lacking husbands, they spend their lives in a sort of languor that distresses us. These poor children do nothing but sigh day and night. It is only too easy to see that they want for something. We certainly could go find them husbands in St. Helena, but two reasons hold us back. One is our reluctance to admit anyone of a different religion into our colony; the other is our desire to remain for as long as we can unknown to the rest of the world. Our solitude is a benefit, as is our separation from

¹⁷³ An important detail: the originally favorable impression of this “promised land” and its happiness has led many hasty readers to interpret it as a utopia; Gilbert Chinard called it “une sorte de Salente protestante,” referring to *Télémaque (L’Amérique et le rêve exotique)*, Paris, 1913, p. 283). On the contrary, we learn rather early that every condition of happiness is not met here, and it does not take long for the seed of serious social troubles to appear.

¹⁷⁴ If it is now about 1658, and the colony has been in existence for twenty years, it took them ten years after the fall of La Rochelle (1628) before leaving for America.

¹⁷⁵ It was an old theory that the female child was a deficient male (being defined by the lacking organ); this is why the harmful climate that produces only daughters is previously called not merely a strange influence but *quelque chose de vicieux*. The girls’ beauty is thus a sort of epiphenomenon arising from their deficient gendering: nature has embellished them with some of the leftover energy that was insufficient and thus superfluous.

human intercourse. We therefore deemed, after mature deliberation, that our best choice for avoiding attrition of the colony was to [106] bring some young husbands for our girls from France and England. I was entrusted with this mission, because I am thought to have beguiling ways. It has been about fifteen months since I left the island, along with one of our men who was designated to accompany me. First I went to France. I went to all the cities where our religion flourishes. But despite all my efforts, I found few young men who were willing to follow me on my word. My conquest came down to two. I was able to add only three in England. It might have been easy for me to bring a larger number had I been disposed to accept them indifferently; but I needed young, upright, gentle, virtuous men attached to their religion: and God knows there are few such in Europe. I saw you on the ship; I was attracted by your physiognomy; and you no sooner acquainted me with your fortune and inclinations than I believed you fit to increase the small number of the elect I was bringing. You might have noticed them on ship, although you were unaware of the reasons for their voyage. They disembarked with me three days ago. They are now awaiting you here, and are no less eager to see you than is the rest of the colony.

Having finished, Mme Eliot asked me whether I did not approve her plans for me, and whether I was not grateful to her for delivering me from slavery to bring me into the arms of a pretty woman, and joining me to a society of amiable and virtuous people. I was so filled with joy that I could scarcely persuade myself her story was true. I asked her a hundred questions, which she answered with great candor. There was only one thing to which she refused to answer: it was to the astonishment I expressed that the establishment of the colony could be unknown, whereas it was so close to St. Helena that we had required only five or six hours to get here. I also asked her how she had been able to find the way, either to go to St. Helena, or to return from

there. That, she replied, is a secret for which you must manifest no curiosity until it is deemed appropriate to make it known to you. But what must console you for the ignorance in which you may long be kept on that head, is that even among the inhabitants of this place, only a handful of elders are privy to it. I did not think I should to press her, and persuaded myself that if she refused to satisfy me, it was for fear lest I make use the knowledge I was requesting to leave the island should it happen to displease me. We continued on our way. When the four men who had stayed behind us to look after the longboat having caught up with us, we stepped up our pace, and after about an hour's walk reached the home of Mme Eliot.

It was tidy and comfortable, and though the furnishings were all very simple, there was a feeling of abundance. Seeing my house, she said, will give you an idea of all the others; they are exactly like mine. Our goal, with this uniformity, has been to avoid jealousies and affectations of superiority. Everyone lives here in perfect equality.¹⁷⁶ In that way we have undercut ambition at its root. Our ranks are according our age; and no one can well be envious of preeminence when it is owed only to aging. Then she called her servants to get me a change of clothes. She had taken the precaution of bringing some in the boat, and giving them to me when I came out of the water; but she wanted me better attired to make my first appearance in public, especially in the eyes of the young persons among whom I was to find a wife. God forbid, she said, that I should ever inspire in you the love of

¹⁷⁶ It will be seen that nothing could be less literal than this “complete equality”: those who were servants remain servants and eat separately from the masters. Bridge of course does not yet know that he should be wary of the hyperboles of happiness he hears in the colony, aspects of a euphoric mythology the settlers have created for themselves, not always corresponding to objective reality.

vain ornaments or the least luxury in attire; but on an occasion like the one that awaits you, it is permissible to adorn modestly the advantages nature has already given you; it is even a mark of consideration and respect which we owe to the presence of the persons we honor. She had me properly dressed, which she had had made expressly for me since her arrival, and which was rather nicely cut to my height and build. Seeing this apparel, and the goodly number of servants there taking care of us, I could not help asking her what she meant by that equality [107] in which she had said they lived in the colony. You have tailors, I said, and domestics, whom you doubtless do not regard as your equals. No, she replied, we have not altered the order of conditions. The domestics we brought from Europe continue here to be what they were. Children born to them also remain within the same limits as their fathers. But they nonetheless have with us a sort of equality, which I am going to explain to you. First of all, they have the same share as we in our wealth. All our property is communal, as you will later learn better, and everyone is entitled to make use of the same portion. Although my domestics have a table different from mine, they have the same food I do; everything they need in life is provided them with the same abundance.¹⁷⁷ In the second place, treating them harshly is a crime which we punish severely here. What right have we to mistreat them that they do not have to refuse to bear it? As for rank, they come immediately after our children; and they observe between themselves the same order that we respect among ourselves. Thus, just as it cannot be said there is inequality between a son and his father, there is hardly more between us and our servants. Each family is considered as a

¹⁷⁷ Equal in property, but divided into serving and served; the same food, but separate tables: properly speaking, this is a caste system, which is rationalized by the masters' benevolence towards their underlings.

whole, the father making up the first part, the children the second, and the servants the third. They are as much part of us as hands to a body. We hold ourselves superior to them only as the head is with respect to the other members.

I heartily approved this wise arrangement, which seemed to me to accord with the principles of both religion and humanity. While I was thus speaking with Mme Eliot, the four men who had left us when we entered her house spread the news of my arrival. A moment later a crowd of both sexes arrived, who warmly and most civilly welcomed me. Most were advanced in years; but their robust appearance and the healthy look on their faces betokened both the temperateness of the climate and the sobriety of their life. I expressed some regret that they had not allowed me time to come greet them first. One of the old men replied: We have given up awkward civilities and vain compliments. We are more satisfied by coming to see you for the first time here, because we feel we are giving you a sign of friendship, than you would be to come and introduce yourself, because you would have been showing us a mark of respect and honor. So the advantage is on our side, and you must have no regret. Is this not the way all men should act towards each other? You shall see, once you get to know us, that we have higher regard for a degree of mutual charity and genuine affection, than for all the outward grimaces men have seen fit to call civilities.

I confess that, hearing them reason in this way, I imagined I was dealing less with Protestants than with a band of Quakers who professed to reject the usual customs of human society and to live in a manner just the opposite of other men.¹⁷⁸ However, the more the conversation went on, the more I found them sound and

¹⁷⁸ The Quakers were founded by George Fox about 1648; Prévost is doubtless thinking primarily of the Pennsylvania colony founded by the Quaker William Penn, although that did not occur until 1681.

reasonable. I even noticed that while they deplored affected appearances of politeness, they had them in essence, in other words much cordiality and graciousness. They told me about the laws they had instituted and which they all pledged to support, their customs, their occupations; and they promised me they would everything they could so I could spend a happy and peaceful life among them. Thus I was called upon from the first day by a large portion of the colony. Their number, which had been only about two hundred when they arrived, had grown to nearly twice that. It would have grown much more yet, had they had husbands for all their daughters. That was their worry. I noted that they were not pleased with Mme Eliot's voyage. They had not expected her to bring them merely six men, given that they had nearly a hundred girls who were in need of marriage.¹⁷⁹ They told me they would be obliged to come to some new resolution on that score.

[108] After spending the first day enduring their blandishments, that evening I expressed to Mme Eliot that I would be pleased to learn more about the marriage to which I was destined. I have just heard, I said, that you have nearly a hundred girls who are waiting for a husband; how do you expect to satisfy them with six men? She replied that the decision that had been taken was to make the preference accorded be decided by lots; for here, she added, nothing must offend the law of equality. I was very dissatisfied by this response. My sensitivities, as I saw it, could not countenance a wife I would owe merely to chance. My heart would choose, and I began to fear I might not find on this island all the happiness I was promised, if I were made to live with a wife I could not care for. This fear was all the more founded that

¹⁷⁹ The term "need" (*dans le besoin du mariage*) has a sensual charge; the problem is not merely that the colony's population might dwindle, but that its girls are wasting away (*se consumer*).

they talked to me of the colony's girls as the most charming persons in the world. It is impossible, I thought, that they should all be like that; what if chance gave me one who was ugly? What cruel torment it would be to hold a disagreeable wife in my arms, while my eyes constantly beheld others as lovely as they tell me? I retired that night with these thoughts, and they stayed with me throughout the night.

The next morning, when I awoke, I had the satisfaction of meeting the five young men who had come on the same ship with me. They had been taken the day before to the far confines of the plain to show them all of its parts, and for this reason had not learned of my arrival. We embraced with the tenderness one feels for another when they are companions of the same fate. They seemed to me docile and reserved. But once we began after a quarter of an hour's conversation to make acquaintance and speak more openly, they did not hide from me the fact that with the pleasure they had to be in such an agreeable place, they like me were felt anguished at being condemned to receive their wives from chance. We are the first, said one of them; we have the right to choose. In other words, he added heatedly, if the lots do not favor us, some newcomer would walk off before our very eyes with the loveliest person on the island. In my opinion, my dear friends, we must not allow this. It was a Frenchman who spoke with such energy. I replied that I agreed with his resentment, but failed to see how we could bring the colony's old men to see it our way. At least I defy them, he replied, to make me see it their way; they will not make me marry a woman for whom I feel no attraction. Thereupon he tried to commit us to supporting him in his plan to argue with the elders the injustice of their pretension. I absolutely refused to join in this covenant; not that I was less opposed than he to such a marriage, but I was reluctant to disrupt the peace that prevailed in that tranquil settlement. I advised him at least to wait before protesting until fate had declared itself out

against our desires. I learned from him and his comrades that they had just been notified that our destiny was to be decided that very afternoon, in satisfy the impatience of numerous girls who eagerly desired to have their fate clarified. They had been strictly confined to their homes since our arrival, and this attention to preventing them from seeing us only increased the urgency of their wish to do so. Mme Eliot also came to inform me that that evening I would have a wife. I had not asked whether she had a daughter, but I did now. She replied that she had two, and hoped one of them would be fortunate enough to fall my lot. I spent the morning calling on some of the colony elders. They took me to see the most notable features of the plain. They took me toward the large edifice of which I have spoken. I had at first taken it to be a church, but they informed me that it was the common storehouse where all the island's wealth was kept. Here is the explanation which they gave me.

Here we consider ourselves less as one people, one of them told me, than as a single family. We live free from worry and effort, like children [109] in their father's house. Each year, we elect four governors by lot, whose job it is constantly to look out for the public welfare. Their particular responsibility is to have our servants cultivate the earth, and have the fruits of our harvests and gatherings brought into this storehouse, and then distribute them. This is done equally, in accordance with the number of persons who live in each house. A servant's share is the same as the master's. We did not achieve right away the plenty that now reigns in the island. When we arrived from Europe, we were rich in money, and reasonably supplied with food and the necessary instruments for life; but our money was of no use here. Our food could serve to sustain us for a while, but we had no wheat for sowing our land, and horses to plow them. We had nonetheless to provide for our future needs. Our ship had broken up on the shore; we had nothing left but a longboat: how could we venture

forth at sea in unknown and rock-strewn waters? To go where? In what direction? With what hope? However, there was amongst us an Englishman who offered to risk his life for the common good. He was the same man who had luckily discovered the cleft in the rock; Mme Eliot told me that she related that story to you. The brave man wished to undertake his mission alone. He filled the boat with food, and departed with nothing to assist him but a small sail and two oars. The whole colony spent the time he was away making wishes for his safety, which was to be the means of our own. We did not expect to see him again for a long time. Yet several of our servants who were walking along the seaside two days after his departure spotted him returning toward the coast. They told us this pleasant news. We all rushed together to the strand. It was indeed him, bringing back his boat full of wheat and various seeds which he knew we must have. Everyone was eager to question him about the circumstances of his voyage; but having no less prudence than courage, he refused to say anything in public. The notables among us assembled to hear his report. I was among them. He told us things that filled us with joy and wonder. We deemed it appropriate, in keeping with his advice, to keep part of it secret, in the interests of the colony; but we broadcast what needed to be revealed for the consolation of all. Everyone was told that he had been to St. Helena, that it was not very distant, and that we were henceforth assured we could draw from there all kinds of assistance and provisions. The name of that illustrious and generous comrade was Drington. He died a few years ago, but not before rendering the colony a hundred other important services, which have earned him our immortal gratitude.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ The immortality thus conferred on Drington is another example of the patriotic rhetoric elaborated by the group as a mark of solidarity and protection against the outside world.

This countryside assumed in no time a happy shape after his return. Everyone took to working with the same fervor. It took us only about six months to build our houses and plow our lands. We gave the whole plain the flourishing appearance you see behold; and seeing ourselves as the founders of a new state, we were not more inspired by the idea that we were working for ourselves than by the desire of leaving our descendants a favorable impression of our hard work and dedication. Mr. Drington's function was to return often to St. Helena and bring us all the conveniences which we were wanting. To assist him in these voyages, we commissioned three of our comrades who took an oath to reveal nothing of what we had originally thought it best to keep hidden from the colony. We have followed the same procedure since Mr. Drington's death. There are only the four sworn men among us who are entitled to take to the sea and leave the shore. If one of them dies, a new one is elected. Only they may make use of the longboats, which they keep chained in a grotto which you may have noticed when you arrived. Today they go only rarely to St. Helena: we no longer require anybody's help; our lands furnish us with more food than we require. Our herds have so multiplied that we are sometimes [110] inconvenienced by their number. We could sell some of them in St. Helena: but what would we do with our money? That which we brought from Europe is counted among our useless riches: by agreement, we have locked it up in one part of this storehouse; it is a dead, useless possession. Thus, of the three principal passions that wage war in men's hearts, we have been able to cut off two at the roots: the equality which is established among us protects us from ambition, and the futility of wealth has cured us of greed. The only thing for which we can find no remedy is love. Our girls are wasting away, and what is extremely sad for them, we can neither deliver them from this passion, nor give them a means of satisfying it. I remember only too well, the old fellow added, how hard it

is at a certain age to moderate one's desires and resist the longings of nature.

At this point I asked him two questions. I can well conceive, I said, that you have no difficulty preventing individual colonists from making use of the boats to leave the island and satisfy their curiosity; but how is it possible for your location not to be known to the inhabitants of St. Helena, who are so close by; and what do they think of the four men whom you send to them periodically, seeing that they arrive so far from the continent in a longboat, in which they must surely realize they have not crossed the vast expanse of the seas? The old man replied that the first time they had seen Mr. Drington, they had looked on him as a man who had dropped from the sky, and were very curious to ask him whence he came, and by what adventure he was in their island; but that wise Englishman, having considered what an advantage it would be for the colony's welfare to remain unknown even to its neighbors, had given them such equivocal answers that they had been able to extract from him not the slightest enlightenment; that his comrades had maintained the same measures; and that protect themselves even more against the curiosity of the Portuguese and a handful of Englishmen who have settled in St. Helena,¹⁸¹ it was their custom to leave their port only at nightfall, so the darkness would conceal them from the eyes of any who might undertake to observe them. They are persuaded, the old man added, that our

¹⁸¹ In 1657 Cromwell granted the East India Company a charter for a colony at St. Helena; it was founded at Jamestown in 1659 under the command of captain John Dutton, its first governor. Prior to this there had been no permanent Portuguese settlement: cf. *Histoire générale des voyages*, VIII, 582. The company had indeed experienced great difficulty attracting settlers, and the early harvests were spare and discouraging; see Philip Gosse, *Sainte-Helena* (London: Cassell, 1938), ch. I.

settlement is not far away from them; but try as they might, they will never succeed in locating it. Chance alone, or the indiscretion of our four seamen, could give them that knowledge. My second question was the same one I had already put to Mme Eliot. What benefit, I said, can you hope for the contentment of your girls from my arrival and that of my five comrades? You can satisfy but six of them, and the others will be all the more distressed to see themselves rejected by fate. He conceded I was right, and harshly blamed Mme Eliot, who had succeeded so poorly in her mission. However, he continued, we have adopted, in an assembly held this morning, a resolution that will console them. It is to send once more to Europe for a new recruitment of young husbands. If that deputation meets with no better success than the first, we will leave our daughters free to go there themselves, giving to each a fair sum, to settle in a place of their choosing.

There was some indiscretion in making such a disclosure to me. The old man did not see the consequences. The reflections I made right away made me see more injustice than ever in their plan to have us draw our wives by lot. I did not fail to share this new discovery with my five comrades, and needed to add nothing to make them sense how hard it would be for us to see all the most winsome girls leave the island while we remained there attached to some disagreeable girl that might fall to us by whim of fate. It was the opinion of Mr. Gelin, who was a clever and able young Frenchman, but whose impetuosity seemed to outweigh his prudence somewhat, felt that we should choose without a minute's hesitation to take our objections to the principal elders, and declare to them that we would never submit to a procedure that was so manifestly prejudicial to our [111] rights. He got our comrades to agree with him, so that being alone to oppose them, I had more than a little difficulty bringing them to understand that there would still be time to resort to that extremity; and that for our honor, as well as for the sake of peace, we

should at least defer our protest until the moment they sought to force us. It is not, I said to them, as if we had already established ties which they were trying to make us break; we know as yet none of the girls we are to see today. We have no particular inclination, and have only a general desire to obtain an amiable wife. Besides, it may happen that the lots favor us: then we would have, along with the pleasure of seeing our desires satisfied, also that of giving the whole colony a proof of our docility and restraint. If on the other hand it happens that result of the lots displeases us, our protests will be no less free, and our arguments will have all the more force, after the certain indication we have given of our submission and our modesty. We can first ask that our marriage be postponed, on the pretext of our wish at least to get to know our spouses: that is a favor they can hardly refuse us; and we will take advantage of it to break off politely, if possible, the involuntary engagements to which we have been constrained. This line of reasoning made enough impact on the mind of Mr. Gelin to make him revise his decision. Before breaking up we embraced like brothers, and promised each other every assistance that could contribute to our common expectations.

The appointed time for the ceremony having come, one of the elders of the settlement came to fetch me at Mme Eliot's, where I was still staying. He told me that the election was to take place at the church, and that all the young girls were already gathered there. I arrived at the same time as my five comrades, who also had been notified by assigned elders. Curiosity had attracted all the island's inhabitants to witness such an extraordinary spectacle. We had to make room through the crowd to enter; but they had arranged to leave a fairly large space around which the girls were arranged in a circle. In the middle was a table. The minister was seated there, flanked by the four governors of the storehouse. They had us come forward. All the spectators maintained complete silence, and appeared to be awaiting impatiently

the opening of this rare ceremony. They began with a short prayer, to call for heaven's blessing on us. Next the minister, addressing us aloud, made a most eloquent speech about the purpose that brought us together. He recounted in few words the history of the colony's establishment, and the special marks of heaven's protection which it had received for twenty years. He briefly exposed for us the laws of the land, and of all the engagements we were about to make with the status of inhabitants of the island. The laws seemed to me simple, and easily observable. They consisted of a small number of clear and immediate consequences of the general precepts of charity and justice. He congratulated us on being chosen by Providence to come share the pleasures of this happy island, and exhorted us to show ourselves worthy of the society of which we were beginning to become members. Although all the girls among whom our wives were to be elected had been raised in the practice of decency and virtue, he did not doubt, he said to us, that God, whose hand guides fate, would designate for of us that person whose humor and qualities were most in harmony with our inclinations. It is for this reason, he added, as much as to avoid the jealousies that arise from preferences, that we have decided to entrust the election of your wives to chance, persuaded that whatever men call by that name is but a hidden disposition of heaven, which always turns events to the advantage of those who respect its will.

While my ears lent a portion of their attention to this speech, my eyes were devoted to a very different concern. It would not have been natural for me to find myself in the midst of a band of girls, who indeed were all charming, and not observe at least their appearance and countenance. I surveyed them one by one, and [112] my admiration was so divided that it seemed to me I would be hard pressed to choose among them. I no longer regretted that the choice was left to chance. Whichever way it falls, I thought, I could not fail to be content with my lot. I would hesitate too long

if I was obliged to choose among so many fair persons; that is a quandary I am delighted to be spared. Such were my dispositions for several minutes. Simple admiration is a calm and disinterested feeling; so far it was the only one I knew: but one glance soon taught me more. Having begun to scan this charming lineup for a second time, and studying these appealing girls more carefully, I noticed one whose eyes were turned toward me. She lowered them quickly when she saw that mine had paused on her. I kept on looking at her. My attention was not deliberate, and at first I did not notice anything more particular in my curiosity than when I had studied the others; yet my eyes were as if riveted to the same spot. I surveyed with a sort of avidness all the features of this face that I seemed to have missed the first time around. The stature, the carriage, the slightest movement of this lovely person held my curious gaze. From time to time she raised her eyes towards me, and noticing that I did not cease to look at her, she finally lowered them with a blush. I could tell immediately that my own face was flushing; and this change having snapped me out of my distraction, I found myself so moved that I do not remember ever having been so agitated. I caught myself, pretending to listen to the minister, whose speech went on; but I was continually distracted by a hidden impulse that drew me back towards what I had seen. I no longer even say in the other girls the charms I had admired: their manner seemed to me affected; I could read in their eyes the eagerness they had for marriage, and their fear of being rejected by the lots: whereas everything evoked innocence and reflected modesty in that one who had just become mistress of my heart. I confess that I began then to regret the advice I had given to Mr. Gelin. I would have liked to speak with him for a minute to make him revert to his original intentions. Love made me feel all at once that it had attached my life's happiness to the one it had made me see, and that it was no longer from the lottery, nor from my own choice, that I could expect it.

While I was turning these various thoughts over in my mind, the minister, having finished his speech, announced the order to be observed in the election. Of the two paths we might have adopted, he said to the assembly, the first, to have all the girls draw at the same time, and the second to divide them into six groups corresponding to the number of the six young men, it seemed to me that the second was the most natural, and would be the most acceptable. Each group will be made up of sixteen girls. The lots will decide to which group each young man shall belong, and then we will draw to see who will be the happy person heaven wishes to favor with its distinction. Everyone applauded this arrangement. The girls were extremely satisfied: sixteen to one seemed indeed a better proportion than at ninety-six to six, and that reduction seemed to improve their hopes. The division into groups was quickly done. Our six names were written on as many pieces of paper, and one girl from each group was called forward to draw them from a basket where the minister placed them. A vague murmur then arose in the assembly, which suggested the impatience with which fate's decrees were awaited. In my case, as I was pressed by impulses of a different nature from those of curiosity, I watched with trembling as the girls reach their hands into the basket. My fate was to be decided immediately, for if I fell into a different group from that of the person I loved; it was the absolute ruin of all my desires. My passion was already so constituted that this fear made me suffer a mortal agitation. Finally, the pieces of paper were drawn, and I had the misfortune of being assigned as I had feared. I addressed my protests inwardly to heaven. How bitter they were! I was scarce able to hold back my tears. I allowed myself to be led silently toward the group to which I belonged. My eyes alone [113] expressed my grief to the amiable girl I was being forced to abandon. I could see in her eyes that she had noted my sadness, and could guess the cause. I did not cease turning my eyes towards her as I walked

away; and to make my despair complete, I thought I could see in her languishing eyes that she as much as I was protesting the cruel fate that was separating me from her.

I was no longer able of attention for the rest of the ceremony; when having noticed Gelin who was assigned to the group next to mine, I drew closer to remind him of his promises. Do not fear I will forget them, he replied heatedly. I even regret that I condescended to follow your advice: it may make me unhappy for the rest of my life. We are being treated like slaves here. But at least do not fail, he added, to support what I have agreed to attempt in our common interest. The place we were in did not allow us to discuss it further. I returned to my group. The election was over in an instant. Those girls whom the lots had favored were called to step forward. Joy shone in their eyes; and despite the efforts of the others to hide their jealousy, you could see it painted on their faces. The minister said to us: Behold your wives: receive them from the hand of God, whose will has just manifested itself. He ordered us all to embrace them.¹⁸² I looked toward Gelin, as if to alert him that it was time to execute his resolution. I was surprised to see him calmly submit to the minister's order. He even gave us to understand with a slight nod of the head that we could do likewise. I understood only too well that, whatever plan he may have formed to help us, it was imprudent to commit ourselves so far, and that so public a sign of consent

¹⁸² Like Cleveland, Bridge, already in love, is despite himself pressed by an old man (here the minister) to marry someone else. The arbitrariness of this system of distribution can be compared to the authority enjoyed by the governor of New Orleans in *Manon Lescaut*, who had some of the wives drawn by lot (*Manon Lescaut*, p. 434). The idea originates perhaps in Vairasse's *Histoire des Sévarambes*, in which women among the Sporouï are distributed by chance to the survivors of the *Dragon d'or*.

would become a bond we would have a hard time breaking. Nevertheless, his example and that of our comrades made up my mind.¹⁸³ I sorrowfully embraced the girl they wished to make me consider as my wife. Even had I not already had another love in my heart, I would not have committed this act more joyfully: for I was wretchedly assigned that fate seemed to have reserved me specially for the most unpleasant and repellent girl in the whole numerous company.

Although Gelin's intention was good, you will see I was right to think that his conduct was imprudent. Mine had been too, by depending too entirely on him. It was his wit and his boldness had led me to think him better suited than anyone else to take our interests in hand; and knowing his impetuosity, I hardly anticipated that he would harm our plans by a miscalculated excess of docility and moderation. This was nevertheless the source of all our misfortunes. His idea was that, in order to obtain more surely the delay he was going to request for our marriage, we should do nothing to cast the slightest doubt on our sincerity; and it was for this reason that he consented to embrace the girl presented to him as his wife. Ominous reasoning, which might have contributed immediately to our obtaining what we wanted, but subsequently caused the loss of all our happiness, and nearly of our lives as well.

The minister was about to complete our union with the usual ceremonies, when Gelin raised his voice to put forth our request

¹⁸³ Throughout his story, Bridge rejects upon others the responsibility for errors committed, either by pleading, as here, his acquiescence in the example set by someone else, or by insisting on the unanimous approval by the others of a decision he has himself made. The personal story is thus often, in Prévost, an apology: Cleveland, des Grieux, and the Doyen de Killerine also present many excuses for their errors, sometimes with lengthy rationalization.

before the assembly. I did not understand his speech. He gave it in French, because he would have had more difficulty expressing himself in our tongue, having learnt it only since he left France with Mme Eliot.¹⁸⁴ The mixture of the two nations that made up the colony had made both languages so familiar that either was used indifferently, and the minister had expressed himself up to that point in English, in order to be understood by my three compatriots and myself, who did not know French. Thus I did not understand Gelin's speech; but as he spoke with grace, and they had no reason to be wary of our intentions, I had no difficulty discerning from the audience's faces that they found his request reasonable. It was listened to with applause by all the spectators. The minister was one of the first to approve it, and even labelled as wisdom the wish [114] we were manifesting to know our wives and merit their affection before we began avail ourselves of the rights of marriage. We were granted an interval of six weeks to satisfy such a just and modest desire. We seemed to accept that term, and everyone congratulated us on the way out of the church on the manner in which we had conducted ourselves in the assembly.

Not one of my comrades desired less ardently than I the opportunity to meet together to confer in common on the state of our affairs. We evaded a number of the curious who surrounded us, and found a suitably calm place to talk. Gelin was beside himself with joy. He asked us first what we thought of the service he had rendered us, and whether we were not satisfied with the skill with which he had succeeded. He went on to confess, without giving us time to respond, that, however indebted we felt to

¹⁸⁴ Mme Eliot, despite her name, is French, being one of those who left with the original group from La Rochelle. But since four of Gelin's five comrades are English, and since Mme Eliot speaks both languages, Gelin had to start learning English.

him, he was persuaded that there was none among us for whom the success of his action could be as advantageous as to himself. Woe was me, he declared passionately, had the minister and the assembly been as unbending at my speech as fate was to my desires. I do not disguise it, my dear friends: I am in love beyond all my expressions; and unfortunately, it is not with the one the lots sentence me to marry. He added that on this matter he required our advice, and all the assistance of the friendship we had sworn to one other. We all looked at each other after this disclosure. Our consternation seemed equal, and we kept our silence for several minutes. Finally we spoke up each in turn, and it was to declare that each of us was afflicted by the same disease, and that we were asking of our brothers and our friends the same assistance as Gelin. This similarity of adventures only tightened the bond that already united us. The fervour with which each of us expressed himself about his passion gave us protection against the zeal with which each was prepared to serve his own cause, since each would not fail to gauge the assistance he would give the others by what he also would demand of them for himself. Our first deliberations addressed the means by which we might contrive to see our mistresses: that was the most difficult point; for the rest, we were depending on love and fortune as much as on the counsel we would receive from each other at the conferences we planned to hold frequently together. One of our comrades ended this first dilemma by assuring us he had heard his host being told that the girls would be held captive, as they had been since we arrived, only up to the time of the election. He concluded from that that we would be free to see and talk with them; it ought not to be a very difficult thing to find our mistresses in a country of such small dimensions, the houses, moreover, being almost all clustered around the church and the storehouse, which were more or less its center. We agreed unanimously that, prudence and discretion contributing more than everything else to the

success of our plan, each of us must not only be very careful what he did, but keep an eye on what his comrades were doing as well. Our interests were so interconnected that individual mistakes could only harm our common purposes. As far as the conduct we should adopt with respect to our supposed wives, we took no other decision than to see them with decorum and without affectation. We put off elaborating more just and more precise plans until we knew a little more about what we could hope for, and had begun to sort out the initial uncertainties of our undertaking. We had to meet often to confer together; but inasmuch as too frequent meetings could give rise to some suspicions, we fixed their number at two per week, and specified the day, the time, and the place.

We separated to return to our homes. Mine was still Mme Eliot's. We had been told that these we would not change homes until the conclusion of our marriages; then they would give us each a house, and constitutes us [115] heads of households. I found Mme Eliot alone, waiting supper for me; but I was surprised to see four settings at her table, instead of just two that had been placed before. She anticipated my questions by telling me that with the election ceremony being over, I would henceforth be at liberty to see her daughters, and they were going to eat with us. She expressed at the same time her displeasure that fate had rejected her family. I did not wish to speak disparagingly, she said, of the one who fell your lot; but, without allowing myself to be blinded by the love I have for my daughters, I think you would not have been worse off if heaven had allotted you one of them. They have given a good account to the care with which I have raised them well. With the affection I have for you, the good woman added, how content I would have been to be able to call you my son! As I was thanking her for this obliging token of civility and friendship, her daughters, to whom she had sent word of my return, entered to greet me. Imagine, if you can, my joy and

astonishment: at the first glance, I recognized in the younger one the mistress of my heart. It was this very person who had caused me such emotion at the church, and whom I had already sworn to love passionately my whole life long. I admit that all my intentions for discretion evaporated at the sight of her. I turned toward Mme Eliot, and with no consideration for the effect my transport might produce: Ah, madame! I exclaimed, you are the mother of the one I love, and mistress of all my happiness. She made a joke of my exclamation, and answered as one would an excess of thoughtfulness and civility. I immediately realized the mistake I made in expressing myself so spontaneously, and tried to undo my imprudence in our subsequent conversation. But my eyes were so far from being as moderate as my words that Mme Eliot quickly deduced from them the true disposition of my heart. She made a point during the supper to talk only about indifferent things, and afterward motioned to her daughters to withdraw. Once we were alone, she said to me, with a serious mien, that she thought I had some inclination for her second daughter; that she had no idea where I had gotten it, and that was a mystery to her which she invited me explain. I hesitated to reply, doubtful whether I ought to confide my secret to her. Finally, since I had depended greatly on her kindness, I declared candidly to her what had happened in my heart in the church; and without divulging anything pertaining to my comrades, I confessed that the decision of fate was so contrary to my inclinations that there was nothing I was not prepared to do to avoid submitting to it. For a while she made no reply. Her embarrassment also caused me a good deal. I was concerned I had revealed too much to such a righteous woman, and expected her to condemn my sentiments for her daughter. I cannot approve, she said finally, without offense to my honor and my conscience. Your love arose too late; I see no path by which it can succeed. I would have wished with everything in my soul for you to be able to marry my daughter; but since that is

something impossible, I beg you not to mention it to me again. I am even sorry to know what I have just learned. No, she added after a moment's revery, there is nothing I can do for you, it is too late; and I ask you please never to repeat to me the confidence you have just made. She withdrew after these words, giving no indication that she was angry with me. I turned over her reply in every possible way. At first I saw it as a devastating condemnation, one that cut off all my hopes off at the root. However, when I reflected on the tone with which she spoke to me, and her pensive air which was a sign of uncertainty, I became convinced she could not so absolutely condemn something which she admitted she would have desired in other circumstances. She did not wish to take any action for me; but nothing kept me from hoping she might approve what I would do for myself. I understood that propriety did not permit a person of her age, esteemed as she was in the colony, to become involved in the petty stratagems of a lover, and go against the decisions of the elders. She was sorry, she had said, about the confidence I had made to her: but I thought she would not [116] be sorry about the success of my actions, and that her intention was simply to make me understand that it was best she appear to know nothing about them. This explanation seemed to me so plausible, and it accorded so well with the kindness M^{me} Eliot had shown me up till then, that I decided to adhere to it as a sort of rule for my conduct. It will be easy for me to tell, I said, whether I have overflattered myself by her manner of dealing with me henceforth: if she does not forbid me to see her daughter, I will have cause for believing that, far from condemning my passion, she secretly approves of it, and hopes for it a happy ending.

Those pleasant thoughts made me spend the night quite tranquilly. First thing in the morning I sought the opportunity to see Angélique Eliot: that was the name of my charming mistress. The pleasure of speaking with her was not refused me; I was even

lucky enough to be alone with her for a while. The impression her features had made on me at a distance was nothing in comparison with the new ardor that a moment of her conversation made me feel. Her whole person to me a composite of marvels. I stood trembling with love and admiration; and each of her features, which I at first studied in silence for a few moments, engraved in my heart an image which all the power of heaven and of men will never remove. Although this silent language was a fairly lively expression of my sentiments, I opened my mouth to explain them. She listened without interrupting me. I perceived in her eyes neither the affected anger, nor the pretended disdain by which the false honor of a coquette or a hypocrite defends itself. Her modesty showed itself in an honest blush, which served as a new ornament on her face; and her sincerity by a reply which confirmed the notion my love was already forming of the character of her mind and heart. She said that far from being displeased to be loved by me, she thanked heaven for the sentiments which it inspired for her in me; that, more indifferent than others thought to marriage, she had only reluctantly allowed herself to be led to the election ceremony; but that she confessed that the way I had fixed my eyes on her, and some movement of the heart which she could not define, had aroused her for a few minutes from her indifference; that she had hoped to be the happy person assigned to me by chance; that this desire had seemed agreeable, and that she had not lost hope without regret; but that having no more right to keep hoping, she reserved for herself only some claim to my esteem and friendship.

Had I not already succumbed to the power of her charms, such noble and virtuous candor would alone have been able to attach me to her for life. I saw no need to hold back with a person of this character, nor to make use of the petty artifices that love inspires in ordinary lovers to assure the success of their passion. I at once resolved to reveal to her not only every secret of my heart,

but even my communication with my comrades. I withheld from her neither our recriminations, nor our intentions. If I have had the good fortune, I said to her, to obtain from you some feelings of esteem, even before that of speaking with you and knowing you, I rightly flatter myself that the knowledge I dared to give you of my passion will not diminish them. I renew at your feet the oath I have already made a hundred times in my heart, to love no one but you, and never belong to anyone if I am too unfortunate to make you consent to make me yours. Why should I lose the hope of that? Is my destiny not in your hands? And what matter the decrees of chance, if you are willing to pronounce one that favors me? In a word, it is in your power to grant me everything my heart desires. See whether the esteem with which you have honored me is strong enough to make you undertake something in my favor. This lovely person had no less prudence than beauty and modesty. She replied that she had said enough to make me understand that to belong to me would bring her happiness too, but that she saw so little apparent possibility of that happening that she dared not conceive the least hope for it; that she had her duty and her honor to [117] consider; and after the decision of fate and the consent we had given to it, it seemed impossible to her to reconcile them with love. I had no trouble countering this objection. Their behavior toward us, I said, is a tyranny; it is unheard of to force free men to take wives by whom they are repelled. In truth, until the present moment everything appeared voluntary on our part: but our dispositions have been misinterpreted, if they have believed that what was merely an effect of our docility and restraint was owing to our consent. We made no objection to the election, because along with the fear of sowing discord and division in the colony, we held out hope that fate would perhaps be favorable enough to us to make us content with our lot. It turned out counter to all our desires; it is a misfortune for which we are sorry with respect to peace: but we feel so

indisposed to bear it that of the six of us, there is not one who is not determined to risk everything to regain a freedom of which we could not justly be deprived. Who could condemn such a reasonable and natural sentiment? So I see nothing that could offend your duty in the favors my love solicits. With respect to you I am in the usual case of a tender and passionate suitor who seeks to win the heart of the mistress he adores; and all my desires being legitimate, you can make me happy at no cost to your honor or to your innocence. I added, to make my appeal even more attractive to her, the reasons I had for believing that Mme Eliot did not disapprove of my passion; and I argued that the judgment of a few foolish old men and a few jealous rivals was of little importance to her, provided she had the approval of heaven, as well as her mother's. She agreed with this. She was even so charmed by what I told her about Mme Eliot that she did not hesitate to assure me that she was disposed to attempt anything with her mother's consent. As I was not seeking to mislead her, I did not disguise the fact that what I was calling Mme Eliot's approval was subject to some restriction. I explained that, that lady being bound by the political considerations of human respect, she might find it difficult to give us formal consent; but I am certain, I added, that she secretly approves of my love, and hopes in her heart for its success. At the very moment I was concluding these words, chance led Mme Eliot into the room where we were. Her presence gave me the idea of attempting a bit of artifice, which worked for me. It was to elicit adroitly from her the confirmation of what I had said about her sentiments, persuaded by the response I had just obtained from her daughter, that the slightest appearance of approval, formal or tacit, would lift all objections. Alas, madame, I cried sadly as she entered, what had I done to fate that it should exclude me from the happy expectation of calling you my mother, and bearing the title of your son? It is since I have seen sweet Angélique I have learned to feel all my

misfortune. I shall never get over it. I am as disappointed as you, Mme Eliot replied simply; I believe you would have been content with this little creature, she added, pointing to her daughter. She has a wonderful heart, she is like me. Then you would willingly have given her to me? I came back; and it is my ill fortune alone I must blame, since I could have counted on your consent? Although I had spoken these words by design, they were no less accompanied by a heartfelt effusion as intense as if this had been a spontaneous outburst: I felt moved to tears. Mme Eliot, observing this, shed some herself as she embraced me, and assured me that she would have deemed a part of her blood well spent, if at that price she could have made of me her daughter's husband. I desired nothing more than this avowal. I turned the conversation in a different direction, and postponed until later making use of what Angélique had heard. The opportunity was not long in coming. That sweet girl had perfectly understood my purposes; and her heart being incapable of dissimulation, she confessed she was satisfied with my love's innocent invention. I am persuaded of two things, she said to me with an ingenuousness full of charms [118]: first, that you sincerely love me (for to what could I attribute this preference you give me over all my sisters, and what touches me even more, that ardor and emotion I see in you when you are close to me? I judge what is in your heart by what I feel in mine). Nor do I doubt, she continued, after the manner in which my mother explained herself, that she secretly approves of your designs; and I understand at the same time that she is bound to outward concessions that do not allow you to expect from her a more explicit consent. But supposing that that is sufficient to protect my honor and duty, tell me then, she added with a blush, what you are asking of me, and by what means you pretend that I could become your wife? I was very hard-pressed to answer her; for at bottom, I had not yet conceived a means that could satisfy an honest and virtuous maiden. I was counting on Gelin's ingenu-

ity and mental energy. That business was to be deliberated at our first conference. I was therefore forced to admit to my dear mistress that I was as yet uncertain about the choice of means; but I assured her that her honor being as precious to me as to herself, she need not fear I would ever would make her a proposition that could arouse her scruples. My comrades, like me, I said, have pure and innocent intentions. We are to meet to reach a decision common on this important matter; and whatever it be, love will not have a greater share than virtue and propriety. Indeed I awaited most eagerly the day when we were to meet. In the meantime, decorum required that I see occasionally the girl the lots had assigned to me; but the comparison I made at each visit with true object of my affection served only to confirm me in my inclination for the lovely Angélique. I was almost continually with that dear person; and since it was natural that, living in Mme Eliot's house, I should live on familiar terms with her daughters, my constant presence could not be unkindly interpreted. Every day showed me that, however extreme one imagines one's love to have become, that passion is continually capable of growing; for the last moments I spent with Angélique were always those when I felt the most affected by her charms. I discovered new ones at every moment; and the greatest satisfaction of all was this: I did devote more ardor to persuading her of my sentiments, than she did attention to making me aware that she appreciated the meaning of my gestures and treasured them.

When the time came for our conference, my comrades showed up as punctually as I. In the previous days we had made a point of seeing each other only in public, to avoid any hint of intrigue and cabal. This was an important precaution amidst so many suspicious old men with nothing better to do than to observe our conduct. It was therefore a great satisfaction to be together again, and be able to converse freely. To witness the disorder that dominated our assembly at first would have been an

agreeable spectacle for an indifferent person, each man hastening to speak and wanting to be the first to give an account the state of his fortune. Finally we all explained ourselves in turn. No one complained of love: all our mistresses had heard us favorably; with one difference perhaps, that some of them had yielded less out of esteem for their suitors than out of a violent inclination to marriage. Our contentment seemed in every case the same, pride not failing to persuade us that we owe our conquests to our merit. The issue at hand was to give such happy beginnings an equally happy ending. Different approaches were put forth, and examined at length. The idea of taking as a group our objections to the colony was rejected as too uncertain: our misfortune would be beyond remedy if the old men knew our designs but were unwilling to consent to them. To leave the island and carry off our mistresses was regarded as dangerous, although it was Gelin who had proposed it. There was [119] danger, not only in the means we would have to have employed to evade the colonists' vigilance and make off with the boats, but even more in the flight itself, which we could not undertake without a guide in the middle of an unknown sea, and without the slightest knowledge of navigation. Gelin nonetheless pressed hard for this option. The difficulty of leaving the island, he said, is not greater than that of meeting here in secret. We will choose nighttime to go down to the shore. The chains holding the boats will be easy for us to break. We will not put them out to sea until daybreak; and I do not see why we should fear being less likely to find the isle of St. Helena than was Mr. Drington who was the first to find it. This reasoning made no impression on us. To judge by later events, perhaps we might have been wiser to try it; but at that point it seemed to us foolhardy, not to mention that we did not deem ourselves sure enough of our mistresses to dare proposing to them something as strange as leaving their parents and friends to flee with us. The third suggestion was for a secret marriage. Gelin,

who also made this one, argued for its necessity with such skill and eloquence that, after absolutely rejecting the other two, we were obliged to agree that it was the only one we could adopt. The more timid amongst us still raised several difficulties, but they were not as powerful as our firm resolution to satisfy our hearts. Whatever might be the resentment of the old men and the spurned maidens, we at least anticipated that they would never think of taking our mistresses from us once they had received our troth, and they for their part would have admitted us to all the liberties of marriage. This option finally won out. But it was first necessary to secure their consent. For that we had to rely on our skill. We hardly doubted the outcome. It seemed unlikely they would hesitate for long, once they saw they were supported by the example of their sisters. Numbers are encouraging; and, however much one clings to one's reputation, it is very hard to resist love, when the means of justifying it seems to have been found.

This important deliberation thus terminated, we separated with the fondest hopes. The very next day I had the opportunity of discussing it with Angélique. She herself brought it up indirectly, by asking about the outcome of our conference. I disguised nothing to her. You are sincere, I said to her; your answers are to be decisive. Bear in mind that what I am proposing to you is the only path that can assure me the happiness of being yours. It is an honest path; your virtue could not possibly exclude it; and if only you will listen to love, it will seem agreeable and easy. What would our union be wanting, I added, to be holy and legitimate? You know what constitutes the essence of marriage: it is not a vain ceremony, it is the gift of the heart, and the vows that accompany it. We will have, as witnesses of ours, five pairs of lovers, to whom we will render the same service we are expecting from them, and who will be committed by their own interests to attest the truth of our promises. If I attest these reasons, I added, it is to satisfy the scruples of your honor, by removing all shadow

of fear and alarm; for the sole reason to which I would wish to owe your consent is the tenderness of my heart, and the infinite ardor of my passion. She replied that if we had to meet together to adopt this plan, I could not object to her for requesting several days also to think it over; that she foresaw, in truth, that her conclusions would be favorable to me; but that in whatever action I had the power to engage her, she would always posit one condition, without which it seemed to her impossible to satisfy her love and mine innocently: that she wanted her mother to be informed of her marriage at least once it was accomplished; that decency required, in her opinion, that I should take the responsibility of breaking this news to her. I vowed to obey her every wish without reservation. It is in your happiness alone, I said, that I may find mine; and so, I shall ever strive to bring you contentment and happiness by continual execution [120] of all your desires. My respect and my passionate expressions moved her so that she confessed to me before the end of our conversation that she did not require all the time she had requested to mull it over.

Love was no less favorable to my comrades. By the third meeting, we found, after each had reported on his progress, that we could rely on the good will of all our mistresses. We still had about a month of freedom; but as our plan could not be carried out too soon measured by our ardor, we decided to move the moment forward as much as possible. We were in the fairest season of the year. The very next night was chosen for the celebration of our amorous mysteries. We agreed upon the place. There was none more convenient thereabouts than the very spot where we had been meeting. It was a fine prairie, surrounded by dense trees, two hundred paces from the main settlement. It was determined that each of us would come about midnight with the person he loved. The day that preceded that happy night was to be put to use disposing our mistresses, and taking measures with them to help them sneak out of their houses. Angélique trembled

when I declared to her that we were so near the end of our desires. I had new fears to combat, and some slight objections to overcome: but love spared me part of the trouble, either by quickly reducing the reservations of my lovely mistress, or by increasing the force of my replies. She promised she would be ready to go with me at midnight.

That desired hour arrived: I heard it sound. All was calm in the colony, with exception of six happy couples of lovers, who were on the verge of their moment of happiness. I awaited Angélique at the door of her house, which I had opened noiselessly. She did not make me wait long. Oh, with what joy I saw her appear, and look for me with a shy, embarrassed gaze! I attracted her attention, and taking her for the first time into my arms, I kissed her with the greatest ecstasy love has ever inspired. We reached the prairie in a moment. Some of our comrades were already there with their brides. The moon seemed to have dressed in all its luster to light a spectacle worthy of the attention of heaven and earth; and doubtless as an effect of my heart's extreme satisfaction which in a sense suffused all of nature, never did the air seem to me so warm, nor the greenery so lush, as during the rest of that enchanting night.

As soon as our little troupe was assembled, Gelin, who had assumed some ascendancy over us with his decisive manner and ease of expression, delivered us a nice prologue about the ceremony we were about to begin. First he gave thanks to fortune and love, in the name of the assembly; and then, adopting a more Christian note, he spoke of the obligations of the marriage we were about to contract with as much eloquence as the minister had done at the church. We approved his homily. He was the first after that to pronounce a form of vow he had prepared. It was expressed in terms so strong that, independently from the love and honor that attached us forever to our amiable mistresses, it could have served as a restraint to our inconstancy and as preven-

tative against falling out of love for an eternity of marriage. We all pronounced it in turn. Our mistresses, or rather our wives, repeated it after us. All this was done with decency and modesty. What was such a proper ceremony missing in order to be regarded as a holy and solemn marriage? Heaven approved it no doubt, for we had religiously respected all its rights. Nevertheless, it pleased cruel and unjust men to treat it as a sacrilegious union, and to break bonds which by their nature ought to be immortal, as they will be by our inclination. I cannot recall the memory of that delightful night without marveling that my heart, which then was capable of such joy, should have been capable subsequently of such despair and pain. Heaven, how suddenly one can go from consummate happiness to an excess of misery!

Every moment of that beautiful night was marked by a transport. We spent it, [121] each separately, in the arms of our wives. How short time seemed to us! But alas, it was an extreme imprudence not to be wary of its passing so quickly! Daylight caught us unawares. We realized too late that what we had continued to take for the light of the moon was sunlight. No one among us failed to sense the danger to which we would be exposed. It was even greater for our wives than for ourselves. They had to return home without being noticed, and that seemed almost impossible. We could already hear sounds of inhabitants, who were starting to leave their houses, and fear caused us to imagine that they were searching for their daughters after having detected their flight. For a minute we conferred together. Several of my comrades thought we should return together without any precaution, and declare our marriage to everyone we might encounter. It is something we must admit sooner or later, they said: let us take this opportunity, since we have no other way out of this dilemma. That is what we would have done; but our wives opposed it out of feelings of modesty and timidity. They supposed that it would necessarily bring shame on them to recognize that they had been

more or less caught in the act. Although they admitted that our marriage had to be made public sooner or later, they preferred that it be done progressively and in a way that would not expose them to mockery: for that is all they imagined they had to apprehend. We saw it the same way they did. To satisfy them, we agreed that they alone would head back to the settlement, and that if they could not reach their houses without being seen, they would try to find some pretext to excuse their nocturnal absence. I do not know what excuse they could have come up with; but at the very moment they were separating from us after embracing us tenderly, we spotted the minister of the colony, who was coming towards us with several elders. Their only intention was to take a walk in the morning air; however, to perceive six of their girls with us, and even had time to notice some of them in our arms, seized them with anxiety and astonishment. They walked as fast as their age allowed. Our first fearful instinct incited us to run away, and hide like schoolboys behind the trees; but we reflected that this would be a confession of guilt. The proposal of declaring our marriage was vainly renewed by Gelin; our wives again rejected it. I spoke up: All is lost, I said, if we fail to stick together. Listen to me, I will take charge of the situation. It is only too certain that the minister has seen us: but I do not think he could have determined exactly how many of us there are. Two of us, I continued, speaking to my comrades, must get down on the ground, and crawl off into the nearby trees. I immediately had two of them drop down. Try to hide, I said, well enough not to be visible. As for us, I continued, addressing the others, let us go openly to meet the minister with our wives: we will tell him that after a walk in the morning air, we have run into them by the same chance that led him to us. He will imagine no hidden design in our meeting up when he sees that there is an unequal number of men and women. My expedient was welcomed. Fortunately, the grass was high enough to cover the retreat of our two com-

rades, for the minister and his party were by then no more than fifty paces from us. We joined them. On the way, I had invited Gelin, who expressed himself more easily than I, to speak to them as I had suggested. He did so in an open manner that seemed to convince them. Nevertheless, returning directly with us to the settlement, they maintained along the way a seriousness I could not easily interpret, having no inkling they had seen our embraces, or had the least suspicion that Gelin had fooled them with a fable. Our return was observed by many inhabitants, but the company of the minister shielded us from any aspersions.

We parted company rather coolly. The five wives of my comrades withdrew to their homes, and I did not learn whether their absence had been detected, nor in what manner [122] they were received. Since I had the same path to take as my own wife, I consulted with her on the excuse we would use to satisfy her mother. What reason have we to hesitate? I said. You know what we agreed to, and what I promised you at your own suggestion. I shall retain Mme Eliot, while you return to your room. I shall make a sincere confession to her of our love and our marriage. It is not with her that we need to be careful; she loves us, and her anger can hardly be long-lived or violent. I do not fear for myself, replied my dear wife; but I have a premonition of some misfortune that threatens you. I would wish it to fall entirely upon me. Her voice in pronouncing these words chilled my blood. I stopped to look her straight in the eyes. Dear gods! I said, what are you telling me, and what do you mean by this language? She hesitated some time before replying; but having urged her to speak, she begged my pardon for hiding from me something important which she had learned the day before. Yesterday, she began, after our talk together, my sister came to tell me that the minister had been to see my mother, and that they had had a long and heated conversation, a part of which she had managed to overhear. Although she had not been able to follow the course of the con-

versation exactly, she understood from the minister's expressions that he was complaining of your coolness for the person fate had assigned you to marry, and that he attributed it to some fancy he suspected you had taken to my sister or to myself. My mother maintained a disinterested posture, protesting her ignorance. But that impetuous and imperious man, who is accustomed to making the colony respect him, responded that this was a matter of the utmost consequence to her; and as he was leaving he invited her to remember the business of M. Guiton. It is certain, continued Angélique, that that business is capable of frightening any married persons here who might be tempted to forget their duty. M. Guiton was one of the most distinguished men in the colony. Aside from his personal merit, people had enormous respect for him, because he was the son of the mayor of the same name who commanded La Rochelle during the siege, and stood out by his admirable religious zeal.¹⁸⁵ However, having had the misfortune to be caught in an amorous relationship he was carrying on with another man's wife, nothing could save him from being punished. He was sentenced to die, and his punishment was to be drowned in the sea with his mistress, with the whole colony looking on. All the elders felt constrained to this example of severity in order to insure marital fidelity.¹⁸⁶ Whatever the impression which the memory of this story made on me, my wife added, I told you

¹⁸⁵ Admiral Jean Guiton, mayor of La Rochelle from April until its capitulation in October 1628, was a symbolized of the city's determined resistance; a monument there still honors him. He had, however, no son.

¹⁸⁶ This violent story, who has strongly shaken the peace of the colony, and which the inhabitants were careful not to mention to the new arrivals, is the best example of the hidden tensions threatening the myth of the earthly paradise. In the same way, infidelity was a great crime among the Sevarambiens, drawing a minimum of seven years in prison (*Histoire des Sévrambes*, part II).

nothing about it, not only because you succeeded in convincing me that our engagement is not a violation of duty, and that we consequently are not in the same situation as M. Guiton, but for a more powerful reason, which I am not ashamed to admit to you: it is the affection you inspired in me. I could not help but fear somewhat that I might attenuate yours by perhaps causing you some anxiety. Today, she concluded, I feel more timid than I did yesterday. I do not know whether it is the encounter with the minister that upsets me, or whether it is that, now assured of being yours, I am more fearful than before of losing something I possess: but it seems to me my heart is warning me silently that I have something to fear for you. Would to heaven that my anxiety were unwarranted, or at least that it forebode nothing dreadful for anyone but myself!

If the beginning of this story had dismayed me, the end reassured me. The only part I even paid any mind to was my wife's tenderness and affection, to show her how deeply moved I was. The story of M. Guiton, I said, had nothing in common with ours. Even had you told me about it yesterday, with the minister's visit and threats, it would have been no more likely to intimidate me than than it is to frighten me now. You love me, do you not? You do not repent of what you have done for me, and you are determined to maintain to the end of your life the truth of our commitments? Leave the minister free to protest and threaten. We are not his slaves. As for the calamities you apprehend, [123] I cannot believe that heaven has such things in store for us, since we have not deserved them. If men should intervene, they will perhaps not readily succeed. You may be sure anyway that the effects of their malevolence will not easily extend to you. Really, I felt more calm and resolute since the conclusion of our marriage than I had been previously. Angélique was mine; I was no longer troubled by my desires. Nor by my fears; for, besides the solidity of our bonds, which I thought equal to all the attacks of the minis-

ter and the colony, I found in my heart a well of courage which sufficiently assured me that I would be capable of defending my wife's rights as well as my own.

We arrive at Mme Eliot's house. Nothing suggested to me that our absence had been noted. I went into a room she was alone, while Angélique withdrew quietly to her own room. Her manner of greeting me having confirmed my supposition that no news had reached her, I remained uncertain for a moment or two whether I should take this moment to explain things. Ultimately, I thought it would be an advantage to have prepared her for all the ugly impressions that she would not fail to receive from elsewhere. I fell at her knees. I revealed to her that I was her son. The fear of displeasing you, I said, or rather of compromising you, kept me from telling you of my marriage before the execution; but I flattered myself you would not disapprove of it, because you desired it. The lovely Angélique is my wife. I would have given up every worldly fortune to gain this happiness. All I lack now is your blessing, without which my felicity is imperfect; for next to being her husband, I cherish nothing so much as being your son. I could have gone on for quite some time before Mme Eliot would have been in a condition to respond, so taken aback did she appear and even frightened in hearing me. Finally, as I had ceased to speak, she replied almost in trembling that she prayed heaven we had not acted too incautiously, but that I was telling her the strangest and most consternating news she could ever receive. Explain yourself further, she added with the same disquieted air. Tell me what it is you are calling your marriage, and how you became my son. I set forth our whole story. Oh, dear Bridge! she exclaimed after hearing me out, how I fear you may have lacked prudence, and exposed us all to woes we shall never be able to remedy! I shall not deny to you that I hoped you could be my daughter's husband, and that even at this moment, amidst all my distress, it gives me joy that you now are. But listen to what you

have to fear, and I perhaps along with you. I tremble, added the good lady, and I scarcely dare tell you. Thereupon she related her exchange with the minister the previous day. Her elder daughter had heard only the smallest part of it. That imperious and vindictive clergyman had his own private reasons for being angry at me. It was his brother's daughter who had fallen to me by lot. He had learned from her, and had perhaps noticed himself, that my eagerness to see her had been wanting ardor. Indeed, it had been impossible for me to force myself to court a most disagreeable creature whom I would have found it difficult to suffer even if my heart had not been filled with the charming Angélique. I had rarely been to see her, even less than I was obliged to for self-interest and decorum. The minister, to whom that girl was very dear, taking my coolness as an indication of distaste and scorn, was acutely annoyed; and since one is always blind where the merit of a loved one is concerned, he had attributed my indifference less to his niece's poor qualities than to my poor taste. My assiduity in remaining from morning to evening at Mme Eliot's had ultimately opened his eyes. He concluded that it was love that was keeping me there. Recalling as well the affection that lady showed me on every occasion, and her kindness in desiring that her house serve as my lodging until one was ready for me, he imagined that she was favoring my love for one of her daughters. All these thoughts had heated him to the point of making him come to her house to express to her his [124] displeasure. At first she had received his accusations calmly; but he allowed himself some that were barbed and provoked equally sharp responses from her. In a word, Mme Eliot, to defend her daughters' honor, had answered him that she had raised them well enough never to fear they would ever imitate the mistress of Guiton. Now this mistress, who had been punished along with her lover, was none other than the minister's sister-in-law, and consequently his niece's mother. Such an egregious affront is rarely forgiven by a

clergyman. He had left Mme Eliot reminding her that he had been the first to opine on his sister-in-law's punishment, as an example to the colony, and swearing that if he had been that severe towards his family, he would be even more so for all women of the island who departed ever so slightly from their duty. I have no doubt, Mme Eliot continued after telling me this, that in that threat he had my daughters in mind. The unlikelihood, as seen yesterday, for what occurred last night kept me from warning them at once to be more restrained than ever in their conduct. The harm is done, and now we are exposed to our minister's full resentment. Oh, my dear mother, I interrupted, how are you describing the holiest marriage there ever was! You call it harm, but I defy all the minister's hatred to find anything in it to find fault with. I confess, she said, that with all the precautions you took, your action can bear a better name; and I do not hesitate to recognize it, as you desire, as a sacred and legitimate commitment. But you do not know the hatred of a man of the church, and more particularly you are unfamiliar with the character of our minister. She added that she was only too sure he would find the means of destroying us.

I admit that hearing her speak in this way, and remembering the obligations I had to that generous lady almost as vividly as what I owed to my wife and to myself, I could not help a violent reaction of indignation and anger. He, destroy us? I cried: I would not let him live for a moment, if I thought he conceived the thought. Take heart, madame, I continued: there are only six of us; but capable, if I be not mistaken, of frightening a greater number. We will demand justice, since we must; and be sure that your interests will not be forgotten. I was about to leave to find my comrades, and exhort them not to let us be oppressed. Mme Eliot, who saw that I was overwrought, bade me calm down for a moment. I made use of it to send for Angélique, whom I wished to present myself to her mother. She entered timidly. Come, my

dear heart, I said, come thank the best of all mothers; she forgives us the liberty we have taken of uniting ourselves without her consent. It was nevertheless she alone we should have considered: but her kindness has no equal save the maliciousness of her enemies. I thank heaven they are ours as well; and I do not hold myself more bound by the vow I have pronounced to adore you my whole life, than by the one I am taking to defend and avenge her. Mme Eliot was sweetness and generosity personified. She implored me to moderate my transport, and contain myself at least until it appeared that the minister was preparing to carry out his threats. Then it will be in your interest, she said, as much as mine. She then embraced her daughter, not without a few tears. She told her that in truth she would never have consented to our marriage, if we had taken the liberty to ask her; but that heaven having arranged things so happily, she could not help letting us see her satisfaction. Nevertheless, I am not easy, she added, and I foresee so many storms that will take shape, either on the part of the minister and the elders who will never approve your actions, or on the part of Bridge and his comrades who will perhaps not suffer themselves to be treated harshly, that I do not know what we must expect in the future. I protested again to her that whatever turn our situation might take, there was no danger for her to fear, so long as I was in a condition to defend her.

While I was trying to reassure her, and divided my comforting words between that good mother and my dear wife, a servant of the minister asked to speak to me on [125] behalf of his master. My inclination was to send him away summarily; but Mme Eliot advised me to hear him. His only message was to summon me to go see the minister directly. I might have resisted, overwrought as I still was, had it not occurred to me during this visit I might gain some information useful to our security. I went right away. I was introduced into a room where I was surprised to find my five comrades. They told me they had been summoned there as I had.

We had a moment to talk together. I told them what I had learned from Mme Eliot, and pointed out to them the consequences they should draw for themselves from it. Mme Eliot, I said, is a wise and experienced woman. She trembles for her daughter and me: be sure that it is not without powerful reasons. And any harm I have to fear threatens you as well. Thus, when I speak to you of my interests, I think you must not separate your own from them. They answered me to a man that I need invoke no other reasons than those of friendship to engage them in the defense of my wife and myself; and that moreover they well understood that, all being party to the same action, our interests could not be separated. We promptly swore by the most awesome oaths to help each other to our last drop of blood. Since I had been the first to propose this new solidarity to them, and they had fresh in their memories the service I had rendered them on the prairie, the all agreed to choose me as their chief. Gelin was named to assist me. They took another oath to obey us without reservation in anything related to our common interest and that of our wives. All this was very quickly accomplished.

The minister appeared. No doubt I gazed at him with the eyes of anger and hatred, for everything about his face and manners seemed loathsome to me. He looked at me as he spoke as the one with whom he was apparently the least satisfied. The whole colony, he said to us, is ill edified by your conduct. It is unheard of among us for young men of your age, and already bound by holy promises to wives whom heaven itself chose to assign you, should be out walking at night with persons of the other sex. The strangeness of such a scandal is equaled by our determination not to tolerate it. We are not so easily deceived by fables. Where had you been, he asked me arrogantly, when I met you this morning with a group of shameless, immodest girls?

I was still agitated by the short, intense conversation I had just had with my comrades, as well as the one I had had just

previously with Mme Eliot. I admit I was not restrained enough to reply calmly to this outrageous interrogation. When we came to this island, I said in a voice as arrogant as his own, we claimed to enter into all the rights of inhabitants, and above all into the two principal ones, which are freedom and equality. If we recognize here an authority higher than us, it is not that of an individual, whose only function here is to recite prayers in church, it is only that of the general assembly of the colony. And so, sir, I added, leave aside that imperious and arrogant air, which becomes you less than anyone. We shall give an account of our actions to those who are entitled to ask for it. The minister's pride was extremely shaken by this reply. He nevertheless got hold of himself after a moment's silence. Make no mistake, he replied. Although I claim no authority here, I declare to you that it is the body of the colony itself that addresses you by my mouth, and I repeat on its behalf the question I asked you: where had you been this morning? Thus pressed, and fearing I would damage our interests by refusing to respond, I chose to cut through the difficulties, and take advantage of this opportunity to declare our marriage openly. I glanced at my comrades to prepare them for what they were about to hear, intending to make them aware that I was doing nothing imprudently and without reflection; then I turned my eyes on the minister. Know then, sir, I said in a [126] natural and moderate voice, what you are so very curious to know. We were born free. Nothing seemed to us so unjust and ill-conceived as that despicable ceremony of lots, to which you wished us to owe the election of our wives. Englishmen and Frenchmen do not suffer their hearts to be tyrannized. We have reclaimed our rights, by choosing our own dear and amiable partners, who will henceforth share our pains and our pleasures, and give us new pleasures in this land of serenity and innocence. We could not live happily without them; and as we were promised happiness in bringing us here, we flatter ourselves we shall be allowed the peaceful enjoyment of the only

possession to which we have attached it. I bowed deeply to him after this disquisition, and all my comrades silently did likewise.

I would try in vain to portray the first signs of his surprise and his indignation. He turned red and white twenty times in turn, in the same moment. He squirmed, unable to open his mouth to give passage to the expressions of his anger that seemed at any time ready to come from his lips. His transport made me feel sorry for him. I motioned to my comrades to leave with me, and said to him on the way out: Now, sir, you know our secrets; we have told them to you so you may take the trouble to make them public. Only crimes does one insist on hiding, and our conscience has none to reproach us with. He responded then in a word that he would make us recognize more than one, and would find the means of punishing them. We left him. My comrades thanked me wholeheartedly for what I had just done for them.¹⁸⁷ They insisted they were more at ease for it, and I thought I felt the same effect. We no longer hesitated to tell our story to everyone who happened to be on our path. Some seemed to approve. Others expressed surprise, without telling us how their sentiment. We renewed our mutual commitments before we separated; and in order to take common actions more easily, we decided to continue holding our twice weekly meetings in the prairie.

I returned to the home of Mme Eliot, whom I found awaiting me impatiently. She at once approved the decision I had made to declare all to the minister and colonists I had encountered. For a few minutes it appeared to her, as to me, that a weight had been lifted. She was the first to say to me: After all, and despite all my fears, what have we to fear from the minister's resentment? What harm can his wrath do us? Is my daughter his dependent? It is I who consent for her to be your wife; and from whom shall she

¹⁸⁷ Bridge emphasizes their unanimity so as to feel less the weight of the bad strategies in which he has engaged the group.

receive orders she should respect more than my own? Nevertheless, she came back despite herself to her worries when she thought about the minister's character, and the altercation she had had with him. She even found cause, as she had me repeat what he had said to us, to increase her fear; and there she found the seeds of all the harm he had in store for us. He had spoken to us of bonds and promises in a way to make us think he considered us committed to our wives of chance. Heaven, exclaimed Mme Eliot after reflecting on it a moment, how could I have first failed to note that remark? You will see, she added, that he will compose his venom on that point, and that he will give it all the force that wrath and maliciousness can muster.

We spent part of the day talking about her concerns. We made sure we sent a servant out from time to time to find out what was happening in the settlement, and the way our adventure was being construed. He reported to us toward evening that all the elders were assembled at the consistory, at the request of the minister who had sent for them. There could be no doubt that it was our affair that was to be discussed. Mme Eliot's anxieties increased all the more. Angélique did not appear to be alarmed. She was at peace, she said, with her love and innocence. For my part, knowing her mother's prudence too well to think she could [127] be troubled for no good reason, I thought that, despite the confidence I too had affected up till then, I needed to take in secret some measures for our safety. The function of chief which my comrades had conferred on me seemed to obligate me to do that. I went out to assemble them. I had to sneak out of the house, for Mme Eliot and my wife would not have agreed to let leave before being knowing of the consistory's decisions. I fooled them by leaving under a false pretext. God, what blindness made to rush to my doom! I left them to prepare assistance for them, and my presence might have been the only means that might have served, a moment after my departure, to defend and assist them.

As I left the house, I sent a servant to my five faithful friends, to notify them that I was going to await them at our conference spot. We had agreed to a sort of watchword which we sent to each other on exceptional occasions, and which sufficed to alert us to meet right away. They lost no time following me after receiving it from me. I found them informed as I was of the assembly which was meeting at the consistory. They seemed not so upset by it as I thought they ought to be. I shook them from their dangerous security by relating to them the reflections that Mme Eliot had forced me to over the minister's words. Make no mistake, I said, we are engaged in a serious matter. If our own interest is not forceful enough to give rise to our misgivings and our fears, let us tremble at least for our dear wives. Who knows how far the minister's animosity can engage the elders? Most of them are simple men, and long accustomed to following his decisions and respecting them.¹⁸⁸ Let us see, I continued, what action we would take if it came to open persecution.

Of the different opinions that were put forward, some of which went as far as an open break and violence, we thought we should for the first time opt for the most pacific. It was to go all together to the consistory hall, and request as a favor to be allowed in. We hoped that a sincere and straightforward exposition of our conduct could make an impression on the old men's minds and serve, at least for the present, as counterweight to the minister's declamations. Gelin was designated to explain our feelings and our intentions. We hastened to retrace our steps. Each of us seemed satisfied with this resolution, which was indeed the wisest

¹⁸⁸ Bridge is beginning to grasp the basic truth of this apparent democracy, which is that it is not only a gerentocracy (see Jean Sgard, *Prévost romancier*, p. 203) but that its kind of order supposes great docility on the part of the consistory of the elders, tending toward the tyranny of one whose power is founded on moral authority.

choice we could have agreed to. But whatever wisdom and whatever restraint we had tried to employ in all our actions up till then, it was decreed in heaven that they would only have sorry and deplorable success: injustice and cruelty were to win out over rectitude and virtue. The heads of the church, the elders of the people, our judges and our fathers, had held a council of iniquity against us. They were preparing to execute our downfall, while we were seeking them out to present them our tears and move them in favor of our innocence.

Alas, how devastating it is to have been happy, when one is condemned to bear the memory of that happiness in the midst of a despair beyond remedy! It can well be said of me that my felicity lasted scarcely more than a day. Take away from my life the time I spent hoping to possess Angélique, and that charming night when I saw all my desires fulfilled, everything that has followed or preceded that brief interval of pleasure has been nothing but a succession of miseries and misfortunes. You are about to hear the story of the most terrible ones.

Approaching the settlement, we saw a crowd of people rushing toward the same place, who seemed to be drawn by some extraordinary spectacle. Although I was preoccupied by my wife's peril, it did not occur to me that she could be involved in this event. Nonetheless I stepped up my pace, to satisfy my curiosity; and because of my natural agility I was faster than my comrades. I inquired what was going on. I was told that Angélique Eliot with some other girls, had just been arrested by order of the elders, and that they had all been securely locked up together in prison. I had to make them repeat to me twice this terrible news [128], which I was too stunned to understand it. My comrades, arriving after me, were told the same thing, and were in about the same state as I after hearing it. They asked each other dumbfounded what we were going to do, and where we were to begin. For my part, I found myself so oppressed that for a few

moments I was utterly unable to speak. Finally, I embraced the one closest to me. Oh heaven, I exclaimed, oh my dear friends, what say you to this fearsome blow? If you have for your wives the same affection I do for mine, do you not wish to die with me to defend them? Come: you have chosen me as your leader; I want you to see me be the first to expire: but do not refuse me your aide. Despite this transport, I realized we had no arms. I did not even know whom to attack, nor where I should search for my wife's prison. I could have inquired about that; but reflecting that a wise decision could not result from a violent agitation, I thought that before undertaking anything, I should return to Mme Eliot's, and get reliable information from her. I advised my friends to go likewise to the homes of their hosts; and as the day was drawing to a close, I had them promise to come to the prairie after dark for further deliberation. We separated. I hurried so I was short of breath. Alas, I am done for, I thought as I went; my ruin is too certain: but my enemies will not laugh for long. The perfidious minister shall perish: he shall be the first target of my vengeance. Approaching the house, I saw three men who seemed to be walking about the area. They came up to me, once they had seen me. I had no suspicion of their intention. They were three emissaries of the consistory who were waiting for me to arrest me, while an equal number carried out the same order with respect to each of my comrades. They surrounded me, and however vigorous my resistance, they held me so tightly it was impossible for me to escape from their hands. Such offensive treatment put me in a rage that cannot be described. I was less escorted than dragged to my prison. The efforts I made continually to free myself attracted a crowd of settlers behind me. I invoked their aide, protesting the minister's injustice and tyranny: they listened to me in silence, so I could not tell what sort of interest they took in my dilemma. Finally, they made me enter a room deep into the storehouse, where I found two of my comrades they had already had time to

take there. My guards locked me in with them, and withdrew without explanation.¹⁸⁹

I had been grouped with Gelin, and with an Englishman named Johnston. The three others were also locked up together in a single room. It appeared to me that Gelin was hardly less furious than I. His first words were a terrible vow, with which he promised to exact signal vengeance for the outrage inflicted on him, and then to leave the island with his wife, even at the risk of perishing a hundred times in the sea. I was myself too exercised to disapprove his resentment; but once we had thus relieved ourselves with recriminations and threats, I pointed out to him that the difficulty would be to carry them out; and that in order to act as reasonable men, we had to seek the means a little more tranquilly. First of all, I said, we need to know what the intentions of the consistory and minister are in having us arrested. Let us each reflect on that for a moment. Gelin had a quick and incisive mind. I am sure, he replied almost at once, that, proposing to break our marriages, as the minister gave us to expect, they thought they needed to seize us so as to prevent us from having the ultimate intercourse with our wives. They do not anticipate that we are ahead of them, and the ceremony was in no way incomplete. In that case, I replied, it is a matter to be settled in two words, by declaring that they are our wives in fact and in name. But I do not see, I added, how this reason, which certainly explains our captivity, can also explain that of our wives: for the purpose you assume, there was no point in arresting them with us. Gelin could not answer this objection, [129] although he had reasoned correctly insofar as we were concerned; thus, our con-

¹⁸⁹ This division, which compromised the solidarity of the six, is an important point, and testifies to the minister's strategic sense: he does not, like them, commit the mistake of underestimating the enemy, but sees and exploits their weaknesses.

jectures having attained only half the truth, it was impossible for us to take measures extending as far as the misfortune that threatened us. The only decision we reached was to have one of the elders, or the minister himself, notified that we had important information to share with them, and reveal to them straightforwardly that our marriages were beyond their control, and we had omitted nothing to make them indissoluble.

This action was necessary, and would doubtless have achieved its purpose, if we had enemies less shrewd and wives less timid; but the minister, in planning his vengeance, had foreseen everything that could favor or impede it. He had anticipated, as Gelin had quite well surmised, that the main obstacle that would stand in his way would be the consummation of our marriages. It was indeed in order to prevent it that he had managed to persuade the consistory to deprive us of freedom. And as he had some fear going about this too late, since it was quite likely that young people who had spent the night together would not have failed to satisfy themselves, his first care had been to extract from our wives a confession of the truth. He had gone about it in a manner so cunning and so malicious that rather than inducing them to explain themselves candidly, he had, as it were, made them feel it necessary to make an attestation entirely in line with his purposes. They were scarcely locked up in their prison than he went to them with some of the old men to serve as witnesses. He began by reproaching them in the most hateful terms their boldness in disposing of their persons without the consent of their families, and without the consistory's approval. He let them know that a union such as ours, far from deserving to be called a marriage, was a crime that could not be forgiven. Finally, after sparing nothing to disconcert them by fear, he added that he trusted that at least their modesty had not been forgotten, and they had not renounced honor and virtue to the point of consenting to something indecent in the prairie. After preparing their minds

with this insidious speech, he asked them in a juridical tone for an account of everything that took place between them and us the previous night. These sweet, timid creatures were so embarrassed at this question that, half out of fear and half out of modesty, they disguised an essential part of the truth; and the minister, having made a record of everything they had denied or confessed, had the old men who accompanied sign it on the spot. From there he came to the storehouse, and since he knew Gelin and me to be the most firm and resolute of our band, he put off seeing us until last. This was a new source of misfortunes for us; for our three comrades, whom he addressed first, being no more capable than our wives of determining what to do without counsel or example, he intimidated them just as easily, and extracted answers from them that were scarcely less damaging to our interests.

He entered our room when we expected it the least, when we were still discussing the decision we had adopted to send for him. We controlled ourselves enough to greet him civilly, and to listen with apparent calm to what he had to say to us. His particular resentment towards me, and the memory of the retort I had made to him a few hours earlier, are doubtless what led him to address me. I had correctly foreseen, he said with a smirking manner, that your behavior would not appear so innocent in the eyes of the consistory as you tried a while ago to make it appear to me. Brashness and presumption are common in young folk, and I see only too well that you have all the flaws of your age. I had the strength not to reply to this insulting preachment. He continued to say that he had come on behalf of the consistory, to hear from us more formally than he had done at his house the circumstances of our nocturnal assembly, and the details of an enterprise as offensive to religion as to decency and morality. Gelin opened his mouth to reply, [130] but my fear of his impetuosity made me hasten to anticipate him. Your affronts, I said to the minister, in no way alter the justice of our cause; I dare hope

that our actions will appear more innocent in the eyes of the consistory when they are explained by a party less partial and determined than you. Nevertheless, we do not refuse to give you the circumstances of our marriages which you request in its name. They are so inoffensive to religion and decency that we merit praise on the contrary for having so perfectly respected the rights of both. I then related with the most exact faithfulness the order we had observed in our engagement, and did not fail to emphasize in particular the final act of that tender ceremony.

He turned red listening to me, and when I had finished speaking, he turned toward the old men and asked them with a bitter smile whether he had been mistaken in telling them, when they were entering this room, that he would be dealing with the wildest and most dangerous of our band. I see through your tricks, he continued, addressing me; but you will extract little fruit from them. Take my advice, do not add imposture to the disorder of your conduct, and follow the example of your comrades, who are more sincere than you, even if they have not been more prudent and restrained than you. The difficulty I had conceiving his meaning kept me from responding otherwise than by protesting our sincerity. Nonsense, he said disdainfully; and taking up a pen, he wrote a few lines which he then had the four old men who had come with him sign. While he was writing, I asked Gelin and Johnston whether they understood any of what they had heard. We concluded together that our comrades must have been deceived by artifice if their replies different from ours had been extracted from them; or that they had betrayed us, if they had made them voluntarily. In vain did we beseech the minister to illuminate us further; he simply read to us what he had written. That was our deposition. He stated that it was in conformity with that of our wives and of our comrades, except that, being more shrewd, we were pretending, against the others' testimony, that our marriages had been consummated. The clarity of this manner

of expressing himself finally opened my eyes completely, and I said to him: Be careful, sir; your design is not forthright. You are going to engage yourself in some imprudent action. You may be sure, I added, that I have declared nothing to you but that is quite certain, and that, whatever our comrades and our wives had in mind in explaining themselves differently, they will not refuse to confirm the truth in our presence. Oh yes, he replied, once you have had time to tutor them to speak like you, and cease to be sincere in their replies. He left us, unwilling to hear us further.

It is only too clear, I then said to Gelin, that they are trying to do us in; and if we are to believe the minister's report, our wives and our comrades are furnishing weapons against us. Nothing short of heaven's assistance can get us out of this dilemma, for force is of no use here, and justice seems to be heard not at all in the consistory. If we still have any hope, it is to argue for our rights in a general assembly of the colony. We must ask for that. If the consistory opposes such a reasonable claim, our protests will be all the more just and likely to move the people in our favor; and if they accept our request, you are eloquent, and I do not doubt that by setting forth the truth of our story and exposing the minister's evil intentions, you will win everyone to our cause. Although Gelin seemed to be listening to me, I realized that he was lending me only a part of his attention. This impassiveness surprised me; it did not accord with his impetuousness. I reproached him for it. He continued looking at me in silence, with a distracted air that showed him deep in thought. Finally, having urged him to reply: Yes, he said, I will willingly follow your counsel, and we shall, as you say, request a general assembly. But if this attempt does not succeed, I am contemplating a plan on which you may much more surely count than on my eloquence. They are going too far, he continued, growing more exercised; they are treating us with an indignity never before seen. I needed to make an immense effort to imitate your [131] moderation at

the sight of the minister and at the insulting say he addressed us; but you may be sure I have found the way to bring down his pride, and make them respect us more than they have so far in the colony. I urged him to tell us more. He said there would be time enough for explanations when the remedy he entertained became necessary; but he assured me it was infallible, and that we could promise ourselves in advance the pleasure of seeing our wives again in our arms, and our enemies at our feet. Whatever his idea might have been, I begged him to leave it aside for a while to prepare to uphold our cause in the general assembly. The next day, we sent out jailor to the minister and the principal old men to declare to them that we recognized no tribunal but that of the whole body of the colony, and entreat them to hasten its convocation. They replied that they would examine our request. We were so convinced that they would not dare deny it, that we became for the moment much more tranquil. Gelin spent several days composing his speech. I was contemplating meanwhile the reasons we had to fear or to hope, or talked with Johnston about our wives' anxiety, and the infinite tenderness we owed those dear persons in return for their docility and generous affection. They had disavowed the favors our love had obtained from them, but it was easy for us to judge that it was out of timidity and modesty. We even suspected the minister of having duped them into it. I for one was so sure of Angelique's heart that I apprehended neither her disaffection nor her change. My worst anguish was caused by her absence, and by my persuasion that she was suffering immeasurably more from mine.

In this way we passed four days without a visit from anybody, and still in the foolish opinion that they would grant us the liberty to justify ourselves in the eyes of the entire colony. On the morning of the fifth day, the minister came into our room with the same elders who had accompanied him the first time. He adopted a gentle and obliging mien to speak with us. I bring you, he said,

no doubt better news than you had reason to expect. Whatever resentment the consistory, like myself, has had over the irregularity of your conduct, we have thought it best to forgive it because of your youth. We know that in well-disposed minds, the soundest and constant good conduct is sometimes the fruit of the greatest mistakes. One is even fonder of virtue and duty, when one comes back to them after having wandering off. So we forget the error into which you have fallen out of flightiness and sheer imprudence. You were asking for a general assembly; you ill knew your true interests: be sure there you would have been treated much less favorably than by us. But your case does not exceed the limits of the authority which the colony has vested in the consistory, and you should thank heaven that we have kept it for ourselves. Now hear, he added gravely, the sentence we have just brought forward for your benefit. He then read us a paper containing in substance: that whatever severity that had been applied with respect to Guiton, in a case rather like ours, the consistory had thought it best to treat us with more indulgence, not only in consideration of our youth, but principally because of our recent arrival, which did not allow us to be as yet fully informed of the island's laws and practices; that it therefore sentences us only to receive with humility the mild and charitable correction which the minister would address to us publicly in church, and expiate by three weeks of prison the scandal we had caused among our brethren; we would subsequently be allowed to join with our legitimate wives, those whom God had seen fit to give us by means of lots, and whom we had solemnly accepted before heaven and earth, to live in sweet union with them, as tender husbands, faithful Protestants, and peaceful fellow-citizens; that for the six immodest and girls wanting in virtue, who had abused some advantages they had received from nature to lure us from our duty, and induce us to form with them profane bonds which they had dared qualify as marriage, to the prejudice

of that which we had contracted with our sole and legitimate [132] wives, the consistory postponed pronouncing on their punishment until its next assembly; and that while awaiting their sentence, they would continue to be locked in a secure prison, deprived of the right to talk with even their relatives and friends. Such was the indulgent edict declared to us by the mouth of the minister, and on behalf of the consistory. Minister, consistory: venerable names, sacred masks, which injustice, perfidy, and cruelty abused for our ruin.

I relate this fateful edict almost in its entirety. It was not nevertheless right away that we realized just how terrible and devastating were its contents for our dear wives and ourselves; for Gelin had scarcely heard that they established the disposition of chance as a legitimate marriage by which our true marriage was annulled, than he uttered a piercing cry that prevent the minister from finishing. There was no transition between the beginning of his wrath and its excess. Never had fury and indignation expressed themselves so forcefully. I implored him in vain to be careful, in a conjecture where it seemed to me that our situation did not yet call for violence; I could obtain nothing from that inflamed temperament. He called the minister by a thousand insulting names; he reproached him openly for his malevolence and hypocrisy. Nor did he go any easier on the consistory and the whole colony; and adding threats to the accusations and insults, he swore to employ fire and the sword for our defense and that of our wives. The minister, whom this outburst had at first somewhat disconcerted, composed himself; and remembering no doubt that we were captives, and that we could more easily make threats than carry them out, it was this thought apparently that gave him the boldness to compound our calamity with several caustic remarks. Gelin, losing all consideration, was about to attack him furiously, had I not made what efforts I could to stop him. Go now, sir, I said to the minister; go, if you have some wisdom left,

and do not make it necessary for us to punish your artifice and your insults at the same time. He went out, exhorting us maliciously to submit to the will of heaven and to the order of our superiors.

Gelin complained bitterly of my having halted the effusion of his wrath. I explained to him that it was a good thing for us I had kept my head and my calm better than he. Do you think, I said, that I am less sensitive than you to the indignities to which we are being subjected? I shuddered like while the minister spoke, and concern for my life would not have prevented me from punishing him, if nothing more were at stake: but do we not have wives who expect our considerations and assistance? What will become of them, if we imprudently make ourselves incapable of serving their defense? They are doubtless trembling at the peril to which they are exposed: how greatly will their alarm not increase, when they learn of the sentence of the consistory? Those innocent victims have no other resource than our love and our promises. Doubtless they are now thinking of us, talking about us, and if they there is any hope, it is in our affection and our faithfulness, our prudence and our courage they think they can found it. Ah, dear Gelin! I added, embracing him, what resentment does one not master with such reasons? And is anger a passion that for a moment can compete with love? Although at first he had scarcely listened to me, I noticed that my admonition had little by little calmed his emotion. He agreed that he had been imprudent; and as he loved his wife passionately, the reflections he made on the danger that threatened her moved him to the shedding of tears. He assured me that even his anger had been simply an effect of his love. But beginning to sense that the excessive fury with which he had spoken to the minister would inevitably make our cause worse, he told me he thought it was time to use the remedy he had put off explaining to me until then. His design, as you shall see, answered to his impetuous and enterprising character.

He had had the curiosity, soon after our arrival on the island, to ask to visit every part of the storehouse, to observe the order and disposition of that [133] vast edifice. He had noticed that the weapons which the settlers had brought from Europe were carefully kept in a granary, although that was the least used article on the island. They consisted in fifty or sixty rifles, many pistols, a rather large number of swords, and a few kegs of powder. The door of the granary was never closed. That of our prison was not strong enough to sustain our attempts, if we undertook to open it by force. It occurred to Gelin, after making these observations, that, nothing being easier for us than to get hold of the weapons and powder, we could not only shake off the yoke of the minister and consistory, and defend ourselves against their designs, but even take complete control of the island by the terror of firearms. He had not failed to take account of the fact there were only three of us, and so small a number would hardly suffice to sustain such a great undertaking; but his fertile genius had soon furnished him a resource. First, it was clear that once we had decided to break out of prison, we would have no difficulty rejoining our three comrades who like us were locked up in a room in the storehouse. Whatever cause we had for resenting their weakness and timidity, there was no doubt that they would show more courage when spurred by our exhortations and example. But Gelin's principal hope was founded on much more profound and extensive thoughts. I admit he gave them such a plausible turn in explaining them that he got me to consent readily, and that I admired in his plan an acuity of reasoning of which I had not previously thought him capable. However great a point they make here of their moral severity, he said, and of their zeal in observing all the laws and decisions of the elders, we must posit as principle that we are dealing with men: now men will never abandon the sentiments of nature. Our wives have parents, by whom they are doubtless cherished, and who do not see them exposed to danger without

taking their part. Those parents have friends and servants. If we suppose that our wives' six families each have four friends, and each of those friends a servant, that already makes fifty persons on whose good will we can depend; and the least we can expect of them, is that they will not take sides against us. But who prevents us from hoping that with some skill in urging and arousing them, we will succeed in putting them in our interests, and maybe in getting them to support what we wish to undertake for our freedom? That is an assignment I accept, Gelin added, and I have enough confidence in what little eloquence you attribute to me not to despair of success. I will make them see that, far from attacking the laws or religion, no one will be more faithful than we in respecting them; that we have no other purpose than to defend ourselves against the minister's tyranny, and keep inviolate the troth we have pledged to their daughters; that our satisfaction and peace are not more at issue than their own honor; finally, that we are their children, the husbands of their daughters; and that after our own dear halves of ourselves, we are as close to them as anyone here. I know nothing of the human heart, he added, if these considerations have not the force to shake them. Then I will tell them my plan, and I am inclined to believe that, far from condemning it, they will openly side with us. Next we will take over the island, the minister, and the elders, and we will install in the colony the order that best suits us.

Everything in this plan seemed to me possible, and even easy.¹⁹⁰ Johnson, like me, approved it; but we regarded it a last recourse, which we would invoke only as a last resort. Gelin insisted on carrying it out that very evening. He wanted to try at

¹⁹⁰ The same expression has already occurred, word for word. Bridge shares with his brother Cleveland a fundamentally simple and innocent perspective that can prevent him from anticipating the complexity of his misadventures and lead him to put his confidence in facile solutions.

least to get out of our prison during the night to go see our wives' parents, and begin to dispose their minds in our favor. To that we consented. But although our doors were not absolutely able to withstand the efforts we could have made to force them, we could not exert such violence without the jailor noticing it the next day. That would risk [134] getting us locked up more securely, and consequently ruin all our hopes. Gelin was obliged to agree that all parts of his enterprise had to be executed at the same time, in other words that he could only think of going outside the very night we chose to break down the doors to seize the powder and the weapons. We promised him that that night would not be long in coming, and asked of his enthusiasm only the delay necessary to be assured the consistory was seriously persisting in the intention of executing its sentence.

We received the next day a new visit from the minister. I secretly implored Gelin to control himself. We waited in silence for our enemy to speak. His harangue was short. He told us softly that, the next day being a day of public prayer when the whole colony was to assemble at the church, he believed we would not refuse to be taken there to submit to the sentence of the consistory. Far from manifesting any reluctance for this order, we were delighted to hear him speak of a public assembly of the colony, and to learn that they granted us the freedom to appear. That was our most ardent desire. He left, content with the promise we made to go there gladly. Indeed, we congratulated ourselves on this event, which renewed our earlier hopes. Gelin had prepared a very moving speech which he intended to deliver to the people. We almost did not doubt that it would have produce some beneficial change in our favor. It even seemed surprising to us that the minister had not thought of this himself, and we thanked heaven for what seemed a favorable omen boding us a better fate. However, before the day's end I received a piece of news that poisoned that short moment of satisfaction. The jailor entered our

room, and taking me aside, he told me that out of consideration for Mme Eliot, he had agreed to give me a letter from her. Here it is, he said, handing it to me; but promise me that the service I am rendering you will never reach the minister's ears. I promised, and judged by his fear the authority which that violent clergyman had assumed in the colony, while he seemed to affect establishing in it the most perfect equality. I opened Mme Eliot's letter; every line was a mortal blow that pierced my heart. That good lady first spoke of herself as the unhappiest of all mothers. Next she reproached me for breaking faith with her daughter. The rumor of it had indeed gotten around on the minister's report, which had given that explanation to the calm and straightforward manner in which we had promised to come to the church the next day. Despite this damning opinion, Mme Eliot still expressed her affection for me, even in the way she couched her blame and reproach. Cruel Bridge, she wrote, so you abuse a mother's goodness and the daughter's weakness! What had either of us done to you? Alas, what can we reproach ourselves for, except loving you too much! She ended in an even sadder way, informing me that the consistory, by a horrible sentence it had just brought against our wives, had condemned them be exposed publicly at the church exit with various signs of ignominy, to bear for an hour the gaze and abuse of all the inhabitants of the colony. Oh Gelin, I exclaimed shaking after reading this awful news. Oh Johnston! It is now we must die, or save our poor wives. I gave them my letter to read, while I gave vent to my cries and recriminations. They soon joined with me in that sad occupation. Gelin was so beside himself he was tearing his hair. He rushed toward the door to break it down, repeating vociferously: To arms, my dear friends, let us not lose a minute. Alas, I am sure we will be too late. The clamor he was making having served to bring me a bit to myself, I begged him to cease. We are, I told him, at the decisive moment for all our happiness, and perhaps our lives. In

God's name, dear Gelin, let us not do ourselves in by careless outbursts. My interest is the same as yours; there is nothing I am not prepared to do to assist you, or to serve as your guide: but let us try to collect ourselves, and if make a decision that [135] can lead us to something sure. He kept repeating that the only sure choice was to get the weapons and avenge ourselves by the death of all our enemies. I got him to recognize, though, that at least we must wait for nighttime; that daylight could give us away; and that it was even surprising that the jailor, who had just left our room, was already far enough away not to hear the noise we had just made. I persuaded him thus to enter into a less tumultuous deliberation, and got him to agree that each of us would take a few minutes to digest our thoughts before we communicated them to each other.

We withdrew to different parts of the room; there we spent perhaps a quarter hour reflecting. Only our sighs broke our silence. Finally Gelin, weary of this constraint, exclaimed that it was useless for us to search for a more certain way than that of arms, and that he wanted none other. I believe, I replied, that it is indeed the only one we have left; but since there is no going back if we take it rashly, and once we have lifted the mask there is no more peace or reconciliation to be hoped for with the minister and the elders, it would be desirable to adopt it with some limitations. Could we not, for example, arm ourselves without letting our weapons be seen? That way, we would be prepared to use them if we are forced to come to that extremity; and we will not even be suspected of having taken them, should your speech produce on the people the effect we were hoping for a few minutes ago. Impatient Gelin immediately rejected this proposal. Don't talk to me about a speech, he said, nor about limitations or precautions. All your concessions will be more fateful than my excesses. To arms, to arms! It is by sword and bullet that I want to explain myself tomorrow. I allowed time for this transport to subside, and

already understanding his character well enough to know how to deal with it, I explained to him, as I believed deep down, that it would be infinitely more glorious and agreeable for us to owe the success of our desires only to the force of his eloquence and to the justice of our cause, than to the violence of arms. The people are easily moved, I added. Our youth, that of our wives, the docility and honesty of our behavior since our arrival on the island: everything speaks in our favor. I am persuaded we will triumph over all the minister's efforts. Now it would be very sad if, having such expectations of success by a peaceful means, we should employ another which is unavoidably going to cause strife throughout the colony, and prevent us also from ever living peacefully on this island. I added other thoughts of this nature, which finally had the effect I hoped on Gelin.

I had persuaded myself that they were well founded during the fifteen minutes I had spent reflecting on them. If it was certain that the consistory had published its sentence against our wives, all our efforts could not prevent that from happening: all we could do was halt its execution. I placed great confidence in Gelin's speech, and in the good disposition of the assembly, which was composed in part of our wives' parents and friends. Since sovereign authority resided in the colony as a whole, all the consistory's sentences could be abrogated in a moment. If with Gelin's efforts, and the justice of our rights, we were unfortunate enough to obtain nothing, I was determined to be the first to have recourse to arms; and I had no doubt at all that a single man with a pistol in his hand could scatter an unarmed populace which in twenty years had not heard the sound of gunpowder. My plan was therefore to exit from our prison under cover of night, to arm each of us with two pistols. I no longer feared that the jailor would notice in the morning the violence we had to do to the door: I figured I was master of his discretion, since he had delivered Mme Eliot's letter to me, and had so emphatically plead with me

that the minister know nothing of it; there was, besides, no reason to think he could conceive the slightest suspicion of the design for which we would have left our room. I shared this plan [136] with Gelin and Johnston. They approved it. We awaited impatiently the time for carrying it out.

It came. We had light to see by. The lock on our door did not hold long against our combined efforts. It was broken without too much obvious damage. We went up to the weapons store. We found pistols in good condition: we chose some that could conveniently fit into our pockets, and along with ours we took three pairs for our comrades. Looking over the rifles and other firearms we were leaving behind, it occurred to me that, in order further to assure the design we were on the verge of carrying out, we ought to find some way to render so many weapons useless to those who would wish to use them against us. My idea was that we should spend the rest of the night taking the mechanisms apart, and hiding them somewhere they could not easily be found; but Gelin made an observation that spared us that trouble. At the moment when we are forced to resort to arms, he said, all we have to do is detach one of our number to return promptly to the storehouse, and guard its entrance until we arrive. We will doubtless withdraw here, since we have no other location where we can more securely bring our wives. Here we will be in control, not only of the powder and weapons, but also of all the island's provisions, and consequently in a position to dictate the law in any case to our enemies. This idea struck us as so useful that it prompted our praise and our thanks to Gelin. We went downstairs after we had prepared our weapons and taken a supply of powder. Now we needed only to find the way to speak for a moment with our three comrades. Not only did we have pistols to put into their hands, but also reproaches and exhortations to give them. It was a simple matter to find their prison, and for them to hear our voices through the door. The only problem was to give them their weap-

ons. We so excited them by our words that, unable to be do longer without the pleasure of embracing us, they did not wait for us to urge them to do to their door what we had done to ours. It was quickly broken open. They shed tears of joy as they threw themselves into our arms. I invoked my authority as leader which they had given me to upbraid them for the weakness with which they had allowed themselves to be caught off guard by the minister's tricks. They offered as excuse the fear they had had of going too far in admitting things of which they worried about the consequences. I made them aware of how pernicious their unfortunate timidity had been to us. They conceded the blame, and beseeched us to forgive their mistake because of their good intentions. I have no doubt that they were indeed upright and sincere; but they were of such slow and timid character that I had always had some misgivings about them, which were only too much justified by what happened later. We left them, after setting forth our plans in detail, and assuring ourselves of their constancy and steadfastness by the renewal of all their promises. I advised them to answer the jailor straightforwardly, when he found their door broken, that they had made use of this means to obtain for themselves the satisfaction of seeing and conversing with us.

The day having finally began to dawn that seemed it would decide our destiny, we implored Gelin to remember that with his own interests, he had those of five dear friends to defend, who were placing their happiness and their lives in his hands. He had no need of this reminder to energize him. The hour came to go to the church. A few elders having assembled at our prison to serve us as guards and escorts, we followed them without demurrer, affecting a calm and satisfied air, to avert even the slightest suspicion. Nevertheless I bore in my heart a weight of hidden pain that was caused not so much by the uncertainty of my fate and that of my wife, which was about to be happily determined, as by the mortal displeasure I felt when I thought of the anxiety of

Mme Eliot. I had been tempted the previous day to write a word of response to her letter, to complain of the unjust opinion she had of me, [137] and to assure her of the constancy of my sentiments; but Gelin and Johnston had dissuaded me from doing so, out of excessive fear of some betrayal by the jailor that could have compromised our enterprise. I looked about for her when we reached the church. I did not see her. I learned later that she had remained at home, and that she was dangerously ill from an excess of sadness and dejection. We were taken to the middle of the church, where the greater portion of the inhabitants were already assembled. A special bench had been prepared for us, opposite another which was destined for the odious girls whom they wanted to make our wives. They were brought in a minute after us. We greeted them politely. Our civility was noticed by everyone present, and we were able to judge from the different signs of satisfaction or displeasure which we saw on their faces, in what manner each one was disposed with respect to the ceremony they were awaiting. The minister was not long in appearing. We were uncertain whether our dear wives would come to participate in this strange spectacle, and did not dare inquire. However eager I was to see mine, I did not know whether I should wish her to appear to the eyes of the public and her haughty rival before our fate was elucidated; but the minister having begun the prayer without a thought for them, I assumed he intended to leave them in prison until the designated hour for their ignominy. As soon as the usual prayers were over, the minister went up to the pulpit. This was the decisive moment. My comrades doubtless felt as emotional as I, and the assembly as a whole seemed no more tranquil. We had agreed that, in order to avoid any appearance of frivolousness or tumult in our action, Gelin would not begin to speak until the minister had finished. We little feared the effect of his homily; we depended on the force of Gelin's to nullify it. It seemed to us that our reasons

needed only to be explained to be approved.

The sermon dealt with the duties of a Christian marriage. The minister explained them most eloquently, but he went into no particular application. Only his peroration was addressed directly to us¹⁹¹; it was composed for us. First he reminded us, with pompous figures, the day when, as he pretended, we had plighted our troth in this same place. He characterized it as a day forever memorable, for a ceremony so august and sacred. What fruits had the colony not hoped from it? But that spirit that is the enemy of the good, which exerts its seduction and its tyranny particularly on young people, had broken the flow of such a happy expectation; it had breathed into our hearts a maverick love, one which could produce all the effects of hatred, which is to say dissension, division, and the end of the happy peace which until then had made such a happy abode of their island. Thanks to heaven's protection, the evil had been halted at the source; but the peril had been extreme, and it was a miracle of Providence to have turned it aside from the start by bringing us round so swiftly to our duty that soon one would scarcely remember that we had deviated from it. I would have forgiven the minister for speaking of our marriage as a disorder, and our silence as a sign of repentance, had he not gone beyond these moderate limits; but in the guise of treating us kindly and wishing to go easy on us by lessening our fault, his venomous hatred of Mme Eliot shrewdly found a means of satisfying itself. He drew attention to the ease of recognizing from our docile demeanor and manners that we had received from nature an excellent character, and would never have entered into a wayward path had we not been no guides, or if we had had only

¹⁹¹ The peroration is the sermon's conclusion, its purpose being to highlight the main points. Prévost ably underscores here the minister's arrogant tone through an original use of indirect discourse interspersed with words obviously taken verbatim from the sermon.

ones that were virtuous and loyal. But where is the wise man, he added, who will resist the ruses and beguilements of a woman without virtue who makes it her business to seduce him? What a dangerous sex, capable of every excess once it departs from shame and modesty! If he did not name Mme Eliot after this zealous exclamation, he designated her so clearly by speaking of those weak mothers who take a part in their daughters' disorders through a criminal indulgence, and too often by their own counsel when age no longer allows them to do it by their examples, that the entire assembly [138] indicated by a murmur of displeasure that it understood the meaning of this satire, and did not endorse it. Mme Eliot was a respectable woman by a hundred excellent qualities. An accusation like the minister's, ventured without evidence or plausibility, produced an effect opposite his malevolent intentions; it inspired compassion for that virtuous lady who was being so unjustly maltreated in her absence, and perhaps it disposed the people to look at our cause with more favorable eyes. Although I quite noticed quite well what was taking place to our advantage, and took it for a favorable augury, it was not without effort that I mastered my resentment sufficiently to hear this insulting sermon to the end. The first impulse of my indignation was to put a hand to one of my pistols, and I might have forgotten I was in a church, had I not remembered that in the interest of Mme Eliot I must sacrifice that ardor to avenge her.

When the minister had finished speaking, and seemed about to descend to culminate the ceremony for which he seemed to believe us disposed, Gelin modestly raised his voice: You will allow me, sir, he said, to add a few words to your eloquent speech, and give my own account to the assembly of my sentiments and those of my comrades. This new scene which no one was expecting elicited a dull murmur; everyone trying to move closer, and demonstrating as much surprise as curiosity. Gelin, far from losing his composure, seemed all the more stimulated to

assume the tone and the charms appropriate to his speech. I advised him to stand on the bench where we were seated, the better to be heard by everyone. His exordium¹⁹² was simple, but that simplicity entailed much art. He first mentioned that his purpose was to explain plainly to the colony all the circumstances of the conduct we had followed since we were admitted to the island, persuaded, he added, that if we had been responsible for any disorder or weakness, our age and the innocence of our views would evoke from the kindness of the inhabitants much more compassion than anger and hatred. This ambiguous way of preparing his auditors had the effect he had expected. It prevented the minister from interrupting his speech, because, not revealing our true purpose to him, it allowed him to believe that we entered into his views, and that it was doubtless repentance that was going to force us to confess our errors. It was no less successful with the inhabitants, for, by leaving them uncertain whether we were going to oppose or submit to the sentence of the consistory, it kept them from forming the first prejudices that almost always arise for or against an accused person, when he contends he is innocent or admits his guilt: and Gelin was confident that acting next on hearts which would be as if suspended, he would have the ability to win them little by little, by an adroit and moving exposition of the fairness of our cause and the injustice of our enemies. He therefore told them without affectation what we had thought of the ceremony of the lots when it had been proposed to us for the first time, the conferences we held over this important matter, how reluctant we had been to obey, with what courage we nevertheless believed we should do violence to our inclinations so as to give the colony a proof of our respect and docility. He admitted

¹⁹² The beginning of the main body of a speech, exposing its outline. Bridge, a former student of Eton, is familiar with rhetorical terminology.

that along with this motive there was some hope that heaven would reward our submission by guiding the lots favorably for our desires; that this thought had sustained us until the time for the ceremony, and that they had been able to gauge our sincerity from the calm demeanor with which we had first appeared in the church; but that attentive persons had been able to note from the change in our faces that a very great one had suddenly taken place in our hearts; that the designs of God never declaring themselves more perceptibly than through such spontaneous impulses where the will of man plays no part, we had explained them in the most natural way, which is to say, as a sign that heaven destined us to marry the young persons for whom it suddenly inspired in us the most intense affection; that we had flattered ourselves for a few moments that this disposition [139] would be confirmed by the lots,¹⁹³ but that finding them contrary to our desires, we no longer had the power to return to indifference by eradicating from our hearts the first impressions they had received; that we had done no more that go along listlessly and distractedly with the rest of the ceremony; that far from thinking of contracting contract some engagement to the girls whom the lots had offered us, we had needed to recall all our presence of mind, and the consideration we owed to their merit and to the presence of the assembly, to give them by an embrace the only indication they could ever henceforth expect of our esteem; that our sentiments were made sufficiently clear by the delay we had so urgently requested, and which we had appeared so content to obtain. Gelin added that, marriage supposing willful consent, we were able to consider

¹⁹³ This affirmation by Gelin underscores the irreducible opposition between the six comrades and the colonial authority, according to which the lots are the voice of God; contrariwise, for the six new arrivals God's voice is conflated with that of nature which is manifested through feeling. Thus their wedding vows for them remain sacred.

ourselves free upon leaving the church; that we had always reasoned on that principle, and that having assembled immediately after the ceremony to deliberate in common over the interest of our hearts, it had so little occurred to us that we could be thought to be engaged, that that item had not even entered into our deliberations; that we had been restrained only by the fear we might displease the colony by disposing of ourselves otherwise than it had seemed to desire; but that this fear had soon given way to hope, when we came to think that we would not have been brought from Europe in order to make us unhappy, and that religion, docility, and equity being the dominant qualities of all the island's inhabitants, they would never constrain us by force to do something contrary to our inclinations. Our orator assured the assembly that it was on this assumption that we formed the plan of an innocent artifice, the purpose of which had been not so much to deceive the colony as to spare it and us futile discussions that would have drawn out the realization of our desires. He related the manner in which each of us had gone about achieving the end we had in view; the difficulties we had had to overcome to get our wives to hear us, and to defeat their modesty; the reasons by which we had succeeded in convincing them that they could give themselves to us without offending it; the order and the measures of decency and virtue we had maintained the night of our commitment. To conclude, he repeated the very wording of the vow we had pronounced to unite us; it was conceived, as I have said, in terms so strong and so explicit as to be almost fearful. I noted that the impression they had on the assembly was favorable to us, and as Gelin was entering into the most moving part of his speech, I did not doubt that he would ultimately bring everyone present over to our side.

Indeed, changing the simple and indecisive tone he had maintained up till then, he soon made plain to his hearers that eloquence is a gift of nature, which is attached neither to age, nor

to the robe¹⁹⁴ and the profession. His gestures, his attitude, the look of his eyes and face: everything about his person became expressive and animated. He was aggrieved, stirred, and seemed to feel in turn all the passions he wished to inspire. He did not get carried away by invectives against the minister: but he presented the malevolence of his conduct so vividly, contrasted it so to our ingenuousness and innocence; he painted such a touching picture of the charms of our wives, of their virtue, their modesty, and the boundless affection we felt for them; in short he gave such a revolting and odious turn to the violence that had been used against us, and especially of the horrible sentence which had been handed down against our dear, unhappy sweethearts, that the most barbarous American¹⁹⁵ would not have heard his speech without emotion. At the end, as if collecting himself after being carried away by his fervor: Ah, dear fellow citizens! he added in an intimate and heartfelt way, you who appear to be moved by our misfortune and the greatness of our sufferings, will you let us succumb to them without compassion? It is to you that our innocence has recourse; it is to your tribunal that it appeals. We have here neither beloved fathers, nor caring brothers, whose aid we may implore. We have left them behind to come live on this island with you: if we have there is any [140] resource remaining, it can only be in the friends of justice and virtue. Ah, were we not told that that is what you all professed to be? Is this not that tranquil abode where we were promised such satisfaction and happiness? What other motive do we have for leaving our own countries behind, except the hope of living among you a peaceful and virtuous life, and being constantly edified by your example? Were then the blessings we were given to expect then nothing but opprobrium, imprisonments, violence, and the consuming despair

¹⁹⁴ *I.e.*, the judiciary.

¹⁹⁵ *I.e.*, native American.

of seeing what was most dear to us taken away? Ah! Do you believe it can be stolen from us without first taking our lives? Have we been thought capable of renouncing our wives before we have spilled all our blood in their defense? No, no, do not expect either our separation, or the spectacle of their shame that is being prepared for you: only our death can insure the execution of that cruel sentence. Do not be ashamed of taking our lives, if you have none in dishonoring our dear wives: you will crown thereby the triumph of our enemies. But why would you defile your hands in our blood? What have we done to you? What offence have you received from us? If our righteousness and our invincible attachment to our wives are virtues that displease you, let us leave your island: we will flee with the partners of our fate, we will go find places where they do not make a crime of constancy and fidelity. Let us have just one boat; we ask of you neither sails, nor rudder: virtue and love will make us tranquil in the midst of the seas; we require other guides. O dear fellow citizens, do not reject our prayers, do not harden yourselves against our tears. See how pathetically little we ask of you! We ask for death, or the freedom to seek it with our wives in the vast ocean that surrounds your isle.

It was time for Gelin to finish his speech. The noise that was beginning to rise in the assembly would no longer have permitted it to be heard; each person seemed stirred, as if he had been worried about a loved one he feared losing. People were speaking heatedly on all sides; and although no one could be heard distinctly, it was easy to see that all this movement was going in our favor. I was still near Gelin; I told him, losing no time: Your speech has produced its effect; but if you do not add a few words that can decide the people to speak out, I fear no one will dare to raise his voice and declare himself for us. Gelin, who needed no preparation to express himself easily, at once resumed: I can see, my dear fellow citizens, that heaven does not abandon our inno-

cence, since it inspires in you sentiments in our favor that declare themselves in your eyes and in your faces. But you must realize that it is not enough to pity us; you must help us. You know it is in your assembly that sovereign authority resides: do you not annul the cruel sentence that was pronounced against our wives, and do you not give them back their freedom?¹⁹⁶ He had scarcely finished this last word when from everywhere in the church rang out: *Freedom, freedom: the sentence is annulled*. The inexpressible joy we felt all of a sudden made us for a few moments so incapable of reflection that it made us commit an irreparable mistake. Too preoccupied by the happy deliverance of our dear wives, we did not think to take advantage on the spot of the people's good will toward us to obtain likewise from them the confirmation of our marriage. The minister sensed our imprudence sooner than we did, and his malevolence shrewdly took advantage of it. He had been put in a most embarrassing position, during the last part of Gelin's speech, and while the people were granting us our wives' freedom. With everyone seeming so clearly committed to us, he had not dared open his mouth, nor even give the slightest sign of annoyance. But once he had realized that we were neglecting the part of our interests which he was most determined to destroy, I mean the item about our marriage, he hastened to make sure we could return to it by summarily adjourning the people. He even affected doing it in an obliging manner for us: Go, he told the assembly; do not leave [141] these poor girls a moment more in their prison, since you have seen fit to give them back their freedom. Everyone rushed out to go set them free; and our blindness was such that even then we did not pay attention that the circumstances, and the requirements of our situation, demanded.

¹⁹⁶ As in the preceding sermon, the dramatic effect of Gelin's speech is heightened in the telling by the modulation of the indirect discourse in the major part, by direct discourse in his own "peroration".

Only the elders of the consistory and the minister remained in the church with us. We soon realized the mistake we had committed, and bitterly regretted it, while the minister was talking with the elders. Since he had kept us from leaving with the crowd, we quite expected that he had some new order to give us; but we were far from foreseeing that it would be for us to return, our rather allow ourselves to be escorted, to prison. We were indisputably stronger, irrespective of the weapons we kept carefully concealed; and one can well imagine that a dozen or fifteen old men would not have undertaken to use force with six determined young men. It was this very thought that kept us from lashing out at them when we received their order from the minister's mouth. I only asked for a minute to speak separately with my comrades. Our folly is extreme, I said, to have forgotten the most essential of our interests: but in the present state of things, we would commit an even greater one by refusing to return to the storehouse. We must hope that the opportunity we have lost today will arise again some other day; and since we have obtained our wives' freedom and the annulment of their sentence, we should regard our return to prison as a minor evil. Gelin had some trouble believing me. He asked what the purposes of the consistory could be with this new injustice. The same ones, I replied, which they had the first time, which is to prevent the intercourse they suspect we have had with our wives. It is clear that their first sentence, which concerns our marriage, is still in force, and that they will continue to try to execute it. But come, I added, taking him by the hand, and follow me, on my word that being in prison will not be harmful to our cause. He had enough confidence in me to follow me. The elders seemed satisfied with our prompt obedience, and a few of them left the others to escort us.

We were locked up in the same rooms. The jailor having noticed that morning that we had forced open the door, and being satisfied with the excuse we had given him, he had taken care to

repair the disorder quickly. Although we could easily obtain the freedom to exit in the same way should necessity so require, I thought the elders would not refuse us permission to see our comrades from time to time, if I asked them civilly. They did indeed grant it, and instructed the jailor to allow us this satisfaction once a day for a certain time, the length of which they specified to him. I was consumed with impatience to speak with them freely, to inform them of the reason I had had for not considering our return to prison as a bad thing. Do you know, I said to them as soon as we were allowed to get together, what new plan I am thinking about? I hope you will approve, because, slow as it will be in the execution, success seems to me assured, tranquil, and safe from any violence. The minister pretends to believe that we have not exercised the rights of marriage with our wives; and it is apparently this persuasion, which he communicated to the consistory, that made it so easy for him to obtain from them the unhappy decree of our divorce. Why take such pains to undeceive him? Is it not a truth which will soon produce its own proof? Let us do ourselves the violence of passing three or four months in prison; there is no way that of the six of us, there will not be at least some whose love has produced fruit that will become evident. The pregnancy of some of our wives will surely suffice to convince the minister of the reality of our intercourse; and one would have to suppose him the most evil of men to think he would be capable after that of continuing to insist on separating us. Let us try to live tranquilly, I added, counting thus on the future. It [142] will be harder for me than anyone to be so long apart from my dear Angélique; but what pains are not assuaged by hope? There is one objection to make to me, which is that we will doubtless be pressed to face the execution of the consistory's sentence. But that is a matter in which we have no violence to fear: they can prevent us, despite us, from living with our dear wives, but they will not attempt to constrain us to make us live

with girls whom we will constantly refuse to take into our arms. If they ask the motives of our conduct, we will politely refuse to explain them, and not worry much about whether they can be guessed.

My comrades found this advice so to their liking that they embraced me a hundred times as proof of their gratitude. Even the impetuous Gelin applauded, despite the torment he already anticipated of so long an absence from his wife. It was fundamentally a sound decision, one which should naturally have succeeded; but the same star which had always opposed my happiness up until then was preparing to consummate my ruin. The advice I had given to my dear friends for our common utility became so disastrous to me, that it seems heaven punished it as a crime, by making all the deplorable effects it produced fall on me.

However, the seeming unlikelihood that it could turn out so badly having led my comrades to accept it joyfully, we began that very day to carry it out. To some of the elders who visited us we spoke of our prison as an abode that displeased us so little that we were quite willing to spending several months there. They asked in vain for our reason; we only answered their question with jests. We maintained the same demeanor with respect to the minister, and everyone whose visit we were allowed to receive. Not a week went by without the consistory renewing its persecutions to get us to submit to its sentence; but its envoys received the same replies from us. We were enjoying, so to speak, their uncertainty and consternation. They understood nothing of our mysterious manners, and as most of them were old men who prided themselves on wisdom and experience, they could not hide the annoyance they felt at seeing the designs of six young men resist their conjectures and divination. We did not have this reserve with our wives. One of our first cares was to inform them of the secret of our conduct, as much to forestall the misgivings they might have conceived about our fidelity, as to exhort them act in concert with

us, and make sure we were aware of the first signs they might have of the state in which we hoped they might themselves. The jailor, who was not as unbending as most men of his kind, agreed to render us this service. I wrote every day to Mme Eliot and to my dear wife. My heart at least satisfied itself in my letters. I also received their replies. Love and friendship have no tender and passionate expressions that were not used in this endearing intercourse, which for nearly five months was my sole consolation. My comrades obtained the same favor from the jailor. We shared with each other the letters we wrote and those we received. The friendship that united us was so sincere that we made no more attempt to disguise our thoughts than our actions. Each man allowed his heart to be read, and he read those of his comrades, who to him were like cherished brothers and faithful friends. We were not deprived of books, nor anything that could help us pass the time. The Englishmen applied themselves primarily to learning the French language, and the Frenchmen to making progress in ours. Thus we derived considerable benefit from our captivity. But alas, I never was able to make of it the use for which I had tried to acquire it. My principal motive in learning French was to be able to converse with my dear wife more agreeably in her natural language, and pitiless heaven had condemned me never to see her again.

Three months had scarcely gone by, when I received a letter from Mme Eliot, which [143] brought me the happy news of Angélique's pregnancy. She confirmed it to me as something certain. We celebrated it in our prison. My comrades congratulated me on the appearance that I would be the first of us to bear the name of father, and they regarded this disposition of heaven as a confirmation of the small authority they had granted me over them. We debated whether we would wait longer before announcing this news to the consistory. They were all of a mine not to put it off; I alone was of a different opinion, and so insisted it be

followed that they consented out of deference. That was indeed their only motive; for I had no sound reason to give them, nor did it seem to me I had a good one to give myself: I acted out of blind instinct, or one might say from a sort of inner foreboding I could not fully account for. It seemed to me there was some danger to my wife in letting her be seen as a mother before her sisters. My anxiety was still only for her; I imagined it was only a desire to shield her modesty, by waiting to declare her pregnancy until my comrades had their wives in the same condition. Whatever reason we had to presume advantageously of the people in our favor, I knew that one look, one sign of surprise, even a gentle and innocent jest, affects a virtuous girl who finds herself in a certain condition which, one insinuates, had not been expected; and my intention, insofar as I could explain it to myself, was to spare my dear Angélique the least occasion of discomfort or embarrassment. It may seem that this reasoning, as vague and indeterminate as it was, could have sufficed to make me make the choice I decided upon; but it is certain that something stronger and more urgent entered into my resolution. I felt it without conceiving it; it was a remnant of the happy influence of my star which presaged approaching woes to which my thoughts could not yet extend. How could I have foreseen them, since nothing but hateful malevolence could have given rise to them, and even as I experienced them, for a long time I could scarcely believe them?¹⁹⁷

I therefore declared in my reply to Mme Eliot that I thought it best to hide carefully her daughter's pregnancy until my com-

¹⁹⁷ For Bridge, the fatality that pursues all of Prévost's heroes takes on a frightful form; Bridge asserts not merely that he was born under an unfriendly star, but one that is hostile and diabolical. Cleveland sometimes accuses heaven also of cruelty, but never does he like Bridge attribute the responsibility for his sufferings to a "malevolent power".

rades' wives had revealed something similar. Several weeks went by in that expectation. The news I so earnestly desired never came. Meanwhile, the minister and the consistory, who understood less than ever the purposes of our behavior, and who had made a hundred fruitless attempts to pry the secret from us, renewed their insistence with new persecutions. They sometimes employed gentleness and civility to persuade us to yield to their orders, but more often they resorted to reproaches and threats. The minister especially, who came to see us often, never left without calling us indocile and rebellious, and without given us to fear from heaven and the colony some harsh punishment that would restore us despite ourselves to our duty. It was one day at the conclusion of one of these violent apostrophes that, out of patience to put up with his rudeness and outbursts, I all of a sudden, and without really thinking about it, decided to declare clearly that he was wasting his words and his trouble. Do you want me to marry two wives? I said. I will do it, if that is necessary for the colony's welfare; but if you are not capable of proposing crimes to me, speak to me no more of leaving Angélique Eliot, who is so truly my wife, that she is about to give birth to the fruit of our marriage. He was so stunned by these words that I was obliged to repeat them twice to make him grasp their meaning. I added all the explanations he wanted. And did your comrades, he said after a moment of silence, commit the same offense as you? I answered frivolously that we were associates in virtue and crime, and that we expected the same rewards or the same punishments. He withdrew, with no indication of what he was thinking. Although I had made this admission without forethought, I did not think I ought to regret it; and my comrades, who had [144] ardently hoped for it, were completely delighted. We were already in the fifth month of our imprisonment. We could no longer count on their wives' pregnancy, since it was so long without their experiencing any signs of it. The expectation

that we had invested in five months of waiting now rested entirely on Angélique and myself. We were eager to know how the consistory and the colony would take such an incontestable proof of our marriage as that which I had just given the minister. I wrote straightaway to Mme Eliot to alert her. She received my letter, and I her reply, which she sent toward evening. I found in it some cause for confidence and joy: she informed me that she had had a visit from the minister; that he had asked to see my wife; that he had inquired about the truth of her pregnancy, and that being convinced of it, he departed, appearing tranquil and satisfied.

However, the next day we saw with the greatest astonishment that we were under the watch of a different jailor, and that more care was taken than had been until then in locking the door of our prison. We asked in vain the reason of the new master of our lodging. He did no more than reply that this change had been made by order of the consistory. We had no doubt that the former jailor had been suspected of served for the exchange of letters we maintained with our wives. But this initial rigor was but a prelude. When the time came when we were allowed to leave our room to visit with our three comrades, the jailor declared that we would no longer be granted that satisfaction, and he obstinately refused to tell us the reason for this stringent conduct. It could not fail to alarm us considerably. We held counsel. All of Gelin's insight could not furnish us any light in such murkiness. We were not being treated so strictly out of conciliatory indulgence and kindness, that much was clear; but what did they hope to achieve with this new violence? And even supposing that my wife's pregnancy was its pretext, how could we be more guilty since the minister had himself seen the proof than when I had made to him five months earlier revelations that should have enabled him to foresee it? It is true that he had always resisted believing they were sincere: but it was this very thought that precluded all the suspicions I should have conceived of his cruel designs; it had

even served until then to make me find his injustices excusable. Maybe he is persuaded, I would say, that we are trying to fool him; all he needs is to be convinced that our marriage was consummated; for the more affection he has for his niece, the less likely it is that he would want to give her a husband she could not accept with honor, supposing I could prove the favors I had received from Angélique. They are now proven beyond a doubt; he would no longer want me as his niece's husband; and consequently he no longer has any interest in breaking the ties that bind me to my wife. This reasoning would have been correct, had the minister acted only as an affectionate uncle and as a virtuous and charitable pastor; but all his intentions being those of a cruel and cunning enemy who wanted to satisfy his resentment against Mme Eliot, against her daughter, and against me: he had no other aim in the constraints to which he had already subjected us. My comrades had only shared them because he could not destroy me without associating them with my ruin. Vengeance was his only passion, or at least all the others derived from it. Mme Eliot knew him well, when she described his character to me; and she had doubtless been right to tell me that he had solicited his sister-in-law's death for the sole purpose of avenging himself on Guiton, whom he could not destroy without causing her to die with him. That deed was worthy of what he since did against me; for I am telling you nothing about that hateful minister but what is only too well confirmed by what it remains for me to relate.

The trouble we had figuring out his intentions forced us to resort to the usual consolation of the unfortunate, which is patience and invocation of heaven's succor. As far as I was from suspecting the misfortune that threatened me, I could not help a dreadful anxiety for Angélique. That dear wife [145] was constantly on my mind. What sad fruits of such a tender and innocent affection! She worries about me, I said to myself, at the very time I tremble for her! Which of us is the more pitiful? Alas, I well

know that the sufferings that affect me most are not my own; but I die a thousand deaths from those of my dear Angélique. We spent another month in the most secure captivity. We received three or four times the visit of an elder, who exhorted us vaguely to be of good hope: but we could not get from him the reason for the cruel treatment we were made to endure. He even refused to respond to questions regarding our wives. Gelin, who was provoked to indignation and rage by such harshness, proposed more than once to me that we resort to the weapons, as the sole means of ending such indignities. We had not only our three pistols, but also those of our comrades which we had thought best to recover from them,¹⁹⁸ because as our room being the larger and more comfortable, we could more easily keep them hidden there. Each time I answered Gelin that it was doubtless a resource we should absolutely not renounce; but that I saw no necessity for it as yet; that we should wait at least for some illumination about our destiny, and not choose the path of despair until we had lost all hope.

We were at the end of our sixth month in prison. One morning, the minister entered our room with several elders. Their faces seemed to me consternated. Go outside, said the minister to Gelin and Johnston, and leave me alone with M. Bridge. My dear comrades went outside, escorted by the elders, and I indeed remained alone with my enemy. He commanded me imperiously to be seated, and taking a seat himself, he asked me two questions at once: Who are you, he said; and what was your purpose in coming to this island? Surprised at the peremptory tone with which he spoke, I looked at him for a time without answering. He repeated his query. I made up my mind to satisfy him politely, while still making him aware that I was capable of some resolve. Although I do not know, I said, for what purpose or by whose

¹⁹⁸ Bridge said earlier they each had two pistols.

order you interrogate me with such arrogance, if you do not yet know who I am, I do not refuse to tell you. My name is Bridge. I am the son of the Protector of England. As for the motive that brought me to this island, it was the hope of finding here men who were just and friends of virtue: may it please heaven that my expectation be not disappointed! There was assuredly nothing insulting in my reply: nevertheless the minister saw fit to accuse me of lacking respect. His hatred first vented itself in a few insulting words, and then assuming a more moderate tone, he told me it was difficult to believe that a young man capable of the horrors into which I had fallen could have been the offspring of such a father as I claimed; that it was not plausible either that I had ever possessed the least sentiment of honor and virtue, since I had violated all their laws; but that if it was true that I had thought to find love of order and justice in the island, he was there to confirm that idea, by telling me that vice there was rigorously punished, and announcing to me that I would myself be an example of that. We suffer here, he continued, neither adultery nor seduction. A husband who is unfaithful to his wife is deserving of death. Your condemnation is already pronounced by our laws. However, as it is in the power of the colony to return a death sentence, I leave you with the hope that it may be favorable to you. Do not be too sure, nevertheless, he added mockingly, and think of reconciling yourself with heaven: for it has not spared in the same situation persons who were worthier than you. I wanted to speak to justify myself; or rather I was so shaken that in opening my mouth to speak out, I hardly knew what I was going to say: but he anticipated my intention, inviting me put off speaking in my defense before those designated to hear it. He added as he rose, that he was sent to my prison only to fulfill the duty of his ministry, which was to counsel me to think of penitence, and make a Christian use of my punishment. He left at once. My comrades did not reappear. [146] I remained alone for a moment,

after which the jailor came in with two manservants who seized hold of me, and in no time I found myself laden with heavy chains, and treated as the most criminal of all men.

I admit that my assumptive reserves of courage and steadfastness were unable to sustain me against the initial impressions of an event so terrible and unforeseen. I saw the whole system of the minister's vengeance. The tragic example of Guiton immediately came to mind. I thought my death inevitable, and spent more than an hour protesting to heaven and bemoaning the harshness of my fate. But when, after these first movements of anguish which had no other object than my own misfortune, I began to reflect that Angélique would probably be enveloped in my fall, and suffer the same penalty, I completely lost what composure I had left, and fell into a state that nearly deprived my enemies, through my death, of the cruel pleasure of making me suffer longer. I had scarcely the strength to emit a few words, which were all but stifled by the tumultuous agitation of my spirits. Yet my despair could not contain itself within my heart: I wanted to speak, to cry aloud, and broadcast my protests to anyone who could react to them. I managed to utter a few, intermixed with a thousand sighs: I adressed them to Angélique, to Mme Eliot, to my comrades, and called heaven and Earth to witness my misfortunes and my sufferings.

My sweet wife, whose name all my pain could not make me pronounce without tenderness, was during that time in a state little different from mine. I only learned the circumstances several months later. However unbearable for me the uncertainty they left me in over her fate, it was doubtless much less so than the knowledge would have been of what she had yet to suffer. It was from the generous Gelin that I had my first news, along with news of their conduct with respect to my comrades, and of everything that had happened to him and to them up to the moment with I was allowed to see him again. To order my narrative by

what I knew and when, I ought to put this off until after I have related my own adventure; but my story will seem clearer to you by following the order of events.¹⁹⁹

After the way I have expressed myself about the minister's character and his malevolence where his vengeance was concerned, you may imagine where my chains came from, and this extremity of misery into which I was all at once precipitated. Listen to the horrible plan of his wrath. He had no sooner learned from me about Angélique's pregnancy than he went to Mme Eliot's, as I have told you, to have this important fact confirmed by my wife's own testimony. He also went to the homes of my comrades' wives, and through the shrewd way he spoke to them about mine, he succeeded in getting from them sufficient enlightenment to be certain they were not in the same condition. He thought then he was at the pinnacle of his desires, and absolute master of his vengeance. His victims had delivered themselves to him unforced. He decided to leave thereafter my comrades in peace, and direct all his darts toward Angélique and me. By the sentence of the consistory, the lots ceremony was to be regarded as a holy and solemn marriage; yet had since had substantiated intercourse with another woman than the one whom fate had given me; I was therefore in the same situation as Guiton, in other words guilty of adultery, and consequently deserving of death. Such was his reasoning. He did foresee that my comrades, and especially Gelin, could well create some difficulty for him by recognizing they were guilty of the same crime; but as he had

¹⁹⁹ Strictly to follow the order of events as perceived by the protagonist himself ("what I knew and when") allows for good suspense and disarming surprises, but it can entail a loss of clarity for the reader. The dynamics of narration in Prévost alternates between these two poles, each of which has advantages; the meaning of this option which is evoked at several points in the novel.

already managed to persuade the elders that that confession was an artifice, he felt quite sure he could easily confirm them in the same opinion, by pointing out to them that it was not plausible that of six young men who had the same intercourse with girls of their age, there was one only who became a father. There was indeed something so extraordinary in this event that I was myself hard put to explain it. I still regard it as a irrefutable proof of the reality of some malevolent power which has, as it were, [147] taken over my fate, and alters the very course of nature to assure my doom.²⁰⁰

Although the minister believed this plan infallible, he kept it hidden in his heart until our sixth month in prison. The purpose of this delay was to verify more and more that Angélique and I were the only ones guilty. He simply took the precaution of having us more closely guarded in our rooms, doubtless to prevent anything getting back to me which might make me suspect his plan and lead me to take measures in concert with my comrades to thwart it. During nearly a month that he kept us under such constraint, in public he pretended not to believe Angélique's pregnancy was genuine. God forbid, he would say, that these horrors should be repeated in the colony! The example of Guiton and my sister-in-law is a deterrent that will forever restrain our girls within the confines of modesty and virtue. These hypocritical affectations lasted for several weeks. Finally, when my wife's pregnancy was so visible that it was no longer unknown to anyone, he all at once lifted the mask. He called the consistory together. There, with a crafty harangue, he so stirred up the elders against me that there was hardly one who was not immediately prepared to subscribe to

²⁰⁰ The rigorous symmetry of the six comrades (all of whose experiences have heretofore been shared) has suddenly become a radical asymmetry tending to isolate Bridge and differentiating his case from all the others, whence this conclusion.

my death. His poisonous eloquence principally elaborated two points: first, to establish firmly the soundness of our pretended marriage by lots, and the consistory's justice in confirming it in its sentence; secondly, to destroying the tendency some elders might have had to believe my comrades as guilty as I, supposing that I was guilty myself, and to persuade them that I alone was in a state of adultery. My crime, and the necessity of my punishment, necessarily followed from the first of these two points. The second removed every hope of pardon: for the guilty in large numbers sometimes evoke indulgence, whereas it is generally an individual's crime that is used as an opportunity to give an example of severity for the maintenance of the law; and naturally, it seemed that after what happened to Guiton, a young man like me, without reputation or protection, had little right to appeal for clemency. The minister therefore pointed out that in addition to the clear and obvious proof that could be drawn in favor of my comrades from the fact that Angélique was the only one pregnant, there was other evidence that declared no less their docility and innocence; that those who were in a different prison from mine had at first firmly denied having committed the least indecency with the girls they had pretended to marry in the prairie; that they had made this initial deposition of their own free will; that having changed their language after they spoke with me in the church, it was clear that it was at my instigation; that it seemed equally certain that those who were locked up with me had acted only on my advice; that foreseeing the consequences of the criminal intercourse I had had with Angélique, I had quite well realized that I could save myself only by increasing the number of the guilty, and had had the skill to persuade my comrades that their interests required of them what I engaged them to do only for my own; that the girls also had vacillated in their depositions; that in captivity, they had protested that they had never deviated from their duty; that once they were free, in other words as soon as I

was able to shape their language through the advice I gave them in my letters, they had completely changed their version; that he had intercepted some of these letters, either in my hand, or in that of my comrades; and that he had found them so crafty and dangerous that it was for that reason that he had solicited the consistory to give us a jailor whose fidelity could stand up to our inducements. In a word, the minister employed on this occasion, everything that a violent and wily enemy use to pour his poison into the hearts of others and kindle wrath there; and indeed his speech had all the success he had designed it for. The elders regarded me from this moment on not only as implicated and convicted of adultery, but also, as the sole initiator of what I had done in concert with my comrades; and visiting on me the resistance they had made to their orders, they held me alone guilty.²⁰¹

[148] It was not far from that judgment to the resolution to put me to death. It was taken by unanimous agreement; and although there were several persons in the assembly whose consideration for Mme Eliot made them wish there were some indulgence for her daughter, her cause was too necessarily linked to mine to separate her from my fate. No one would have dared, moreover, solicit for her in the presence of the minister, who had once been the most ardent in demanding the punishment of his sister in the same circumstances. Her doom and mine were therefore concluded. However, since it was not in the consistory's power to pronounce definitively on penalties of death, they settled, according to the established procedure, for drawing up as articles all the minister's charges so as to publish them to the colony. It was customary on such occasions to attach to the church door a sort of manifest listing the crimes of the persons

²⁰¹ All that Bridge relates here he learned only three months or so later, from Gelin – which is why Bridge alerted Cleveland that his narrative was not following “in the order of what I knew”.

accused. Each individual examined them, to prepare himself for making an informed judgment. All the island's inhabitants then assembled, following a public proclamation, and proceeded regularly to the sentence. My wife and I were therefore considered from that day, if not as already condemned criminals, at least as suspects whose crime was so notorious and so certain that we could not fail to be condemned. We were immediately treated as we would be under that supposition. Angélique was torn from her mother's arms, and locked up in a dark prison. I was laden with chains, and advised by the minister to begin early to prepare myself for death. As for my comrades, who were in a sense justified by my crimes, they were set free. The minister assumed responsibility for their conduct; and still reasoning on the principles of his wrath, he assured the consistory that, being no longer corrupted by my guidance, they could be relied upon for good behavior and docility. Such were the preludes of the dreadful scene in the offing.

Gelin and Johnston, now free, could not understand why I was held prisoner after them. These two dear friends, who were accustomed from long association in misery to love me and wish me well, could not hide the pain they felt at seeing me excluded from the clemency that seemed to be granted to them. They made this clear openly, from that very day. But their anger equaled their astonishment when they learned from the rumor that was soon abroad that my wife had been arrested, and that she and I having already been declared worthy of death by the consistory, it was just a matter now of assembling the inhabitants of the colony for the confirmation of that sentence. Gelin lost not a minute in going to see the minister. He spoke to him about what he had just heard, with an vehemence that disconcerted him; and after informing him that, whatever respect he had for the consistory and for the colony, there would never be any considerations that would detach him from my interests, he declared sharply to him that

before undertaking any measure against my life, they must first render him incapable of sacrificing his own to defend me. My enemy, who had expected that the pleasure of being once more at liberty would make all my comrades less interested in my misfortune, needed all his skill to calm Gelin's outburst. What he decided to do was to confess that the consistory had passed resolutions which were not favorable to me; but he added that it was an affair that could not fail to drag on, and that whatever direction it took out, it was not to be apprehended that anything drastic would be done before Angélique was delivered of her child; that in that interval there could be any number of changes in the dispositions of the consistory and of the colony; and that in sum my cause was not yet hopeless. This response was sincere in part, for they could not think of carrying out Angélique's condemnation, nor mine consequently, before her term was up; but the minister's goal in planting this thought in Gelin, was to appease him for the moment, figuring it would be easy to win him over with blandishments, him and his comrades, or deceive them by cunning. Seeing even that his words had had some effect on Gelin, he took advantage of the opportunity to imply to him that his good conduct and that of our comrades could contribute more than anything else to my salvation and freedom.

[149] Gelin had the flaw of all straightforward and generous hearts: he did not easily tend towards mistrust. He had just been granted his freedom, and the minister had not failed to inform him that it was to his solicitations that he owed it. This thought, combined with an appearance of goodness and moderation which he thought the minister showed in clarifying my situation, persuaded him not only that he was not our enemy, but that the advice he had just given him was the most advantageous for me, and that he could not serve me better than by resolving to follow it. He prevailed on Johnston and our other comrades to go along with him. They all agreed to do themselves violence for my sake, even to

the point of accepting without murmur the continual denial of the right to see their wives, and the renewed pressure on them to take the wives that were being urged on them. They did no more than indicate gently that their dispositions were unchanged, and kept themselves constantly occupied with visiting the minister and the elders to obtain my freedom from them. I do not know whether it would have been preferable for my interests for them adopt a different conduct, but it is certain that their gentleness and civility were not virtues which could make an impression on the minister: they merely gave him an opportunity to take advantage of their weakness, providing him the means of winning them over little by little as he hoped to do, and getting them finally to betray their wives and abandon their friend. I speak only of three of them: for Gelin and Johnston could be fooled all right, but they were as incapable as I of betrayal and disloyalty.

It was with the three I have not yet named to you that this shrewd enemy soon discovered how to go about coming to an agreement. One was a Frenchman; his name was Roussel. The other two were English: the name of one was Green, and the other Blakmore.²⁰² I never learned exactly by what expectations they allowed themselves to be enticed: inconstancy was doubtless a larger factor than self-interest. They were forced to visit frequently with the girls whose husbands they were supposed to be, whereas they were forbidden to see those whose husbands they truly were; the fear of heaven was tirelessly held up to them, and the soundness of their first engagement underscored. A new love, a weak mental, the minister's constant insinuations, ultimately had the strength to make them forget what they owed to their oaths and to their honor. They consented to what had been vainly required of them for so long; and in attaching themselves to their

²⁰² We learned earlier that Mme Eliot had recruited two Frenchmen and three Englishmen before she encountered Bridge on the ship.

new wives, they lost all the affection they had had until then for their comrades. This was the minister's principal aim. That was easy to judge from the measures he took at the conclusion of their marriage. Since he was wary of Gelin and Johnston, whom he had always found unbending, he wanted this ceremony to be performed secretly, lest they oppose it at the least by their objections, and by the reproaches they could have made to their weak friends. Therefore they learned about it only several days after it was concluded; or rather, they guessed it from the look and embarrassed demeanor of our three unfaithful men. Gelin, ever impetuous and impatient, could not resist giving them overt signs of disdain and indignation: but that only made them more hostile to us, and pushed them entirely into the enemy camp.

What a triumph for the minister! It did not take him long to reap its fruit. Having sufficiently recognized that nothing could shake the constancy of Gelin and Johnston, he thought that after succeeding in putting them at odds with their comrades, they were numerically too weak to justify further placating them further. He changed the gentle, obliging manners he had affected with respect to them. People reported to him some of the outbursts that had escaped from Gelin when he learned of the scandalous marriages of our comrades: from them he assumed the right to address him with an arrogance that made him see easily what he should expect henceforth, and that they no longer intended to deal cautiously with him. However the affection he bore me had the power to make him [150] suffer this affront with moderation. He told me subsequently that he could scarcely himself understand how he had found himself capable of such patience; never had the minister been so close to receiving the treatment he deserved. But the friendship of that generous Frenchman soon had a more just, and also sadder, cause for intervention. It led him to expose his life like a desperado to save mine. More moved by his generosity than by the benefit, I con-

ness that it earned him obligations on my part which all the blood he spared me will never be able to satisfy.

The term of Angélique's pregnancy having arrived, she gave birth to the fruit of my love. Unhappy father! Alas, I was then languishing in my prison, burdened by the weight of my chains. I was even unaware of my wife's captivity. She was barely over her first pains than the minister, who thought he now had a free hand, called the consistory to press the execution of their earlier deliberations. I have already said that my wife's pregnancy had served as pretext to defer it. The sentiments of the elders turned out to be the same, despite all the efforts Gelin and Johnston had made to sway them. They decided to have the list of my crimes posted on the church door the very next day, along with the consistory's judgment. Gelin learned this news only with the public, in other words by reading the fatal notice. He took no more than the time required to read it, and to make sure it was about me and my wife, before ripping it down and tearing it to pieces. This bold act was reported to the minister, and was the subject of a new assembly of the consistory; but they judged best, so as to avoid new disturbances, to leave it unpunished, pretending not to know about it. They nevertheless convoked the general assembly of the colony. It was held in the church a few days later. The minister, who was wary of Gelin's eloquence, and fully expected he would not fail to attempt on this occasion what had already worked so well for him, obtained without ado an order from the consistory which forbade my five comrades to appear at the church on the day set for my sentencing, and specifically ordered the porters not to let him in. Gelin and Johnston put all their strength and all their time, up to that day, into bending the people's mind in my favor, and stirring up the parents and friends of their wives and mine to undertake something for my defense. Their zeal was for naught: people answered that the law was clear and precise, the crime was notorious and proven, and that the example of Guiton and his

mistress allowed for neither interpretation nor commutation. To the objection that could naturally be made in my favor, that I believed I was genuinely married to Angélique, and that even supposing the validity of the marriage by lot, I was guilty only of an error, since I had never been of that opinion, they replied that it was an implausible excuse, since three of my comrades had just made clear by being united with their wives, that they had not been unaware of their true engagements, and there I could hardly have been any less aware of them than they. And so it was that the cowardice of the three disloyal men contributed more than anything else to my undoing. Gelin told me nonetheless that they could easily recognize, from the manner in which people resisted his pleas, that this prejudice was the doing of the minister, who had doubtless labored quietly for three months to destroy all the penchant the inhabitants of the island might have had shown toward pity.

Finally, the day for the general assembly having arrived, my trial was duly held. They produced my statements, and those of my wife; they heard the depositions of the witnesses; my whole case was explained by an elder; and once the people had indicated they were sufficiently informed, they cast their votes, which were given according to the established method. More than two-thirds of them were against me. I say against me, and my unfortunate wife; for no difference was made between our cases. We were declared guilty of the same crime as Guiton, and condemned to the same punishment. The execution was set for the next day; and to end this horrible ceremony in a manner worthy of the entire procedure, the minister then delivered moving meditation, in which he expressed deep [151] compassion for my fate, and exhorted the whole colony to benefit from the example of my ill conduct and condemnation.

What do you think I was doing in my prison, while such a cruel decision was being voted against my life and that of my

dear wife? Alas, I was beginning to flatter myself that the outcome would be better. My credulous hope was based on the length of my captivity, and on the goodness of the island's inhabitants, whom I did not yet take to be savage and pitiless men. I had seen hardly anyone for the three months I had been in chains. Only the minister had come to visit a few times. His early visits had always had something curt and insulting about them; but I had noticed recently that his manner had softened. His cruel joy apparently came from the nearness of my condemnation and my punishment; and I, in my foolish simplicity, explained it as a return of kindness that foreshadowed my deliverance. This opinion was so impressed on my mind, that for several days I had ceased devoting myself to the complaints and lamentations that until then had been my sole occupation.²⁰³ Even my wife's image, the continual presence of which had made me shed so many tears, began to appear in my mind in a less ominous form. I shall see her again, I would say; I will be allowed to see her and love her. Dear Angélique! They will no longer oppose the most tender and innocent love that ever was. I shall possess you peacefully, and I shall spend the rest of my days in your arms. Yes, at the very time they were handing down against me the decree of an unjust and cruel death, I was thus fantasizing about happiness: I was the toy of that same malevolent power that has made me unhappy since my birth, and has taken care to preserve my life only to make it an example of misery and misfortune.

The shadow of satisfaction it granted me was paid for dearly, before the day was over. The darkness was just settling in when I heard a terrible noise at the door. I went over to listen. I

²⁰³ As a function of their general melancholy, perhaps, Prévost's suffering heroes never seem bored as long as they can fill the time pitying themselves. Des Grieux also says: "Instead of studying when I was alone, I kept busy bemoaning my fate" (*Manon Lescaut*, p. 392).

thought I could make out the voice of Gelin, who was shouting in a furious and threatening voice: Open up, or I will strangle you with my own hands. The tumult which kept up made me think he had several other persons with him, and I could not understand where this strange scene was headed. My door opened: Gelin and Johnston entered, my faithful comrades, my dear friends; and I had scarcely the time to recognize them before they were holding me in their arms, hugging me in the most tender and heartfelt way. They were followed by fifteen men, who filled my room in no time. Their presence, and the expressions they gave me of their friendship, so well matched the pleasant thoughts I had entertained all day long, that I was persuaded for a moment that they brought me news of my liberation. Tell me, dear friends, I exclaimed, embracing them back, am I free? Are you? How goes my dear wife? Gelin's involuntary sighs before he answered me made it only too clear that he had nothing but sad news for me. Ah, Bridge! he said in a baleful voice, I come to pierce your heart. I know you; I am bringing you a mortal blow. And without giving me time to reply, he added that as things were there was no way to soften the news of my calamity. You are condemned to die tomorrow, he continued, shedding a few tears, you and your dear Angélique. All I can do, my dear friend, is to defend you to the last drop of my blood, with Johnston, and these fifteen brave men who have promised me their assistance. There is not a moment to lose. We must at least perish as men of honor and courage.

Such talk cannot appear as strange to you as it was terrible and overwhelming for me. Gelin wanted to undo my chain, and have me leave immediately with him. No, no, I said to him, pushing him away with a trembling hand; no, dear Gelin, I must be informed immediately of the extent of my calamity. For God's sake, hide nothing from me. If Angélique must die, ah!... But hide nothing from me, I repeated, interrupting myself: if she is already dead, there is no need for me to go elsewhere to die. He

then told me briefly [152] a part of my miserable adventure, and how little hope I had left if I did not immediately go along with the thoughts he had for defending me. I learned from him that my wife had safely given birth to a son,²⁰⁴ and my cruel enemies had scarcely allowed her to recover from the pains of childbirth before they condemned her to die with me. This new thought, combined with the horror of her condemnation and mine, put me in a state of which it is impossible there could ever have been an example before me. My heart was assailed by affection and fury at the same time, torn by the one, and so moved by the other as to shed a stream of tears, while embracing my dear friends over and over. I found no words adequate to these two transports: fury prevented my affection from expressing itself, and my affection seemed to arrest all the expressions of my fury.

Johnston and Gelin were full of pity seeing the excess of my pain and despair. They freed me from my chains, and explained their plan to me. It was to arm ourselves before leaving the storehouse, in order to go first to Angélique's prison, and take her from the hands of our enemies; and from there to the homes of their wives, whom they also wanted to have with us. Next we would return to the storehouse, enclose ourselves there in as in a fortress, and not lay down our arms only after setting conditions with the colony that could establish our happiness and tranquillity. My first project, Gelin whispered to me, was not to treat our enemies with such moderation; but without this promise I would not have obtained the assistance of the men I am bringing to you. Let us go, dear friends, I said, beginning to breathe a little, let us go take possession of our treasures. As for our enemies, I added quietly to Gelin, we will not leave it to heaven to avenge us. I was indeed formulating a plan which would have served to punish the

²⁰⁴ Prévost forgot this detail in the ultimate sequel to his novel, where we find that Bridge and Angélique's only child is a daughter.

minister in the most sensitive way, by humiliating his proud and arrogant humor; for all my indignation was not capable of making me think of exacting any other vengeance from a clergyman. I wanted to take him in his home, bring him with us to the storehouse, and force him for a few days to bow to us, and witness the caresses we gave to our wives. Knowing his character as I did, I was sure he would have preferred death to that kind of punishment.

We lost no time arming ourselves, and were not content just to take pistols as the first time; each man took a sword and a rifle. We left the storehouse in good order, leaving behind three men to assure our entrance on our return. We had scarcely gone four paces when we heard the vague noise of a crowd of people who seemed to be assembled along the line of houses. There was no doubt that it had to do with us. My comrades remembered they had overlooked one precaution without which we might be exposed to serious dilemmas: they have forgotten to attend to the jailor after they entered the storehouse. We figured that that devil had gone to alert the minister and the elders of the violence manner in which Gelin and this band had gotten inside, and that the news which had quickly spread caused fear and emotion among the inhabitants. However, as this was not a reason which could prevent us from going forward, we continued walking. Fifty paces further along we recognized the minister coming towards us, torch in hand, leading a troop of perhaps a hundred men; and what surprised us the most was to see most of them armed with clubs or domestic tools. I confess that my first reaction at the sight of my cruel enemy inclined me to make him unable with one shot ever to renew his betrayals and injustices. I doubt heaven would have punished me for a crime which would have prevented that evil man from committing numberless others. Nevertheless I controlled myself and let him live, only to become once again the object of his perfidy. Despite the hardihood with which he was

advancing, he seemed to take fright when he saw fifteen men armed with swords and rifles heading toward him. His men seemed as disconcerted [153] as he. Gelin forestalled some mortifying words I meant to say to him, but not in order to treat him more kindly. Halt, knave, he cried, pointing his rifle at him, and thank heaven it made us more honest men than you. You would deserve the death you were getting ready to give to my friend. We want to let you live, for your own punishment; for life must be a burden for a wicked man who has so many crimes on his conscience. But if you love it, you must begin this moment to redress your injustices. This challenge, which it seemed ought to have further frightened our enemy, or irritate him more, produced neither of these two effects. He had the time to collect himself while he listened, and feeling certain, from the way Gelin had expressed himself, that we had were not threatening his life, he had enough skill and presence of mind to display neither fear nor anger. He answered Gelin tranquilly that he could not imagine why he was treating him so badly. I solicited your freedom, he said, and I obtained it. If I did not render the same service to your friend, it was because our laws, justice, and the judgment of the consistory and the colony did not allow it. But it is a long way from the sentence to the punishment; and although we set the day for tomorrow, that is a formality that does not necessarily entail carrying it out. In a word, if we could not help condemning your friend, we can grant him clemency after the condemnation. I even admit to you, he continued, that I was surprised you did not think to ask for it; and far from wishing you ill for what you are undertaking for his deliverance, I promise to join with you to obtain it. Your action is audacious; but it comes from an excellent character, and I shall be sure to present it from the most favorable angle. As for your comrades, he added (I mean our colonists whom I see armed with you), I admit it will be difficult to excuse them. This is an unheard-of revolt, for which we will never forgive; and for

my part I declare them from this moment severed from our communion by the order of my ministry, unless they lay down their arms at once. And then turning toward them: I foresee what will happen: we are going to grant clemency to Bridge, and you are in danger of being punished in his stead. Even if you avoid execution, you can see that you are going to make yourselves odious and forever dishonored in the colony. There is still time for repentance; if you take my advice, you will return your weapons to the storehouse.

This shrewd and deceitful appeal caused our ruin. To be sure it called down on the minister the punishment he deserved: but what use can the punishment of a traitor be to unfortunates?²⁰⁵ Our feeble comrades in arms, after conferring for a minute, headed back to the storehouse, in spite of our pleas and reproaches. Gelin was losing hope. We cannot allow ourselves, he told me, to be fooled by new tricks. We must perish, or emerge successfully from our enterprise. I approved his opinion. The three of us pulled together, he, Johnston, and me; and making it clear by our demeanor that we would allow no one to approach us, we continued on our way towards my wife's prison. The minister urged us in vain to stop by renewing his treacherous promises. We answered as we walked away that only death could suspend our intentions; and that before they could inflict it, there would be more blood shed than ours.

Such was our determination, and we only confirmed ourselves in it as we continued on. It was about a hundred paces to the place where my wife was imprisoned. Along the way we encountered many colonists running with every sign of surprise

²⁰⁵ It is characteristic of Prévost's heroes that they never wish for bloody vengeance even with respect to those who have done them the most injury. The sole exception is Aberdeen's assassination in book I, but he was guilty of raping Axminster's wife.

and fright, as happens during a public alarm; but finding none who stood in our way, our hopes were continually improving. We had made it three-quarters of the way when we heard the sound of several persons running after us. Wait, I said to Gelin; we are being pursued. Although the only light came from a few lamps that frightened women were holding at the door of their houses, we spied fifteen or twenty armed men, who quickly caught up to us. We could easily judge that their weapons were those of [154] our deserters, which the minister had told them to take up. They told us to halt and lay down our weapons. We would rather die a thousand times, Gelin replied angrily. Let the boldest of you step forward: he dies without quarter. We were indeed holding our rifles ready to fire. They dared not come closer, and did no more than exhort us to surrender, and to take into account that we were not the strongest. Their advice affected us as little as their threats. We held in the same posture until the arrival of the minister, who soon appeared, with his hundred-man escort. He still had his torch in his hand, and as most of the persons who were with him had picked up others on the way, we found ourselves all at once surrounded by a great light. Proud of the number, and irritated to find us defending ourselves, the minister called his armed men cowards who were afraid of three young men of our age. This reproach caused them to surge forward: You then, you black-guard, since you want it, cried Gelin, aiming at the minister; and he fired his shot, which felled him mortally wounded. Johnston and I discharged our rifles as well. Our two shots wounded a few persons. We could not draw our swords as fast as the people fell on us. We were seized and disarmed despite our furious resistance. A few elders who were in the crowd had us taken forthwith to the storehouse. We were locked each in a separate prison. I could manage to say only two words to my dear friends as I separated from them: Farewell, brave Gelin, I cried; farewell, dear Johnston. May your generosity and your friendship be fatal

to me alone! It will at least be a sweet consolation to me as I die, that I have had two such generous and faithful friends.

Indeed I could expect nothing other than a prompt execution: I had no longer had the slightest hope of avoiding it. I prepared for death, calling on all the strength and constancy that such cruel misfortunes could leave me with. How hard it was to bring my mind back to submission to heaven's orders! Never did anyone experience impulses so like ultimate despair. But was mine not excusable? Does misfortune have dreadful darts that I had not received? Where can one find motives for patience against the cruellest of all woes, when one has reason to accuse both the rigor of heaven and the savagery of men? Such was my situation. All that we call natural benefits, advantages of birth, parental affection, good fortunes, what heaven affords almost all men, I considered it to have denied me; and life, such as I had received it, was less a favor from its hand than an ominous and poisoned gift. Had men treated me any less harshly? Alas, think back on all the circumstances of my sad story. Torn from my mother's arms almost at birth, deprived of her by an accident I cannot remember without shame and horror, raised afterwards in the darkness of a horrible cavern, my first visions were gloomy, and my first thoughts baleful. I wished to see my father, my heart was joyful at the thought; I found in him nothing but a cruel enemy would could barely bring himself to spare my blood, and whose intention in preserving it as a favor was to make it so miserable that it would be impossible for me to enjoy its benefit for long. I finally escape from his cruelty; a glimmer of hope seems to appear. But all those promises they give me for a happier life, what do they come to? To crowning my miseries, by multiplying the causes of my pains, and making me find the cruellest sufferings in what provides ordinarily the felicity of others. Love, friendship: for me everything turns to poison and torment. An entire people, who made a profession of virtue, turns savage when it comes to mak-

ing me unhappy and condemning me. A tender and innocent love is held to be a crime; a holy marriage passes for adultery; I am sentenced to the ultimate punishment; and if I still have at the end two faithful friends who take an interest in my fate, my misfortune carried over to them, and I take them with me in my doom.

What constancy would not have succumbed under such distressing considerations? But up till then, my complaints supposed only woes of fortune. Meager sufferings, when [155] I compared them to those of love! I must lose Angélique. To lose her by my death would already have been a torment more cruel than all those my enemies were preparing for me: but to think in dying that she was destined for the same punishment; perhaps to see her expire before my eyes! Angélique, my dear wife, everything my heart loved! Oh the inexpressible pains, which no one but me has ever experienced! I pictured that dear person, alone and languishing in her prison, perhaps weighed down by chains as heavy as my own, awaiting the death she believed inevitable; and knowing as I did the bottom of her tender heart, I had only too many reasons to imagine that her misfortune was not the most powerful cause of her tears. So she grieves for me, I said; she laments my death, perhaps she fears it more than her own; and I will not even be able to tell her that I feel all her sufferings, not even tell her that I worship her, and that since she is condemned to die, I would disdain the more glorious fortune that would prevent me from dying with her. I pictured her still weak, and scarcely over her birthing pains: these were the kinds of thoughts against which neither strength of mind, nor religion, nor approaching death could sustain for a moment my constancy. The cruel minister, the savage colonists! What, I exclaimed, a woman of sixteen,²⁰⁶ a tender, innocent creature, whose only crime is

²⁰⁶ If this takes place in 1658, as it seems, Angélique was born in 1642 and is the same age as Cleveland; Bridge must have been born about

loving me and being lovable, arouses no compassion in you in that state? Are you men? Are you ferocious wolves, of tigers thirsty for blood? Cruel protestants! Is this the spirit of gentleness and humanity your religion inspires in you?²⁰⁷ Ah! Return to your homelands, which the zeal for truth, say you, made you leave. Be Turks, idolaters; and do not violate the sacred laws of nature, which is the most sacred and inviolable of all religions.

I spent the night in these violent agitations. Poor Mme Eliot had her place in my tenderest sentiments. She had had those of a mother for me before I was entitled to be called her son. I was sure that the death of her daughter would affect her scarcely more than my own. If only I could at least thank her for her many kindnesses! If only I could see her once more, and ask her elder for the fatal disorders I was unhappily causing in her family! Alas, good and sensitive as she was, she would not have long survived such a continual succession of pains! Bitterness and tears would have accompanied her unhappy old age all the way to the grave. All is lost, no doubt, the mother, the daughter, and the sad fruit of my marriage. I can no longer hope to see any of those whom I have cherished: for that it would take miracles of heaven and fortune; and it is not a wretch like me who can hold such expectations.

The day that followed this oppressive night ought to have been, as I anticipated, the last of my life and of Angélique's. Whatever worry I had about Gelin and Johnston, I could not

1639. Fanny, born about 1647, will be a mother at an even earlier age than Angélique.

²⁰⁷ This is less a criticism of their religion than of their social principles, which are "savage" because unnatural. The six had long believed that the simplicity of this argument would be persuasive. But for the colonists the first obligation is not nature but order; the conflict, whatever religion gave rise to it, is irreconcilable.

imagine they had been condemned to death for attempting to set me free. It seemed likely at least that they would do something so extreme only if the minister were to die from his wound. My impression was that the shot was not fatal, from the way he held supported when he was raised up from his fall. It was one less torment for me to be able to imagine that my dear friends' lives were not as devoid of hope as mine. I awaited only the moment of my execution. The jailor having brought me some food, I refused to take it, as useless succor for the few minutes I had left to live. I invoked heaven as much as my turmoil could allow, and the most ardent of my wishes were for my dear wife. I tried to familiarize my imagination with her punishment, to diminish somewhat, if it were possible, the horror I was going to feel at the sight; and still supposing we would be executed together, like Guiton and his mistress, I placed myself in advance in all the situations I thought I might be in when I was to be cast into the sea. I examined whether there was no hope that I could be of some assistance to my wife, hold her up in the water in my arms, disappear from the sight of our executors with this dear burden, return to the shore [156] with her, and save her precious life; or at least help make her death easier, and use my strength until the last breath disguising its horrors to her with the tenderest protestations of love. The entire day went by without anyone coming to my prison. Admire one of the strangest effects of love: I felt a sort of impatience to see my guards and executors arrive; not that death was beginning to appear to me less terrible, but the urgent desire I had to see Angélique again made me forget that this pleasure would be afforded me only to be at once taken cruelly away. As all my attention was concentrated on her, and on the pleasure I would find in talking to her and hearing her, I lost sight of our execution to abandon myself to the desires of an unhappy and futile affection.

Finally, darkness having taken the place of daylight, I surmised that our execution had been postponed until the next day,

and attributed this change to the turmoil we had caused the day before in the settlement. This is what I was thinking when suddenly I heard my door open. It was four guards, who came to me without speaking. They removed my chains; but they had brought a cord, which they used right away to tie my hands tightly. I asked various questions, which they constantly refused to answer. At least tell me, I said, whether you are taking me to my execution. Shall I see my wife? Will I not be allowed to bid her a last farewell? They indicated some regret at having committed themselves by vow to maintain silence. Don't worry, one of them said to me; you will not be alone. Well, I replied, I forgive you my death if I am allowed to expire in the presence of Angélique. They led me from the storehouse, and surrounding me on all sides, they took me with them on the road leading to the sea. So I am on the way to my death, I said as we walked; my life and woes are almost over? I praise heaven for it. But where am I then to meet my wife? They maintained an obstinate silence. I wondered why curiosity or compassion had led no one to come along to witness my last scene. However, after continuing on for about a mile, I thought I heard the sound of some people walking, some in front of us and others behind. I had no doubt that Angélique was in one group or the other. My heart was beat so hard that I almost completely lost the ability to walk further. Unhappy wife! I exclaimed with the bitterest feeling that grief ever produced, so that was the sad meaning of our promises! It is thus by perishing together that we shall fulfill the vow we made never to separate. Oh, I said to my guards, if pity could at least make you consent to leave my hands free! If only you would allow me to embrace my dear wife one last time! What do you fear? Would you not dare be a little less savage than your masters? Do you not dare cease to be cruel for a moment? They answered me nothing. We arrived at the entrance to the winding path that led down through the cliff. We took it in the dark. But upon emerging from the side by the

sea, I saw by the light of several torches ten or twelve men along the shore, and immediately recognized Gelin among them.

His hands were bound as were mine. It was he I had heard walking in front of us with his guards; and Johnston, who was following behind, also was only a moment in appearing. I thought their doom as certain as mine. Two streams of tears, which suddenly flowed from my eyes, and the surfeit of unforeseen horror that took hold of me, made me realize that I had not yet been as miserable as I was at that moment. I went over to in a transport these dear friends, whom my bonds did not even allow me to embrace. The passionate movements that at first served as expression of my sorrow persuaded them sufficiently that it was not for the approach of death that I was so beside myself: friendship acted on my heart as impetuously as love had done. I had trouble finding words adequate to my feelings. Gelin anticipated me. His voice sounded firm, though his eyes did not have [157] their usual vivacity. What a tragic scene, he said; but we must bear it as stalwart men. Yesterday we were resolved to die; only the kind of death, and the time, will be changed. I opened my mouth to reply, and I would surely have been far from affecting as much steadiness as he. My first words were interrupted by an elder who was off giving some orders on the longboat when I arrived, and who came to us when he saw all three of us were together.

Listen to the orders, he said, I that I have been commissioned to declare to you. It is obvious that you deserve death. Bridge had already been justly condemned, for a crime we have never forgiven in this colony; and Gelin and Johnston made themselves so guilty yesterday that the fact itself carries its condemnation. We lived peacefully on this island before we took you in. You have brought disruption, by seducing our daughters, injuring our minister, and trying to impose laws on us by force of arms. In short, you have brought us all of the corruption of Eu-

rope, from which we thought we were forever sheltered here.²⁰⁸ These are your crimes: they are public knowledge, and we have not a single member of the colony who did not consent this morning to your punishment. Nothing seemed able to save you. Nevertheless, the minister, seeing he was about to breathe his last, sent word to the consistory to assemble at his home. He has recognized with humility that he might have contributed to your errors through a rigor for which he regretted the motives; and his desire to make his peace with heaven made him intercede so urgently for your lives that we could not refuse nothing to that respectable man, who for over twenty years has served as father to the colony. He is dead, and you are assured of living. Nevertheless we have judged that while granting you clemency, it was not appropriate to keep you any longer among us. Only too often resentments resurface. As guilty as you are, we doubt you judge yourselves rightly; and who knows what we may fear from three young men as bold and forward as you? Moreover, the difficulties of your marriages are of a nature never to be end. You will not submit to the sentence of the consistory; it is not disposed to revoke it: thus, the best option, both for us and for yourselves, is to banish you forever from this island, and equip you to return to your own countries. Such is the consistory's decree, which I announce to you on its behalf. It has ordered that you be brought quietly to the shore, to keep you from the public eye, since curiosity would doubtless have attracted a crowd following you. And in

²⁰⁸ The colony's unity was dependent on a sort of *cordon sanitaire* which protected its own innocence against corruption from outside. Yet the defeat was already present in germ, for, as they conceded, they had succeeded in controlling only two of the three sources of human conflict, inequality and avarice: there was still passion that was not assuaged. It was therefore an endemic vulnerability which led them to treat – only temporarily, as they imagined – with the outside world.

order to remove any cause for you to complain of us, and accuse us perhaps of severity, I have been delegated to pay you the sum of ten thousand crowns, which you will divide into three equal shares. It is in the boat that will take you to Saint Helena. Go now, he added; in no time you will find a ship in the port that will sail to Europe.

Who can imagine that after all the transports and grief which I have related so far there could be something more terrible for me than everything I had experienced? No, the death sentence, and that of Angélique, had not made the impression on me as did the fateful decree of my exile. My comrades felt the blow as intensely as I. The life we were granted did not to us seem merciful; it was a punishment more cruel than death itself. Death would have ended our woes, and the life they condemned us to spend far from our wives was for us going to be an eternal torture. No, no, I was first to exclaim, they can force me neither to leave, nor to live. I wish to die, if that is what I have deserved; death alone can tear me from this island, to which my life's entire happiness is attached. Piteous old man, I continued, seeing the elder walk away, leaving us in the hands of our guards; oh let yourself be moved to pity! You see three unfortunates who ask you for death. Oh God, does one refuse punishment to criminals who ask for it as a favor? Stop; listen to us; do not push us to ultimate despair! He turned his head to tell us that he was grieved by our affliction, and at his obligation to obey the consistory. We took that moment, all three of us, to fall to our knees, and our prayers were so pathetic that he could not possibly have heard them without compassion: but having soon entered the opening [158] in the cliff, we understood, losing sight of him, that we had no hope left. Gelin and Johnston, who were not less troubled than I, asked me what we could do now. You are eloquent, I said to Gelin; make an effort on the minds of our guards. He tried all that nature can do, abetted by sorrow: but they had purposely chosen to accompany

us inflexible, or rather cruel, men, whom nothing could move.

Meanwhile, they pressed us to put to sea; and if we had refused any longer to be taken to the boat, they seemed to be ready to drag us there despite ourselves. Our hands were still tied, which made us incapable of the slightest resistance. I said quietly to Gelin: Our misfortune is now beyond remedy; let us not expose ourselves to acts of violence we have no means of fending off. But if they take us to St. Helena, who can prevent us from returning here, and entering equipped to make them fear us? With ten thousand crowns, we will raise an army. Despite what they said about the unknown location of the island, we will discover it, were it in the bosom of the sea. I intimated the same thing to Johnston: both of them applauded this project. We climbed aboard. The boat was large. Six of our guards came along and two rowers. The night was so dark that you had to be as sure of the route as they were to dare set out at that hour into waters strewn with rocks. We sailed without incident for several hours. Although our guards no longer had the same reasons for keeping silent, they still obstinately refused to answer all our questions. Mine were only about Angélique. The ardor of my transport had prevented me, after the elder's speech, from asking him for at least some enlightenment on the fate of that dear wife. However probable it seemed that she had not been excepted from the pardon, a mere likelihood was not enough to reassure my affection. My alarms became extreme when I found my guards deaf to my inquiries. To the end these hard men had the cruelty to close their ears to them. Alas, it is that dreadful uncertainty, in which I remain to this day, that still causes my cruellest torment.

We came ashore at St. Helena. The dark of night still prevailed. Our guards roughly put us ashore, and taking from the boat the sack containing the ten thousand gold crowns, they made three shares of them, of approximately equal weight rather than value. You are bound together by interests and friendship, they

said; you together will make a very exact division of this sum. We are dividing it only to make it easier for you to carry. They put each man's share in our pockets, and leaving us on the shore, they made haste to get back in the boat, without untying our hands. What, Gelin said, will you not remove these bonds, which are going to make us pass for criminals and reprobates here? They pleaded the orders they had received from the consistory, and did not disguise to us the reason: it was the fear we might try to hold them back, or to get back into the boat despite them to return to the island with them. We promised them in vain not to misuse our freedom if they would only grant it; we were unable to obtain anything. I spoke up, seeing them about to leave the shore: You have been deaf to our questions, I said, and unmoved by our prayers; we have obtained nothing so far from your kindness and compassion. But if you have not lost all feelings of humanity, grant us at least in parting the only mercy we have still to ask of you. May heaven then grant all your desires! When you get back to your island – ah, that happy island!²⁰⁹ – when you get back there, go see our dear wives, and tell them that you come on our behalf. Tell them, if not all the excess of our despair, which you could not possibly express to them, at least that part of our pains that you have witnessed. Portray to them what you have seen us do, tell them what you have heard. Tell my dear Angélique that there is no sentence harsh enough, no separation cruel enough, to keep me from being hers, and [159] calling myself her husband; that she owes me her faith and constancy; that she can rely on mine: that I may yet be betrayed by the faithless, and abused by

²⁰⁹ With this unexpected exclamation, Bridge reveals how attached he remains to the nostalgia of an ideal happiness. Jean Sgard compares it to Renoncours exclamation “happy island!” (*Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, p. 273), which refers to England (see Sgard, *Prévost romancier*, p. 202 n. 28).

the cruel, fail in my plans, perish in my endeavors; but that all the power of fortune and the malevolence of man will never blot her from heart. Tell her unhappy mother that I blame myself for all her sufferings, although I am, alas, but their innocence cause; that I feel them more intensely than she does; that I am punished for them by utter despair. Tell them both... ah, tell them...! But our cruel escorts were already so far away that they could not possibly hear me. Maybe they had not even lent an ear to my supplications while they were closer, and I dare not flatter myself that the unfortunate Angélique has had the comfort of learning of those last attentions of my love. I had purposely let fly the terms plans and endeavors. She and her mother would not fail to understand their meaning if they receive a faithful report of them; and doubtless they still complain daily of heaven's rigor for delaying their execution for so long.

I leave it to you to imagine what a strange situation we were in after the boat's departure. Daylight was not yet beginning to glow, and our guards had not even allowed us a torch to light our way. The whiteness of the sand allowed us just barely to see it. We had the impression, from the sound of the sea that was constantly increasing, that the tide was coming in, and we had to walk for a while in the dark to avoid the waves that were beginning to wet our feet. We sat down when we thought we could safely do so, resigned to waiting out the night in this situation. The effort we made to break our bonds were futile; we had to abandon that hope, and resign ourselves to asking the first person we ran across the next day to render us that service. I will not tire you with the detail of our lamentations and recriminations. Finally day began to dawn. We saw the settlement a hundred paces away. It was not without shame that we headed towards it, only too aware of what we would find ourselves exposed to. A few sailors who were along the shore were the first to see us; and the strangeness of the sight having attracted them, they looked at us

in astonishment, without the boldness to come closer. I should point out that the island of St. Helena being inhabited only on the periphery by a small number of Portuguese, among whom are mingled a few Frenchmen and a few Englishmen, all the settlers knew each other perfectly by name and face; so that the sight of three men looking as we did was sure to cause considerable surprise. We spoke first, beseeching them to untie our hands. After consulting for a moment, they answered in broken English that those who had tied them had not done it without some reasons, which it was not their business to go into; but they would take us to their governor, with whom we could explain ourselves. Our redoubled entreaties did not make them change their mind. They forced us follow them. Having to cross through the settlement, we quickly found ourselves surrounded by most of the people. Our discomfort and embarrassment were extreme. However, as we happened across the governor on the way, the first thing we asked of him was to send the people away and take us into some house to hear us. He granted us this favor. Although Portuguese, he spoke the French and English tongues well. We told him the essentials of our adventure. He heard it with wonder; and seeing no doubt in our youth, and in the natural expressions of our grief, some cause for showing kindness and pity, he gave us every indication we could hope for of both. His name is Don Pedro Columella.²¹⁰

It was not that first day that we revealed to him our true intentions. For a long time we allowed him to believe we were merely awaiting the passage of some ship which was willing to take us to Europe. Gelin, who is ingratiating, used that time to win us his esteem and friendship, to bring him gradually to favor

²¹⁰ Since the first permanent colony established there in 1659 was English, the governor's Portuguese name is, historically speaking, an anomaly.

[160] our enterprises. In this he succeeded. Don Pedro finally developed such a liking for us that we did not hesitate to ask him for his help and that of his people to help us find our wives again. We had often discussed with him that unknown island²¹¹ which we had left with such regret, and to which our hearts were so attached. He had enjoyed hearing us relate the circumstances of our adventure, and having the origins and state of the colony explained to him; but he had never indicated that his curiosity made him want to try to find it. Those are people, he said, who want to be hidden; I have no interest in knowing them. I see them come here, but more infrequently now than before, to buy from us certain necessities they seem to lack. They need iron, and tools to work with. They give us the choice of being paid in coin or in livestock and the fruits of their lands. I know there are many small islands in this sea; they must live on one of them. Don Pedro added that his predecessor had made some futile attempts to find out where they were; that he had had them observed, and that having one day had some of the them held prisoner, he had invoked entreaties and threats to extract their secret; but that having failed to shake their loyalty and their discretion, he had decided to leave them alone; that in the ten years he had ruled in St. Helena, he had maintained the same conduct; that their visits had been very rare of late; that about a year earlier one of their women had made the trip to Europe; that she had come to St. Helena to board a passing ship, and that she had returned there after being away several months; but that he had not had the satisfaction of seeing her and speaking with her, because her servants, who knew about when she would return, having spent several weeks waiting for her, had disappeared with her the

²¹¹ This may well be a reminiscence of the “Inaccessible Island” (in the region of the Canaries) which Poxandre long sought in Gomberville’s novel *Polyxandre* (1619–1637).

moment she arrived.

Although the governor's narratives had told us nothing we were not already quite aware of, they had sustained our hope well. We were no sooner assured that he liked us well enough to lend himself to our designs, than we proposed that he let us have us one of his largest boats, with a few armed soldiers, and a few experienced sailors to take us. He consented to do so. We left St. Helena. We spent more than six weeks surveying all the western portions of the Ethiopian Sea, at the risk of perishing a hundred times in such a small vessel, which was nearly defenseless against the wind and waves. We visited a number of known but uninhabited islands, such as Martin Vaz, Agosta, Los Picos, and we discovered several that had not yet been sighted.²¹² Danger, which

²¹² The repertory of islands in the Atlantic was still, as Bridge suggests, uncertain; maps of the period show some that do not exist and often situate the real ones wrongly. But Prévost did not invent these particular islands; we find S. Maria d'Agosta, Martin Vaz and Dos Picos, rather close together and a little above the Tropic of Capricorn, in the *Niewen Atlas* (Amsterdam: J. Jansson, 1657–1687, t. V), in *Ogilby's America* (1671), in *Le Nouveau Théâtre de Vander Aa* (1713), and in *Voyages de François Coréal* (1722, t. III). It seems that N. Sanson's *L'Afrique* (1656) alone gives the spelling *Los Picos* (on the other hand it gives the spelling *Martin Vas*). Martin Vaz and its neighbor Trinidad (Brazilian possessions) are in fact more than two thousand kilometers from St. Helena; yet Bridge has covered this distance in six weeks, and in a smallish boat! The idea of a colony in the vicinity of St. Helena might also have been suggested by these very maps, on which one sometimes finds the ephemeral island "S. Helena Nova" situated at the latitude of St. Helena, between it and the African coast. The Dutch seriously looked for this New S. Elena Nueva in order to found a colony there: see Henri Déhérain, *Dans l'Atlantique* (Paris: Hachette, 1912, pp. 12–18), and Philip Gosse, *St Helena* (London: Cassell, 1938, pp. 60–61).

increased by the day because of the boat's disrepair, would not have slowed the ardor of our search, if my comrades and I had had only our own miserable lives to spare: our soldiers and our sailors, who felt the danger and trembled continually for it, declared to us that they were determined to go to St. Helena. They argued that it was unlikely the island we were seeking was so far away; that it had to be in the vicinity of St. Helena, since we ourselves confessed that we had been at sea but three hours when we left it; that it was on that supposition that the governor had lent us his boat, and ordered them to accompany us. It was impossible for us to communicate to them even a hint of our boldness and resolution. However, since we had paid them so liberally that they had some attachment to our service, they agreed to assist our enterprise to the end if we could obtain a ship on which there would be more security for them and for ourselves. We thus returned from our first mission, with the dismay of seeing our hopes more distant than ever.

Don Pedro was grieved at the futility of our voyage. The length of our absence had given him a better opinion of it. He was disposed to grant us everything in his power so that we could undertake a more successful one; but there was not a single ship in the port, and none of the other boats was any larger than ours. The island of St. Helena is not a trading port. It is favorably [161] situated for vessels that have circled Africa on their return from the East Indies, and those that were returning to Europe from the southernmost parts of America: it is on their route, and can furnish them all sorts of refreshments. That is what gave it the name of Hotel of the Sea. But, aside from the ships that sometimes put in there in this manner, there is in its port only a small number of longboats and poor fishing boats. The governor gave us advice that we might have liked had we had less impatience, which was to wait tranquilly for need to bring some of the colony's inhabitants to St. Helena. I will give orders, he said, to hide carefully

from them that you are still among us. They will suspect nothing: I know how to make a marvelous phosphor, which I will have attached without their knowledge to the stern of their boat. You will be ready in my boat for the moment of their departure; and I hope that, despite the darkness under which they always choose to leave, you will be able to follow them at some distance without losing sight of them.²¹³ This hope, as puerile and uncertain as it was, was the sole basis for our patience for over six months. But far from being able to reap the fruit of such a long wait, we had the displeasure of not even seeing anyone arrive from the colony come in all that time, as if our enemies had had some suspicion of our being still in St. Helena, and their hatred had striven as much to keep us away as love motivated us to come.

We were almost continually on the shore scanning every part of the sea our eyes could reach. However distant the object of our desires, we would have soon discovered it if the quickness of our eyes had equaled that of our sentiments. One day when we were thus occupied, we spotted a vessel advancing heavily toward the port. We could easily see that it had been battered by a storm, and was in danger of sinking. Indeed, the captain who commanded it having sent some of his men go down into his long-boat, sent them directly to the city to beg the governor to send it some help. His ship was leaking everywhere; he barely hoped it could hold up until it reached the port. All the fishing boats were

²¹³ Such is the method which Polyxandre intends to use, in Gomberville's novel: in order to find the "Inaccessible Island" again, where lives his lovely Alcidiane, he wishes to find and follow Lyncée's vessel which puts in once a year at the Island of the Sun; see on this subject Philip Wadsworth, *The Novels of Gomberville* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), pp. 36 et 103. But there is one significant difference: whereas Polyxandre's island is the legendary Saint Brendan, here St. Helena is authentically St. Helena.

immediately sent out to take on the crew and some of the cargo. This disburdening having considerably relieved the vessel, it managed to run ashore. It was a Dutch vessel. However, since it was in no shape to return to sea to complete a voyage as long as the one to Holland, especially bearing the weight of two hundred thousand crowns, the captain, who wished to take no risks, decided to have another built in St. Helena. There was no shortage of workmen, and the island furnished excellent wood. His intention was no sooner published than I thanked heaven for giving him the idea. Nothing could be more favorable to the success of our own. The one I thought up was to buy his broken ship, and to use part of our money having it repaired. Damaged as it was, I thought it could serve for voyages less long and less dangerous than that of the Dutch captain, not counting the difference in cargo weight, which would make it even more serviceable. I proposed this idea to my comrades. They approved it. I lost not a minute concluding the deal with the captain, and with the governor's mediation we settled quite reasonably. I immediately put workers to the task. It took almost as long to repair the old ship as to construct the new one; but finally our ardor overcame all the difficulties. The captain had his cargo and his canon removed, and put us in possession of whatever remained.

I can hardly express to you how joyfully we put out to sea. That precious vessel constituted not only a good part of our wealth, but the substance of our soundest hopes. We obtained from the governor fifteen well-armed soldiers, with eight sailors; and having taken on supplies for a long while, we promised ourselves that if the colony island was not a phantom, and our whole adventure an illusion, we would manage to find the object of so much desire and searching. Yet heaven has not [162] yet allowed us to land there. For nearly three months we have been scanning the seas. We have been all around St. Helena a hundred times, at five or six leagues' distance: there has been nothing to

see. Oh heaven! is it you who blind us for stern purposes that are beyond our understanding; or if you leave the disposition of our miserable destiny to fortune, who is tormenting us incessantly and pitilessly? So for three months we have been wandering at the whim of some enemy power, which pushes us constantly in the opposite direction from what we seek: today close to St. Helena, tomorrow a hundred leagues off, at the pleasure of the winds, seas, tempests, and fortune. It was an extraordinary storm that pushed us last night into your path. For eight or ten hours we went through all that the element we are in can provide that is most awesome and terrible. A precious favor nevertheless, and sweetest I have received in my whole life, since I owe to this accident the satisfaction of finding a dear brother, and the happiness of having saved him from the hands of his enemy.²¹⁴

Bridge embraced me again as he finished this story, and his heart, as moved by my presence as by the recollection of his misfortune, relieved itself with an abundance of tears, which were accompanied by mine. Then he told me what a dilemma he had found himself in when Captain Will came to see him. He began, he said, by asking me if I was returning to England. I used this question as an opening to answer him. I said that was my intention, if fortune and the wind did not stand in the way.²¹⁵ He pro

²¹⁴ The La Rochelle story is not entirely ended at this point. Polexandre too had encountered a brother, Iphidamante, in the course of his quest for the Inaccessible Island.

²¹⁵ Now we can understand why Bridge's vessel seemed to be crossing the path of Will's, as if it were indeed on its way back to England. What remains extraordinary is that they have met precisely in the neighborhood of St. Helena, despite the fact that Will had set sail for Jamaica – which is to say that, just as the captain who had brought Mme Eliot and her recruits to St. Helena, he was going to Central/South America by way of St. Helena. This is all the more peculiar because what Bridge says about the out-of-the-way location of the island is quite

posed, without further ado, that I take on an enemy of the Protector, whom he had discovered in his ship; and he revealed to me a part of the secrets you had confided in him. His betrayal horrified me. But the more inclined I was to save you, the more I figured it would require dissimulation. That is what made me to treat you until he left with some semblance of harshness. My heart bled for your anxiety; for although I had been only partially informed by that traitor, nature alerted me that it was to my dear brother that I was going to be useful. Alas, I see only too well that he is no happier than I. We were born of the same father; we bear the punishment for his crimes. But my story, Bridge added, has lasted too long.²¹⁶ I am eager to introduce you to Gelin and Johnston, who are doubtless surprised at my closing myself up for two hours with you. I invite you begin to love them a little for the love of me. Those dear and faithful friends! You will agree that they also well deserve your affection for the love of themselves. He sent right away for them to come join us.

I have given this narrative a length it would not have if I had related it merely by my unaided memory. I wish to inform my readers that it is not mine. It is by my brother, who subsequently was obliging enough to set it down in writing at my behest; and I have merely inserted it into my own story. Thus, it is in fact he

correct.

²¹⁶ The interpolated story, unlike memoirs, is supposed to be told live to one or more hearers; but if it is too long, this fictional framework runs the risk of seeming implausible. Thus Robert Challe separates the several stories of *Les Illustres Françaises* (1713) by pauses, and the long narrative that constitutes *Manon Lescaut* is divided in two by a meal, at which point Renoncour says: “The Chevalier des Grieux having taken more than an hour for his narrative, I urged him to take a bit of rest, and join us for supper” (*Manon Lescaut*, p. 405). But Bridge is assumed to have related everything in just one sitting (of only two hours), whence this exclamation.

himself who has related his own adventure here.²¹⁷

²¹⁷ The convention of autobiographical story-telling allowed the supposition of perfect memory both of the teller and of the hearer (in this case, Bridge) who has recorded it for us (see, e.g., the final words of book VIII). Already in *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* Prévost manifested a taste for “documents” to help bolster verisimilitude: Renoncour refers to notes he took during his travels, quotes letters after the originals which has kept, and assures he has written down the whole story of des Grieux immediately after hearing it (*Manon Lescaut* p. 367). The original twist used here will be repeated in *Le Doyen de Killerine* (p. 54).

[163] BOOK FOUR

Although the continual presence of my sorrows left me little taste for joy, the good fortune of meeting such an affectionate brother, his story, his amiability, and the expectation of seeing Gelin and Johnston, of whom I had an advantageous notion, suspended my sadness for a few moments. They entered; and I, to show Bridge that I already had for them the sentiments he desired, went to meet them and embraced them with an air of openness and affection that surprised them. They looked at Bridge, to indicate their confusion: Do not worry, he said, with renewed emotion; this captive is my brother. I have already informed him of our misfortunes; he will help me recognize the obligations I have to you. He had to explain my adventure to them in a few words; and after that I was hardly able to respond to all the fervor of their compliments and embraces. Gelin bore in his eyes and his movements everything my brother had told me of his vivacity. There was no need to name him for me to know who he was. In a moment, he was a familiar with me as if he had never had another companion in his whole life. His manners were easy, and his face prepossessing. Johnston seemed more timid and restrained. He spoke little, but in his reserve it was easy to note a judicious mind, with all the appearances of an excellent temperament.²¹⁸ If you are unhappy in love, I said to my brother, you are very happily provided for with respect to friendship. Your sorrows are great, and your consolations as well. As for me, everything is extreme in my misfortune; and I find in it neither attenuation nor remedy.

He answered that he did not yet know my sorrows suffi-

²¹⁸ These are almost the only indications ever given on Johnston, whose personality is never very clearly delineated.

ciently to propose remedies; but if I thought friendship fit to attenuate them, that was a consolation I like him would henceforth have. His comrades said a hundred obliging things about the confidence I should have in their services and affection. I could see, of course, that they might be helpful to me; but the services I could expect from them were of such a nature as I could hardly dare request. The first thing required would be, without too much regard for prudence or consideration for the poor state of their ship and the numerical disadvantage, for them to assist me in delivering Mme Lallin from the hands of the traitor Will. The fate of that good lady touched me deeply, and I would have thought some of my blood well used to obtain her freedom. Failing that primary favor, which I could not reasonably press them to grant me, I would have wanted them to take me on his trail as far as Jamaica, to complain to the English governor of the violence of Captain Will, and ask him for justice. Finally, this second action also having its dangers, since Captain Will, who knew all my intentions, would not fail to warn the governor about me, I would at least have hoped they would convey me to Martinique, where I hoped still to find Lord Axminster, and that they should join with his lordship and myself first to save Mme Lallin, and next to favor the execution of the king's orders. Those were the only services suited to my sorrows, and which could assuage them.

But what was the likelihood of obtaining them, or even being able to propose them? My brother and his friends had their own misfortunes, which to them were as urgent as [164] mine. They, like me, needed assistance and consolation, and perhaps expected from me the assistance I thought of ask from them. Nevertheless, I decided to sound them out the very first day, and give them a glimpse of my desires, were it only to preclude their hoping that I could be willing to stay with them for long. I told them the motives for my leaving France; the reasons of honor and love that called me to follow Viscount Axminster; the obligations

I had to Mme Lallin, which did not allow for any delay in rescuing her; finally, my firm resolution to take advantage of the earliest opportunity to continue my on toward America. It is very sad for me, I told them, that the satisfaction of seeing you is taken from me almost as soon as it is granted; but I owe myself to the most indispensable and sacred of engagements. Compare my situation to yours. You burn with desire to be reunited with your wives whose love you are sure of, who are in no danger, and whose absence is the sole reason for your grief. All you need is for a favorable gust of wind to carry you to the shores of their island. You are certain, you say, either of carrying them off by night, or of obtaining them by day with open force; the obstacles do not daunt you; all you need is a little patience to discover what cannot sooner or later escape your search. Happy lovers! How can you complain of fortune and love? It is I who am entitled to complain. I seek my wife: alas, I give her a name that is not yet hers. If only I were assured she will bear it some day! I seek her, and am sure to find her vexed. I do not know whether my supplications will have the power of appeasing her. Her father loathes and disdains me; death would be less unbearable to me than his disdain and loathing. What path shall I take to find him, and re-establish myself in his esteem? Heaven had offered me one in that generous lady who was the companion of my voyage: I have lost her help through a betrayal without example. I am perhaps to blame for her misfortune, to which she exposed herself in part out of affection and esteem for me. I am an ingrate and a knave, if I lose a minute coming to her rescue, and if I prefer anything to so just a duty. Thus, you see what turmoil there must be in my heart, and the division of my sentiments; called on both sides by love, honor, and gratitude, and retained here by the presence and friendship of a brother whom I will not leave without mortal regret.

Bridge replied that he quite understood that my sorrows

must not be less than his, and he was sorely grieved to be able to do nothing for my consolation. I was disappointed that he had so misunderstood the gist of my words. I would perhaps not have dared express myself more clearly, if Gelin had not given me the opportunity to do so by proposing that I come with them to search for their island. I cannot believe, he said, that our efforts will be forever futile. I even take our encounter with you as a happy omen. We are perhaps on the threshold of seeing what we are seeking. Now if this good fortune occurs as soon as I hope, I happily consent to go back to sea with you and second you in your undertakings. Bridge and Johnston made me the same promise. They added that their wives would come along, and we could perhaps all settle together in one of our colonies, or return collectively to Europe.

I lowered my eyes in silence, contemplating this plan. Bridge could tell it was not to my liking, and asked me why. I told him candidly that I could not agree to it. But, he came back, where do you hope to find a ship that will take you to America? I replied: Dear Bridge, I will not disguise my hopes: I base them on your generous friendship, and on that of your comrades. There is no way a few months' delay could make any change in your and your wives' fate. They love you; love keeps them for you; they will be faithful to you. I implore you to interrupt your search for a few days, and take me to Martinique. Wait, I continued, raising my voice, to anticipate the first reaction that could have inclined them to reject my request; my dear friends, wait, and do not refuse [165] to hear my reasons. Bridge and Johnston, you are English; you are on the side of King Charles, our legitimate sovereign; just think what honor you may gain, and what rewards you could expect by engaging with Lord Axminster in advancing his interests. His lordship needs to be supported by persons of resolution. Courage will do more than numbers. In America, twenty stalwart soldiers make an army. You can thus render to the

king, and to all of England, a service of the ultimate importance, and that with little risk to yourselves: for Lord Axminster is loved in our colonies; he will have only to appear to be obeyed, and you only to escort and accompany him. His mission will no sooner be recognized that he will grant you the freedom to return to your enterprise, with every assistance that can help assure you of success; and then I myself pledge to return with you. Consider that what I am proposing to you is as advantageous as it is easy. Gelin is not English, but he is generous: and by working for his glory, he can readily see that he will also be working for his fortune, and therefore for that of his wife. If the memory of Mrs Riding, I continued, addressing Bridge, could add something to such great motives, I would speak to you of the infinite affection she has for you, and of the gratitude you owe her. What joy would your presence not give her, and what more favorable opportunity will you ever have for to satisfy a part of your obligations for the generous care she took of your childhood?

I do not know whether it was the force of these reasons or my tone of voice that made an impression on Bridge; but I noticed he was reflecting deeply on what he had heard. Gelin was the first to reply that he found soundness in my proposal, and that, aside from the honor of rendering a considerable service to the king of England, and the satisfaction of obliging me, he believed, as I had said, that I was offering them a path to fortune and establishment. They finally all agreed in the same thought; and the only difficulty that appeared to stop them was the length of time such an enterprise seemed to require. They came back to urging me to turn with them towards their island, and employing in their continued search a certain number of days which we would limit, after which, if heaven did not favor them more than it had so far, they gave me their word to convey me to Martinique, and support Lord Axminster in all his designs. This specious promise did not shake me. I renewed my insistence, and depicted so energetically

the difference between our situations, in other words the small risk for them in putting off their search, and how important it was for his lordship to be promptly supported, that they yielded to my desires and solicitations. Delighted with this victory, I spurred them on with other reasons, and so as not to allow time for their zeal to cool, I committed them on the spot to turn their sails towards America. Their sailors and soldiers at first expressed some discontentment with our resolution; but it was easy to appease them by promising them rewards proportionate to their services.²¹⁹

Bridge and his comrades endlessly stressed the sacrifice they had made for me. I freely admitted that it surpassed every mark they might receive of the gratitude of Lord Axminster and myself. However, it was fundamentally true that they could not make a more advantageous decision, even considering their own interests alone.²²⁰ They had cause for recognizing this even more subsequently, and for regretting the inconstancy that made them change their plans. We sailed with such a favorable wind that we took less than a month to reach Martinique. Our pilot unfortunately had only a vague familiarity with these waters and the islands which are everywhere. He knew the location of Martinique; but having never been there, he did not know its shores nor its ports: so that instead of heading for the western part of the

²¹⁹ As these fifteen soldiers and eight sailors from St. Helena were sent by the governor for a specific rescue mission, it is understandable that they grumble at the thought of being transformed into a colonial army in the cause of English restoration. Cleveland deliberately fudges his motives, with little mention of rejoining Fanny but much about Axminster, in order to hold up the hope of material rewards.

²²⁰ It is hard indeed to see how doing Cleveland's bidding can benefit them much. Prévost in writing this was doubtless still planning an entirely English novel in which Cleveland would play a crucial role in the restoration of the king.

island, which was then the only part inhabited by the French, he turned directly toward the eastern side, which was still an uninhabited side, or inhabited only by savages. They are commonly called Caribs.²²¹ After a circuit of five or six hours [166] around the coast, we came to the opening of a fine river, along which the eye could see very far inland. We did not hesitate to enter there, and with the countryside offering us plenteous perspectives on both sides, we did not doubt that this section of the island was one of the most populated. It was indeed, but by Caribs. These are cruel peoples. Only extremely good luck allowed us to escape from their hands. As the river narrowed progressively the further we went, the pilot, who feared we would not always find the water deep enough, advised us to set foot on one bank or the other, and look on foot for traces of men and signs of habitation. His advice was followed. Johnston remained alone on the ship, with the sailors and six soldiers, and we left well armed, twelve in number. We followed the bank of the river for a league or so, still believing that such an amenable territory could not want for some European colony. A large number of huts, which we came upon in a valley, agreeably confirmed us in this thought. Our eagerness to march redoubled, and we were very soon close enough to make out what we had seen just vaguely from a distance. If I am not mistaken, said one of our soldiers, these huts are inhabited by savages. He assured us he had been several times to America, and was familiar with the structure of their dwellings. This warning prompted us to keep our guard up. We nevertheless continued on, until we saw several naked men, whom we then clearly recognized as the natural inhabitants of the island.

They fled upon seeing us. We were so well armed that we

²²¹ At the time of this story, the Caribs had withdrawn into the island's northeast; they were more and more obligated, because of the expansion of French commerce, to abandon it for other, less developed islands.

had no fear of people who seemed to us defenseless. Thus we decided to enter the village, and inform ourselves by signs, if we could not make ourselves otherwise understood, in which direction we must look for the French settlement. Fifty paces from the first huts, we passed a hedge that closed the entrance to a broad prairie, in the middle of which the village was placed. We were unwary, but then, turning our heads along the hedge on the inside towards the prairie, we saw more than two hundred savages who were seated calmly, and who suddenly rose letting out a great outcry when they had seen us. All our resolve did not keep us from being frightened. Although naked, most of them had weapons. They had bows, and long, pointed sticks, much like our pikes. They studied us for a while, without making the least movement. Their uncertainty was perhaps equal to ours, for we on our side remained as immobile as they. However, since something had to be done, and that seemed to be up to me, since it was to render me a service that my comrades were now exposed to danger, I said to them: I think there is a middle path to take here between weakness and temerity. We have to see whether we can hope for something from the humanity of these savages. I willingly take the responsibility of going to them. Keep your arms at the ready, and do not move from where you are. They likely will not take alarm when they see me coming alone, with peaceful appearances. I did not wait for my comrades' reply, because I feared at every moment that lest the savages take it in mind to charge us. We were not more than twenty paces from them. I moved forward. Maybe I would have had less assurance if I had had time to pay closer attention to the danger. I nevertheless maintained enough presence of mind to observe as I walked the savages' countenance, which did not appear to me threatening; and I discovered amongst them a man covered in a long, black robe, whom I thought I recognized as a European. When I reached them, I greeted them with a deep bow. They instantly

converged about me, and felt my hands and clothing, as if to assure themselves that I had no bad intentions. I tried to make myself understood by various signs: they responded doubtless in their language; but I could make out nothing from sounds that to me seemed not even articulated. The man dressed in black, who had been studying me for some time, came up to me, and I was surprised to hear him ask me in French what my nationality was, and whether I knew his [167] tongue. I do, I said, and I consider meeting you a great piece of luck. Tell me what we have to fear here, or to hope for. He replied that one could place little confidence in the shy and capricious character of the island peoples, and he admired our daring in risking ourselves to come among them in such small numbers. Yours is much greater, I replied, since you are here alone, and seem to live without fear among them. He told me he was a French missionary, and that the desire to impart some notions of Christianity to these savage peoples made him count for nothing the perils to which his life was at every moment exposed. I admire your zeal, I said, if you have no other interest in view than that of religion. But extend your charity to us, and try to reconcile us with the mind of your savages. Tell them that we ask nothing of them, and have no purpose other than to learn from them where the French have their settlements².

He began to talk with them for a few minutes, and returning to me, he gave me a very good account of his negotiation. He had obtained from them to let me go back with him to my comrades so he could himself inform us of what we wished to learn, and they would allow us to regain our ship without doing us the slightest harm. I left them along with the missionary, who wanted to accompany me. Gelin, delighted to encounter a man of his nation, wanted to question him about many things which would have greatly prolonged our conversation; but this good man, knowing the savages' temperament, and did not believe we had yet completely escaped danger, advised us to take advantage

promptly of the favorable disposition in which he left them, giving us to understand that it could change. We therefore limited ourselves to asking him for some insight into the location of the French colony; and by a happenstance we were not expecting, his answers served to enlighten us about the principal objective of our voyage. After telling us that we could not miss Fort Royal,²²² which was then the largest French settlement, if we continued to follow the coast of the island, he told us that, having left it himself a mere fortnight before, he had seen a ship from France arrive on which there was an English lord with his family. It was clear that this could be none other than Lord Axminster. This thought caused me all the joy one can imagine. I hastened to ask the missionary innumerable questions. Although he was not informed of the viscount's purposes, nor of the destination of his voyage, he rendered us an inestimable service by informing us that this gentleman had found, a few days after his arrival at Fort Royal, a Spanish vessel on which he had embarked for the island of Cuba. There was, after that, nothing to keep us in Martinique. I thanked the missionary a hundred times, and pressed my comrades to return to the ship. We had no trouble finding it. Gelin would have liked for his compatriot to grant us his conversation all the way to the river's edge; but he refused us that favor in order to render us a more important service. The knowledge he had of the savages made him fear lest they not allow us to withdraw as tranquilly as they had promised; and he thought he had better return to them in order to maintain in them the intentions he had tried to instill.²²³

We put out again to sea, in the almost certain hope of catching up with Lord Axminster in Havana, which is the capital of the

²²² Today Fort de France.

²²³ This missionary and his observations recall Father Labat, a missionary to the Antilles and author of the *Nouveau Voyage aux îles de l'Amérique*, published in 1722.

island of Cuba. It was not terribly far away, and according to the missionary's report, he had no more than a fortnight's advance on us. I immediately understood what motivation he had for choosing to go to Havana. He hoped he would still find there the former governor, father of his wife, and perhaps obtain from him some assistance for the execution of his enterprises. My ardent desires obtained favorable weather for us from heaven. We reached Havana, and were allowed into the port without difficulty. But that was the least part of my desires, and its success suddenly became quite indifferent to me when I did not see the other realized. His lordship had come to the island; he had already left. We learned this sad news upon landing. My blood froze on the spot, and I augured ill of this first reversal of my expectations.

[168] We nevertheless went into the city. Don Pedro d'Arpez²²⁴ was still its governor. We requested the honor being introduced to him, and he received us kindly. I told him I was looking for his son-in-law. I am as sorry that he left here, he replied, as you are not to find him here. I made many futile attempts to keep him. Don Pedro at first only explained this rather vaguely: but having opened up more to him once I recognized that he was well disposed toward his lordship, he did not hesitate to tell me what have transpired between the viscount and himself during his brief stay in Havana. I saw him arrive with joy, he said; and although I ought perhaps to harbor still some resentment for the earlier injury he did me in carrying off my daughter, his presence, and the caresses of little Fanny, made me forget it all. He related his misfortunes to me and the derangement of his fortune; I offered him a haven here, along with half my wealth: my urgings and my offers were unable to hold him back. He spoke to me about some

²²⁴ *Don Francisco* in the original, but the correction to *Don Pedro* is specified by the errata at the end of vol. IV. The name seems, in any event, to be of Prévost's invention.

commission or other which he had undertaken for the service of his master the king, and suggested I give him some support in weapons and soldiers. But, besides the fact that I have no ships of war at my disposal here now, I did not think I that without a specific order from my king I had the right to undertake anything to the prejudice of the English Republic, which is now allied with Spain.²²⁵ My refusal dismayed him. He took advantage of a French ship which was sailing to the north to put back out to sea, after first extracting a promise from the captain that he would put into one of the ports of the English colonies of which his father was once governor. I was unable to get him to change this resolution, added Don Pedro, although I made him aware of all its dangers; nor did I succeed better in persuading him at least to leave me his daughter, who is hardly suited to accompanying him on such a perilous mission.

What? I said to the governor, you do not know in what port he intended to land, nor what route we must take to follow him? He assured me that he was totally in the dark; but that, according to his conjecture, he would stop in some part of English Florida, and that he imagined it would be in Carolina or Virginia,²²⁶ unless he decided to go directly as far as New England. Such uncertain information could only increase our uncertainty. Nevertheless that was the only enlightenment we acquired in the island of Cuba. By

²²⁵ It is hard to see what Arpez means, since Cromwell is supposed still to be alive. Quite to the contrary, following the Anglo-French treaty against Spain (March 1657), Spain had entered into a treaty with Charles II and had even granted him a stipend of six thousand livres per month; cf. Rapin de Thoyras, t. IX, pp. 87–88. Officially, the war was still on when Charles II regained the throne, but the hostilities had been formally halted in September 1660, which amounted to peace, but certainly not alliance with the republic.

²²⁶ Florida, in the Spanish lexicon, meant the whole southern part of North America, and for Arpez it includes Carolina and Virginia.

redoubling my anxiety, it kindled my ardor; and without considering a longer stay in Havana, I urged my comrades to set sail again promptly. We will reach the continent, I said, and drop anchor in every port to make inquiries. The first day, it did not appear to me that they were much opposed to this sentiment. We withdrew in the evening with the intention of going to sea again on the morrow. If I spent a worried and fitful night, it was not fear of their disloyalty that caused my insomnia; I had never had the least wariness on that subject: on the contrary, the confidence I had in their friendship was my sole consolation, and I did not yet believe I was hated by heaven, since it left me three generous and loyal friends. However, either because they had already begun to regret the voyage they had undertaken, or because they were frightened by the length and uncertainty of the new route I was proposing to them, they reached that very night the most cruel of all resolutions. It was Gelin whom they delegated in the morning to break it to me.

He entered alone the room where I had slept. After a prelude of French civilities, he declared that he was sent by his comrades to express their regret at not being able to accompany me any longer. This was such a distressing displeasure for them, he said, that they had spent the whole night deliberating how they were to tell me this disappointing news, and had all felt the same reluctance to accept the mission. But the state of their own fortune, and the extreme importance to them of not deferring for too long in returning to their dear wives, did not allow them to engage themselves in an undertaking as dubious and as lengthy as mine. They offered me their purse, and all the help they [169] were able to provide me in their own state of indigence. If they were favored enough by heaven to see their desires fulfilled, they promised to return to America with their wives, and come to whatever place I saw fit to specify, to serve me with all their might, and even at the cost of their lives. Finally, given the necessity of leaving me, they

would be devastated if I did not at least do them the justice of recognizing that it was reason and honor that imposed this necessity upon them, and if I did not preserve for them as much esteem and affection as they promised me for the rest of their lives.

I listened to the eloquent Gelin with a heavy heart that all my efforts could only partially hide. I asked him if his resolution was very certain, and if his comrades thought as he did. It is unshakable, he replied forcefully, and we all think the same way. The tone alone with which he gave this response persuaded me that he was the author of the design, as he has been its spokesman; and I confess that I developed from that moment an aversion for him that it was impossible for me subsequently to overcome. The reader will see how many new reasons I have since had to increase it, and what terrible accidents it has fomented. I added neither protests nor entreaties to the question I had asked him; but continuing to count a great deal on Bridge, whose character was more in harmony with mine, I went to his room, where I found him with Johnston. He came to meet me with a sad and compassionate air. Blame your ill fate and mine, he said, embracing me; and be sure that after my dear wife, it is you I love best. I shall perish for her, if it is necessary; but you may count on my employing in your service all the blood and strength I have left after delivering her. What are you saying? I interrupted; alas, I am not asking for that! My interests do not require an assistance that can cost you blood. What can I desire of you for myself? Only that you convey me to some location from which I can hope to go after Lord Axminster. If I have suggested anything more dangerous to you that was in the interest of your king, it is for your own honor and for your advantage. Are there difficulties in that glorious enterprise terrify you? Then give it up, fine. But why would you refuse to complete what you have begun for my benefit? There is almost nothing left for you to do. Help me at least to

reach the continent. Drop me in the first port in Carolina.²²⁷ Then I will give you back your pledge and your promises. You will abandon me without disloyalty. But do honor and friendship allow you to leave me on this island? Dear Bridge! I added, embracing him tenderly, are you still my brother? Is that what I expected from your generosity and affection?

Gelin, who had perhaps been a bit vexed at my leaving him so suddenly in my room, spoke up vehemently, not allowing my brother the time to reply. He asked what reason I had to complain, and whether I ought not to be satisfied with what they had done so far to help me. Had they not done violence to their most cherished inclination, by suspending the search for their wives? Had they not forgotten their own interests to pursue mine, which were neither more pressing, nor any different in nature from theirs? We were supposed to find Lord Axminster in Martinique: I had not at first proposed that they farther; they nonetheless had had the indulgence to press on to Havana: what could I reproach them for? Had they committed themselves to following the entire American coastline, and go with me as far as the heart of New England, where I would surely want to be taken if we did not run into his lordship along the way? Even if they could neglect their dear wives to that point, did the poor condition of their ship reasonably allow them to begin a new voyage of six or seven hundred leagues, especially towards the northern seas, where navigation is more difficult? No, no, my dear Mr. Cleveland, added the silver-tongued Gelin, shaking his head, you have noth-

²²⁷ There was no port in 1660 in what is now called the Carolinas; but as the term was then sometimes ill-defined, Cleveland means simply the first port on English territory. Some of the maps divide all of North America into Virginia and Florida; others, for example those of Hennepin (1697) and Pierre Vander Aa (1713), leave room between them for the province of Carolina.

ing to reproach us for, and maybe there are things you should thank us for. Bear in mind that we lovers, [170] like you, and that we have the same impatience and the same desires. Our duties are even in a way more indispensable than yours: our wives are at issue, and your anxiety is just for a lover. As far as the king of England is concerned, we would have liked to be useful to his interests; but it is even less possible for us to render him service than to you. He will credit us for our good will, if he can understand some day how sincere it was.

After such a clear and definitive declaration, I was quite aware that there was little hope left for me. Bridge nonetheless undertook to attenuate some of the harshness of Gelin's reply. He expressed his regret, he embraced me several times, he even shed tears; and he offered me in conclusion to continue across the Bahama Sea,²²⁸ and take me to the tip of the Tegesta peninsula,²²⁹ from which I could go by land clear to the heart of the continent. Out of grief, and a just sense of pride, I chose to refuse this offer, especially since the peninsula was inhabited by the Spanish, and as its distance from the island of Cuba being only about thirty

²²⁸ As Cleveland says further on, he means the Bahama Canal (today, the Straits of Florida), which indeed separate Cuba from Florida: ships used this passage from the islands to join the Gulf Stream for a return to Europe.

²²⁹ The Florida peninsula. The name of an Indian tribe or chief was given to Tequesta, a Jesuit mission established in 1567 in the region of Biscayne Bay, the present site of Miami; later, it could designate the whole region or even the whole peninsula (see John Ogilby, *America*, p. 220). Prévost could have found the spelling *Tegesta* on the maps of Vander Aa (*Le Nouveau Théâtre du monde*, 1713) as well as those of N. Sanson (1657 and others); the gallicized form *Tegeste*, which Prévost also uses, if not spontaneous, could only come from *Voyages de François Coréal aux Indes occidentales* (Amsterdam: J. Frédéric Bernard, 1722, I, 43).

leagues,²³⁰ I figured that in Havana I could easily find a ship for the passage. Go, I said to them, I cannot hold you back despite yourselves: but if I judge correctly the situation of your fortune, and your true advantages, the choice you are making will not always look the best to you, and maybe some day you will regret your failure to keep your word to me. They tried to enter again into justificaton, and prove to me that they had fulfilled the full extent of their promise; but I at once withdrew, refusing to hear them. They left me alone in my room for a few minutes. I was determined to let them go, without seeing them again. However, Bridge appeared at my door a moment later. He repeated, with a sad countenance, his assurances of his regret at leaving me; and he bade me grant him two things, without which he would, he said, consider himself the most guilty and unhappy man alive. The first was to accept one hundred pistoles that he offered to facilitate my journey; the other was to state precisely at what point on earth he could hope to rejoin me, as soon as he had succeeded in the new search he was about to undertake. I accepted his money only after repeated insistence. As for the second request, I got him to see that I could not possibly fulfill it. I have less insight than you, I said, into the destiny that awaits me. It is chance that will determine my path, and I can expect nothing certain except many worries and renewed suffering. Farewell then, he replied with an air of sadness that moved me: I suffer terribly from the necessity of leaving you; but my heart owes itself entirely to love. I ask only of heaven, if it has some happiness in store for me, that I may see you again after finding my wife. They departed that same day. Basically, I believed their regrets were sincere. The commitment that called them was

²³⁰ A marine league is 5.55 kilometers; Cleveland is therefore speaking of the 165 kilometers or so separating Havana from Key West. In fact it is more like 300, measuring all the way to the peninsula proper.

stronger than all the laws and all the promises. I judged them by myself: what reason strong enough, what power could be capable of making me lose sight for a single minute of Lord Axminster and his daughter?

And so I remained alone in Havana, with one thing to console me: that I was at least free, and could take whatever measures best suited my plans. I counted heavily on the governor's kindness. It was to him I went, not only to learn how long I could expect to wait before finding an opportunity to leave his island, but also to get his advice about the route I should choose, and engage him to lend me some assistance. I did not expect him to do for me what he had refused to do for Lord Axminster and his daughter; but I was not asking for so much. Indeed he did not hesitate to grant me everything in his power. He made me a present of a negro, who had long been his slave, and whose loyalty he knew. His intention was less to give me a manservant than a guide and interpreter, because this slave had been to a good part of the American continent, and knew the principal languages in use there.²³¹ To this present the governor added a considerable sum of money, and several [171] passports by way of recommendation,²³² to procure me a favorable reception by all the Spaniards into whose hands I could chance to fall. As for my route and the time of my departure, he expressed much regret at his inability to provide me either information or assistance. I was obliged to wait in Havana for the passage of some ship sailing toward the English colonies, and entrust everything about my voyage to chance. Two

²³¹ Either by forgetfulness or by a strange use of the term "negro" by Prévost, this slave will later turn out to be the Amerindian Iglou, member of the "Abaqui" tribe. The role of this loyal and ingenious servant is reminiscent of that of Friday in *Robinson Crusoe*.

²³² *Passport* has a limited, local use here: a letter which provides safe conduct within the governor's jurisdiction.

months passed in such waiting: I used them to study wisdom, as the sole means of lessening the heartache of such a long delay, and moderating the impatient ardor I had to rejoin all that my heart loved. Finally, heaven granted a part of my desires by bringing in a ship from San Domingo, which was bearing various kinds of merchandise it was to sell along the very coast where I wished to land. The only favor I wanted to ask of the captain was to take me on board. I departed with my slave and the liberalities of Governor d'Arpez, who made me promise, as he took me to the ship, to use all my influence on Lord Axminster to persuade him to return some day to the island I was leaving.

We crossed the Bahama Canal without incident, and once we had passed the tip of the Tegesta peninsula, we simply followed the shoreline, stopping in every port or settlement where the captain could distribute some of his merchandise. First we dropped anchor in several small Spanish ports, the first to be found along the coast; but there I asked in vain for news of what I was after. I did not do much better in a settlement of French Presbyterians which we found further along.²³³ They knew not so

²³³ There was really no other Spanish port on the east coast of Florida other than St. Augustin. The allusion to a settlement of "French Presbyterians" (there is a later mention of same in book XIV) is more interesting, for though there was no well-established colony of Protestants in 1660, there may have been settlements here and there on the Carolinian coast. Huguenots led by Admiral Coligny had twice attempted between 1562 and 1565, under the direction of captain Jean Ribaut, to establish a colony at Charlefort (Parris Island, in South Carolina), and then at Fort Caroline (in Florida, the present site of Jacksonville), but the attempt ended in a massacre by the Spanish in 1565. Another expedition in 1633 went no farther south than Virginia. Various Huguenot refugees settled in the region of Charles Town and Port Royal (South Carolina) around 1670, and other followed after the Revocation of 1685. On this subject see Arthur Henry Hirsch, *The*

much as the name of his lordship. They did tell me, however, that some months earlier a ship of their nation which came from Cuba had stopped in their harbor for two days, on which they had noticed several Englishmen who did not seem to be commoners: I followed the penchant of all unfortunates to flatter themselves, and dared to believe it was his lordship himself and his party they were talking about. These feeble reasons nevertheless greatly revived my hopes. From there we went to several ports in Carolina²³⁴: but although we were now dealing with Englishmen, from whom I naturally could have expected more enlightenment, I received none at all in over a hundred leagues of coastline. My anxieties were beginning to increase; I could scarcely conceive how his lordship, who wanted nothing more than to put into an English port, could have passed by so many without stopping. What augmented my fear was the decision of the Spanish captain, who had told me several times that his intention was not to go farther than the Chesapeake Bay.²³⁵ Since his lordship had not

Huguenots of Colonial South Carolina (Durham: Duke University Press, 1928), pp. 7–30, and Gilbert Chinard, *Les Réfugiés huguenots en Amérique* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1925). Robert Beverley in *The History and Present State of Virginia* (London, 1705) *Histoire de la Virginie* mentions the arrival in that colony, about 1618, of several discontents from Port Royal (vol. I, pp. 35–36; he describes further on (vol. IV, pp. 44–47) the warm reception received by the Huguenot refugees in Virginia – in a passage which, interestingly, was suppressed in the French translation of 1707.

²³⁴ The two poles of contemporary maps of the American southern coast are Spanish Florida and English Virginia; not all show Carolina between them. Here Prévost seems to rely on Vander Aa's, which bears the label *Carolina* between *Virginia* et *Tegesta provincia*.

²³⁵ The topology gets more precise; Prévost is prudent in giving no proper name to the various stops along the coast between Tegesta and Virginia, for Carolina was not even founded yet (nor was Georgia) in

stopped in Carolina, it seemed likely he had gone on to Virginia, or even to the extremities of our colonies in New England: and what hope could I still have to rejoin him if I were obliged to retrace my steps with the Spanish ship, or wait in some empty, nameless port for the chance to take another ship which I could only come upon there by accident? For I while I had to keep going with these worries. We had already reached the coasts of Virginia, and were approaching Chesapeake Bay, when at the entrance itself of that great bay, in a little port names Riswey,²³⁶ where our captain had in mind to end his voyage, I finally learned what I so impatiently desired to hear, which was that Lord Axminster, son of the former governor of all these lands, had landed

1660. He seems to refer particularly to the maps of Pierre Vander Aa in his *Nouveau théâtre du monde* (Leyden, 1713) for the toponymies of this part of the novel. There are situations where Prévost complements that collection by other maps or relations. Here, for example, Vander Aa's map and several others denote the bay under the spelling *Chesapeack*; but there appears to be only one where *Chesapeake* is to be found, as Prévost writes it: the "Carte d'un très grand pays nouvellement découvert dans l'Amérique septentrionale" (signed by J. V. Vianen) in *Nouvelle Découverte d'un très grand pays*, du Père Hennepin (Utrecht: Guillaume Broedelet, 1697). See Paul Vernière, "L'Abbé Prévost et les réalités géographiques," *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France* 73 (1973), pp. 627–629, and Philip Stewart, "L'Amérique de l'abbé Prévost: aspects documentaires de *Cleveland*," *French Review* 49 (1976), pp. 868–882.

²³⁶ The origin of this name has not been identified with any certainty. In the entire bay and along the James River the maps of the time indicate neither Riswey nor anything similar. Its location might be supposed, as suggests Paul Vernière, at Point Comfort, east of Newport News (art. cit., p. 631). The name is possibly suggested by the Dutch city Ryswick, near The Hague, in which was signed the treaty of 1697; since there were other Dutch names in America (e.g. Nieuw Amsterdam), this name might have seemed plausible.

there not many months earlier; that the ship that had brought him there having continued its route northward, his lordship had acquired a large boat with which he entered the bay to go up to Jamestown,²³⁷ one of the principal cities in Virginia; that he had arrived there without incident with his party; and that I could absolutely depend on this report, since I heard it from the very persons who had guided his boat, and who had returned to Riswey a few days after they rendered him this service.

[172] I blessed heaven at the end of this relation, and my joyous effusion was so visible that all those who witnessed it expressed wonder. I noted that some of the principal inhabitants of the town seemed after that to view me with more affection, and looked my way as they talked, as if they had taken some interest in my person. I had no doubt they were busy making their conjectures on the subject of my voyage, and that of my joy; I even imagined that the interest they seemed to take in it had some secret cause which I explained to Lord Axminster's advantage. I was not mistaken. His lordship, who had found his father's memory and his own still living in the hearts of this small number of good Englishmen, had not failed to make himself known to them, and announce to them his mission. They had up till then submitted to the new government established in England; but that was less by choice and inclination than by a blind acquiescence which ordinarily brings along people who are unquestioning and not free: so that, having no particular reason to attach them to the person of the Protector, they were not at all unwilling to recognize the authority of the king, and promptly revert to their duty, when called to do so by the son of their former governor whose

²³⁷ Founded in 1607 on a small peninsula near the mouth of the James River (its Indian name, often seen on the maps, was the Powhatan River), Jamestown, named after James I, was the first English settlement on the continent to survive.

orders they had once so gladly obeyed. This little settlement was therefore the first conquest Lord Axminster made for his master, and it cost him nothing more than the trouble of pronouncing his name and declaring his intentions. From them he then very easily obtained everything he needed to get to Jamestown; the colonists would not even have refused to follow him as a body, and form a company for his defense if he had thought he needed such assistance. I was informed of this detail by all the townspeople with whom I had occasion to speak, and I found not one who was not favorably disposed toward his lordship and toward myself.

They offered to have me taken also to Jamestown. I accepted their offers, and leaving the Spanish captain who was returning toward San Domingo, I cast myself wholly on the good faith my compatriots. They loaned me a boat and four sailors. We entered the bay, where the wind was out of harmony, for some while, with the impatience of my desires. However, as I apprehended no further obstacle, I did not worry about such a slight delay, when being at the mouth of the Powhatan River, which flows into the bay, and by which we had to go upstream to reach Jamestown, which is located on its banks, I spotted a warship just leaving the river, which seemed to be sailing towards open sea. I had no doubt it was an English ship; but the joy this encounter could have cause me changed to a dreadful fear and sadness the minute I thought I recognized it as the ship of captain John Will.²³⁸

²³⁸ The struggle for Virginia between royalist Axminster and Cromwellian Captain Will seems to be inspired, as Paul Vernière observed (art. cit., p. 630), by a passage in Robert Beverley's *History and Present State of Virginia* (London, 1705). He describes a colony long which long opposed fierce resistance to Cromwell, until finally, in 1651, Cromwell sent captain Robert Dennis to reduce it and depose the governor, Sir William Berkeley. Cromwell also sent a fleet commanded

My conjecture proved only too certain. It was that traitor's ship. Alas! it was he himself; and the shudder that came over me all of a sudden announced to me the minute I saw him the precipice into which I was about to fall. But why talk about my own perils? However inevitable my doom must have appeared to me, heaven knows that was not the first thought that bothered me. I had to worry about something dearer and more precious than my life and liberty. Captain Will was coming from Jamestown; there he had doubtless encountered his lordship: no one is half a traitor; I did not think I could doubt for a moment that he had consummated his horrible treatment of me by completing my ruin in the person of his lordship. I saw nothing that could have prevented him from it: his ship was so well armed that there was no likelihood Jamestown could have defended itself against him; so even supposing the viscount had been received in that city as well as he had in Riswey, it did not seem possible that he could have put himself in a defensive posture soon enough to hold off our enemy by force. I therefore concluded that he had been crushed and perhaps seized by this double-crosser, who presumably was holding him prisoner aboard his ship, and was taking him to London to deliver him to the Protector.

[173] I had time to make these reflections, because the ship was a ways off. They caused me all the anguish one can imagine. Nevertheless, they did not take away the strength and freedom of mind I needed in such a dangerous pass. In that I can say I have always been different from other men, and could truly call it the heart of my character. I do not know whether it will appear ostentatious to publish it, but should I have some glory to expect from

by Ayscue to secure the Barbados in 1651; but the parallel Axminster-Berkeley and Will-Dennis seems indeed fairly compelling because of the common site of the two episodes. On the other hand, nothing had suggested previously that Will commanded a war ship.

this sort of confession, it would have cost me too dearly to give rise in me to a sentiment as frivolous as what is called vanity. It is true, then, that I have always been able to master my pains sufficiently to preserve the free use of my reason: but it is not less true that this firmness of mind, which may contributed to the wisdom of my conduct, has never had any benefit for my tranquillity of spirit. Unfortunates can commonly be placed in two classes. The first, those who more or less succumb under the weight of their miseries, and sometimes become less sensitive to them for the very reason that they do not stand up to them, something like the way a tree is less damaged by the wind when it bends to the impetuosity of its blowing. The other class is those who stiffen against misfortune, and also in this manner manage to diminish their sensitivity to it, were it only for the reason that, the effort they make to resist occupying a share of the attention and strength of their spirit, less is left over for feeling what must be assailing it. But I can put myself in a third class, and I am perhaps the sole individual of my unfortunate kind. I have struggled all my life against suffering yet my struggles have never served to lessen it, my spirit having always been sufficiently capacious to sustain at the same time both the effort required to resist misfortune, and the attention that makes it perceptible. I therefore suffered terribly from all the thoughts that agitated me; but I was not demoralized by them to the point of being unable to reach a decision.²³⁹ The first one I arrived at without hesitation was to surrender of my own volition to Captain Will, if I could determine that his lord-

²³⁹ Cleveland specifies here the sense in which he is a “philosopher”: not, to be sure, because he elaborates abstract systems, nor because he knows how to master suffering stoically, but because he never loses his head. But his control results only from an exceptional force of will and not from insensitivity: this “philosophical” resolution is lucid, and for it Cleveland suffers more than another would.

ship and his daughter were aboard his ship. There was no prison nor cruel fate that did not seem agreeable if I shared it with them. But as I was not absolutely certain of their calamity, I thought I must use guile to learn more. I had, fortunately, changed my clothes on the island of Cuba. I thought I could easily completely disguise myself by disfiguring my face. I told the sailors accompanying me what I had in mind. They willingly agreed to help me. I took a poor wig from one of them, with which I covered my head; and after soiling my face and hands with mud from the bottom of the boat, I gave myself an appearance that would not have permitted my best friends to recognize me. Next, having no more fear of coming before the eyes of Captain Will, I asked my sailors take me straight to the ship. We came to within earshot. I saw the captain who was on the deck. He signaled with his hand for us to come closer; and as the weather had grown very calm, we had no trouble reaching the foot of the ladders. My intention was to climb on board myself. However, I reflected that it would be imprudent, supposing his lordship were not there; and I preferred to be enlightened first by the report of my companions, being still free, when they returned, to follow the decision I had made, if that dear gentleman was in the captain's prisons. I briefly instructed the most sensible of my sailors, and awaited the clarification of my fate in the boat, while he went to submit to the captain's questioning. He returned in less than four minutes. You may rest easy, he said, his lordship is surely safe, for the captain does not know what has become of him. Unless I be mistaken, he is looking for him, the sailor added. He asked me in a disappointed way if I had heard nothing of him. He wanted to know where we are going, and where we left from. I satisfied him, and he ordered me to withdraw.

This relation rekindled hope and joy in my heart. We lost not a moment in distancing ourselves from him. The sole distress that stayed with me until Jamestown came from [174] the mem-

ory of Mme Lallin, whom I believed still in the hands of her abductor. I commended her anew to the protection of heaven, and although I destined my life to the service of his lordship and his daughter, I felt that gratitude would have made me risk it gladly to rescue that lady. We finally arrived at Jamestown. Upon arrival, we could see there was some turmoil in the port, and that the colonists were expecting some exceptional event. A good number of them came hurriedly to the shore to greet our boat, and I noted that they expressed surprise to find on it only someone unknown, with a negro and four sailors from Riswey. They asked us whether we had not encountered Captain Will's ship, and added nothing to this question. I entered the city, still unable to confirm whether I could consider them as my friends, not having dared question them about what I had the greatest interest in knowing. Out of fear of harming his lordship's interests by some indiscretion, I took an assumed name: I pretended that reasons of commerce had brought me to Jamestown, and took a lodging in a very simple house, with the precaution of taking with me the four sailors, whom I did not wish to lose sight of until I could see more clearly through all these obscurities.

The Englishman with whom I was lodged was fortunately a zealous royalist, who deplored what had just recently taken place at Jamestown. Scarcely was I in his house before, sparing me the embarrassment of questioning him, he asked me himself whether I was informed about what had just happened, and what I thought of the new government of England. His way of posing this question gave me some insight into his desires. I made a reply that satisfied him; so without further precautions during the rest of our conversation, he violently denounced the Protector and the Parliament, and above all Captain Will. I took the opportunity of his invectives against the latter to inform myself about what he had done in Jamestown. Here is what I could garner from his account.

Lord Axminster had safely arrived in the city two months

earlier. He had found there no less inclination to submission than at Riswey. The governor and most of the inhabitants had greeted him with the same zeal they would have expressed for the king's person. He had spent a fortnight in the city, busy taking measures for restoring the rest of the country to obedience; and feeling sure in particular of the loyalty of those at Jamestown, he had left to go to Powhatan, which is a considerable city, situated like Jamestown on the river that bears its name but much further inland.²⁴⁰ Nowhere did he find any greater difficulty being recognized as governor for King Charles; so that his enterprise would have met peaceably with success everywhere, had the only obstacle come from the country's inhabitants. That is where things stood when Captain Will's ship arrived unannounced at the port of Jamestown. I have said that it was too well armed to encounter much resistance in a city which did not expect to be attacked, although it was one of the strongholds of the region. The governor had been obliged to open its gates to the captain, which he did with all the less regret that, not expecting to have so unwelcome a guest for very long, he hoped to find himself after his departure again free to return to his duty and follow his inclinations. But though he was sincerely attached to the king's interests, along with the majority of the inhabitants, there were nevertheless some who felt differently. These lost no time informing John Will about his lordship's arrival and the progress of the king's business. That

²⁴⁰ Located higher on the right bank of the James River, where the city of Richmond is now, the little Powhatan settlement bore the name of a chief and dated, according to Captain John Smith, from 1609. This is the limit of known territory on the maps that indicate it – Vander Aa's this time not being among them. It is on John Smith's map of 1612 and in Beverley's *History and Present State of Virginia* (1705), and also, with the spelling *Pouhatan*, in John Ogilby's *America* (1671) and Father Hennepin's *Nouvelle Découverte* (1697).

was exactly what this traitor wanted to learn, and what had brought him from Jamaica to Virginia to earn himself a reputation in England of his zeal for the Protector. He therefore made severe reproaches to the governor and inhabitants of Jamestown for their change, and hastened to take measures to put down the enemy of the English republic.

[175] During this time, his lordship was tranquil in Powhatan; and that city being much less capable of defense than Jamestown, nothing was easier than to surprise him there. Captain Will sent two hundred men ashore, of the three hundred he had on his ship; he led them himself, not wasting a minute, and had himself taken by land to Powhatan. That was surely the end for his lordship, who could not escape from his hands if he were taken by surprise. But the governor of Jamestown had the generosity to dispatch secretly one of his servants to warn him of the danger threatening him. As fast as the messenger could go, he had much difficulty getting there before John Will; so it was not without particular assistance from heaven that the viscount found the time and the means to get out of the city with his party. He had no other means of salvation available, being devoid of weapons, and in no situation to hold out against two hundred regular troops. Will thus had the regret of having taking a futile action. He spared nothing, however, to discover his lordship's tracks, and spent more than a fortnight having him pursued, both in Powhatan and in the vicinity. Seeing he could learn nothing about him, he returned to Jamestown, where he remained more than a month longer continuing his search, and sending parts of his soldiers in various directions. Finally, supposing that his lordship would perhaps have got back to the sea to head for another colony, he decided to leave Jamestown, and to look for him in all the English settlements. I had encountered his ship the very day he departed. The confusion I found in the port on my arrival there came from two causes: the departure of John Will, for which few colonists

failed to feel much joy; and the hope they had, seeing my boat in the river, that it might be his lordship who had happily evaded his enemy, and had enough confidence in them to return to their city.

If I found something consoling in this account, because it at least assured me that the viscount was out of danger, there was also cause for much anxiety and disappointment. After such a long journey and so much searching, I was scarcely more advanced than when I left the island of Cuba; for I was not less uncertain of the path I should take and what success I could hope for. I inquired whether his lordship had had a relation of friendship and confidence with some colonist in Jamestown. Several persons were mentioned whom he had seen most often: but I was given so many names I could not believe he had confided in all of them; and the fear of committing an indiscretion by broaching the subject unadvisedly caused me to leave the city without broaching it to anyone. I set out for Powhatan with my slave, flattering myself that if I could hope for some enlightenment about the place his lordship had chosen for his retreat, it was in the last city whence he had left with his family. I plodded sadly along the way. My expectations, which I had thought so near fulfillment at Riswey, now seemed infinitely further off. Even what was left of them was so feeble and confused that it changed by the day into fears, and at certain times into despair. Love still held pride of place in my heart: but it was not its pleasures that it made me feel. The impatience to rejoin his his lordship had an almost equal place. Mrs Riding came next. Mixed in with these was worry about the unhappy Mme Lallin; and all these feelings were accompanied by my usual desires and wishes for the serenity of a tranquil life, one suited to the study of wisdom. In this way, seeing the only things that could satisfy me move further and further away, I often felt my courage about to abandon me, yet found nothing outside myself that was capable of sustaining it.

Iglou – this was the name of my slave – had lived long

enough with me to know my troubled soul, and he was enough attached to me to share in my sorrows. His great familiarity with this whole part of America, and his skill which I had more than once put to the test, were my only resources. I often [176] reminded him of this, to spur him to serve me with zeal, and I gave him to expect rewards proportionate to his services. We arrived in Powhatan. His lordship's retreat and the captain's search for him were still on every tongue. On arrival I took the same precautions as Jamestown, inquiring inconspicuously about how things had transpired, and trying to garner from public discourse some cause for hope and some rule of conduct. Everyone felt sorry for his lordship and spoke variously of the direction he had taken; but there was no favorable conclusion to be drawn from this diversity. It occurred to me that if his lordship had confided his route in anyone, it must be in an English gentleman with whom he and his family had lodged in Powhatan. I lost no time forging a close relationship with that gentleman, and seeing that an excess of discretion made him reluctant to reveal anything to me, I inspired confidence in him by telling him what my relationship was to his lordship, and the reasons impelling me to take such an interest in his fate. This approach finally succeeded, and it was the only one from which I could hope to gain helpful enlightenment.

I learned from good fine man what was known only to him, and what he would have continued to hide from anyone but myself. Not only had he rendered his lordship every service of zeal and friendship during his stay in Powhatan, but, at the first news of Captain Will's arrival, he had personally made provision for his escape and security. He had advised him to go by land toward Carolina; and having first personally led him to a country property he had at some distance from Powhatan, he had promptly found for him conveyances and provisions for that journey, with two faithful guides perfectly familiar with the land. He had two reasons for having giving his lordship this advice: one was to

get him closer to the Spanish, among whom he would be in better range of seeking asylum if he were forced to do so by the fury of his enemies; the other had been the hopes of misleading Captain Will, who would not expect the viscount to have retraced his steps, and would doubtless continue to search for him towards the north once he lost hope of finding him in Virginia. His lordship had left with his daughter and Mrs Riding, accompanied by six English gentlemen, by eight servants, and by his two guides, which made up a party of sixteen persons. You are certain to find him, his liberator told me, either at Warwick,²⁴¹ which is on this side the first settlement in Carolina, or at least at ... if he thinks it better to go further inland.

After this good news, I remained in Powhatan only as long as was necessary to buy two horses; and relying on Iglou's assurances that he would guide me safely to Warwick, I refused to accept another guide who was offered to me by the English gentleman. I asked him when I left what he thought of the disposition of the inhabitants of the area, and whether he thought his lordship could return there safely. He replied that he knew no one in the city who was not disposed to come back under obedience to the king, and he judged the same for the rest of the province; but he feared people would not dare yield to their true feelings as long as Captain Will's ship held the whole territory in respect and constraint: that his lordship's plan was to assemble, if he could, a corps of troops in Carolina, and then seek the occasion to rejoin the captain, and make him pay for the terror he had caused him in Powhatan. I set out, followed only by Iglou. Our horses were hale. Having to cross rather a rather great expanse of wilderness, we took provisions for most of the journey.

From the discomforts I had to put up with along the way, I

²⁴¹ Warwick was rather, to be exact, the name of a county in Virginia near the mouth of the James, and site of Newport News.

could judge those that his lordship and his dear family must have suffered before me. To be sure, having two covered wagons,²⁴² they must have spent the nights less unpleasantly, and at least not be exposed to the night air. I, not enjoying that comfort, found myself obliged to halt at the very onset of darkness, and make my bed the in most convenient patch of grass I could find. I felt only too lucky when I found [177] some tree shaped so its leaves could be a roof to me. Iglou offered me all his clothing to protect me at least from the extreme chill of the night, but I obstinately refused for humane reasons. To me my quality as master did not cause him to lose that of man, nor consequently did it deprive him of the natural right he had to shelter that was as necessary to him as to me. We progressed in this way for some time through innumerable difficulties, and reached the Appalachian mountains. Although I knew nothing at all of the lie of the land, I did not fail to perceive that Iglou was having me turn considerably to the west, and that we were leaving Carolina a bit too much on the left. I asked him the reason for this. He explained to me that it was necessary to follow the mountain range to avoid impassible swamps which we would have found before us. This chain of hills and rocks called Appalachians dominates all along the English colonies for a very great distance, and separates them from numerous savage peoples who inhabit the middle of the continent. But though it is high enough to close off passage almost continually, it falls in some places to the point of dividing into deep, narrow valleys, its various bends forming gorges and avenues of communication. We passed through a good number of them.²⁴³ I

²⁴² The author seems not to appreciate the paradox of crossing a virgin forest with such equipment.

²⁴³ As Cleveland's topography in the rest of books IV and V remains somewhat vague, it is probably futile to seek its precise source and attempt to trace his peregrinations on any specific map. In any event,

noted that Iglou never approached such openings without looking all about with nervous alertness. More than once he avoided answering my questions about his uneasiness, and his silence finally provoked the same in me. I absolutely insisted that he explain himself. You want it, he said with serious mien; you may be less tranquil because of it. These gaps always expose us to some danger. Although the savages who live on the other side of the mountains are not cruel and bloody, they are almost all addicted to theft and plunder. You would not be safe if they spotted us. This warning had a dreadful effect on me. I could feel a trembling in all my members. Do you think, I asked instantly, that his lordship came this way? He said he had no doubt of it, if his guides had taken him by the shortest and easiest path. Oh heaven, I exclaimed, you know why I implore your assistance! Indeed I was very far from focusing all my fears and my prayers on myself. My sole concern from then on was the danger to my loved ones, and I progressed only in trembling, and asking Iglou a thousand questions about the temperament of the savages and their manner of dealing with prisoners.

He was perfectly familiar with their customs, being himself born among these peoples, but in a more distant region. He took pains to reassure me. Nevertheless, after a few days' travel, we suddenly spotted a body of about a hundred savages coming from the bottom of a valley, who could not continue on the same path without crossing ours. Iglou, very agitated, begged me to halt. I will keep you safe, he said; but you must try to contribute by hiding carefully. He had me dismount, and leading me toward several bushes that were to our right, he told me to stay there with our horses until he returned. Do not leave this spot, he repeated,

when Cleveland leaves the plain and enters the mountains, there is nothing implausible about imagining him following the Indian Road or modern Appalachian Trail.

because as long as I am sure you are here I will find a way to steer the savages away from it. Do not be concerned either if I am gone a while, even if you should stay here two or three days waiting for me. As he spoke, he was stripping off his garments; and I was surprised to see him in no time naked, with the air and form of a savage. He bade me again not to worry, and to depend on his loyalty. I allowed him to go ahead, without even asking him what he intended to do. As he left he kissed my hands to give me a sign of affection. I remained alone, seated behind the bushes which completely covered me, and holding myself the reins of our two horses. I do not wish to disguise my fears; they were extreme: but I attest heaven that it was not my own danger I was thinking of. My eyes saw nothing but his lordship and Fanny. What must be their fate, if they had had the misfortune of falling unawares into the precipice that I was to be spared! All my blood froze at that thought. Far from wishing to flee the hands of the savages, I would have surrendered to them a hundred times over, if I could have been sure that his lordship had not escaped the same danger.

[178] I lost sight of Iglou, and spent the remainder of the day in the situation in which he had left me. I was weighed down by grave sorrow when I heard him returning in the dark. He took care I should hear his voice to prevent the fright his approach could have caused me. Well, Iglou, I said, what have you to tell me? Are his lordship and Fanny the prey of some savage, and must I have the same fate? He tried in vain to disguise his own suspicions from me; I could sense his embarrassment, and ordered him to be sincere. He replied that for me the danger was past; that the savages had taken a different route, on the false information he had given them; and if we still had some to fear, it assuredly would not be the same ones; but since I wanted to be told the truth, there was reason to believe that his lordship had been less fortunate than I. I mixed in with the savages, he contin-

ued, and having had no difficulty recognizing their nation, neither did I try to hide my own. I pretended I had been lost for some time in these parts, and needed to learn from them which way I should go to return to my village. They rendered me the service I was asking of them; but they wanted to know before they left me whether I encountered several prisoners who had escaped from their hands a few days earlier. They did not tell me what kind of prisoners, and I did not dare press them to tell me, for fear of becoming suspect; but I took advantage of the question to steer the danger away from you by making them believe I had indeed encountered those they were searching for, in the opposite direction from the way we are going. They immediately took the path I showed them. But to be honest with you, Iglou added, I fear that the prisoners of whom they spoke may be his lordship and his party; for I infer from some of their replies that they have no war with their neighbors. This good slave exhorted me thereupon to lose no time moving on, and even to take advantage of the night, which was not so dark as to prevent us from traveling.

This relation plunged me into inexpressible consternation. Ah, Iglou! I said, there is no question of going further, nor of leaving this spot, without ascertaining what I must fear or hope for his lordship. We must look for him, were I to lose my life and freedom. Help me, as you already have, and tell me what advice you can give me. He confessed that his uncertainty equalled mine, and that he could not possibly guess in which direction we ought to begin our search. If his lordship still has his guides with him, he said, it is likely he has headed again towards Carolina; but if he has no one along to guide him, I see nothing to settle our conjectures about his path. Everything was indeed so obscure and so dispiriting in the conduct I should adopt that I could see no way out. The situation I must imagine his lordship to be in was another abyss that set all my thoughts spinning: for if it was true that he had escaped from the hands of the savages after having the

misfortune of falling into them, what condition might he have been in when he fled? Was I to think he still had held onto his conveyances, his entourage, his provisions? Was it even plausible that he had been able to save Fanny and Mrs Riding? This last reflection struck to the depths of my heart. Oh God, I kept repeating, was your protection wanting to Fanny? Could you have abandoned her in the most horrible of all dangers?

I became convinced, after thinking about it for a long time, that if his lordship had fled with his entourage, he should not be very far from where I was. The savages would not have been searching for him thereabouts unless they had reason to believe he had chosen his path in that direction. And by reasoning about the measures he might have taken to slip their pursuit, it seemed to me that his first thought must have been to hide rather than to run away, because one would have been more difficult than the other in territory unfamiliar to him. It was heaven, no doubt, that inspired me to reason thus. Aye, it was heaven, to which I give thanks even today, for otherwise, all that was most endearing and virtuous on earth was lost! Dear gods, what a description [179] am I now obliged to enter into! And how will my readers believe, after reading it, that there can still remain something even more sad and stirring for me to tell them of in these memoirs?

I shared my thoughts with Iglou, and having determined we would not leave the area where we were before we had covered every part of it, we waited patiently for night to end to begin our search. We mounted our horses at daybreak, and thoroughly inspected every place that had the slightest appearance of serving as a refuge. Valleys, woods, dense hedges, we left nothing unexplored and unexamined in a circle of more than four or five leagues. We spared our horses so little that, despite the heat of the sun which was beating down, we kept them in action for most of the day; and it was only late in the afternoon that, thinking they were worn down with fatigue, and unable to fight our own for

longer, we decided to pause in some rather tall briars to take some refreshment. I lay down on the grass, which was very thick, less distressed by the violent exercise in which I had just engaged in than from continual contemplation of my misfortune. Iglou a few paces away was looking after our horses, or preparing something for me to eat. I was astonished to see him suddenly bend down, and come toward me on all fours. Good lord, I said, my heart failing me, what is it, Iglou; what have you found? He replied that he had just spotted several savages in the thickest part of the briar; but that by adopting the same behavior we had observed the day before, he hoped we could not only avoid running into them, but perhaps obtain some useful enlightenment from them. He recommended I stay where I was. Our horses were behind some trees, where he had placed them in the shade, to rest up from the heat they had borne; so that, seeing no change that needed to be made for them or for me, he hurriedly took off his garments to go directly to the savages. He was not gone more than fifteen minutes, after which I saw him returning accompanied by man who was naked like himself, but the skin of whose body was much whiter. I dared flatter myself for a moment that he brought me good news, and that a savage who followed him so tranquilly could not be our enemy. Alas, must I call good the news he brought me? Read on, and judge for yourself.

This naked man, whom I took to be a savage, came with him over to me. He looked at me fixedly, neither of us uttering a word. Finally he threw his arms about me, and hugging me with all his strength: It is he, he himself, he exclaimed several times, it is Mr. Cleveland! I disengaged myself, and not knowing what opinion to I should have of his action, I asked him with trembling voice who he was; and since I recognized as English from his language, by what adventure he found himself naked in this wilderness. Do you not recognize me? he replied with tears on his face. Ah, follow me then, and come recognize the unhappy Vis-

count Axminster who awaits you a hundred paces from here: come recognize his daughter, Mrs Riding, and some of the officers who have been with them since Rouen, among whom you must also remember seeing me. The dear name of Lord Axminster, that of his daughter and of Mrs Riding; the assurance I was within a hundred paces of them, and already expected by them; love, friendship, gratitude, what else: everything that ever was tender and moving so stirred my heart that, unable to bear such great emotion, I fell unconscious and motionless. However, I soon came to. I opened my eyes, and studying for a minute the man who had spoken to me, I recognized him as Mr. Youngster,²⁴⁴ his lordship's squire. I scarcely had the strength to open my mouth, and extend my arms to him, being prone as I still was. I recognize you, I said to him feebly; you are Youngster, the squire of my dear lordship and my dear father. Oh what did you say to me? Where shall I find him? Quickly, take me to him. And Fanny? I added, scarcely able to enunciate; are you not flattering me? Shall I see Fanny again? I was so agitated that, considering also my state of exhaustion [180] from the day's exercise and from having as yet had nothing to eat, I had to get Iglou to support me while Mr. Youngster answered me.

He told me that, far from flattering me, he declared that he had nothing but a horrible story to tell me, and terrible news to share with me; I would better learn all the circumstances from his lordship's own mouth; but that in the meantime, he thought he should prepare me for the state in which I was going to find him and the rest of his party, which was reduced to a very small number of persons; that having been betrayed by his guides,

²⁴⁴ The name *Younger* is attested by Bardsley's dictionary (see note 62), but not *Youngster*, another name simply derived from an English noun. Cleveland had already indicated in book II that in Rouen Axminster had taken on, on his first visit, four manservants and a squire.

attacked by a band of savages, and taken prisoner despite the resistance of his men, most of whom had perished defending him, he had spent about a fortnight in the village of his cruel captors; that he had been stripped not only of his equipment, but all of his clothing, he, Fanny, Mrs Riding, and everyone he had left; that they were obliged to make belts for themselves of grasses and reeds, and fashion for the ladies and the two women who served them wretched tunics out of the same material, which barely sufficed to protect their modesty; that since the savages did not otherwise treat them harshly, nor even guarded them closely, they had thought it best, following his lordship's opinion, to set themselves free during the nighttime; that they planned it so carefully that their escape had not been noticed; that it had been four whole days since they left the village, but that they still did not believe they were very far from it, because so far they had dared to walk only at night, and that in their present state, their progress could only be very slow; that his lordship tried to bear his misfortune courageously, and comfort those who were with him, but that it was only too easy to see that he was deeply affected; that he had taken the trouble so far to carry Fanny in his own arms, so as to spare her the fatigue of walking, and that he had constantly refused to leave that care to his servants, who could not hold back their tears when they saw him walking thus in the lead; that they had been fortunate enough to take some provisions with them upon leaving the savages, but that since they could not be very abundant, it had to be expected they would soon be exhausted; finally, that if I was sufficiently recovered from my faintness to fit to walk, he was going to take me to his lordship, who would doubtless be happy to see me; that it was by his order that he had come, to be sure it was indeed I who was looking for him, as the slave had given him to understand; that he still had doubts, not only because Iglou did not pronounce my name accurately, but much more because of the unlikelihood that I could be in Amer-

ica, I who they believed to be married in Rouen to Mme Lallin.

I listened to these words with a consternation that immobilized me. As soon as Mr. Youngster had finished speaking, I took his hand, which I pressed without any reply; and although I felt so weak I still needed to be supported, I started off toward the place where his lordship was, continuing to lean on Iglou. Mr. Youngster walked in front of me. We reached the briar patch in a minute. It was mixed with some bushes, which gave it the appearance of a small wood. At first I could see no one, although my eyes searched most keenly in all directions. Finally, Mr. Youngster bringing me around a bush at the corner of the densest part of the briar patch, I found a sight that would have made me die a thousand times of pity and pain had I not been prepared for it. I saw his lordship, naked, lying in the grass, his head resting listlessly on his hand. He had three of his servants seated beside him, who rose when they saw me. He started to do the same; but anticipating him with a passionate movement, I fell to my knees beside his, and embraced them with an ardor that none but me has ever felt. Heaven, you witnessed it! Oh, what strange things took place in an instant in my soul.²⁴⁵

His lordship did not object to this animate effusion of my pain and affection, [181] but he said nothing to me. I lifted my head, after keeping it thus bowed for a few moments, and turned my eyes on his. I noted some tears flowing down his cheeks. His face appeared to me pale and worn. He looked at me too without breaking the silence, as if he were uncertain of how he should deal with me. This uncertainty, the reason for which I could understand only too easily, caused me a crushing renewal of sorrow. I could not hold back my protests. Ah, my lord, I said,

²⁴⁵ In a similar manner, the hero of Defoe's *Captain Singleton* (1720) encounters, in the heart of Africa, a naked English gentleman stripped of all his belongings.

have you closed your heart to me, and will you refuse me some little sign of kindness and affection, when I come to find you at the extremities of the earth, purposing only to die at your feet? What, alas, have I done to you, and why does so much respect and attachment serve only to provoke your hatred? I tried in vain to say more: sentiments like mine could not be expressed by words. His lordship easily recognized that my grief was not feigned. He extended his hand to me. I do not hate you, he said; and I am persuaded that my misfortune causes you sincere compassion. Tell me by what happenstance you come to be in this wilderness. I told him, as well as I could in my disordered state, that what he was calling an effect of happenstance was an effect of my undying affection for him and his daughter; that it was an effect of the despair into which his departure from France had cast me, and of my unshakeable resolution to expend my blood and my life in his service. I told him that I had remained in France only as long as I had been held there in prison; that for over six months I had been combing the seas and wilderness of America in search of his trail, and grieving at the difficulty of finding it, determined to spend my whole life in this pursuit, and to count for naught all the perils and all the pains. I explained myself enough to persuade him of my innocence, and of the injustice he had done me by doubting it.²⁴⁶

I recognized then better than ever the goodness and generosity of that endearing gentleman. No longer able to doubt that I was what he wished, he was no longer frugal with either his sentiments or his expressions. He embraced me with great emotion, and held me a long time in his arms without speaking a word. Oh heaven, he exclaimed finally, you deploy for me all

²⁴⁶ There is a significant omission in this narrative: the fact that Mme Lallin had undertaken the voyage to America with him; the importance of this detail will emerge later in this book and in book VI.

your power. You take me through the extremes of suffering and joy. I am the most unfortunate of all men; but Cleveland has not betrayed me, he still loves me, and you grant me the satisfaction of seeing him again! He began again to hug me against his breast, giving me a hundred tender names and covering me with tears. I too wept, and his caresses carried to the depths of my heart.

I had been torn up to this moment between my need for justification and pity for his misfortune; but beginning to be occupied only by the latter sentiment, all my attention focused on the state in which I saw him. He perceived this from the sad and stricken way my eyes fixed on him. I read in your eyes, he said, how deeply my misfortune affects you. It is true it is extreme, and I search in vain what draws down on me such rigorous treatment from heaven. My hope is somewhat renewed, he added; you will comfort me, my dear son, and your presence will prevent me from dying of grief. He spoke to me of Fanny and Mrs Riding. They will doubtless see you with joy, he said; but I am most worried that poor Fanny will have for long the strength to withstand her hardships and mine. She is already so weakened that I quite fear for her life. My only reply to these words was to kiss his hands, with a fervor that imparted to him well enough my thoughts and my sentiments. I realize you wish to see her, he continued, and I can answer you in advance that she will be charmed to find you still have affection for her. But in her present state with Mrs Riding and her servants, I advise you, to spare their modesty, to wait until night brings darkness. They are only twenty paces from here, and I see that the sun is about to set. I had to do myself that violence. I nevertheless looked all about in the hopes of seeing her. I even believed I had spied her head rising above the grass, and my eyes remained as if fixed on that spot. Her features, her demeanor, the sound of her voice, [182] everything was already coming back to me; and transported at the pleasure I would feel in seeing her again, there were moments

when I forgot her misfortune and that of her father to think of nothing but my happiness and joy.

I nevertheless proposed to his lordship during this time that he take some of my clothing to cover himself, and send my linen and anything we could make suitable for their use to the two ladies. I had with me only the garment I was clothed in, with a large coat, having been obliged to leave my apparel at Powhatan in order to load our horses with food and provisions; but I was sufficiently supplied with linen. Iglou moreover was quite well clothed, and he like me had a coat; so we could find in our surplus enough to cover his lordship, and furnish at least some items to the two ladies. My jerkin being too tight for him, he did not refuse to take my coat, after taking a shirt; he sent my jacket, Iglou's coat, and some linen to his daughter, and everything that she and Mrs Riding might be able to use. I do not hesitate, he said, to accept the assistance you offer. It is to your father and your wife that you are rendering service.

Although Fanny and Mrs Riding should have been in a state to appear modestly with the clothing we had sent them, his lordship still wanted me to wait to speak with them in the dark, to spare them any remaining embarrassment they would surely feel at first sight. This was extremely difficult. He made use of the time remaining until nightfall to tell me about all the circumstances of his departure from France and his arrival in America. He did not disguise the hurt which the opinion of my unfaithfulness had caused his daughter, Mrs Riding, and himself. He even confessed that he had regretted more than once having left Europe so suddenly, and not having at least convinced himself of my change by my own admission, as much from what friendship remained, which had always battled strongly for me in his heart, as from affection for Fanny, who had not had a moment of joy and tranquillity since she had left Rouen. Finally, he asked me how much confidence I had in my slave, and whether he or I was

sufficiently familiar with the route to reach some English or Spanish settlement safely. I replied to the first parts of his discourse with new signs of affection and gratitude. As for Iglou, I invited his lordship to rely on his loyalty and his familiarity with the terrain. He wanted to question him for himself. Iglou answered all his questions very sensibly; but his lordship, who thought he was already well on the way to Carolina, was taken back to learn that we still had about a hundred leagues to go. He was terribly shaken by this news. He asked my slave urgently whether we still had an encounter with savages to fear. Iglou told him that would depend on our good fortune, since these savages often changed moved about, and there were always some villages along this mountain chain. I observed that his lordship was worried only about his daughter; and since that interest was as dear to me as to him, I urged Iglou to think of every way to secure us from peril. That good slave, after reflecting a few moments, made us the following proposition: I am an American, he said, of the Abaqui nation.²⁴⁷ It is a peaceable nation, and much more humane than most of the other savages. It lives in a very pretty valley which it has long occupied, and which is scarcely thirty leagues from here. I will go there promptly, if you wish, and bring back with me a sufficient company to escort you safely. He added, to inspire confidence in his lordship, that his family held one of the highest ranks in his nation; that he had left it five or six years earlier, out of pure desire to satisfy his curiosity by travelling to the European colonies; that after being captured by the Spanish

²⁴⁷ The name of this nation derives from a Canadian Indian tribe often mentioned in missionary writings, and diversely called *Abnakis*, *Abenakis*, *Abenakis*; according to Champlain, the name came from *Ouabenakiouek* and means *people of the dawn* (*Voyage de l'auteur en la Nouvelle France*, in *Œuvres de Champlain*, Québec, 1870, p. 1180 n. 1).

and sold to the governor of the island of Cuba, he had lived very acceptably in slavery; that he remembered having seen his lordship in Havana in the governor's palace; finally, that he had much affection for Europeans, and such great attachment for me, that he was ready even to risk his life itself in our service.

[183] His lordship, hearing him speak with such zeal and reason, asked me again whether up to a certain point we could trust his offers. I believe, I said, I can answer for him almost as much as for myself. I received him from Don d'Arpez, who guaranteed his trustworthiness, and since then I have put it to many tests. Thereupon his lordship wanted to know whether the thirty leagues to his village were completely out of our route, whether his people were as humane as he pretended, whether he was assured of obtaining help from them, and whether they were as naked there as amongst the other savages. Le viscount found Iglou's answers entirely satisfactory. He told him that if taking it from certain places where we must pass to reach Carolina, the detour to the valley of the Abaquis did not exceed ten leagues; that he was certain to obtain from them whatever he asked, not only because of his family's influence, but even more because of the joy the whole nation would share at seeing him again after an absence of six years; that the temperament and customs of this people were as gentle as could be; and as for their manner of clothing themselves, they were in truth naked for seven or eight months of the year, because of the excessive heat, but that they covered themselves, in the wintertime, with skins of the animals they killed in the hunt.

The viscount took me aside. After so many misfortunes, he said, I do not know whether I should take the slightest confidence in fortune. But if I believed your slave sincere and his report faithful, I would consider what he just told me as good fortune in our present, sad situation. Aside from the perils we have to risk on the way to Carolina, and the length of the trip, which appals

me, I am extremely reluctant to show up in an English settlement in this wretched condition. If I dared rely on the Abaquis, we would attempt to reach their valley all together; we would acquire the needed clothing and foodstuffs; and taking with us the most stalwart of them, we would be safe from harm, not only from other savages, but perhaps even from Captain Will. He asked me what I thought of this proposal. I renewed the assurances I had given him concerning Iglou's good character, and told him that I left the rest up to his judgment. He had me bring forth that slave once more, and after having him repeat what he had already heard, with additional details, he concluded that in six days, or rather six nights, for that was a precaution he still wanted to take, we could reach the valley of the Abaquis. What food supplies we had could last us until then, so the idea of this journey was considered as decided.

While we were carrying on this discussion, and the impatient ardor I had to see Fanny was constantly interrupting my attention, darkness finally succeeded to light. I made this observation to his lordship. He understood what that signified. We started down the path to the place where we were awaited by the two ladies. The darkness was not so complete that objects could not very easily be made out. I caught sight of Fanny. Alas, in what a state did I sight her! What name shall I give to the feelings of affection that arose in me at a sight so dear and so desired! And how shall I express at the same time the sorrow and the compassion that swept over me?

Her women had made rather skillfully use of the linen and clothing I had sent to cover her with. But her head and feet were still naked. Her hair fell unkempt on her shoulders. She was seated near Mrs Riding, and her head was resting on her knees. As her eyes were closed, and it seemed she did not see us: Look at us, my daughter, said his lordship; it is Cleveland I bring to you. She glanced at me, and quickly lowered her eyes with a deep

sigh. I realized that she was not yet informed of my innocence; so with the most violent transports that anyone was ever agitated, I nevertheless remained cold and immobile on the outside, wanting even the temerity to throw myself at her feet. Her father, who easily surmised the reason for her silence and my timidity, took her by the hand [184] and lifted her to her feet. Say something nice to Cleveland, he said. We have unjustly accused him: he has always loved us. She rose, and then I fell to my knees before her in an act so passionate that she required no other interpretation of my sentiments. I started to kiss her feet; she made me stop, and bidding me softly to rise, I saw that her tears were flowing, and that she was trying to hold back her sighs and wails. His lordship, as moved as I by the state in which he saw her, told me to embrace her. Oh, my lord! I exclaimed, I ask only to be suffered at her knees! And falling a second time, I told her that I would relinquish that posture only with my life, unless she resumed her earlier feelings of affection for me. Never worry, the viscount answered me; I can answer for her love, and that we are all most satisfied to see you again.

Mrs Riding gave me the same assurance, embracing me tenderly. I addressed to each of the three, in turn, a hundred tender and moving words; and his lordship having sat down and motioning to us to do the same, I took my place at the feet of my sovereign, with more joy than had I sat on the greatest throne in the world.

I do not know how the heart can pass so suddenly from a given situation to the one most opposite: a single instant sometimes produces this strange vicissitude. Is there then so little difference between the inner movements that make for grief or joy? Or rather, is it not indeed the same movement, which assumes different names when it changes object and cause? For observe this: genuine joy has the same symptoms as excessive grief. It provokes tears, it takes away the use of the voice, it

causes a delicious languor, it compels the heart to contemplate the cause of its emotions; and of two men carried away the one by joy and the other by grief, I do not know which would be more willing to surrender the feeling he enjoys.²⁴⁸ In my case, though I had been unable to hold back my tears upon seeing the pitiful state in which I had found his lordship and his daughter, I realized that I was again shedding tears when I began to think of nothing but the happiness of seeing them again and to have reclaimed their esteem. My eyes were fixed on Fanny: the darkness could not make me lose a single one of her glances. I tenderly scolded her and her father for the dreadful sufferings which their unjust suspicions had caused me; I asked to be compensated for them by the redoubling of their affection: this they promised in the warmest way; and Fanny herself, with her father's permission, and moved by the expressions of my passion, did not shy away from my innocent caresses.

We spent part of the night in this situation, and confirming in ourselves the decision to trust ourselves to Iglou's guidance, we left several hours before daylight, in the direction of the valley of the Abaquis. The two ladies used our horses. We were continually about them, and so attentive to rendering them all kinds of services, that they suffered no other discomfort during seven nights' travel than the movement of the horses. We would stop at daybreak in some covered spot, and pass the time until evening discussing our adventures, or getting some rest and some refreshments. More than once I thought to propose to his lordship the fulfillment of his promises, that is, the execution of my marriage with his daughter. I spoke to Fanny about it. Who knows, I said to her, what heaven has in store for us? A misunderstanding exposed me to the risk of losing you, at a time when we feared nothing

²⁴⁸ This surprising equivalency between distress and joy is another instance of the quantification of emotions.

from fortune. Today, we are perhaps on the threshold of some new misfortune that could separate us for longer than ever. Oh, if I had to leave you without being yours!... Alas, I added after a moment's reflection, whether after or before the joy of being united with you, there is no longer any hope I could live without you. But what sweeter consolation could I wish, even in death, than to belong to you by the bonds of marriage? Dear Fanny, will you not consent? Have I something to combat in your heart?

She answered that it was entirely up to me; that she left it to me to provide for our common happiness, and that she desired it as much as I. Then we will not be long [185] in obtaining it, I replied; and immediately took it up with Mrs Riding, whom I begged to put this proposition to his lordship. She did not decline the task; but she made me fear encountering some resistance, since it is highly unlikely, she said, that he would consent to give his daughter to me without the ceremonies of the church. However, she found the opportunity to speak to him about it, and was surprised to hear him say, not only that he had already thought of it, but that his intention was to anticipate my request if we could enjoy a moment of peace among the Abaquis.

Our journey was completed quite successfully. When we were a certain distance from the principal village, Iglou suggested it were better he go in alone, to dispose his people in our favor, and prepare them to see us without fear or astonishment. I took him aside. Iglou, I said, you see with what confidence we put our lives and our freedom in your hands. I have answered for you before his lordship. Do not betray your master, and remember the kindness with which I have always treated you. He fell at my feet transported with joy, and protested that far from deserving that I should have the least apprehension of his loyalty, he would make me see not only that he was wholly devoted to us, but also that Europeans do not do justice to Americans when they assume them all to be wild brutes. He left us, promising he would not be

so slow as to make us impatient. Although his lordship had been the instigator of this journey, I observed that finding himself so close to being delivered to the discretion of an unknown and uncivilized people, he was not free from uneasiness. For my part, knowing my slave perfectly, I had no fear except that which is inseparable from love, even far from danger.

Iglou returned toward midday. But if he first showed himself alone, it was only by a precaution similar to the one he had wanted to take for his compatriots, in other words the fear of causing us some alarm had we had seen him too well accompanied. We heard his report eagerly. He told us with apparent satisfaction that we would soon know whether he was respected among his own. He only cautioned us about a few of their customs that might appear strange and discomfoting to us, and especially invited us not to take offense at the curiosity with which they would approach us to observe our manners and our faces. Before he had finished talking we saw a band of savages emerge from the village which was composed of not less than five or six hundred savages. Iglou bade us not take alarm. He told us it was by order of the chiefs, and in order to honor us, that all the inhabitants had assembled to come out to greet us.²⁴⁹ Indeed they came toward us. Halting about fifty paces off, they seemed to wait for Iglou come back and tell them how they should behave. I told him that he would oblige us by not allowing the whole group to come to us, and that it was enough for him to bring the leaders. While he going back toward them, his lordship ordered the small number of persons who made up his party to be very restrained with the savages, and always behave gently with them.

There were only twelve or thirteen who stepped out from the

²⁴⁹ We see later on that the total population of the tribe was five or six thousand.

tribe, and followed Iglou. We remained standing to receive them. Iglou having indicated his lordship to them as the person to whom they should pay their first respects, they greeted him by bending their bodies and crossing their arms in a hundred different ways. Next they paid me the same civilities, and addressed no fewer to the two ladies. This initial ceremony took place in silence. Finally Iglou spoke for them, and assured us on their behalf that they were very pleased to see us, and there was no service they were not prepared to render us. His lordship ordered him to reply that we were persuaded of their generosity and good faith, and on that basis we had not feared to come amongst them to seek their assistance and their friendship.

As soon as these compliments were over, and they seemed to take confidence in the open and sincere appearance we tried to manifest in our manners and on our faces, they [186] became much more familiar in their gestures. They kissed us several times on the forehead and on the chest. They looked at us with an appearance of astonishment, and I thought I perceived good sense and reflection in the manner in which they communicated their remarks to each other. There was nothing frightening in their countenance. All the savages in this part of America commonly stand tall and straight. They are dark, but without being either black or olive. The color of their skin is a sort of dark brown with which they are practically born, or which is maintained in the same state their whole life long. They are naked, except in the middle of the body. Their eyes burn with a certain fire that gives seems a good sign of their soul; and although they have in general something wild about their mein and in their eyes, one could not say it is ferocity, nor that their outward appearance is capable of causing fright. Most were armed with bows and arrows, and some had the head decorated with feathers that were stuck bizarrely in their hair.

However attentively they all were observing us, I noticed

two of them who attached themselves to me more particularly and were constantly renewing their friendly gestures. Iglou informed me that one was his father and the other his brother. He had already told them that I was his master, and that I had always treated him with an indulgence not commonly shown a slave; so they made every effort to express their gratitude to me. They maintained this disposition so constantly that they never tired subsequently of giving me new expressions of it.

Iglou proposed that we go to the village. We agreed. He had no sooner said the same to the other savages than, at a signal they made to those who had not yet approached us, they ran eagerly toward us. For a long time we had to lend ourselves to their greetings and gestures of friendship. There were some women among them, whom Iglou introduced to Fanny and Mrs Riding. One was his sister. He entreated me to induce Fanny to accept her services, and allow her to accompany her constantly. These women were the same color as their husbands, but there was something gentler about their face and eyes. Fanny treated Iglou's sister, whose name was Rem, with kindness. During that time we could hear a vague sound of words the articulation of which we could not make out; and as the signs of friendship were so often repeated that they were beginning to annoy, I let Iglou know that we would like to be taken to some place where we could be more tranquil. He told me that lodgings had been prepared for us where we would be the masters, and where no one would be allowed to enter except those we wished to receive; but that some concession needed to be made to the people's eagerness, whose behavior was usually determined by the first impressions. In order to heed this advice, we were obliged to allow ourselves to be carried into the village in an extremely bizarre fashion. Each of us was taken by two savages, who had us sit on their hands, which they held attached to each other by the fingers to form a sort of seat; and having us put our arms on either side on their shoulders and

around their necks, they carried us in this posture, with surprising ease, for more than five hundred paces to the village. We found very little order and clarity in their streets and houses. Their streets are not paved in any way, but are essentially sand, which makes them very inconvenient in summertime, because of the dust which the slightest breeze constantly stirs up. The houses are made of a mixture of wood, earth, and stones. They have no second storey, but on the other hand are so long and wide that a single one can usually house two or three families. Only the principal chiefs have their own houses. One of the most convenient was being held ready for us. We entered it joyfully, to be rid of the crowd of people; and although the chiefs had entered with us, they were obliging enough to withdraw once Iglou had told them on our behalf that we were in need of rest.

Indeed, fatigue and the anxieties of such a dangerous trip had made rest absolutely essential for us. Iglou had us brought, by several savages who had been [187] ordered to serve us, a large number of pelts from which he had beds composed for us, as much like European practices as he could. He gloried in having these services rendered to us, which were not only a sign to us of his affection, but also of his family's authority, and the consideration with which he was held among the Abaquis. He did not even alert us to another gallantry he had had prepared for us, and by which he meant pleasantly to surprise us. While he was telling us of some of his nation's customs, the door opened, and a dozen young girls entered with baskets full of roasted meats, and the best fruits of the region. They served them to us, if not magnificently, at least properly enough not to let us see anything distasteful. We could not refuse to eat some, although hunger was not our most pressing need. The savage girls danced during our meal. Iglou directed them, thinking this spectacle to be fine entertainment for us. Finally I let him know that we wished to be left alone.

Before we went to sleep, we talked together a long time about the state of our fortune. His lordship indicated that he was very pleased to have decided to come to the Abaquis. Everything we had seen so far of this nation answered perfectly to Iglou's promises. We were at least assured we could tranquilly rest there for a few days. As for the escort we would have wished to obtain to Carolina, we did not think that was a proposition to make in the first moments of our arrival. It was Iglou who was to work out this favor for us, and we were beginning to see very well that it would not be difficult for him to have it granted us. Everything is going along well, said his lordship after these reflections; and I do not know how we can adequately recognize the obligations we have to Cleveland. Such obliging words were an opening extremely advantageous to my desires. I replied at once in the way most apt to suggest their fervor; and his lordship, who understood the meaning of my reply, told me candidly that Fanny would be my wife when I was ready to have her. When I am ready! Oh God! I exclaimed, can there now be the slightest delay, and shall we put off to another day what can be carried out at once? You are going too fast, replied his lordship; let us wait at least until day comes to enlighten us. I have considered the fact, he added, that we have no minister; but this difficulty will not prevent me from giving you my daughter here. Priestly authority adds nothing essential to that of a father. My consent and my blessing will make up for the lack of church ceremonies, and we will regularize it later with a more canonical celebration.

This formal assurance put me in the agreeable situation I have been in my whole life long. I forgot all my misfortunes. I even flattered myself that I could never have any more, and I was about to be raised forever above fortune and any kind of reversal. My joy was, in truth, mixed with some sadness when I remembered the state to which Fanny was reduced and the miserable circumstances that would attend the happiest of all events. What a

celebration! What nuptial pomp! In the heart of America, amongst a savage people, deprived of life's most necessary comforts! I even feared lest Fanny, affected as she was by the excess of our misery, be less sensitive to our common happiness, and thereby withhold from me some of her tenderness and of the signs I dared expect from it. I communicated my fears to her. Her reply confirmed them. Alas, she said, what a strange destiny! What auspices for the future of our love and our marriage! She spoke these few words squeezing my hand, and shedding a few tears. I shuddered myself at such a sad presage: but rejecting this reaction as a weakness, I thought only of reassuring Fanny. Our affection, I said, and our constancy will triumph over the malignity of our fate. Nothing worries me if you love me. Oh, if I love you! she replied tenderly. Is it not another terrible omen for me, that you can doubt it? No, she added, with a redoubling of tears, I will not be happier than my mother. I had great difficulty dissipating her alarms and [188] her agitation, and I worked a part of the night at it, while his lordship and Mrs Riding spent it sleeping.

I was all the more disturbed by Fanny's anxiety and forebodings that I knew she had a mind of solid character, and was much superior to the petty fears of ordinary people. However, as I foresaw nothing, at least with respect to her and me, that should cause me genuine alarm, I did not fail to pass peacefully a night that was to be followed by the happiest day in my life. All the desires of my heart will be satisfied tomorrow, I said as I fell asleep; I shall obtain what I love; I shall be all the stronger against the blows of fortune. The study of wisdom shall henceforth be my sole occupation; in it I will always find enough resource to withstand woes of a certain nature. Indigence, for example, will never have the power to cause me a moment's distress. If I have a weak spot, it is the heart; and it is happily there that I will be least at risk, since tomorrow I marry Fanny and nothing will ever again be able to separate me from her, nor

from his lordship and Mrs Riding. Sleep overcame me in these thoughts, and I awoke the next day only to take them up again with renewed joy and contentment.

Iglou, who was informed of the immanent conclusion of my marriage, went into action, without telling me, to get his compatriots to celebrate it in spectacular fashion. I will skip this ridiculous festivity, which we were obliged to suffer in our own interests. We took into account only how useful our indulgence could be to us for winning the savages more and more to our side. We had to accept a feast that was given to us by the principals, and consent to sit at table with them. His lordship even took pleasure in having us observe their ceremonies. He left their direction to Iglou's father, who held one of the first ranks in the assembly. As soon as the supper was finished, that savage came to get me at my place, while his daughter also was taking Fanny by the hand. They had us both advance to the middle of the house, and all those present formed a circle about us. Rem, Iglou's sister, presented me with a sort of cord made from bark, and gave me to understand that I must take it to tie Fanny about the waist. She had me pull the knots tight. Next, handing Fanny the end of the same cord, which was quite long, she helped her pass it also around my body, and tie me just as she was tied herself. Thus we were bound to each other, at a distance of two or three paces. All the savages then approached in turn, and feigned one after the other to use all their skill to untie our knots. As each one withdrew, he indicated by a shake of the head and a few words that his attempt had been unsuccessful. Once they had tried to untie us by skill, they returned in the same order, and appeared to make great efforts to break the cord. This attempt meeting with no more success than the first, Iglou's father and his daughter led us over to his lordship, and told him, as we learned later from Iglou, that they had found his daughter bound as he saw her, that they had tried in vain to free her, and that he must see whether he could

succeed any better. They had placed a cord in his hands, which for sole response he was made to cast around his daughter and myself; he thus bound us tightly to each other, and besides the knots he made in his own cord, he added some to those we had made in our own. The savages showed their approval by loud cries. One of them then said, raising his voice, that since the efforts they had made to untie us had proven futile, and the father had himself contributed to tightening our bonds, there was surely nothing left on earth that could break them; that we could blame no one, since we had assumed them willingly; that it was quite clear it was the sun itself which had inspired that desire in us; that it would bless our union; and that we should promise to it in gratitude never to regret having formed it.²⁵⁰

The Abaquis worship the sun, and recognize no other divinity. It would have been necessary, to crown our marriage accord-

²⁵⁰ It is not known whether this ceremony comes from any specific source; it is clearly prefigured in any case by the shipwreck early in book II, where Cleveland ties himself to Fanny with a cord and prevents her father from intervening. A cord is used comparably to link master and guide in Defoe's *Captain Singleton* (1720). Actually, contemporary works in general describe the simplicity of Indian marriages as well as the ease with which the couple can separate afterwards; often they even note a complete lack of ritual, as for example Father Hennepin: "Indian marriage is not a civil contract, because they have no intention of committing themselves; but they join together, until such time as they are displeased with each other" (*Les Moeurs des sauvages, in Description de la Louisiane*, Paris, 1683, p. 30). Lahontan does, however, describe a ceremony rather similar to this one, where the wedding couple hold a rod between them in the presence of their eldest relatives (*Nouveaux Voyages dans l'Amérique septentrionale*, 1703, t. II, pp. 135–137 in the La Haye: L'honoré ed., 1715; indeed Prévost quotes this passage in *Histoire générale des voyages*, t. XV, p. 36, note 29).

ing to their customs, to attest that star as witness to the constancy [189] of our engagement. But having different religious principles, I chose that moment to swear eternal troth to Fanny in the presence of heaven and of her father; and she did at the same time the same thing with respect to me, by order of his lordship, who himself dictated her expressions. He had us add to this vow the promise to present ourselves before the altars as soon as the opportunity arose to do so, there to receive the blessing of a minister; and he then gave us his own with the strongest signs of affection and satisfaction. I fell to his knees, in a transport of joy and gratitude. I remained there for some time, unable to express myself. Such happiness and contentment seemed to me a dream. I asked myself a hundred times whether I was still that unhappy Cleveland accustomed to suffering and lamenting, and I thought I was forever reconciled with fortune.

After suffering for several moments the caresses and bizarre congratulations of the savages, we returned to our hut. His lordship, who had been most satisfied by the zeal of these savages, changed his resolution he had made not to ask them right away to give us an escort. He thought on the contrary that it would be in the initial fervor of their friendship that we would most easily obtain such assistance, and he was occupied with Iglou concerting the best way for making this proposition to them. I left that task to them, while I was occupied with my dear wife in satisfying my love and hers.

I was tender and passionate, and Fanny was equally so. Yet, believe it or not, during a night entirely devoted to the joy and delights of love, sadness and pain still made me feel their bitterness. Strange caprice of fate, which has never let me enjoy an unmixed pleasure! I held Fanny in my arms; I could not even have imagined a more delightful state: but at the time I was receiving her tenderest caresses, I noticed that she was uttering sighs that could not come from a happy and tranquil heart. I

reproached her for it, but she could not answer me well enough not to leave me much disquiet. I would have blamed her indifference, had I been able to doubt her love; but of it I had proofs on which nothing could cast suspicion. I even remarked that she was grieved to have allowed me to discover something of her malaise, and tried to make me form a different opinion of her sighs. I urged her in vain to explain, to me who worshipped her, to me who wanted to live only to please her. She in turn protested that I was demeaning her affection, and forced me to bottle up my agitations in my heart. But they nonetheless subsisted, and I was only too aware that something was wanting to felicity, and consequently to mine.

Let us not anticipate on this new source of pain. Although I have hardly experienced worse ones, they have been preceded by so great a number of other misfortunes that by following simply the order of my life's events, I will always have enough material to sustain my readers' attention.

The new assurances I received of Fanny's affection were so persuasive that, combining them with past proofs, I did not think I could doubt it for a moment without doing her an injustice. Thus I concluded I should attribute the signs of her sadness only to the poor situation of our fortune, and a hundred inconveniences that all our zeal could not prevent her from feeling. I knew, moreover, that her basic humour was a gentle melancholy which rarely left her, even in the happiest situation; and far from being put off by this character, it was very much to my liking, since it always disposes a heart to tenderness and faithfulness. I therefore merely reminded her that it was not to that she should disguise her worries, since she was well assured that my very life would never be spared in order to dissipate or anticipate them. She had the prudence not to allow his lordship to perceive anything of this little quarrel. We learned in the morning that Iglou had chosen that day to propose our departure to the savages and ask of them favor we

were expecting of them. There were no reasons to keep us from hoping for it, so we were counting on [190] good news upon his return. He returned nevertheless with a demeanor that made us fear his mission had not succeeded. I have hastened to come alone, he said sadly to his lordship, to acquaint you in advance with the subject that is going to bring here our principal chiefs. I explained your desires to them, and the intention you have of returning without delay to Carolina. They appeared aggrieved by your decision, which will so soon deprive them of the pleasure of seeing you. However, once I had explained that your business absolutely requires it, and that you will regard their consent as a proof of their friendship, they all readily agreed to allow you the freedom you wish. As for the escort, it will be granted, as numerous as you ask, and the desire to be part of it is already so widespread that every man is eagerly soliciting to obtain the honor. I thought the matter happily concluded, Iglou continued, and was about to return to tell you about it, when one of the eldest of the tribe put forward a proposal that will cause you much displeasure. It is to allow you to leave, to be sure; but to keep here my master and mistress. Iglou meant Fanny and me. This prospect, he added, was received by everyone with cries of joy and applause. I did my best in vain to make them change it, by arguing that you would be reluctant to consent to it. They did not listen to me, and they will all soon be here to declare it to you in person.

This account caused us all the astonishment you can imagine. I could not help reproaching Iglou for getting us into this dilemma, and asking him what had become of his good faith and that of his compatriots. The poor boy replied to me only with his tears, which showed his sincerity and his despair. The savages appeared a short moment later. They had Iglou explain their demand to his lordship; and before he could answer, they surrounded Fanny and me, to express to us the joy they felt at keeping us among them. I disengaged myself from their hands, and

going over to his lordship, I embraced and hugged him in my arms, trying to get them to understand by my gestures that I did not wish to be separated from him. We dictated to Iglou everything we could think of to sway or persuade them. It did not seem to me they even paid attention to the strength of our reasons. There was now a great clamor of people dancing about us, who kissed us affectionately on the forehead and the chest. His lordship, understanding that it would be difficult to get them to change their minds, chose to relay to them that he asked for some time to think over their request. They withdrew after repeated indications that we wished to be left alone.

It would be difficult to imagine our uncertainty and our distress. We held council over this strange event. It did not seem there were two choices, for abandoning his lordship to remain among the Abaquis was not even something to be deliberated over. But the problem was to find means of avoiding it. Iglou confessed to us in tears that the savages never revoked a decision they have once taken with such joy and unanimity, and that it was neither by reasoning nor by entreaties that we could hope to sway them. He told me they had taken a liking to Fanny and me. They intended to give us a strong indication of that by keeping us there, even against our will. You will obtain from them, Iglou added, everything you want from their zeal and friendship; they will grant you absolute authority in the nation: you will govern them.

This manner of explaining things made us wonder for a few moments whether he was not deceiving us, and if he was not acting in concert with his compatriots. But we did better justice to his good faith when we saw he was ready to follow the resolution upon which his lordship decided. It was to sneak away quietly, and set out during the night on the road to Carolina, at the risk of falling back into all the dangers we thought we had avoided by coming to the Abaquis. Our two horses were still at my disposal. The only problem was for provisions, which we feared we could

not [191] easily manage to procure. Iglou promised to bring all his skill to bear on the question. This plan made us more tranquil. But it was easy to see from that very day that the savages had some inkling of our intentions, and that they were observing us. We learned from Iglou some time later that twenty of them had been delegated to keep an eye on our movements day and night, and that under pretext of being helpful they would remain without interruption in the hut adjacent to ours. This news caused his lordship such distress and impatience that, if the small number of servants he had remaining had not been naked and unarmed, he would have thought of breaking out by force. But I was the only one who had a sword and two pistols, and was not well supplied in powder. Our misfortune seemed to us almost without remedy, or at least we believed we could expect it only from chance, or from passing time.

His lordship was inconsolable. Besides the boredom of staying and the discomforts of our situation, he was constantly reflecting that this sort of captivity rendered him useless to the king's business. Nothing distressed him as much as this thought. He spend a whole month contemplating our flight, or soliciting the savages by every means he thought best chosen to shake them. Iglou too tried as best he could. Finally, seeing no likelihood of succeeding, and foreseeing that the difficulties would only become greater in the future, because the habit of seeing us would be a still stronger bond to the Abaquis, he made a decision that quite astounded us. I have decided, he said one day, to leave you for a while, and accept the escort of the savages under Iglou's leadership. I will leave you all my servants. My absence will not last long. If I succeed in Carolina, I can easily put myself in a situation to come back strong enough to free you from this prison; if my enterprises do not turn out well, you shall soon see me here to share it with you. After all, he continued, I see no danger for you while I am away. It is out of affection that these savages are

keeping you. Their character is quite humane. I am going to attach them even more strongly to you by offering willingly what they have demanded, and making much of this sign of my esteem and confidence. Conduct yourselves gently with them; enter into their manners and their customs; they will continue to respect you, as they have done so far. The more I think on it, he added, the more I find consolation in the present necessity of leaving you here without me: you will be safer here than if you were following me in the new expedition I will undertake.

I had nothing to oppose to his lordship's reasoning as far as Fanny was concerned; for I was persuaded by my constantly increasing knowledge of the savage's humor that there was nothing to fear among them, and I could well conceive that except for certain discomforts, she would have less to suffer among the Abaquis than during a difficult journey full of dangers. But I found myself divided between his lordship whom I would have preferred to follow, and my wife whom I could not abandon. Shall I see you go, said I to the dear viscount, without knowing what I may hope for the success of your plans, nor even for the security of your life? You are about to expose yourself to a hundred dangers I will not share. We will not even be informed of the places where fortune will take you. What a life are we going to lead, amidst the worries that will constantly beset us? He replied that we would have him constantly present, she in me, and I in her; that we two made up the better part of himself; and that we consequently ought not to doubt that he would bring back the other part to us as quickly as he possibly could, to join it to that part he was leaving behind him. Fanny's tears had no more force than my objections to stop him. He even ordered us absolutely to make no further objection to his decision, and entrusted Iglou almost at once to request the escort from the savages.

His request, and the promise to leave us at the village, were received by these savages with unbelievable joy. They left to his

lordship the choice of subjects and number. A hundred men seemed to him sufficient. He relied on Iglou to choose them, and wishing [192] no further delay than what was required for his men to prepare their weapons and provisions, he lost no time setting forth as soon as that was accomplished. Only with the most urgent insistence did we prevail on him to take with him at least half his servants. He left us Youngster, in whom he had great confidence, and two other Englishmen who had been with him since Rouen. His farewells, and the moving way in which he entreated these good people to look out for our safety, moved us deeply. I with no less fervor commended to Iglou the life and interests of my dear father and my dear lord. We watched him go. Alas, would I had the right to go along! I would have spilt all my blood to defend him. I would have drawn to me alone all the misfortunes that threatened him. It would have cost me nothing but my life, and that would have been the least of all the losses I was destined to sustain.

However I remained responsible for a precious trust that was to make her dear to me. Fanny, I said to my wife when I found myself alone with her and Mrs Riding, it is now we will see whether love is enough to make two hearts tranquil and happy. We no longer have any other resource. Mrs Riding will have the consolations of friendship, but not those of love. She responded by a sort of involuntary reaction: Ah, if only I were at least quite assured that you love me! She added nothing, and I noticed that Mrs Riding had signaled her with a glance not to explain herself further. I was content to reply with my usual affection that she should not complain of her fate, if she could be happy by the possession of something of which she had such perfect assurance. But, as far as I was from suspecting the slightest enigma in her expression, I did not fail to question Mrs Riding alone about it, and to ask her if she understood anything about Fanny's doubts. That lady tried to turn away my anxiety with a flattering reply,

which did not prevent me from seeing in her manner and turn of phrase a semblance of constraint that could have worried me if my mind easily lent itself to suspicions. But being unable to conceive any reasonable ones, I expressed no eagerness to be more exactly informed.

I note thus, on each occasion, the only insights I have ever had about one of the most terrible events of my life.²⁵¹ Fanny was tender and faithful; but with those qualities which made her capable of a great passion, there was an essential one she lacked in order to be happy where love is concerned. My happiness was bound up in hers. Thus we were both destined, she to make me unhappy without meaning to, and I to be unhappy undeservedly.

The affection of the savages became so lively once they felt sure that our consent to remain with them was voluntarily, that they were forever busy giving us continual proofs of it. Their first attention was to outdo each other bringing into our hut anything that could serve to beautify it. Our walls and even the floor of our rooms were covered with pelts. Since the heat of the sun seemed to bother us, they transplanted a few trees of considerable thickness and put them around our house to furnish us shade; and seeing that we were not at all disposed to imitate their manner of dress, or more exactly to go nearly naked like them, they made us a gift of a good number of pelts, the finest there were, from which

²⁵¹ That is, the only insight he had at the time the event took place: Cleveland will indeed ultimately have everything explained to him, but up to a certain point the narrative maintains the chronological order of his awareness of things so that the reader will fully understand that, as a player, he was in the dark. As in *Manon Lescaut*, and as will be the case in *Histoire d'une Grecque moderne*, woman remains essentially unknowable; the lover-narrator relates all that he knows, but his testimony remains ambiguous unless the object of his attentions is allowed sooner or later to speak for herself.

we made very comfortable clothing. Rem, Iglou's sister, was constantly at my wife's side. Her brother had instructed her on his departure not to forsake her for a minute. She was very clever and remembered things easily, so in little time she learned enough English to understand us. I also applied myself to learning the language of the Abaquis, and succeeded in that sooner than I had expected.²⁵² This competence was a new bond that attached the savages to us even more. I had no sooner started expressing myself with some facility in their tongue, than I could hardly thereafter obtain a moment's solitude and freedom. They were eager at all hours of the day to come see me and talk with me. Their surprise appeared extreme [193] when they heard coming from my mouth something that corresponded with their notions, or which inspired in them new ones. They looked at each other in wonderment. I gave them some advice which they found so useful that they gradually acquired the habit of undertaking nothing without consulting me. I attended all their assemblies; and however little I was attracted by their entertainments, I had to attend them too: they always had me take the seat of honor. In short, I easily recognized that my influence would only grow continually greater and greater with my ease of expression, and that it would not even be difficult for me, as Iglou had predicted, to organize and govern them.²⁵³

²⁵² As with the Man of Quality, who had in short order learned Turkish (*Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, p. 65), Cleveland in two or three months perfectly learns the Abaqui language; Mrs Riding will later learn Nopand in a mere six weeks (book XIV).

²⁵³ For Prévost, as for almost all his contemporaries, the superiority of the white man in all moral and intellectual realms is so obvious that savages themselves recognize it spontaneously. An episode of Marivaux's *Les Effets surprenants de la sympathie* (1713) offers some parallels with this one: Emander (Frédélingue), on a savage island, has only to heal a few illnesses and make fire to be "blindly obeyed" and

That was an advantage that decidedly did not appeal to my ambition. However, two months having already gone by since his lordship's departure, and the uneasiness I had from receiving no news of him not allowing me to live tranquilly, I decided to put the Abaquis' disposition to the test. I shared with Fanny this decision and my reasons. She approved one, which was the desire to acquire enough authority over the savages to get them to undertake whatever seemed to me to coincide with his lordship's interests, or at least what was necessary to enlighten us on the outcome of his journey. As for the second, which came from my affection for that dear wife, and which was simply the purpose of insuring us more and more against the inconstancy of the savages, she would have preferred, she said, that I had chosen a means suited merely to maintaining them in the sentiments they had had for us up till then, but which would not have been able to attach them to us more. Her remark was quite correct; for to judge the future by what had happened to us, we ought to expect that it would never be easy for us to get out of their hands, and the difficulties could not fail to increase along with the growth of their attachment. I nevertheless replied to Fanny that distant fears should not win out over what would surely be the present utility of my authority for his lordship; that by becoming, if it was possible, the principal chief of the Abaquis, I was going to equip myself to render service not only to her father, but perhaps also to king Charles; that this nation was populous and stalwart; that if I succeeded in making them capable of discipline, I did not doubt I could form of them a considerable army, and perhaps make myself feared in America by assuming their leadership; that it was certain at least that we had no better choice open to us to discover what had become of his lordship, and employ ourselves usefully to succor him.

soon elected their chief (*Œuvres de jeunesse*, Pléiade, pp. 285–288).

Besides the love and confidence that did not allow me to disguise anything from Fanny, I had a good reason for let her know of my designs. I had noticed that one of the most influential savages of the nation, and whose suffrage usually carried the balance in all public deliberations, became very tame in her presence. The reader will easily believe that that it was not jealousy that had made me so perceptive; but I was persuaded that if this good Abaqui, whose name was Moou, undertook to induce the others to choose me as their chief, he would obtain their consent without opposition. I had already sounded out old Iglou²⁵⁴ who too was highly respected in the nation, and had found in him an unreserved devotion to my interests. I therefore asked Fanny to find a way to suggest shrewdly to Moou how important it was for the welfare of the Abaquis to take advantage of all the wisdom I had brought from Europe. She carried out this mission so well that Moou at once espoused all our views, and gave himself not a moment's rest until he had inspired the same sentiments in his companions. He recounted to my wife the success of his efforts; and in order apparently to claim credit for his zeal, he appeared at our door two days later, without altering us to his intention, accompanied by the majority of the inhabitants, who were uttering my name with great cries, and inviting me through his mouth to assume the government of the nation. I affected to manifest some uncertainty toward this proposal. It served to redouble the savages' fervor. They carried it so far that they would certainly have used [194] force, if I had not spoken up to inform them that I was accepting their offers. I added, however, that I imposed one condition. As I will undertake, I said, to spare nothing for the public welfare and to make the nation happy and flourishing, it seems to me just that you too should commit yourselves by a

²⁵⁴ Similarly, in *Robinson Crusoe*, Friday's father is called "old Friday" by the narrator.

solemn vow to respect and obey me. They answered only by acclamations that signified consent. I then promised unreservedly to employ all my wisdom and all my efforts to establish a sage government that would soon distinguish the Abaquis among all the other peoples of America. I called a general assembly for the morrow, and dismissing the multitude, invited the principal chiefs to come into my hut to confer on several items bearing on our common interests.

In accepting the authority you offer me, I said to them, I intend it be absolute. I will never demand anything, I added, without letting you know the justice of it: but my regulations must be precisely followed. Thereupon, I asked them what was the form of their oaths, and by what bonds I could be sure of keeping their obedience.²⁵⁵ They told me that, the sun being their all-powerful and awesome divinity, I ought not to fear they would ever be tempted to break their oaths after attesting it; that they would too much dread the fate of some of their fathers whom the sun had punished with great severity for violated their oaths. They then told me various stories, full of absurdities and contradictions such as imposture invents and superstition accredits in all false religions. There was no question of undeceiving them.²⁵⁶ On

²⁵⁵ In the same way, captain Siden, taking over command for the shipwrecked passengers of the *Dragon d'or*, posed as his first condition a oath of absolute obedience by all (*Histoire des Sévarambes*, Amsterdam, 1715, t. I, p. 20).

²⁵⁶ These are factors identified by Fontenelle in *Histoire des oracles*; but the important role there was that of priests, whereas here there are no priests. Cleveland, acting as a political leader rather than missionary, is always reluctant to “undeceive” his subjects, which is exactly what certain of Prévost’s critics objected to. Prévost does not follow the example of La Hontan, whose *Dialogues avec un sauvage* (1703) gave the better role to the savage, who in effect demolishes his interlocutor’s arguments; such will be Diderot’s method in his *Supplément au voyage*

the contrary, I thought I could first derive some considerable advantages from their simplicity and their error, postponing until sometime later to introducing them to more veritable notions of what they should fear and worship.

One further precaution that I took was to ask them whether they had amongst their neighbors any people as docile and humane as they, which we could invite to merge under my government with the Abaqui nation so as to constitute a larger state, and one consequently more suited to taking on a sound and durable form. I was already informed that the number of Abaquis did not exceed six thousand, even including several small villages with friendly ties to them, and which were located not too far from the principal town where we were.²⁵⁷ They replied that they no neighbors except the Rouintons²⁵⁸; that far from being able to unite or join some commerce with them, they were such a ferocious and cruel people that all one could expect from them was hostilities and injury; that they had always been declared enemies of the Abaquis, for the simple reason that humanity and barbarity cannot be reconciled; that seldom a year went by but there was some bloody combat that weakened one nation or the other; that the most recent advantages having been won by the Abaquis, their cruel enemies had taken such great losses that it did not seem they

de Bougainville. But in *Cleveland* the protagonist has nothing to learn by reasoning with the savage.

²⁵⁷ Mentor, in Fénelon's *Télémaque* (book X), begins his advice to Idoménée on the government of Salente with a census of the city and surrounding territory. Prévost is freely inspired in this part of his novel by both *Télémaque* and other utopian literature.

²⁵⁸ An invented name, it appears, the traits of this tribe also being borrowed from various relations of the savage and cruel mores of the Indians. Michèle Duchet does however find a village named *Rouinsac*: see *Anthropologie et histoire au siècle des Lumières* (Paris: Maspéro, 1971), p. 32 n. 45.

would likely soon recover; but that those who escaped the carnage, breathing nothing but vengeance, were doubtless waiting impatiently until their strength was rebuilt to begin the war anew.²⁵⁹

This reply gave me the opportunity to ask my Abaquis how it could be that their nation should be so small, as well as most of those that inhabit this vast part of the American continent. That was an observation I had already been surprised to make several times; for it was difficult for me to conceive how a healthy and vigorous people, which had long inhabited a valley where the air and fruits were excellent, could have multiplied so little that one could scarcely count five or six thousand persons.²⁶⁰ They satisfied me with two reasons. One was the almost continual war they sustained with their neighbors, which generally ended only with the almost complete extinction of one of the two nations. The vanquished sometimes required more than a half-century to repair their losses. I learned subsequently that this is true of almost all the other American peoples. The Abaquis replied, secondly, [195] that it was a sort of law among them not to extend beyond the confines of their valley, since all the surrounding region was sandy and barren; so that if it happened that their youth became too numerous and the nation multiplied to excess, they got rid of all their surplus members by sending them afar to seek some new

²⁵⁹ John Lawson writes that “the continual wars these savages maintain, one nation against another, which sometimes hold for some ages, killing and making captives, till they become so weak thereby, that they are forced to make peace for want of recruits, to supply their wars” (*A New Voyage to Carolina*, London, 1709, p. 225).

²⁶⁰ For Cleveland as for the whole period, it is essential to the prosperity of a state that the population be growing. Thus, fifty years earlier, the *Histoire des Sévarambes* cites as proof of its sound government the population increase from 800,000 to two million in the 38 years of Sévarias’s reign (part 3).

land where they could settle.

Thus I made use of part of the day obtaining from these good savages all the clarifications that could be useful to the role I had accepted. I also engaged them in particular to support my undertakings by promising to consult them often as I had that day, and to manifest at all times my esteem and confidence in them. I especially singled out Moou and old Iglou. It was to them that I entrusted the preparation of the next day's ceremony. Iglou had much good sense, and I had noted on several occasions that he was capable of reflection, which is not common among the savages. Moreover, the attachment which his son had to me, and his entreaty to him on his departure to look after my interests, made him extremely devoted to my service. I decided to keep him constantly by my side, and to leave to him, like a kind of prime minister, the oversight of many things which I could not administer myself. As for Moou, whose character was less peaceable and judicious, I had in mind to make a different use of him, which would be suited to his inclinations. I owed him some distinction, not only for the work he had done for me, but also because he was sufficiently respected and bold to be feared if I had neglected him, and to render me great services if I could make him acquire a degree of attachment for my person.

After spending the rest of the time reflecting alone on the order I wished to establish in the nation, I went the next day to the place of assembly, which was a broad prairie some distance from the village. I was accompanied by the principal savages. I wondered along the way at the inclination all men have to flatter anything they hold superior to themselves. It was not to considerations of self-interest or ambition that I could attribute the savages' eagerness to approach me, and the efforts they made to please me. Innocent of honors and wealth, they neither hoped for nor desired them. It was therefore a natural reaction in these savages, caused by that one thought, that they were to see me

raised above them, and to a degree of grandeur they were already beginning to fear and respect, even though it was their doing. I hold with fondness to this observation, because I find in this penchant of men for submission and dependency a clear sign of the power of a sovereign Being, who has made them the way they are, and who signals them in this way not only that they have a creator and a master, but also that it is towards him that they must direct their first respects and their principal worship.

The assembly of savages, which awaited me impatiently, raised cries to heaven when they saw me appear. Moou and old Iglou had put order in the ranks. They had prepared a place for me where I could be seen by everyone. I had consented, on leaving my hut, to letting my head be covered with feathers. I carried a bow on my shoulder, and a quiver by my side; and as I was to be seen for the first time by a good number of Abaquis, and other smaller populations who, as I have said, made up a single body with them, and had also come from their villages for the swearing ceremony, I tried to carry myself so as to inspire in them the opinion I wanted them to have of me. The cries ceased the minute I made known by various signs that I intended to speak. My speech was prepared, and fashioned in a way to appeal to them. I stated the proposition that had been made to me that I assume the responsibility of governing them. I made a point of my hesitating to consent, and the repeated urging which had led me to change my mind. It was not disinclination, I said, which had made me so hard to persuade; I sincerely desired their welfare; I wanted to [196] make them happy, peaceable, to make them feared and respected by their enemies the Rouintons; but I feared that being accustomed to dependence on no one, they would not easily lend themselves to obedience: I could not bring myself to accept the authority they offered me, unless they swore by the sun to carry out my wishes; and I feared exposing them to cruel punishments if they should break their oath. Thereupon I reported all the

mythical examples I had been told of the terrible effects of the sun's wrath. I added others, with details chosen to frighten them, and I gave all the force I possibly could to my tone of voice, my gestures, and my glances. My principal purpose was to make them regard the oath they were about to take as an awesome ceremony. I had no other bond by which to hold them, and I was persuaded by what I had been told the day before that it was the only means of rendering them capable of discipline. I therefore concluded by asking them whether they were prepared to swear obedience to me, in other words to expose themselves to the most dreadful punishments if they ever should fail to respect my orders.

I had expressed myself with such force on the matter of the punishments they had to fear that I worried as I finished my speech lest the impression of them be too vivid, and cool their ardor a bit. The entire assembly remained silent for a time, as if it were suspended between desire and fright. However, having renewed my question in a much gentler voice, they again took courage, and manifested to me by their cries that they could not wait to see me their chief and governor.

Then I signaled to Iglou and the principals to begin the ceremony. I expected to see them raise some altar, and accompany their oath with some idolatrous, superstitious practices; but I was pleased to observe that nothing was more simple than the cult they rendered to the sun. They had neither priests, nor religious apparatus. It all consisted only in recognizing the sun as their divinity, and each was free to worship it in his own manner, without adhering to any method, and even without ever assembling for that purpose.²⁶¹ I understood that they would conse

²⁶¹ This passage does not prove that Prévost buys into the myth of the atheistic savage. The relations of America often underscore the Indians' superstitiousness but Father Hennepin asserts that many of them

quently have no particular formula for an oath; and in order to instill some sort of uniformity in what they were about to do, I dictated a few words to Iglou of what I wanted to hear them pronounce one after the other. The principals approached me, and obediently repeated the same words after Iglou. All the others came in turn without sound or disorder. I wondered at their modesty, and could only explain it as a sign of their respect and veneration for the sun. The ceremony lasted the better part of the day, with the same order and the same silence. I had a better opinion than ever of the character of so religious a people, and did not doubt I could succeed in civilizing them and governing them well.

What persuaded me even more that their restraint during the ceremony came from a real base of religion, was the noise that followed their silence as soon as it was over. It would be difficult for me to express their transports and the signs of their joy. I could not find a moment to speak to them further, as I had in mind to do. I was escorted back to the village with such tumult and such extraordinary expressions of affection that the first use I was obliged to make of my authority was to make them stop. I closed myself into my hut with my family, made uneasy by the length of my absence, and I required of my new subjects that they let me take a little rest.

Youngster advised me, to seal the establishment of my power, to choose with Iglou's direction a certain number of reliable and loyal savages, to serve as my guard, and be used to execute my wishes. I did not approve this suggestion. I have had only two goals, I told him, in accepting the government. The first

recognize no divinity: "They have no outward ceremony to show that they worship any divinity. We observe no sacrifice, nor temple, nor priest, no any other sign of religion" (*Nouveau Voyage d'un pays plus grand que l'Europe*, Utrecht: Antoine Schouten, 1698, p. 138).

is to make myself useful to his lordship, and if possible to the king's business. I do not see how guards could make this first goal any easier. The other is to spend my time, as much [197] as the first will allow, civilizing these poor savages, leading them out of the darkness of idolatry, and make them accept some notions of ethics and discipline; again I do not see how guards could abet this project. In a word, I said to Youngster, my ambition here is not domination, and even less tyranny. If heaven condemns me to stay longer than I wish with the Abaquis, it will not be by my pride and my sternness that I will make them feel my authority. I shall strive on the contrary to contribute to their happiness and peace. But if I do need your advice on something, I added, it is on the means rendering service without delay to his lordship, and in the first instance of ascertaining what has become of him. Let us take appropriate measures to that end, before we require anything of the savages.

We debated this important matter for a long while. Mrs Riding and my wife, who were in on our conversation, gave me their thoughts as well. Youngster volunteered to undertake the journey to Carolina. But he had no idea how to get there. It hardly seemed likely he could find it without a guide. I had already inquired carefully whether there was someone in the village who knew more about it. The Abaquis rarely ventured outside their valley, and the long travels of my slave Iglou were regarded among them as something unexampled. It seemed then that only a miracle from heaven could get us around this dilemma. I had some knowledge of astronomy, and it could help me to find our position relative to Carolina; but the practice of those rules is always difficult and uncertain. The relative distances between the celestial bodies and the circles and lines corresponding to them on Earth can only be known in a very general way; and in spaces as vast and empty as the American countryside, the slightest error could not fail to produce a significant deviation. However, seeing

no surer means, I finally decided to take five or six of the hardest and boldest savages, to flatter them with all the hopes that could motivate them, and send them toward the sea, at the risk of whatever might happen to them. Here was my reasoning. Although it was not naturel to hope they would head straight for Carolina, it could happen that a favorable coincidence would lead them there. But supposing they missed it by as far as I could fear, I could not see how, by heading constantly toward the sea according to the directions I would give them, they could fail at least to reach, either Virginia if they deviated too much to the left, or the Tegesta peninsula if they angled too far to the right.²⁶² Now in one of these two territories, they must inevitably find some European colony. It was my intention to entrust them with a letter, written in three different languages, that is, in English, French, and Spanish,²⁶³ these three nations being the only ones that have settlements on this immense stretch of coastline. My letter was to contain a civil greeting by which I would entreat those to whom it might be presented to treat my emissaries favorably, and instruct me by a word of reply as to what they might have learned with regard to the person of his lordship, and the outcome of his enterprise. This plan seemed to me all the more possible that there did not appear that, from the valley of the Abaquis to the sea, there should much more than one hundred leagues. I gauged this from the distance I had covered from Riswey to Powhatan, and from this last city to the place where we now were.²⁶⁴

²⁶² This passage shows again that *Carolina* seems to designate vaguely the whole region between the two cartographic poles, Florida and Virginia.

²⁶³ Although Cleveland does not know Spanish, Fanny is half Spanish and might have played a role in the writing.

²⁶⁴ This confirms the approximate identification of the valley of the Abaquis with the sources of the New River, from which the distance to

Youngster, who had an intense attachment to his lordship, insisted on going with the six savages. But failing to see how he could help make their mission succeed better, and sensing that occasions might arise where his assistance would be necessary to Fanny, I absolutely insisted he remain with her. As soon as I had settled on that decision, I sent for Iglou, whom I ordered to choose me six of his finest and most intelligent Agaquis. He lost no time bringing them to me. I did everything I could to stimulate their zeal and courage. They deemed themselves so honored by my confidence that they seemed to me ready to undertake anything. I began that very day to give them the instructions needed for their journey; and as I had misgivings about [198] their comprehension, I kept them another two or three days to go over my lessons several times. They finally departed with my letter, and all they could carry by way of provisions. Their departure relieved our uneasiness, and we strove by our fervent prayers to persuade heaven to bless their journey.

The life we lived subsequently among the Abaquis would not have been without amenities, if we had been in a state to enjoy them. But my wife, ever prey to a secret sorrow, did not appear to react to anything that could serve to diminish it. I could not be tranquil seeing her so dispirited. As I have already said, I had no misgivings about her love. Her heart was full of me. There is no artifice which can fool a tender and passionate husband. I was constantly by her side: could the slightest chill have escaped a love as vigilant as mine? No, she worshipped me; and that was the subject of my despair, that with such tenderness she still seemed to desire something the want of which gravely distressed her. The futility of all the efforts I had made to extract from her a confession of her troubles quite inclined me to believe that tem-

the James River estuary as well as to the Carolina coast would be as the bird flies about a hundred leagues (400 km).

perament had something to do with it,²⁶⁵ or perhaps too much sensitivity to our ill fortune: but I still could not keep from perceiving quite often indications that gave me to understand something else. If I tenderly chided her for her melancholy, if I tried to dissipate it by protestations of love and redoubled caresses, I had almost always the sadness of seeing tears come to her eyes. She seemed at first to look at me lovingly, and her eyes then remained fixed curiously and anxiously on me, as if she were seeking to discover in mine something which she wanted but did not find. The fear of displeasing her kept me from questioning her too insistently: but her distress nevertheless went straight to my heart; and I was all the more pitiable that, not even understanding its nature, I could give neither explanation nor limits to my own.

I hoped that the attention I was going to devote to the government of the savages, and to which I invited her to add her own, could help get her to a more tranquil plane. I shall look after, I said, the regulation of everything that concerns the men; and your occupation, with Mrs Riding, will be to instill the order that seems to you most appropriate among their women. She agreed to assume that function. I indeed left it entirely in her hands, and had the entire nation notified by public cry that it was she whom all the women must obey her as their mistress and governess.

I thought that I, for my part, should begin the execution of the plan I had made for establishment of public safety. This item was not less important for us than for the Abaquis. I had a horrendous notion of the Rouintons, from the account I heard daily of their cruelty. Those inhuman savages were only ten leagues away from us. The desire to attack us could come upon them any time. My first thought was to get us at least to the point of not fearing their surprises. I had a trench fifteen feet deep dug around the village. I required all the savages to contribute to it, not excepting

²⁶⁵ In other words his melancholy.

the women, and I took my own turn at the work to spur them on. This project, with six thousand persons working on it constantly, was completed in less than a fortnight.²⁶⁶ Thus we were surrounded by water on all sides. I did not even leave in place a path for communication; but I had mobile bridges placed here and there, and made several savages responsible for always withdrawing them at nightfall. The entire nation appeared extremely satisfied by this invention. Nothing shows better the dullness of American savages than to see they lack industry, even for their own preservation, although nature alone ought to be enough to inspire some in them. In this they do scarcely better than animals: in other words, their only method in war consists in hurling themselves artlessly at each other, and fighting furiously until the one who gets the worst of it or tires the quickest is forced to yield and take flight.

[199] Before undertaking anything for the Abaquis' welfare, I had long contemplated the outward changes that it seemed to me first appropriate to make in their form of life, and their manner of clothing themselves. It is something so shocking for a European to see them naked, men and women, with almost no respect for modesty, that I had decided without reflection to oblige them to cover their bodies; and I saw little difficulty in it, not only because they were supplied with an unbelievable abundance of tiger and leopard pelts, and of other animals they killed in their hunts,²⁶⁷ but because they were accustomed to wearing them

²⁶⁶ This monumental public work lends to this episode of the novel a quasi-epic dimension, as if to mark the great reign of Cleveland. Prévost probably has in mind, as a model, the construction of the levee before La Rochelle in 1627–1628 (although it had taken several months): it was said that Richelieu, to encourage the workers, himself participated.

²⁶⁷ There are in truth neither tigers nor lions in the region, as the better naturalists of the time make clear; Mark Catesby, in his magnificent

during the winter, and the only question was getting them to maintain that habit through the summer. However, when I came to consider this intention more particularly, I was led by other reasons to change my thinking. The motive of modesty, the only one I had for wishing they were covered, did not seem as powerful to me as the unavoidable drawbacks that would soon follow on the institution of clothing. In truth, the shame of being naked is not a natural feeling. It is a prejudice of education and a simple effect of habit.²⁶⁸ I had certain and present evidence of this in my savages themselves, who did not blush at their nudity, and considered this custom as something indifferent. Why take from them that innocent simplicity in which they were accustomed to live? On the contrary, it seemed to me that they were rather following in this matter the forthright inspiration of nature. It warned them by the bitterness of the cold that they must necessarily cover themselves in wintertime; and the heat made them regard their

Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands, observes that the only felines to be found are the panther (puma) and the wild cat (London: Catesby, t. 1, 1731, pp. xxiv–xxv). The presence of these species is, however, in keeping with what was found in less scientific sources: John Lawson asserts he saw a tiger in Carolina (*History of North Carolina*, éd. cit., p. 123), and Richard Moine attributes to Virginia “a large supply of wild beasts such as lions, bears, leopards, tigers, wolves, and dogs” (*L’Amérique anglaise*, Amsterdam: Abraham Wolfgang, 1688, p. 241).

²⁶⁸ Relations of America often mention the nakedness of certain tribes in hot climates; Father Hennepin for example asserts that in Mississippi he saw pre-nubile girls run shamelessly naked (*Nouveau Voyage*, ch. XX: “Description des sauvages qui sont habillés et de ceux qui ne le sont pas”). Cleveland goes further: for in reducing clothing to a simple prejudice, he implicitly rejects the Biblical myth which intimately ties the shame of nakedness to original sin. The inference is that modesty is not, as the theologians contend, a natural instinct.

clothing in the summertime as superfluous and uncomfortable. If I require them, I said, to wear clothing in all seasons, they will soon sense that it is for some other purpose than that of satisfying the needs of nature; they will soon regard their clothes as ornaments; they will little by little make a point of tidiness and taste in their adornment; they will be after point of curious posturing, affectations, fashions, and all the ridiculous effects of vanity and narcissism, of which we see so many pitiful examples in Europe. I want them to receive from me only what can be useful to them; and I would think I was rendering them a very poor service by ending their innocent crudeness so as to open to them the path that leads to luxury and indolence.²⁶⁹

My reasoning was much the same as concerned their manner of lodging and eating. Their meats were crude and poorly prepared. It was the insipid flesh of all the animals they killed in their forests. They made no distinction among them. Yet their countryside did not lack all kinds of birds, nor their river and their lakes delicate fish: but it was much easier for them to kill a wild buffalo or goat with their arrows, than a partridge or pheasant; and nature taught them always to use the simplest and easiest means. They were moreover of robust constitution, and nothing was as rare among them as diseases of weakness and languor. Thus I again thought that it would be treating them like enemies to introduce amongst them the pernicious use of our sauces and

²⁶⁹ Here we find clearly enunciated part of the argument of Rousseau's *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité*: to lose "innocent brutality" is to begin an irreversible path toward the false games of society and the depravations of idleness. One difference, however, is that Cleveland, while he respects up to a point the Indian's right to preserve his natural innocence, does not for that attribute to him any kind of moral superiority.

stews.²⁷⁰ If it is a misfortune for men that their organs degenerate, and that they need the continual ministrations of nutrients to restore them, the happiest are undoubtedly those who obtain it with the least effort and inconvenience.

As for their houses, they were convenient, but not attractive or regular. They protected from the outside air, and the body was able to rest freely in every posture its needs require. What more do men need when they do not expect to spend an eternal sojourn on the Earth? What need is there to construct houses that last longer than we do? Is it not too bad that our infirmity obliges us to live almost continually hidden under a roof, and thus deprives us of the view of the sky, which is the most beautiful spectacle in nature? However, we cannot avoid making such sorts of prisons for ourselves. But reason does not require us to decorate them so as to become attached to them.

Therefore the only change I decided to make among the savages had to do with [200] religion and the basis of morality. The first of these two items was not something to be undertaken right away. It is well known how strongly men are borne along by the religious prejudices with which they were born. I wished to bring about occasions and provoke some events that could prepare the Abaquis to receive strong and durable impressions. My thinking will develop better later on by the effects. While awaiting these favorable opportunities, I devoted myself both to setting exterior policy, and to establishing within families those principles of order and subordination that are society's firmest bond.

Although the Abaquis were not at the same level of brutishness and ignorance as several of the other American peoples, and they still had at least some feelings of humanity and some ac-

²⁷⁰ Descriptions of the Indians often observed their excellent health on the one hand, and the simplicity and even crudeness of their food on the other: see for example Robert Beverley, *Histoire de la Virginie*, p. 236.

quaintance with natural law, I had noted in a large number of their usages singularities so uncivilized that they had incited in me as much horror as compassion.²⁷¹ It was their custom, for example, when a child was born, to examine closely whether it carried some sign of poor constitution or had any member deformed or misarranged. Those who had some natural defect were sacrificed without mercy.²⁷² Besides this abominable practice that cost the lives of untold numbers of innocent children, they had another which was to observe, five or six days after the birth, whether on the face even of those healthy enough to have escaped from the rigor of the first law, any signs that augured ill for the future. They distinguished happy and unhappy ones, and again they pitilessly took the lives of those who did not have the desirable ones. It was not surprising that with this custom and the two reasons I have already related, the population of nation was so small. I spared nothing to get them to understand the inhumanity of this practice, and when I thought I had made some impression on them with my remonstrances, I ordered by public cry that all children henceforth be raised, without distinction.

The families were separated, and with exception of a very small number who joined together sometimes for particular reasons, each one had its own, separate lodging and obtained by his own labor the necessities of life. But despite this unity, they had little understanding of blood ties, and of reciprocal duties

²⁷¹ In order to know natural law, it does not suffice to live in nature: Prévost is not at all tempted by the noble savage myth. It is Cleveland himself who will teach them respect for parents and human life; he recognizes their qualities but in no way finds their way of living ideal. Prévost's attitude is complexe: it is possible to be both "primitive" and decadent (*avili*).

²⁷² Prévost may have Sparta in mind in lending to the Indians this practice which Robert Beverley denies (*Histoire de la Virginie*, p. 220).

relationships. The son was in no way obliged to respect his father, and the father demanded no respect from his children. Almost the minute a young Abaqui reached the age when one can survive without the help of others, he was completely independent, and on an equal footing not only with the old men, but even with those who gave him life. Indeed they had no specific names to express the function of father. Most of them followed this usage integrally, and manifested no more attention to their parents than to anyone else. There were nevertheless some in whom nature was powerful enough to preserve its rights. Iglou and all his family were like that. I have never seen an example of such friendship and such a perfect union between close relatives. It was not difficult for me to recognize over time those who were like them, and applied myself especially to attaching them particularly to myself, being persuaded that there were none in whom I could expect more zeal and loyalty than those who were capable of these natural sentiments. But what seemed surprising to me was to see admirable harmony prevailing in families, despite their independence with respect to each other. Quarrels and divisions were almost unknown amongst them. I attributed this peacefulness to two causes: the natural character of the nation, which was gentle and opposed to violence, and the common fear they had of the Rouintons, which kept continually on alert, and from whom they would have difficulty defending themselves if they were divided.

However, in order to establish their peace and union on a sounder footing, I explained to them the duties of nature, which up to a point subject children to paternal authority. I made them understand that, if they were obliged to love each other because they were citizens of a single place and joined by the same interests, [201] they owed something more specific to those who were even closer to them by benefit of birth and education; that in changing their home, they could lose social relationships, but that

nothing could break the bonds of blood; that even in growing and advancing in age, they acquired no rights that could diminish those of their fathers, since strength and health still depended upon the life they had received from them, as upon their principle; that they should see nothing constraining in a duty the fulfillment of which was never required harshly or sternly; that the time would come, moreover, when the children would have their turn, and that after having respected their fathers, and given them obedience, they would also have children by whom they would be obeyed and respected.²⁷³

Moreover, I instructed fathers on the reasonable limits their authority should have, and the tender and compassionate manner in which they should exercise it; that whatever right nature and the regulations I would put in place granted them over their children, it was not for their own satisfaction that they should invoke it; that it was for the good of those very children, and for the general advantage of the nation; that their status as fathers also imposed on them obligations that I would make sure they observed; that continual attention, unmeasured cares, wisdom, goodness and patience were the duties of a father, as respect, attachment, and submission were those of children. I did not stop at explaining these maxims to them in public; I visited each family to repeat them separately in their homes, and I only began having them applied after getting them to confess that their life would be the more pleasant, their union more secure, and the outward form of their society more amiable and agreeable.

Once they were thus prepared for this great transformation

²⁷³ “Make old age be respected, and accustom the young early to honor those who are superior to them in age and experience”: such was one of the principles applied, before Cleveland, by Sevarias, another legislator who tried to make his government conform both to nature and to local customs (*Histoire des Sévarambes*, part 3).

which I considered the most essential part of my plan, I instituted the order that seemed to me the simplest to observe, and the most likely to last for a long time. In each family, I decreed that the eldest would be considered the head, unless he was unable to hold that rank for some substantial reason, the judgment of which would fall to a high tribunal. The order of birth was likewise to determine all the other ranks. I did not think it needful to exclude women from the rights I granted to men. Nature gives them the same claims as to us; and if the principal foundation of paternal authority over their children is the benefit of birth and education, it seems that a mother should have the larger share in it, having such an investment in those two favors. I therefore ordered by an irrevocable law that power and authority would follow age, without distinction of sex.²⁷⁴

But as this order applied only within families, I immediately created a body, or council, limiting its membership to twenty, and composed it of those who had seemed to me the most reasonable and moderate in the nation as a whole. Although I did not exclude women from it, I nevertheless set certain exceptions which seemed to me necessary. As the purpose of this institution was to make it a sovereign tribunal to which I wished to leave my entire authority when I left the nation, I took great care to take all measures that could make it respectable. The first rule which I instituted for the choice of members was that of age. Men were not to

²⁷⁴ It has been too little noticed that this remarkable declaration of Cleveland's would, within the limits allowed by biological functions, grant political equality to women. Yet the abstraction of the conceptions Cleveland elaborates for his little realm must be recognized, for there is strictly no aspect of this theoretical parity that carries over to his reflections on European society. On Prévost's feminism, see Georges May, *Le Dilemme du roman* (Paris: P.U.F., 1963), pp. 238–239, and Laurent Versini, *Laclos et la tradition*, pp. 564–565.

be admitted if they had not attained the age of forty, and women unless they were above fifty. This inequality I instituted between women and men was not demeaning to their sex. It was based on the same reason which has led most legislators to reserve to our sex the oversight and handling of public business, which is the handicap of pregnancy to which nature subjects women up to a certain age, and the care they are obliged to provide for the feeding and education of the young. But as they are freed from these hindrances at age fifty, and I saw no other reason that could make them less capable than us at that age of the tasks of government, I wanted them to [202] have as big a share as the men. I realize that smirkers and enemies of that endearing sex attest other causes for the nearly universally established custom of keeping them out of management: they attribute it to their weakness and ignorance. But I had an example among the Abaquis which refutes this unjust accusation. As the women there live unconstrained, and receive an education in no way different from that of the men, they were as vigorous and as prudent as their husbands: proof enough that if they are less so in most other countries around the world, that is an effect of the injustice and tyranny of men, who attach them, against the order of nature, to occupations that sap them of strength, and they thereby usurp from them an authority which the women should share with them.

Besides age, it was requisite for admission to the council to have lived a docile life beyond reproach. Although the Abaquis had heretofore had no laws, and properly speaking no religion, they knew very well how to discern clearly between virtues and vices. Kindness, faithfulness to promises, even temperance, were valued by them, coming only after bravery and valor, which were the sovereign degree of distinction. It was by this first set of qualities that old Iglou had earned respect, and Moou by the latter. I decreed that a member of the council must possess at least the former. When a seat on the council was vacated, each family

was to choose among its members a person of either sex which it found suited to fill it, and it was then the council itself which I allowed to decide who deserved the preference.

Besides, this institution had two objectives. The first was the oversight and general government of the nation's business and interests. The councilors were to meet on set days, and deal together with everything that concerned the public welfare. I was no doubt prepared to spare them this trouble for the whole time I was to live with them; but I wanted to get them progressively into a habit of order and regulation which could sustain itself when they lost me. This good but crude people needed something simple, and at the same time so visibly useful that they would themselves feel the advantageous difference between the state I wished to raise them to, and the one in which I had found them.

The second function of the councilors was to be the individual inspection of families. I divided the whole nation into twenty parts, which corresponded to the number of council members. Each councilor was to have his home in the neighborhood assigned to him, keep close track of anything that might happen contrary to order, and make a report of it to the council, which then would be empowered to judge the matter after deliberating in common. One might imagine that it was overworking a single tribunal, composed of only twenty persons, to assign to it thus the administration of all public and specific business: but it must be noted that savages, naked, lacking ambition and greed, did not have interests very difficult to sort out, and that aside from a few quarrels that could arise by chance, there could hardly ever be an occasion where the wisdom and understanding of the council had to be great applied. Where laws were concerned, I did not think I should establish a great number of them. Those of nature sufficed, and their most important part was already included in the order I was creating within the families. Live in unity; have for each other the same deference of kindness and patience that each one

desires for himself: this was the sole political law which I attempted to inculcate in the Abaquis, and tried to make them see its necessity. I did not fail to establish punishments for certain crimes, rewards and distinctions for extraordinary acts of virtue, to abolish some superstitious customs in their assemblies, and above all to make several useful rules bearing on the prey they brought back from their hunts, and which was almost the only thing that sometimes gave rise to quarrels and divisions among them.

[203] Three days having sufficed for these various institutions, and the docility of the savages seeming to assure henceforth the success of all my undertakings, I conceived another plan which might at first have proven more difficult in the execution. I understood that if the subordination I had established in the families cost me some effort to sustain and confirm, the obstacle would come much less from the elders who would have the advantage of being obeyed by their children, than from the youth who are naturally adverse to dependence, especially in an uncivilized nation accustomed to excessive liberty. I therefore decided to employ the young Abaquis in some exercise that could serve both to keep them occupied, and make them gradually assume the habit of the yoke. I had a quite natural pretext in the fear they had of their enemies the Rouintons. I let them know that these terrifying neighbors frightened me very little, and that I could easily halt their fury, and even utterly destroy them: but that they must learn from me beforehand the art of attack and self-defense; that with the instruction I would give them on this subject, they were going to become invincible; that this was the most important secret I had brought from Europe; finally, that their youth would have to abandon the hunt for some time, to devote themselves entirely to practicing my lessons. I needed all these precautions to retain twelve or fifteen hundred young and proud Abaquis in the village, and prepare them for the constraint of military exercises.

They nevertheless did not resist my proposal. I immediately divided them into several bands, in the style of our companies and regiments. I named the general and subordinate chiefs, Moou being the main one. That was the reward I intended for him for the service he had rendered me. That savage was brave and intrepid, but impetuous and turbulent. I regretted later on being forced by his misconduct to treat him otherwise than my inclination would have made me desire.

The undertaking of training Abaquis for war was doubtless beyond my capacities, for I had never been a student of the military profession. But besides the fact that there is no science of which a man of good sense cannot discover the principles within himself with a little reflection, I counted on Youngster who had served with honor in England, and on whom I intended to rely for this part of my government. He went about it admirably, with better success than I expected. His demeanor was imposing, and his humor stern. In a few months he established such exact discipline among the young Abaquis that I was surprised to discover in them so much skill and so much obedience at the same time. I observed only one thing to disapprove of in his method: he sometimes mistreated too severely those who were lax in their duty. I reproached him for it, and made him agreed that it was completely wrong for an officer to treat his soldiers with an arrogance that stifles their pride and courage. They must be trained to obey, but not accustomed to slavery. Otherwise, there are few exercises in war for which he would not have had them prepared. He had even invented various sorts of weapons, capable of inflicting much greater damage than their arrows and clubs. For want of iron, he had found the means of making them sabers out of a heavy wood he had hardened in the fire, and he gave them such an edge by means of a few sharp stones that no steel was better able to inflict broad and deep wounds, especially among savages whose body is naked and defenseless. He had made them pikes

tipped with bones, daggers which they carried beside their quivers, and other deadly instruments which were perhaps so many pernicious gifts he made to the savages, but whose invention was justified by an end as just as that of defending themselves from the cruelty of the Rouintons. Withal, there was a very good guard posted near my lodgings and at several other locations in the village. Youngster himself took the trouble every night to check each post, to accustom his pupils to vigilance; he left no small mistake without punishment: so that not only were we secure against surprise by our enemies, but even in shape to [204] challenge them, had I not believed it was a matter of justice to leave them in peace so long as they themselves wished it so.

Two whole months had passed since the departure of my six emissaries. I did not know what to make of the time it was taking, and our anxieties for his lordship increased to the point of not leaving us a minute's rest. One day when we were talking together cheerlessly, old Iglou came to announce with a transport of joy he hoped I would feel as well, that the six Abaquis were just at that moment arriving in the village, and had with them a stranger in European dress. My impatience did not allow me to wait for them. I went out to meet them. They had indeed an Englishman with them; but his face being unknown to me, I feared I had too much flattered myself in looking forward to happy news. First I had to hear out the Abaquis, who tumultuously related to me the trials and fatigues they had experienced during their journey, and with what hardships they had finally reached Virginia. They had long roamed uncertain of their direction; and angling left, instead of heading right for Carolina, they had followed the foot of the Appalachian mountains, for the sole reason that it was a path that appeared convenient; so that by learning piece by piece from encounters with other savages, they had happily found the vicinity of Powhatan which is well cultivated, and from there it was a simple matter to find that city.

They had nothing more interesting to tell me, having been unable to understand anything of the language they had heard there; but they added that the stranger they had with them could inform me further.

This Englishman indicated that he did indeed have important matters to communicate to me, and that he had come expressly from Powhatan with that intention. I hastened to take him to my hut; and there, in the presence of my wife and Mrs Riding who were waited as impatiently as I for him to speak up, he first took out a letter, which he invited me to read before he explained himself further. I at once recognized the hand. It was from Mme Lallin.²⁷⁵ I promptly turned red. I would have wished to prevent my wife from seeing that letter, and remained uncertain for a moment whether I would open it in her presence.

In order to unfold this mystery, I must here inform the reader that up to this point I had said nothing about Mme Lallin's misfortune. However innocently I had conducted myself with respect to her, I had thought that since her sad fate had separated us, and there was little likelihood we would ever find each other, there was no point in telling his lordship and his daughter about the decision she had made to accompany me. The reader will recall that even before our departure from Rouen I had worried some about the effect her presence could have on Fanny's mind. Gratitude and compassion had nevertheless led me to overlook this consideration; but subsequent events having taken such an

²⁷⁵ Cleveland has previously seen Mme Lallin's handwriting, on the declaration of love she sent to him in Rouen. For the second time, a letter from her embarrasses Cleveland in front of Fanny and Mrs Riding, but this time he is less innocent, and the letter confronts him suddenly with what he thought was his own secret. His silence about the matter is, as will later appear, all the more serious that Fanny in fact knew about it all along.

unfortunate turn for her, I had not felt obligated to give to my wife an account from which there was nothing helpful to be gained, although I was assured enough of her heart not to be concerned that she could ever imagine anything more than the truth. However, I could well conceive that happening not only to discover indirectly, and in a sense against my will, that lady's voyage and the relations I had had with her, but perhaps to find in her letter some terms of affection that might note the grief our separation had caused her, she would have just cause, if not for taking alarm to the point of suspecting me of unfaithfulness, at least for finding it strange that I had lacked confidence in her, and so carefully hidden such an extraordinary adventure from her. This thought, which came to mind full force, put me in a hopelessly embarrassing situation. There was nevertheless nothing I could possibly do but open the letter. I had to go forward, and the only benefit I derived from a moment of reflection was to summon all my strength to maintain at least a calm demeanor and an easy countenance.

[205] But all my caution and my efforts were quite useless. The crucial blow for me had been received. Why keep my reader any longer in suspense? My poor wife was already only too well informed of Mme Lallin's arrival in America, and that the cause of that deep melancholy which she had doggedly kept hidden from me, was none other than the suspicions of jealousy. The fatal passion! My slave Iglou had provoked it with his unreflecting determination to relate everything he had learned of my adventures, either from myself, who had sometimes been too open in the laments that escaped me in his presence, or from other sources I have never learned of. Curiosity had led my wife to question him. The less clarity she found in his replies, the more she believed she had good reason for concern. My silence about everything concerning Mme Lallin had only confirmed her doubts, which is to say pierced her heart. She believed she was

betrayed; or at least, if she could persuade herself that the present expressions of my love were sincere, she considered them only as the return of a man who had abandoned her for a time, and came back to her because he had not been able to keep the one he had preferred to her. However, because of her docility, her respect for her father's will, and even her inclination, more powerful than her resentment, she had consented to accept my hand; but the dagger remained in her heart, and my most affectionate caresses could not withdraw it. Mrs Riding, to whom she had opened herself up in confidence, strove in vain to heal her by her consolations and restore peace to her. It was on her advice that she hid from me the subject of her troubles, for Fanny was not by herself capable of maintaining such violent dissimulation for long; her heart never formed a sentiment that was not straightforward and sincere. Besides, Mrs Riding's intention cannot be faulted. She feared that explanations of this nature might create a pall between us, and that the remedy consequently could be much more dangerous than the disease. There you have the sorry knot of the misfortunes of my unhappy wife, and of mine. You will see her, obstinately silent for many years running, love me with boundless passion, and continually bottle up her most fatal troubles within; and me, ever sure of my innocence and faithfulness, act mindlessly upon that supposition, and make myself guilty not only of my own misfortunes, but also of other's crimes, by unintentionally occasioning the most tragic and bloody events.²⁷⁶ Eternal justice, who can undertake to explain thy designs? Thou hast accustomed me to experience its most dire effects, never daring to plumb them nor ever protest them.

Perhaps I have satisfied my readers' curiosity too soon. To

²⁷⁶ This is perhaps the only time in the novel when Cleveland applies an adjective such as *guilty* to himself; later, on the contrary, he admits to having been at most negligent, and passes the guilt onto someone else.

make my story more engaging and give it the suavity of a novel, I ought to have postponed to the end of my book the enlightenment which I have hastily given at this point.²⁷⁷ But am I capable of striving to please, and have I promised in these memoirs anything other than sincerity and grief? It would have cost me too dearly to leave my dear wife's innocence and my own constancy exposed for a minute to doubt and suspicions. One must simply remember that, in the events I have to relate, my fate was more obscure to me than it is now to my readers, and that the principal source of my sorrows is not to have had the same insight sooner.²⁷⁸

I therefore affected all the equanimity I could as I opened Mme Lallin's letter; and the better to anticipate my wife's suspicions, I told her before I began to read it that I recognized the writing, and that in order to make it easier for her to follow, I wanted to tell her that that lady had left Rouen with me to sail to America. So far, I added, we have been so absorbed with our own troubles and adventures that the time was not right for entertaining you with the story of someone else's misfortunes. But it is a

²⁷⁷ This anachronological revelation to the reader illuminates Fanny's melancholy: to Cleveland's silence on an important subject, she responds with her own, and thus becomes responsible, in his eyes, for all the undesirable consequences. Cleveland will never truly recognize his share of responsibility for his inability to see, but he spares the reader the harsh judgments he himself will make of Fanny by stressing, in his narrative, his own state of incomprehension.

²⁷⁸ The knowledge he evokes is the story of Fanny which will be told in book IX; but it will come again at the cost of a chronological reversal, for it is not related *to* Cleveland, who in fact will learn it only later, and really just a bit at a time. Cleveland is acutely conscious of technical problems in narrative and of the different effects to be gained through various strategies. Several times, as here, he weighs the advantages and disadvantages of alternative methods in passages which provide us valuable information on the art of fiction according to Prévost.

narrative which I promise you, whenever are ready to hear it. I then read in an ordinary tone of voice the letter from Mme Lallin. She expressed great joy at learning so fortunately that I was in America, [206] and had eluded the malignity of Captain Will. She herself had escaped from his hands by cunning; and in the hope of finding his lordship in Powhatan or in someplace else in Virginia, she had gone there from Jamaica where she had left her abductor. Chance having brought my six savages to Powhatan, they had presented my letter there to the first Englishman they had encountered. His lordship's name had excited the interest of all the colonists, so my letter, having made the rounds of the city, finally fell into her hands. It was she who with a large recompense had engaged an Englishman of Powhatan to follow my savages on their return. She assured me that if she had consulted only her desires she would herself have accompanied them; but that undertaking being impossible for her, she begged me to send news of myself promptly, and by what means we might be reunited. As far as his lordship was concerned, she expressed the despair which the uncertainty of his fate caused her as well as me. Nothing had been learned of him at Powhatan since his flight. But she thought she could assure me, she said, that he no longer had anything to fear from Captain Will, who had grown tired of his fruitless search, and was preparing to set sail for Europe.²⁷⁹ Finally, she asked for news of Fanny and Mrs Riding, and seemed to take a sincere interest in their fortune.

That was the essence of this letter of which the sight had so disconcerted me. All the expressions in it being proper and judicious, I was less anxious than ever, and had no reason not to

²⁷⁹ It is still not because of Cromwell's death – a death still not registered in this story, even though it took place three years earlier – that Will has renounced his search; Cleveland will not learn of it until book V.

relate briefly to the two ladies the motive and the principal circumstances of Mme Lallin's voyage. They listened to me rather tranquilly. Mrs Riding broke off this discussion to turn it to his lordship's concerns. I did not insist further, and perceiving no emotion in Fanny's face nor in her eyes, I remained quite easy over what had just happened. I was very satisfied also at the part of the letter that was about his lordship. John Will's departure much diminished my fear. I thought I could rightly flatter myself that his lordship was in Carolina, that he had been received there without opposition, and that he was only waiting before sending us news of himself until he had brought order and tranquillity to that great province. To be sure much time had already gone by since his departure; but, however ingenious affection may be in tormenting itself, I saw nothing that was really grounds for worry. The numerous escort that accompanied him reassured me against the fear of the other savage nations he might have encountered; and even supposing that such a misfortune had occurred along the way, I had reason for confidence that he had come out of it all right, because it did not seem possible to me that all his companions had perished, and that not one of them had returned to bring us news of it. I prevailed on myself with this false reasoning not to give in too much to anxiety, and thus gave myself a cruel illusion over the two most devastating blows fortune ever sent me. I had to reply to Mme Lallin. I did so without secrecy or reticence. My wife saw me write my letter. I simply indicated to that lady that I was delighted at her good fortune in setting herself free. I advised her to remain in Powhatan until the opportunity arose for us to be reunited. I told her of my marriage; and besought her for our common interest to spare nothing to discover what had become of his lordship. The six savages having consented to return to Virginia with the Englishman they had brought, I made them promise to come back by way of Carolina, and asked Mme Lallin as a favor to give them guides, and what-

ever supplies might be required for the success of their journey.

I enjoyed more rest after their departure than I had for a long time. I could not fail to be informed soon with certainty of what had happened to his lordship; and Fanny, making a greater effort than ever, succeeded in hiding completely from me the continual stirring of her jealousy. She was apparently following Mrs Riding's advice. For some time already her pregnancy had become apparent. The Abaquis expressed [207] great joy over it. They had on such occasions certain superstitious ceremonies which they practiced with respect to their women, and proposed to me in relation to mine. I rejected their offers, and took advantage of this circumstance, as I had already done in several others, to dispel their blindness little by little. They listened with wonderment when I spoke to them of a divinity other than the sun, more ancient and more powerful than the sun, of which it was itself the handwork, and from which it continually received its heat and light. But since they were incapable of being convinced by the force of logic, I had never observed that my explanations had made on them the impression I desired, and I still was waiting, before undertaking to change their religion, for some extraordinary event to come along which I could adroitly turn to the success of this purpose. One did come up, from which I reaped the fruit I was hoping for. The reader may find something irregular, or at least too human, in the means I employed: but I think my conduct is justified by my intentions, especially dealing with a brutish people who could not be shaken in any other way²⁸⁰

²⁸⁰ Given his intrinsic superiority, his "perfect knowledge" of his subjects, and the generosity of his intentions, Cleveland sees no harm in using a trick to enchant a credulous people. Nonetheless, he apparently feels some embarrassment at relating this false miracle, but the plan is based on an impossibility of reasoning with the natives which was asserted by missionaries like Father Hennepin: "We have all recognized

Moou had, as I have said, excellent qualities. He had a handsome, vigorous body; he was sober, skillful, enterprising, generous, and intrepid to a point that caused him rightly to be regarded as the bravest of all the Abaquis. But his impetuous, short humor made him difficult to handle, and I had several times wondered that Youngster, who was another imperious and violent character, had so long stayed on good terms with him. They finally had a great falling out over some question of military discipline, and being both too exercised to remain within certain bounds, they were so indelicate with each other that they became irreconcilable enemies. I was immediately informed of this tussle. Youngster explained frankly to me what had happened, and although he had perhaps wanted prudence somewhat, it was clear from his account that Moou alone was at fault. He doubtless sensed this himself; for when I sent for him to give me an account of his behavior, he refused to come to my hut, and remained closed in his own for several days, not allowing even his best friends to see him. His stubbornness posed a quandary for me. I could not without danger close my eyes to a refusal harmful to my authority; and I worried on the other hand, if I were too high-handed, lest I turn most of the youth, who were completely devoted to him, against me. First I called upon Iglou and some others among the most moderate savages to urge him gently to submit to his duty. Their efforts were fruitless. That violent and vindictive spirit could not stomach the affront Youngster had done him by delivering him several blows. He flew into an open rage with threats and plans for vengeance, not only against him,

that almost all the savages in general recognize no divinity, and are even incapable of common and ordinary reasoning on this subject, so dull are and full of darkness are their minds” (*Nouveau Voyage*, Utrecht, 1968 pp. 136–137). The Amerindians they are, moreover, highly superstitious, believing in all sorts of omens.

but against myself and against my whole family. The disease began to seem to me so serious that I felt obligated to find some prompt remedy for it. I became even more confirmed in this opinion when I learned from old Iglou that every night Moou received the visit of numerous young men who were on his side, and that, according to appearances, they were concerting the means of satisfying their resentment. The evening of the same day he brought me this news, a young Abaqui slipped into my house in the dark, and taking me aside, told me a story that frightened me. He had learned from someone else about Moou's plans. It was to get together at night with those he had engaged in his quarrel, to storm my house, to get rid of me and all my retinue, sparing only Fanny, whom he wished to make his wife, and then to assume over the nation the authority that had been granted to me, he said, only at his behest.

I warmly thanked the young savage. Such a pressing danger requiring all my diligence and attention, I had all the Abaquis on whom I could surely depend secretly notified; I asked them to spend the night around my house, and not to let anyone approach without my permission. Next, reflecting on the means of anticipating Moou, and seeing nothing sure about having him arrested in his house, I decided to be rid of him by the surest means, which was to have him secretly killed. My function gave me this right of life or death against a rebellious and disloyal subject. It was [208] this last thought that led me to conceive a broader one, one that could facilitate the intention I had of bringing the Abaquis to knowledge of the true God.²⁸¹ I was immediately pleased with this

²⁸¹ Perhaps an echo of Robinson Crusoe, who attempts early on to convert Friday to protestantism and later wants to dispute with the Catholics the souls of the whole tribe. But Cleveland up to now has furnished no precise information about what exactly he might mean when he invokes the "true God."

idea, and I took measures for its execution that perfectly succeeded.

I assembled all the savages who were posted about my house, and not being displeased to have an even larger number as witnesses, I sent for all those who lived in the neighboring huts. Seeing they were ready to hear me, I reminded them of the oaths by which they had sworn to obey me, and the punishment which had to be expected by those who had the audacity to violate them. Moou, I told them, has committed the most criminal betrayal: if the sun which you worship were as powerful a god as you have imagined up till now, he would not have taken so long to make him feel his vengeance. I have purposely allowed several days to go by, for you to see that you are unfortunately mistaken in the object of your worship, and that it is the God I worship who alone is able to avenge himself and to punish. I therefore declare to you, on his behalf, that those among you who fail to obey will receive from him a terrible chastisement, and that Moou will be the first example of it. Go announce this to him, I added, turning toward Iglou; and exhort him to come to his senses if he wishes to avoid the awful torment that hangs over him.

I dismissed the savages only after inviting them for their own interest to learn from Moou's misfortune, and to open their eyes to what would soon happen. Having gone back into my house with Youngster, I shared my intention with him, and entrusted Youngster him with the execution. But since I would have liked to accompany the death of Moou by some extraordinary circumstance, capable of provoking terror among the Abaquis, we searched for a stratagem which we might use to awe this credulous and brutish people. Had I had a plentiful supply of powder, I would have found endless ways of terrifying them, either by the

noise or by other effects with which they were not familiar²⁸²; but I had brought so little of it from Powhatan, that after giving part of it to his lordship with my slave Iglou's two pistols, I scarcely had more than a half-pound left. However, Youngster thought that might be enough for the plan he thought up; and jejune as it was, it succeeded perfectly for him. He took the very container in which I kept my powder, which was a thick horn, reinforced with three or four brass bands. He closed it tightly, packing the powder to give it more force, and left only a small opening, to which he attached a fuse. He then attached the horn to a piece of cord with which to suspend it. Having taken with that my two pistols, which he had loaded, he had our two other Englishmen follow him, whose assistance he required. His plan was to climb onto the roof of Moou's hut with the aid of the two Englishmen. The dark of night obviated any fear of being spotted. He was to approach the chimney, which was just a large hole cut in the roof, as is usual among most of the American nations, light the fuse, and lower the horn part way down into the hut; and expecting that the surprise caused by the sparks from the fuse would instantly attract Moou and his companions under the hole that served as a chimney, he hoped he could aim and kill him with a pistol shot. The report of the shot, the death of the rebel, and the bang made about the same time by the horn, which could not fail to shatter into a thousand pieces, were circumstances that ought no doubt to terrify the savages²⁸³; but I was fearful that one of them decide to go outside

²⁸² At the time of this story, the tribes known to white men, including the true Abenakis near Quebec, were quite familiar with firearms and used them; but these Abaquis live in territory where no European has yet penetrated.

²⁸³ This invention recalls the idea of Sevarias, upon reaching the Terre Australe, of sounding the canon so as to "spread terror among all the ignorant peoples unfamiliar with them" (*Histoire des Sévarambes*, t. I,

too soon, and spy Youngster on the roof, which was not very high. He insisted on being willingness to run all the risks. His two comrades were to withdraw as soon as he climbed up, and he expected that with the cover of night, it would not be difficult for him to sneak off. If I had taken his advice, he would have set fire to the hut on his way, to add a final horror to the scene. But I absolutely refused, for fear of a general fire, which we might not have been able to stop.

[209] When he was about to go, old Iglou brought me the report of his mission. His presence gave me another idea, which also served the success of my designs. When he had told me how Moou had laughed at my threats, and seemed to have as little fear of punishments from heaven as of mine, I ordered him to return immediately to renew his exhortations to the rebel, and told him to take with him several of the eldest and most respected members of the council. It was so that they would be present at Moou's death, and be able themselves to reap the reward. I sent them off, losing no time, and Youngster lost none either in reaching the same place by a different path. I could not resist the curiosity that made me follow him at some distance; and favored by the darkness, I remained fifty paces from Moou's hut. I had not been there long before I saw some sparks from the fuse coming out of the hole in the roof. The horn exploded at almost the same time, with a louder bang than I had expected. That was not Youngster's plan, which was to kill Moou first; and for a few moments I worried that he might be unable to aim his shot through the chimney, which would have spoiled our whole endeavor. But the sound of the pistol shot which came quickly gave me the impression that everything had come off happily. The two

pp. 181-183). But the intention of divine vengeance that Cleveland wants to manifest in the episode is even closer to stratagems attributed by Fontenelle to the priesthood in *Histoire des oracles*.

Englishmen passed by me at that very moment without noticing me; and as Youngster lost no time in following them, I learned from him that he had succeeded with such skill and luck that heaven seemed to have guided his hand. He had scarcely lowered the horn when the savages, intrigued by the bright sparks, approached it in amazement. There were twenty-five or thirty of them. The fuse having burned down a bit too quickly, he had been unable to recognize Moou in time to fire at him first. The horn had exploded with great violence. This mishap had only helped him, by spreading terror through the group. Several had been seriously wounded by the fragments of the horn, and all had thrown themselves to the ground with a terrible cry, except Moou, whom nothing could scare. That proud savage had raised his eyes towards the opening of the hole, looking for the cause of such a strange event, so that nothing was easier for Youngster than to hit him in the head with a shot from the pistol.

We quickly retreated to my house, to await the effect of this scene. We had only been there a minute when we heard a horrendous noise that seemed to come from every neighborhood of the village. Those of Moou's partisans who had been able to flee had returned each to his own hut, where their terror and consternation had testified as much as their words to the marvel that had just occurred. Everyone ran to see Moou's body, and five or six young Abaquis who were still on the ground near him, held there as much by their fright as by their wounds. People did not fail to learn soon of the warnings I had sent to the rebels an hour earlier. It was so clear that their punishment could only be an effect of my threats, that there was no one who had the least doubt of it. This having become the general opinion, and being confirmed by the report of those who had heard my speech and my predictions, they began to fear that the God whose wrath I had declared might give new proofs of it; and the effect of this fear was so astonishing that all the Abaquis of the village came I no time to surround

my hut uttering terrible cries, begging me to appear and grant them my assistance.

I went outside to reassure them by my presence. Although the night was not far advanced, I found myself almost as well illuminated as in full daylight. They had lit an infinite number of torches, such as those they are accustomed to; they are long sticks of dry wood, coated with a sort of resin. Their cries ceased upon seeing me, and finding them ready to hear me, I had a bench brought over onto which I climbed to make myself better heard. I spoke to them forcefully about Moou's crime, and the justice of his chastisement. However [210] severe it had been, I assured them that my God was a good master, who exercised vengeance only regretfully, and who would have forgiven even the traitor Moou, had he not persisted in meriting his punishment; but that seeing him hardened in his revolt, and the sun, which they had heretofore believed so fearful, not having enough power to restore him to his duty, I had myself solicited the terrible punishment which several of them had just witnessed; that those who would follow Moou's example ought to expect the same sad fate. I added that I had an order from that same God who was so able to punish, to offer them favors and blessings if they were willing to worship him; that they now knew his power; that it would be used for their happiness, and for the destruction of their enemies the Rouintons; that sincerely loving their nation, as they should judge by the zeal I had shown up to then for their interests, was incapable of proposing anything to them that was not soundly advantageous to them; that I nonetheless must caution them that after the offer I had made them of the protection and the friendship of this great God, they ought to expect his wrath if they did not receive it gratefully; and that by refusant to choose him over the sun, they would inescapably draw upon themselves the same fate as Moou.

I had spoken in a voice so strong and so distinct that they had missed nothing of the meaning of my speech. They let me

know by their cries and applause that they were prepared to follow all my wishes. I ordered them to come after noon to the prairie of the assemblies, where I would explain to them what the nighttime did not allow me to complete.

They manifested much joy as they withdrew. Mine as well was very great, to see myself so happily delivered from all my fears, and on the eve of succeeding in a project that had always been close to my heart. I contemplated the form I should give to their religion. My uncertainty did not last long. They had none but the simplest natural understanding, and I did not believe them capable of receiving more. I examined on this principle what the infinitely just Being could require of them. It seemed to me that the essential point of their obligations was to recognize an all-powerful God, their creator and absolute master; to worship Him only; and to hope for his rewards. Such were the limits I thought I should give to their faith.²⁸⁴ With regard to ritual, I decided to ban mysterious ceremonies because they degenerate sooner or later into superstition; and not having forever to live with them, I wanted to avoid anything that could cause them to return to idolatry. I did not even think it appropriate to give them temples. What use would they have made of them? They would have decorated them. Their thoughts would soon have been enclosed within the space of their walls, and would not have risen higher than the vault. Gradually they would have placed idols in them, with ever-increasing ignorance and obscurity.²⁸⁵ Whereas by

²⁸⁴ There are parallels between this episode and the instructions given by Marivaux's Frédelingue to the savages of his island in *Les Aventures de *** ou les effets surprenants de la sympathie* (1713), and to the Congolese in Terrasson's *Séthos* (1731).

²⁸⁵ Prévost will give an example of the perversions and superstitions that may be entailed by grafting an advanced religion onto a primitive culture, in the description of the Nopande religion in book XIV.

having them envisage the whole universe as a magnificent temple which God has made from his own hands, and God himself seated above the clouds as on a throne, where he is ever ready to hear our desires and receive our worship, it seemed to me that such a noble and respectable thought would be able to fix their attention, and impress itself into their crude brains, in an indelible manner. I firmly decided on this last method, and added only two things, which I regarded as two supports necessary for the Abaquis' weakness of mind: one was to decree that twice each week, in other words every three days, there would be a religious assembly in the prairie, which the entire nation would be required to attend; the other, to compose a short prayer, but with a clear and expressive meaning, which everyone would learn, without exception. And lest it should happen that someone forgot it or failed to recite it, my intention was to command each family head to utter it in turn out loud in the general assemblies in the prairie, which means twice a week; and that the same heads would have it repeated every day, each in his family, by all persons of [211] both sexes whom I had subjected to their authority. However simple this religious order may appear to my readers, the knowledge I had of the character of the Abaquis made me almost sure it was the only one that could long endure, especially once I had decided to commit the members of the council, by a solemn oath which they would take at their reception, to enforcing it in their respective neighborhoods, and never to allow the use of the prayer to be suspended or diluted.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁶ Though Cleveland is unfamiliar with Christian doctrine, he instinctively believes in the necessity of religion. The principles he elaborates for his subjects much resemble a deistic system, and his first critic, in the *Bibliothèque Belgique* of October 1731 (p. 436), did not fail to point this out: "It would have been better to suppress this part about converting the savages than to propose such a frail and imperfect

The morning of the great day when this happy change was to be effectuated, I learned that a large number of the principal Abaquis had gathered in a private house, and that they had been there for some while consulting together, with an air of secrecy that seemed to hide some mystery. As there could still remain some seeds of Moou's revolt, I was alarmed by this. I was about to go there myself when I was informed they had separated, and that some of them were headed for my lodging. I took the precaution of being on guard. It was three of the principal elders, all members of the council, who were sent to me on behalf of the others. Once inside, one of them told me very respectfully the reason for his visit. All the Abaquis sensed very well, he told me, that the God I wanted them to worship was more powerful than the sun; but they were very desirous of knowing where this God was who had never made himself visible to them as the sun had, and in what part of the world He resided. This was what they begged me to instruct them about before I obliged them to relinquish their former deity. This question, and the reflections which must doubtless have given rise to it, struck me a extremely profound for Abaquis. I replied obligingly that I was delighted at their wisdom, and would satisfy their objections so well that they would no longer have the slightest scruple. And since I indeed knew them to be the most reasonable of the entire nation, I explained to them the religious system I wanted them to embrace. They approved of everything they had heard; but I was surprised to hear them renew at the end their original objection. So this God, they said, never shows himself? I admit that this new query embarrassed me, not by the difficulty of responding to it, but by that which I feared I might have persuading them that what they did not see could really exist. Heaven however inspired me with the way to put it in order to make a strong impression on them.

faith in a way that makes it look satisfactory.”

No, I answered, he does not show himself; but he makes himself known by other signs. Do you not often hear the thunder? They replied that they heard it, and much feared it. Well, I said, it is the great God who thus shakes the heavens and makes the Earth tremble. You have seen rain, sleet, snow; you have felt the heat of fire, and bitterness of the cold²⁸⁷; you see your trees grow, and your fruits, and everything that you can eat; it is he who thus produces what takes place continually before your eyes: and you protest, ungrateful Abaquis, that he has never made himself known to you! The truth of my reply, perhaps also the tone in which I spoke it, or rather the infinite goodness of God who wished to cure these poor savages if their blindness, opened their eyes so entirely that they seemed to me transported with joy at finding themselves suddenly surrounded with light.²⁸⁸ They protested they would never worship any other God than mine; and after leaving me in these sentiments, they spread them more than ever through the village, telling everyone they happened to meet that nothing was equal to the God I had proclaimed to them, since it was he who produced trees, fruits, fire, thunder, and all that was most wondrous in nature.

They were all in this religious disposition when they came in the afternoon to the assembly. I was delighted with their fervor, to the point of shedding tears of joy. Fanny and Mrs Riding, who wished to witness this pious spectacle, were as moved as I by it. They listened to my lessons with respectful attention. I proposed

²⁸⁷ This is the only allusion to the climate during their year-long stay among the Abaquis.

²⁸⁸ Cleveland describes the action of grace, though he does not use that word. The faith he institutes can be communicated to a whole people because it consists not in a doctrine but in the simple principle of worship based on nature; nevertheless this sudden illumination resembles a sign of divine approval.

to them the plan I had created; I set the times and the order of the assemblies, I revealed to them with the most vehement expressions and the strongest images the greatness of the master they were to serve, what they should expect from his goodness if they served him [212] faithfully, and from his wrath if they ever forgot the commitments they were about to take. Despite their crudeness, I made them see that independently of the pleasures and rewards that I promised in the afterlife for their fidelity, the religion they were embracing would be most advantageous for the welfare of the nation, and for the maintenance of the laws I had established there; that after the obligation to honor the all-powerful God, it imposed no other laws than those I had already prescribed to them, in other words to love each other, and to contribute with all their power to the public and private welfare. I exhorted them above all to be grateful for the continual favors they received from the sovereign Being. It is he, I said, who has given you birth, who preserves you, who liberally supplies all that is pleasant and useful to you. Do you not feel you must love him who so rains his blessings upon you? Oh good Abaquis! Nature has given you a heart; learn to make use of it; and if there is anything that moves you, let it be his favors which you constantly experience.

That good people was silent in a way that expressed their contentment and wonder. I noted that most of them turned their eyes toward heaven when they heard me pronounce the name of God, as it they were trying to see him in the place where I had told them he lived, and was on his throne observing them and judging the sincerity of their homage. Finally I renewed their attention by telling them about the prayer I had composed for them; and after exhorting them to follow me in their hearts, I recited it aloud, with my eyes and arms raised. They imitated my

posture.²⁸⁹ I must confess that an ecstatic feeling of joy flooded my soul as we concluded the last act of this august ceremony. Heaven may have never received a more sincere and naturel tribute than the one rendered at that moment by simple hearts full of righteousness and innocence; and I have always considered the part I can claim in this great transformation as one of the most glorious and fortunate circumstances of my life.

I spent several days having my prayer learned by all the heads of families, so that they themselves could teach it to their children. Fanny and Mrs Riding also spared no trouble rendering the same service to the savage women. They had already contributed effectively to instilling in them feelings of decency and modesty, of attachment and fidelity to their husbands, and tenderness and attention to their children, and in getting them to shed something of their crudeness and barbarity, yet without putting in its place anything that might lead them some day to the corruption of morals or sloth. We took all our measures in concert and after deliberation, and the common goal of our efforts was to deliver the Abaquis from everything that until then had degraded them below the quality of men. This was Fanny's remark. When you think about it, she said to me, everything that is opposed to reason, or which strays from it through some excess, no longer belongs to humanity; and in this sense, one would perhaps find as many savage and uncivilized people in Europe as in America. Most European nations exceed the bounds of reason by their excessive indolence, luxury, ambition, or avarice; those of America in their crudeness and stupidity. But in both cases, I do not

²⁸⁹ In the usual conventions of memoir-novels, one might expect to find the text of the prayer here also, all the more so that Cleveland wants the whole tribe to learn it by heart. But Prévost avoids all explicitness about the content of the doctrines espoused by his protagonist, as will equally be evident in book XV.

recognize men. The former are, so to speak, in beyond their natural condition, the latter fall short of it; thus Europeans and Americans are truly barbarians, with respect to the point where they should be alike to be genuine men. It is to that point, she added, that we must raise, if we can, our poor Abaquis; and we should strive to find means to do so that can keep them there.

While we were rendering these important services to our savages, and the function I had accepted caused me to consider them as a duty, we did not lose sight of our own interests. Our most fervent wishes were still for the preservation of Lord Axminster, for the success of his enterprises, and for the good fortune to rejoin with him. Our anxiety over his fate brought all our conversations back to that. My wife's [213] pregnancy was so advanced that, however events might turn, we could not think of leaving the Abaquis before she was delivered. A few more weeks passed. Finally, the time of Fanny's confinement arrived. She gave birth to a daughter, who, I was told, took after her poor father.²⁹⁰ Unhappy object of fate's cruellest sentence! Alas, under what terrible auspices were you born! I took her in my arms, and with a heart full of every paternal sentiment, my first wish for her was to be happier than her father and mother. My wishes were not heard.

My wife quickly recovered from her labor. All my attentions turned toward her daughter. Everyone knows the tenderness of a young mother. I observed that something of it effected even humor. It made her less melancholic. Her eyes seemed to me less

²⁹⁰ Since the beginning of 1660, they have separately made the voyage to America, being reunited six months or so later; the marriage, at the beginning of their sojourn with the Abaquis, which lasts over fifteen months, might have taken place about September. The daughter's birth must therefore be in 1661; we will learn that Fanny at this moment is twelve years old.

vacant; and whether this cherished token of our love had redoubled her affection for me and dissipated her suspicions, or simply the joy of being a mother produced this change, I noted that her caresses were more ardent and free than they had ever been. Mine could hardly increase, for I was not capable of variations in my attentions for Fanny; nevertheless her tranquillity put something in my heart that I had never yet felt. I secretly expressed my joy to Mrs Riding, who shared it, without further comment.

I continued for some time to govern my Abaquis peacefully. One day when some of their hunters had encountered a band of Rouintons in the midst of a forest, the antipathy of the two nations did not permit them to separate without coming to blows. The Abaquis had the worst of it. They did not get away without losing some of their men, and of those remaining few came away without wounds. This misfortune revived all the hatred of the nation against these cruel neighbors. The young men especially, whom Youngster's continual instructions maintained in a warlike mood, and who passionately desired to test his new weapons, eagerly solicited me to let him exact vengeance for the affront the Abaquis had just received. I was undecided whether I should grant this permission. War has always horrified me. It is the opprobrium of reason and humanity. Except for the case of just defense, which one must lament even after the victory, a battle is the greatest crime to which extravagance and fury can be taken; and in my moral principles, a warrior hero is but a despicable monster.²⁹¹ With such sentiments, I ought not to yield easily to the insistence of my savages. However, the same reason which had led me to have them assume a semblance of military discipline

²⁹¹ Like almost all the century's philosophes, Prévost, himself a former soldier, considers war as the greatest of evils, and this depreciation of the military hero hints particularly at Voltaire's frequent language on the same subject.

under Youngster's direction made me think that it would be an enormous advantage for them to humiliate the Rouintons before my departure, and take away once and for all from that barbarous nation its desire and even the ability to harass them. I decided that I myself would assume the leadership of this war, to keep the Abaquis in check. I flattered myself that if the Rouintons were not impossibly obdurate, it would not be impossible for me to win them over little by little, and perhaps draw them into a reconciliation with the Abaquis so that both sides would renounce their hatred and unite to form a single nation.

After going over with Youngster the measures this plan required, I declared publicly that I believed war just and necessary, and that to give the Abaquis a new proof of my affection, I promised to go at their head. The cries of joy echoed to heaven. Preparations were on everyone's mind. I left it to Youngster to see to them, and kept myself occupied for several days reassuring Fanny and Mrs Riding, to whom this decision caused mortal alarms. Their fear would have been warranted, had there been for me much risk to run. It is certain that I could not, without extreme folly, expose them to all the dreadful things they might fear if my death, or some other accident, had deprived them of my presence and assistance. But I was sure that the Rouintons would not hold for a minute against me. Their small numbers, which could not have been repaired since the recent losses they had [214] taken, and the opinion they had of me based on the rumors that had certainly reached them, made me regard this expedition as a four-day hunting party. Moreover, what I had in mind was far less to reduce them by force of arms than to win them over by gentleness and by what I could do for them. I therefore explained to the two ladies that they ought not be the least bit anxious, and that there was nothing to fear for me, any more than for them, who were as secure in the village as in the best city of Europe.

Indeed, having left two days later at the head of a column of

Abaquis made up of their finest youth, I arrived in less than twelve hours before the principal village of the Rouintons. Although they fully expected that their neighbors would manifest some resentment over their recent loss, it did not appear to me that they were on their guard with the kind of vigilance that fear inspires. But such is, as I have already pointed out, the genius of most of these miserable peoples. They know neither rules of defense nor wise precautions. They come to blows and brutally slit each others' throats at the slightest provocation; the weaker flees and the victor withdraws, until the occasion arises to renew the combat. I could easily have invaded the village and exterminated every last Rouinton. That was not at all my purpose. After ordering my companions to halt, I dispatched Youngster, who boldly volunteered for this dangerous message, with three Abaquis who knew the terrain, and ordered them to propose peace to our enemies, on three conditions:

The first, that they promptly collect their weapons, and bring them outside the village to burn them in our presence.

The second, that they immediately abandon their canton, to come constitute a new village in the valley of the Abaquis, where I promised we would furnish them all sorts of assistance and facilities.

The third, that they there be subject to my government.

If they refused to accept my friendship on these three conditions, I would leave them only the choice of fleeing the canton never to return, or all being slaughtered without exception and without mercy.

I instructed Youngster to make them this declaration with a proud demeanor, but subsequently to adopt gentle, humane manners to give them confidence, and even to exhort some of the principals among them to come to see me unarmed to receive tokens of the generosity I was promising them.

It can be seen that to act with this confidence and this sense

of power, I had to be completely sure of the success of my conduct. I at least had the sort of security that is founded on a perfect understanding of the character of those with whom one must deal.²⁹² I had with me fifteen hundred well-armed men; I was certain, on very firm information, that the number of all the Rouintons together did not exceed eight hundred, counting women and children; and I knew that the general custom of savages is to flee without combat when they feel inferior in number. I was unsure about only one thing, which was that the Rouintons might become too frightened, when they learned I was so near to them, and that mistrusting my propositions, they might immediately opt to take flight, with the ease these naked savages always have for doing that. My deputies presented themselves boldly at the entrance to the village, and to prevent any aggression, their first act was to make it known that they were supported by a corps of fifteen hundred men. This news, and the declaration they then made of the reason for their coming, spread in an instant among the savages, and produced part of the effect I had foreseen, which is to say that most, listening only to their fear, quickly fled into the neighboring forests.²⁹³ However, several of those who had first gathered about Youngster, and whom he had addressed, seeing nothing to that ought to frighten them, remained and listened to him tranquilly. He enticed them with his words and his promises, and spared nothing to make them feel the advantage of his offers. He thought he had swayed them; [215]

²⁹² “Perfect knowledge” of others turns out to be illusory; Cleveland, who often seems to see others as unidimensional, tends to behave toward them with a confidence that will be gainsaid by the surprises they hold in reserve for him.

²⁹³ This characteristic of the Amerindians was often noted: see Hugh Jones, *The Present State of Virginia* (1724), Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, n. d., ch. II, p. 55.

but since there were but few of them, and it was desirable that those who had fled be persuaded to return to the village, he felt that the only means was to leave those who had listened to him, entreating them explain to the others that they should have no fear, and that nothing was more to their nation's advantage than to join in a true peace with the Abaquis. He left them the rest of the day and the following night to deliberate, and promised to return to them the next day with the same docility and the same intentions. He attempted in vain to bring some of them to me: not one was bold enough to follow him.

I was delighted to see Youngster, who was coming calmly, and augured well for his negotiation. His report increased my expectations. I praised his conduct, and chose to wait until the next day. We were not far from the village, but a small hill, at the foot of which I had made my camp, hid it from view. I had chosen this spot so as not to frighten our enemies overly by a sudden and hasty approach. Youngster got our little army into perfect order, with every precaution that could keep us from fearing surprise. The rest of the day went by without the least movement on the part of the Rouintons.

When it had become very dark, I was alerted, just as I was beginning to get a little rest, that swirls of thick smoke were seen rising at the top of the hill, with a bright light that could only signify a large fire. I went to examine it with my own eyes. I could easily judge that it was the Rouintons' village that was on fire, and did not doubt for an instant that that cruel nation had set it deliberately. I gave an order that no one go abroad until daylight, fearing some other effect of those wretches' despair. In the morning I sent Youngster to scout, with some of my men. His report was pretty much as I imagined. The Rouintons, either from mistrust of my promises, or from a sheer effect of inhumanity and barbarity, had preferred to abandon their territory rather than to submit. They had set fire, as they left, not only to their large

village, but to several small hamlets scattered nearby. Their huts, which were of dry wood, were entirely consumed; and what better revealed their fierce and cruel character, they had killed their aged and their sick. Youngster also found their bodies which had escaped the flames.

I was grieved by this news by a sentiment of humanity. But a feat of such barbarity making it clear enough to me that I had vainly flattered myself that I could civilize such a brutish people, I considered it as fortunate for the Abaquis that they were entirely delivered of these dangerous neighbors.²⁹⁴ Such was the outcome of this expedition, which, as can be seen, did not need to worry Mrs Riding and my wife much, since my savages did not even have the opportunity to shoot a single arrow. I would not have gone on so long about such an insignificant event, if it had not soon thereafter produced such terrible effects that my blood still chills at the obligation I have placed on myself to recount them.

²⁹⁴ If the Rouintons are not irredeemably vicious (we shall see in book X that despite all they retain a “sort of respect for nature”), they have in any case proven unworthy of the efforts Cleveland expends on their behalf. But his relief here cannot conceal the failure of the monarch-missionary who wanted to prove that his system was exportable.

BOOK FIVE

[217] Tranquillity and good order seemed to me so well established among the Abaquis that, not thinking to multiply their laws and obligations, I was content with making them adhere precisely to the ones they already had. That was the only means of assuring the fruits of my labors, which would have been most uncertain after my departure, if I had not taken care to bind those good savages in this way with the chains of habit. Thus some months further were spent repeating our ordinary exercises, and awaiting the return of the savages I had sent to Virginia with Mme Lallin's messenger. I was waiting until after their return to reach some resolution which would lead us to something reasonable and assured, ever hoping to derive from their report some information that could be decisive. I could not guess the exact length of their journey, nor the time it should take them. That was the principal cause of my dilemma. More than once it had occurred to me, especially since my wife's confinement, to leave with her and the rest of my family and attempt on my own to find the way to Carolina. Not that I did not expect considerable difficulties from the Abaquis, who were much too attached to us to consent willingly to our departure; but I might have been able to fool them by making them think we were not abandoning them forever. We would have taken an escort, which would have further helped persuade them that it was not our intention to leave them definitively; and we would have had no difficulty getting rid of it, had heaven blessed our journey and led us by chance to some English or Spanish settlement.

However dangerous this plan, there was no other choice available, assuming we received no news of his lordship. It was what I finally decided upon, as a patient does with a bitter, painful remedy which he dreads almost as much as his illness. I even communicated it to my wife and Mrs Riding, who were not hesitant in approving it, and boldly prepared themselves to run its

risks. The only thing now holding us back was the feeble hope that our savages might arrive at the moment we least expected them. It was not disappointed. One day their return was announced to us. My emotion was so great at this news that I could barely hold myself up. It was even worse when I saw my wife faint away from surprise and shock.

If indeed one imagines how great our anxiety and weariness had to be after fifteen months' stay in a village of savages, and more than a year which had gone by since we had had news of his lordship, one will understand that the faintest hope could not fail to cause us an extraordinary agitation. But if it was not joy, it was at least an uncertainty of sentiments that first had put us in this wracking situation. We would soon experience other movements of which the nature was less equivocal: they were those of the most mortal dread, and hence of the deepest and most overwhelming sorrow.

The savages had gone first to Powhatan. There they had seen Mme Lallin, who had facilitated as much as she could the means of getting to Carolina. With the [218] help of a Virginian who knew the English language, they had followed the seashore, inquiring in each inhabited place whether they had seen Lord Axminster, or whether they knew anything of his fate. They had learned nothing about what they were searching for. Despairing of succeeding any better by further searching, they had headed back toward our valley, through a thousand perils and in continual uncertainty of the way. Finally chance, or rather providence, which no longer wished to leave us uncertain of our misfortunes, and which held yet worse ones in store for us, had allowed them in the vast wilderness to come across one of their compatriots, one of those brave Abaquis who had served as escort to his lordship. They brought him back with them, and it was by himself that we were soon told the terrible adventure of his lordship and his companions.

That unhappy viscount had been no more than five or six days' march from the valley of the Abaquis when he was attacked by a number of savages about equal to his own. He had put them to flight with few losses. Those beasts, who were nomadic inhabitants of the great *Drexara* desert,²⁹⁵ and are held to be the cruellest in America, had not been discouraged by their defeat. The sight of his lordship, who was mounted and clothed, as were the Englishmen of his retinue, had aroused them to return to the assault in hopes of booty. Only this time they had come in far greater number, and cutting the Abaquis' path at some distance from the site of the first combat, had fallen upon them so ferociously and with such a terrible rain of arrows that they downed a large part of them. The remainder, terrified to find themselves instantly surrounded on all sides, and deprived even of recourse to flight, had surrendered their weapons to preserve their lives. They had remained prisoners with his lordship and his Englishmen. The victors had divided up this rich prey, and divided themselves up to take different paths. Most of the savages of the *Drexara* desert are cannibals, at least with respect to their prisoners. They have no real home. They are constantly on the move, hunting animals and men which they consider their most delectable game. The only reason they are called *Drexara* savages is that, searching the mountains and woods as the best hunting grounds, they like this broad desert, which is full of wild animals, since it is covered by forests of vast dimensions.

I was trembling and consternated listening to this first part of the savage's narrative, and I dared not urge him to tell me what I most desired to know. Such a fearsome beginning made me anticipate the most awful fate for the unhappy viscount. Fanny for her part was so agitated as to inspire pity. We continued to lend

²⁹⁵ The name seems to be invented, especially since, as we learn somewhat later, it is an Abaqui name.

our attention, daring not open our mouths to utter a single word. Fortunately, the savage said, I happened to become, along with his lordship and twenty of our companions, the prisoner of a band of the least cruel of them, and the least avid for human flesh. Not that they did not begin by eating six of us to satisfy their initial appetite; but it is their custom to go every year to the shore of a great river, where they find white, clothed men to whom they give their prisoners, in exchange for something they like very much. For this purpose seven of us had been saved, and we were forced to make the long journey to come to the river; but the white men did not come this year. We were brought back towards the Drexara desert to wait for next year. However, the savage added, I am sure that not all my companions will see that time; for of the original sixteen, four have already been eaten since my return from the river. Then he told us how he had managed to escape, and by what happenstance he had run into his three countrymen²⁹⁶ after wandering for two months in territory unfamiliar to him.

I have since learned that these white men with whom the savages maintained a sort of trade with their prisoners were the Spaniards of Pensacola, who at certain times go up the great Saint Esprit²⁹⁷ river, and buy slaves for a few glasses of spirits, or for foodstuffs of no value. [219]

²⁹⁶ Earlier there were six of them.

²⁹⁷ Pierre Vander Aa's map of Florida indeed shows an "Apalachicoli ou Hitanachi et R. du Saint-Esprit," which is the present Chattahoochee and Apalachicola, flowing into the Gulf of Mexico 200 km east of Pensacola, near the St. Joseph mentioned a little later. But the identification is not certain, given that the Mississippi also was called Rivière du Saint-Esprit (*R. de Spiritu Santo* in Sanson, *R. do Spirito Santo* in Ogilby). As for Pensacola, the first colony founded in 1559 and destroyed by a hurricane in 1561 was not really replaced until 1698.

I ordered the Abaqui to withdraw after his story; and the state I was in not preventing me from reflecting on the state I saw my wife in, I immediately did something I not only had never done, but of which I had not yet believed myself capable. I bottled up in my heart the most acute and urgent of all woes; and I, who felt ready to succumb under my pain and fall lifeless, yet found enough strength to feign constancy, to assume a tranquil countenance, and to undertake, in a word, to comfort my dear wife. This is where I expect no longer to be pitied by anyone. Such a persona as I have been able to maintain, and such as I shall represent him, will appear so strange, and perhaps so contrary to common notions, that if the reader is kind enough to believe it possible, he will doubtless imagine that it deserves less sympathy than wonder. You have to have experienced the sufferings another feels, or at least feel that you can experience them, to be capable of engaging in them by compassion; and not only will there be no one who has felt anguish like mine, but scarcely will there be anyone who can understand it.

What I therefore determined at that moment, to master any outward indications of grief, became a rule which I have followed ever since with unbelievable constancy. I did not foresee what I was committing myself to. Contemplation of my wife, whose courage I wished to sustain by my example, led me to formulate inwardly this sort of vow, into which entered perhaps too much presumption. Nevertheless I have had the strength to carry it out: but at what a price! And how filled with bitterness is still the memory itself I have of it! Dear Fanny, I said to my wife, we must bless heaven for allowing us at least to be informed of his lordship's misfortune. The assistance of providence cannot fail to innocence and virtue. You see that he has already proven it, by falling happily among the most humane band of savages. He will receive the same protection to the end. Maybe by now he has already been delivered to the white men mentioned by the Aba-

qui. They can only be English, or French, or Spanish; and whichever European nation it is, he is out of danger if he is out of the savage's hands. Aye, she answered, reasoning only too well on the subject of our fears; aye, if he is out of the savages' hands; but what is the likelihood he has been delivered from those cruel animals? It has only been two months, according to the Abaqui's report, since they came back from their great river; they are not to return there until next year; and who knows whether they will spare my dear father's life for so long? She broke into tears as she thus spoke; and as her emotion brought vividly to mind everything she had to fear, she seemed as frightened as if she had seen his lordship about to be devoured by the savages. In order to reassure her, I told her that, these savages being accustomed to trading with their prisoners, there was no reason to fear they would not conform to their usual practice; that I would in any event anticipate any effect of their cruelty, my intention being to place myself forthwith at the head of two thousand Abaquis, and make use of whatever information I could obtain from the one who had accompanied his lordship, and set out for the Drexara desert; that heaven would be my guide in an undertaking where its goodness and justice were implicated; finally, that I hoped to find his lordship, which was the only difficult point, and nothing would be easier than for me to set him free.

Fanny had too sound a mind to allow herself to be flattered by false hopes. She sensed as perfectly as I all the difficulties in my plan, and here is the decision she came to immediately. I am persuaded, she said, that you will not abandon my father, and will execute what you have just promised me; but I see the perils and the uncertainty of such a venture. You cannot leave me here behind you, at the risk of everything that can happen to me during your absence, and almost certain when we part never to see you again. There is therefore no choice for me but to leave with you. We will find my father, or we will all perish together searching

for him. As strange as this proposal was, I could not [220] reasonably oppose it. However, I brought to her attention several reasons that made it almost impossible. We had no carriages for her, her daughter, and Mrs Riding, and for their two maids. This difficulty alone was insurmountable.²⁹⁸ She replied that she was aware of that, and it did not frighten her; they would go on foot like me, as often as their feebleness permitted them to do so; if they felt too weary, it would be a simple matter to put together a sort of stretchers for them which I could get our Abaquis to carry; that if I took two thousand of them with us, they could relay each other, and provide us this service without much effort or trouble. As for supplies of food, which posed another difficulty, she could not be prevented by fear of want, and decided that like me she would place her principal confidence in the prodigious quantity of wild animals that are to be found everywhere in America, and which our savages would not fail to kill regularly.

We shall go, dear Fanny, I said, embracing her, we shall go. I admire your courage, and want to believe it is to give it a happy outcome that heaven inspires it. I lost no time transmitting our decision to the Abaquis. To them I spoke of it only as an expedition which I wished to undertake to avenge their comrades and rescue his lordship. The entire nation eagerly volunteered; but being much less interested in numbers than in courage and good

²⁹⁸ This curious detail reflects Cleveland's resolutely aristocratic perspective. It is inconceivable to him, even in the middle of the American wilds, for a woman of quality to travel by foot: better to force Rem to carry Fanny (alternately with himself), and two Englishmen to carry Mrs Riding, who nevertheless early in book II was called "a heavy woman"; otherwise the difficulty is, as Cleveland says, "insurmountable". Gelin will have the same consideration for Fanny in book IX, and Manon dies after having to walk all of two leagues (about nine kilometers).

order, I declared that I wished to take along only those who had been trained by Youngster. That was a corps of about two thousand men, all of whom seemed resolute and hardy. Those we left in the village expressed displeasure to see my wife and entire family leave with me; but they still had not the slightest suspicion that they were going to lose us forever. In any other circumstance, we might not have left without some regret this good people, in whom in the course of such a long stay we had found nothing but docility, submission, and every evidence of sincere attachment,. The memory of all the good things they did has been ever-present to me; and my whole life I have prayed heaven to sustain among them the knowledge and love of the good, which I attempted to instill in them.

Although I had limited the number of those who were to participate in our expedition, I could not refuse to a few individuals who had been the most attached to me the satisfaction of coming alone. I was sorry not to be able to grant it to old Iglou, who, mindful less of his age and strength than of his zeal, would have undertaken to follow me to the ends of the earth. But I consented to have Rem, his daughter, accompany my wife: aside from her devotion, which deserved this reward, I thought there would be a hundred situations where her services could be helpful to Fanny and my daughter. Finally we set forth, having commended ourselves to heaven's protection, and entreated it a hundred times over with the most ardent outpourings of our hearts.

My, what a departure, and what a venture! I scarcely knew which way to direct our first steps. I conceived only that being in Florida beyond the Apalachian Mountains, the Gulf of Mexico was to my south, and the coasts of the Northern Sea to the east. It seemed rather likely to me that the white men the savage had told me about were none other than the Spanish, who must have come up some great river from the Gulf of Mexico; for I knew of none

toward the Northern Sea until the end of Tegesta that was as wide as the one the savage had described to me. As for the Drexara desert, which I call by that name by translating literally what the Abaqui prisoner called it,²⁹⁹ I had never heard of it: the only knowledge I could have of it was drawn from the comparison I made between his narrative and my own opinion that the white men were Spanish; and from this I concluded that this desert must be, with respect to us, to the south, or a bit more to the right in a westwardly direction.³⁰⁰ In truth, that did not correlate well with the route of the three savages I had sent to Carolina, and with the encounter they had with the prisoner; but I knew from their own admission that they had not held to any uncertain path, [221] and I judged from the length of their trek that they had wandered far from it.³⁰¹ Such was the state of my knowledge, or rather of the profound ignorance which was our only guide for our unhappy journey. I must nevertheless confess, not to give too terrible an impression of my dilemma, that I had another hope, without which it would have been extreme folly to rush this way into an inextricable labyrinth. I was depending on the information I might glean from the various nations lying along our path, and had no

²⁹⁹ This seems a curious sort of mystification on Prévost's part: for aside from the fact that this name corresponds to nothing to be found on the maps, one can scarcely understand how *Drexara* could be "literally" translated *from* the Abaqui – translated *into* what?

³⁰⁰ Cleveland seems to situate the Drexara in the Alabama savannas, which he would reach if he followed the Appalachian chain, which itself angles westward, to the south. But it would then be at a distance of some six hundred kilometers, and the five or six days' march which took Axminster there would seem rather inadequate.

³⁰¹ Not counting the two months during which the prisoner who escaped had wandered through unknown lands before he was found. Taking little account of the Indians' fabled talent for navigating the woods, Prévost sometimes makes of them rather poor guides (book XIV).

apprehension of encountering them, because I was well enough escorted to fear nothing from their brutality.

We marched very easily for the first eight days. Although it was quite hot, the morale of my Abaquis held up admirably. They carried the women's four stretchers with no reluctance; and as they relayed each other at the least sign of fatigue, they did not to me appear wearied by this exercise. I spurred them on, moreover, by marching at their head; and cognizant of the need I had of their services, I assumed an air of confidence and resolution sufficient to inspire the same in them. Nevertheless, whether because they were not as hardened to fatigue as nomad savages who are used to continual travel, or because the heat and change of air may have helped weaken them, there were a great number who were suddenly attacked by a dangerous illness. This unpleasant happenstance forced us to a halt. In order to take a few days' rest, I chose a pleasant prairie bordering a river, the banks of which were covered by dense enough trees to protect us from the heat of the sun. This precaution did not prevent thirty of my bravest soldiers from dying on me within two days. I quickly realized from the progress of the disease that it was contagious. I lost fifteen men the next day, and was being constantly notified that many others were threatened with the same fate. In less than a week there were eight hundred men sick, and approximately two hundred carried off by the illness. Filled with dreadful anxiety for the danger to my wife, I had her separated with her servants from the main body of the band, and forbade the savages under pain of death to approach the place where she was. I charged Youngster with the task of watching over her while I would be seeking some remedy for the sickness of my poor Abaquis. But the brave and loyal Youngster himself fell victim to this deadly disease, and I saw him expire sadly two days later.

Heaven's wrath was pursuing me. Among so many poor men who were dying before my eyes, I was without doubt the

most pitiable, although my sturdy temperament sustained me against the infected air I was breathing at every moment. I was constantly in the midst of my Abaquis, exhorting and consoling them, and interrogating them about the nature and the symptoms of their sickness. I separated the sick from those who were not yet sick; I had the dead removed, lest the danger increase from the infection of the bodies; I was everywhere, lending my own hand for the most unpleasant tasks, I spared myself less than the most miserable of my savages. Meanwhile, it often occurred to me that such ill-considered zeal could prove pernicious to my wife. I feared, returning to her side in the evening, communicating to her something of the contagious air I had breathed. I decided to wash myself every day in the river before I went to see her, and to cover myself with different pelts from the ones I had been wearing when I visited the sick. What would have become of us, had the sickness attacked even me! The dreadful fear! I turned my attention away from it, as a criminal tries to avoid the thought of his punishment. I composed my face when I approached Fanny, and far from informing her of the continual progress of the disease which every day was claiming twelve, fifteen, and sometimes twenty of my Abaquis, I flattered her with the hope of a change for the better. She pretended to believe me, and at the same time that I was thus disguising our woes to spare her the worry of knowing about them, she was similarly dissimulating by feigning not to know of them, for fear it would be a new burden for me to think her too affected by them.

In this terrible disaster, it was supremely fortunate that she, her daughter, and her servants [222] remained perfectly healthy. We spent three entire weeks in the same spot, without the slightest hope for our miseries to diminish. I had lost about four hundred savages, and with the sickness continuing to spread, I was threatened with losing them all in with the same bad luck. I decided for a change of air, by placing my camp on a rise that

appeared to be only a day away from the vast prairies where we were. I ordered my savages to prepare for departure. But I had the impression they did not receive this news willingly. Although the place where I intended to lead them was fairly close, it was in the direction of our journey, and some of them informed me that they were expecting less to continue it than to return promptly toward their village. Additional cause for extreme anxiety. I ceased to press them, to give myself time to sound their dispositions. I soon recognized that their reluctance was not at all a reaction that had suddenly arisen. They had met together several times during the night to consider what they should decide to do; and discipline having become very lax among them since Youngster's death, they had grumbled about me, as if they should blame me for the misfortune that had befallen them.³⁰² I found them so embittered and indisposed to obedience that I feared I could not contain them long in the respect they had always had for me until then. The consequences of this could only be very dire. The least, and the one I should naturally fear, was to see myself suddenly abandoned, and remain with my family at the mercy of the animals, or of other savages equally as cruel. For several days I employed solicitations and entreaties on those whose loyalty was least suspect to me, and urged them to make their own efforts to persuade their companions. They tried, but to no avail. Even the sight of five or six hundred of their peers who were still suffering from the disease, and whom they must therefore resign themselves to leaving behind, made no impression on the rebels, and lacked the force to make them agree at least to wait until they were well. It was as if once they had declared the desire they had to go back, they had something to fear if they put off their depar-

³⁰² Cleveland's relation with the Indians dramatically changes meaning: rather than a savior from the outside world who compensates for their ignorance, he is a contamination which has compromised their welfare.

ture. They were deaf to all my reasons, they refused to hear them, like a herd of animals that all move impetuously toward the same place, when they are determined by some impulse of which they do not even see the cause. Finally I could recognize in my good Abaquis nothing more than a band of capricious and unbending savages.

The damage seemed to me beyond remedy. The only one still available, and which I determined to try, consummated my catastrophe, by giving those devils the opportunity of carrying out their resolution completely. I gathered them all about me, and after proudly scolding them for their inconstancy and betrayal, I added that I was nevertheless well informed that the number of traitors was small, and that there were many among them who would rather remain faithful to me; that I wanted to know who they were, and distinguish them from the others as they deserved, ready to consent to the others leaving my presence forever, and returning forthwith to the village. My hope was that the shame of being publicly identified as disloyal would, perhaps despite themselves, hold them to their duty. At the same time I ordered that those who wished to abandon me should step to my left, and the others remain to my right. I observed their faces. Several moments passed before anyone dared stir from where he was. They looked at each other with an air of astonishment and uncertainty. Finally, some of the most rebellious having suddenly moved over to my left, they were immediately followed by most of them. No sooner had they paused to recognize each other and to support each other, than they turned their backs to me with a great cry, and all fled in the direction of their village. More than three hundred still remained on my right, whose loyalty I at least had reason to believe confirmed; but even they, seeing their comrades fly, and after remaining for a while uncertainly watching them, left me all at once to follow them, and neither my pleas

nor my reprimands could stop them.³⁰³

[223] What notion could I give here of my grief and consternation? Such excesses as these cannot be described. I remained absolutely alone in the middle of the prairie. Since the two Englishmen I still had never left my wife, and the sick camp was five hundred paces away in a tree-covered place, I was not accompanied by even a single savage from whom I could have hoped for the feeble relief provided by someone as witness to one's sufferings. It was not in my wife that I wished to confide them: she would have shared them, and hers could do nothing but increase my despair. I had to stifle them within me. I sat down on the grass, right where I was. However obstinately heaven seemed determined to crush me, I lifted my eyes to implore its goodness and invoke its justice. I asked, if not for the consolations that could diminish my anguish, at least for some salutary insight that might help guide my conduct, and let me glimpse some possibility of hope, in a condition to which I could not believe it had ever reduced anyone before me. Oh God, I cried over and over, is it despair that honors you? If it is out of goodness that you fashion your creations, how can you take pleasure in destroying them? What would you have me become? What will you do with his lordship, with my poor wife, and with my daughter? What has it benefitted me to call on you, if you never hear my prayers? Oh God, hear me, and take pity on your unhappy creatures.

However, after some time spent in such agitations, I gath-

³⁰³ Thus does Cleveland's empire collapse in an instant. His attempt to construct the ideal rational realm for the primitive did not constitute a utopia, and does not even succeed very well with respect to its own objectives. Nature will out, this time at Cleveland's expense: many witnesses asserted that the Indians were anything but courageous in war. Cf. Philip Stewart, "Utopias that self-Destruct," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 9 (1979), pp. 15–24.

ered my wits to draw from the circumstances of our misery what feeble resources I might perceive in them. At first it seemed to me that there could be no hesitation about the place toward which we should think to direct our path. All semblance of hope would have been vain, except in the direction of the Abaquis. Once I had fully recognized the necessity of taking this option, I bitterly regretted not having yielded to impatience of the fugitives. But such regret being futile, I considered whether there would henceforth be any security for us even among those savages, after the treasonous act of which their youth had been capable. I imagined they might fear I would punish them; and the shame of crime or the fear of punishment sometimes pushes those who are still but half guilty to violate every duty. Nevertheless, I flattered myself that my kindness could reconcile them to me and revive their confidence. There were two difficulties that caused me much more fear and uncertainty. The first had to do with the perils of the journey. We were going to find ourselves exposed to encountering and suffering injury from any and all whom heaven might choose to place in our path: but the danger was the same in whichever direction we might turn, and we would have been no more certain to avoid it even by resigning ourselves to remain where we were. We must therefore commit ourselves to providence, and continue to implore its help. The second obstacle was the fatigue of a ten-day march, which the two ladies and their servants could not have the strength to bear. I had only Rem and my two Englishmen; of the large number of savages who were sick, not one from whom I could expect the slightest assistance. The two chambermaids must necessarily go on foot, whatever effort it might cost them; and I determined that I would myself assume the burden, along with Rem, of carrying my wife, while the two Englishmen would render the same service to Mrs Riding.

Next I thought about what would become of these hapless savages we would be obliged to leave behind us. The dangerous

kind of disease which afflicted them left them so feeble and languishing that they had not the strength to hold themselves upright. About the same number were still perishing every day, and my presence was assuredly of no help to them. Nevertheless, when it came to it, I did not feel capable of abandoning so many unfortunate men to the horror of such a fate. I was of no use to them for recovering from their plight, but I noted that they received some consolation from my visits, and were not without gratitude when they expired. That was enough to make me conclude on deferring my departure until the disease had taken them all, and continue to render them whatever services [224] were in my power. I considered moreover that they had undertaken the journey only out of zeal to serve me and obedience to my orders. I felt that I owed them out of gratitude what I felt inclined to grant them from the kindness of my heart and humanity. Hunger was not a problem we needed to fear. Our disloyal deserters, who for more than three weeks had had nothing to do but hunt, had left us an immense quantity of game which they had dried in the sun, as is their custom; and with every step in the prairie we found all sorts of birds' eggs, of which we made our greatest delicacy.

This plan was the most reasonable that prudence could suggest to me in such a difficult conjuncture. It was even the only one I could adopt. But the ascendancy of my ill fortune was to overpower all my plans, in order to destroy them, or turn them to my downfall.

I did not hasten to return to my wife earlier than usual: a troubled appearance would have alarmed her too much. I did not see her until evening, after visiting the sick and informing them of their comrades' betrayal, which they learned with furious indignation. They were so moved by the promise I made to remain with them that their gratitude burst forth in a hundred ways. I felt repaid from that moment for all I had done for them. Night having come, I rejoined Fanny, who was still unaware of the depar-

ture of our renegades, since the place where she was staying was at a long way off. It was covered by a small hill that separated it from the prairie, and which, being shaded by thick trees, blocked up to a certain height the circulation of the noxious air. I had built her a hut of boughs and branches where she could stay adequately with her servants; in this way, though without being in great comfort, she at least had nothing to suffer from the elements, nor anything to fear from contagion. I strictly observed the custom I had adopted of going naked into the river at some distance from her hut, and changing clothes before I went near her. Although I had plunged back into my mournful contemplations as I left the sick quarters, and had not ceased my lamentations until the time I saw her, I assumed a peaceful countenance when I entered her hut. She asked what news there was of me and of my companions. They have departed, I replied calmly. Not one of them would have survived, if they had stayed here any longer. We too will have to return to the village as soon as our sick are dead or recovered.

The apparent calm of my report did not prevent her surprise being extreme. She looked at me intently to discern my dispositions in my eyes, as if she had suspected that so sudden and unexpected an event had some extraordinary cause. Mrs Riding manifested no less astonishment, and they both sought to make me explain further. I remained steadfast in concealing the truth from them: I even conceded that there was justice in their reproach that I had lacked imprudence in failing to retain at least a certain number of Abaquis to serve as escort to us. And so it was that all the weight of this terrible episode fell on me alone, and I became more than ever accustomed to assuming a philosophical presence in the midst of my cruellest sufferings.

Before the Abaquis' disease appeared to abate five weeks went by, which for me were five years of a cruel agony. The continual reflections I made on my fate, my fears which could not

lessen as long as I could see no assured resource against the perils of our return, and the violence I did myself in order to hide them, made me experience in this short time more combined torments than I had suffered in my entire life. Finally, the contagion completely ceased; and of more than five hundred Abaquis who were still sick when their comrades left, we had scarcely sixty remaining. I nevertheless had in mind to set out with these sorry survivors of heaven's wrath. I put this proposition to my wife. She wept on hearing it. [225] I believed as she that her pain came only from the necessity where we found ourselves of abandoning the mission we had undertaken to save his lordship. That reason was doubtless enough to justify her sadness and mine. But she has since confessed to me that there were even more acute movements taking place in her heart than our present misfortunes ought to have occasioned, either because it was the uncertainty of our fate that caused her agitations which she could not discriminate, or because it was an effect of a foreboding of the horrible catastrophe into which heaven wished to lead us before having us leave America.

The narrative I promise here will be simple. The tragic event I shall now relate requires neither preparations nor ornaments to move a reader who was not born a brute, and who is not ashamed of being a man, in other words sensitive to the movements of a just compassion. One should not even expect that I should, as I recount what happened to me, to express what I felt. Expression of the word is but an invention of art: the unfaithful image, which would correspond too poorly to the most intense and intimate feelings of nature.³⁰⁴

³⁰⁴ Cf. *Manon Lescaut*: "Ah, expressions never capture but half the sentiments of the heart" (p. 431). Feeling is essentially ineffable; we try to analyze it, but words do not suffice. This notion, which Prévost already sketched in *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* (p. 177), places

We set out. My wife trembled as she placed herself on the stretcher. She held her daughter in her arms. I tenderly embraced these two dear objects of my affection, and silently commended them to the higher powers entrusted with the care of innocence. However fragile my Abaquis' health still was, they did not allow me to lay a hand on the stretcher. They shared this burden amongst themselves, and relayed each other in turn. Mrs Riding was carried in the same way. I walked close to my wife, absorbed by everything I had to hope and to fear, but especially by the reception I must expect in the Abaqui village. We had been marching for two days, and we were retracing without difficulty the path by which we had come. Several of my savages, whom I sent ahead out of precaution, with orders to keep their eyes ever open to survey the surroundings, halted at the top of a hill. After several minutes of attentive observation, they abruptly returned in towards us, running with exceptional speed. As they were more than a thousand paces off, I stopped to wait for them, in the hope that if they were bringing us some unwelcome news, I would have time to detour to the right or left with my whole party. My eyes were continually fixed on them. They had scarcely reached the bottom of the hill when I saw on the summit they had just left twenty or thirty persons who seemed to be pursuing them, and who nevertheless suddenly ceased to advance, once they had seen no doubt my band of men who had clustered about me. Twenty or thirty enemies not being number I could fear, I thought we should not give the slightest sign of fright; all the more so that they had sighted us, and that our flight could not be rapid enough to keep them from catching us if that was their design. I even decided, after a moment's deliberation, to send a party of my savages toward them, led by the two Englishmen, in order to anticipate

him at the opposite end of the spectrum from his contemporary Marivaux.

their attack if they were coming with evil intentions; and to remain at my wife's side along with fifteen Abaquis, whom I retained as a reserve corps. While I was making this distribution, I noticed that the hilltop was being covered with new arrivals as if they were filing in. The number grew so that I did not doubt there were already five or six hundred of them. I realized at the same time that I needed succor from heaven, and that neither valor nor prudence could get me out of such a dangerous pass.

Oh God, you know how fervently I invoked you! Each sigh that rose from my heart was a flaming prayer that entreated your powerful assistance. I begged my wife to remain on her stretcher, and confessed to her in a word that we were in the direst peril. Nevertheless, I said, you must master your fear; let us do nothing imprudent: it is sometimes at moment of ultimate danger that heaven gloriously intervenes, and it may be at this [226] that it is reserved for us. My heart was so taut as I spoke those words that it was unable to open up to hope. I embraced her. She begged me not to risk my life, and to remember that I owed myself to her and to my daughter. I did not reply, for fear of increasing her anxiousness by letting her see my own; and doing no more than squeeze her hand, I left her, determined to go in person to confront our enemies.

I had two reasons that inclined me to make this choice: one was the fear that if the combat took place too near the women, they might be within range of the arrows; the other, a pressing desire to test the savages' character, before we committed to a fight and before leaving them time to approach any more. My advance party had no further insight to give me than what I could gather with my own eyes. They had started to flee, as I have said, as soon as they saw they were being pursued. Thus having not a minute more to lose, I left the two Englishmen with my wife, and having my sixty Abaquis follow me, I marched quite proudly toward our enemies, who were advancing in more orderly fashion

than I would have expected from a band of savages. Surprised perhaps to see us with such a valiant countenance despite our small numbers, they halted a hundred paces from us. I continued walking toward them, and my intention was to separate from my men so as to accost them with signs of peace and submission. But when we had taken a few more paces, an Abaqui told me that we were finished, and he recognized the Rouintons.³⁰⁵ At that name I was seized with horror to the bottom of my soul. Oh God, the Rouintons! I stood motionless, not knowing what to do. They, who almost as quickly recognized my comrades as Abaquis, lost not a moment in shooting a rain of arrows at us. The Abaquis had so far been sustained by the confidence they had in me; but they turned tail once they saw what enemies they had to combat. If their small numbers made their flight excusable, it did not for that do them any more good; for their cruel enemies pursued them with such ferocity that there was not a single one of those poor devils lucky enough to escape them.

At the moment they began to flee, I was still thirty paces away from the Rouintons. I might also have chosen to flee, had I only my own life to preserve; but on the contrary I was prepared to sacrifice it a hundred times over for an interest that was much dearer to me than my life; and if I could not make it useful to my wife and daughter, the only happiness I could wish for was to lose it. A moment's reflection made it clear to me that I had nothing to gain by resisting. I threw down my weapons, so the Rouintons

³⁰⁵ As five or six days' march had brought Axminster to the Drexara wilderness where he encountered "nomad savages", one might be surprised that Cleveland, after ten days' march, still encounters Rouintons, neighbors of the Abaquis. But the time lapse in the first instance is exaggeratedly small; ten days at about thirty kilometers per day would instead bring them, following along the Appalachian Trail, into the area of what are now the Great Smoky Mountains.

could not think I intended to use them. A few of them seized me, while their companions were in pursuit of the Abaquis. They readily recognized that I did not belong to the nation they despised, and stopped some time to examine the manner in which I was clothed, giving no sign of any intention to mistreat me.

Although their language was not exactly the same as that of the Abaquis, I could hear enough resemblance to hope they could understand me. Noble Americans, I said in an humble and supplicant voice, I am not your enemy. I am a poor stranger whom chance has brought into this wilderness, and who was coming toward you with the Abaquis only to seek protection and friendship. I implore your pity for my life, and that of my family which is also about to fall into your hands. Allow yourselves to feel compassion for a man who has never offended you. Those pitiless savages looked at each other, laughing, or rather gnashing their teeth in a horrid way. Their eyes were bright and alert, but with that cruel and cunning look as the eyes of a tiger are commonly described. Their build was short and stocky, and almost all had extraordinarily large mouths. I surmised that they had not yet perceived my wife, for turning their eyes in that direction once I had spoken of her, they set out running towards the place where she was. Those who were quickest reached her in an instant, while a small number brought me after them, holding [227] me by both arms. I felt myself fainting from fear, and thought I had reached the fateful moment of experiencing the most ghastly thing which a father and husband can have to dread.

Nevertheless I got to the stretcher. There I found Fanny unconscious, and my daughter in her arms, in danger of killing herself in a fall. The savages may have believed my wife was dead, for they left her alone without the slightest assistance, and instead were looking over Mrs Riding and the two women, who, though they had not fainted, were speechless and paralyzed with fright. Having nothing to lose in such an awful situation, I tore

myself free from the hands of those who were restraining me, and fell on my wife's face, with movements too complex for description. I supported my daughter with one hand while I attempted to revive her poor mother, pressing my lips against hers to communicate to her a part of the little strength I had left. Finally she opened her eyes. Where is my daughter? she said instinctively; and seeing I was held her in my arms: Oh, Cleveland! she cried with a sigh she scarcely had the strength to utter, give me my child; do not leave me; I feel I can bear no more; we are finished, are we not, and there is no hope left? I had time to give her only a couple of words of comfort. I begged her to try to take courage. Heaven, I said, cannot abandon us without cruelty. Brace yourself for a while. They have not yet mistreated me, and perhaps they can be dissuaded.

During this time, those who had pursued the Abaquis having quickly cut them off and captured them, they returned triumphant with their prey, and came towards us with yells that chilled me with horror. They rejoined us in no time. The crowd of those who had the curiosity to see my wife pushed me away from her by pressing me on all sides. They did her no harm; but she had to suffer the gaze of a throng of hideous men, who increased her terror by taking her hands to look them over, or fixing their ferocious eyes on hers. I continued to hold my daughter in my arms. There was no way to use pleas, nor even to make them heard, in the tumult of this wild band and amidst the jumbled sound of their continual cries of joy. Which of them could I have addressed? It seemed they scorned me and considered me inconsequential, seeing me forlornly carrying my daughter. They no longer paid any attention to me. I managed to get back to my wife, and as the crowd about her was thinning, I sat down on the ground by her stretcher. I still do not know, I said to her, what we must expect. Let us hope heaven will do something to help us. It was already something that they had spared us in the movement

of their initial fury. Poor Fanny was so dejected she could scarcely reply. She asked me for her daughter. Her tears, which terror seemed to have stifled up to then, began to flow when she had her child in her arms. She kissed her a hundred times. Oh God, she cried, I would be only too happy to be dead; but save my husband and my poor daughter! It was some consolation to her to see beside her Mrs Riding and her servants, whose freedom to approach had not been taken away.

I was trembling with anxiety while waiting to see what all the savages' movements would come to. They had gathered into a circle fifteen paces from us, with the Abaquis in the middle, and seemed to be deliberating over the fate of those wretched prisoners. Finally the huddle opened, and divided into six groups. The sixty Abaquis were divided into the same number, and each group thus received an equal share of them. They immediately set to gathering wood from all about, and began other preparations that must plausibly be the prelude of a gruesome sacrifice. I did not doubt that the Rouintons had adopted the plan of making their enemies perish by fire. I bitterly pitied those unhappy victims, and grieved at the necessity of witnessing their torture.

But what was most extraordinarily surprising to me was to see that they were not only steadfast and calm, but even light-hearted to the point of singing and expressing joy, the very men who a minute earlier had [228] seemed to me wracked with fear, and could not be unaware of the cruel fate to which they were destined. It seemed they wanted to insult their enemies, and that having lost all hope of escaping from their hands, they had together determined to defy their cruelty, and not betray the slightest trace of weakness. I heard them boast aloud of having submitted many Rouintons to the same treatment they were about to undergo, and having slaughtered or burnt a large number of them

in their most recent wars.³⁰⁶ Once the fire was finally lit, the Rouintons in each group took just three of their captives; and instead of casting them into the flames, as I had imagined, they tied them to stakes which were extremely close to it, so that these poor Abaquis felt the great intensity of the fire, which caused their skin at once to change form and color. Thus they were slowly roasted, yet lost none of their constancy. Their comrades, who expected the same fate, did not fail to urge them to be patient and courageous, while their cruel enemies uttered shouts of joy and hopped about them, heaping on them all sorts of abuse.³⁰⁷

This was only the beginning of a scene the end of which was

³⁰⁶ “However timorous these savages behave in battle,” relates Mark Catesby, “they are quite otherwise when they know they must die, shewing then an uncommon fortitude and resolution, and in the height of their misery will sing, dance, revile, and despise their tormentors till their strength and spirits fail” (*Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahama Islands*, London: Catesby, t. I, 1731, p. xiv). Louis Hennepin relates a particularly striking incident on this subject: “They say there was one who said to them: You have no wit, you don’t know how to torture, you are cowards; if I held you in my country, I would make you suffer much worse. But as he was so speaking, a woman made a iron spit red-hot in the fire, and pierced his private parts with it. At that he cried out, and said: You have some wit: that it how it is done right” (*Mœurs des sauvages*, ch. “Cruauté des sauvages”). But such anecdotes also much resemble what Montaigne had already related in “Des cannibales” (*Essais*, livre I, ch. XXXI, Pléiade, 1962, p. 211).

³⁰⁷ The Indians’ extraordinary cruelty for their prisoners is attested by all observers; here is just one example: “Their savage nature appears in nothing more than in their barbarity to their captives, whom they murder gradually with the most exquisite tortures they can invent. At these diabolical ceremonies attend often both sexes, old and young, all of them with great glee and merriment assisting to torture the unhappy wretch, till his death finishes their diversion” (Mark Catesby, *op. cit.*, I, xiv).

to be infinitely more awful. Once the three Abaquis in each group had finally lost consciousness and then their lives, the Rouintons untied them from their stakes, and after completed the roasting, sat in a circle to divide up this horrid meat. The cadavers were cut into pieces. Every man received his share, and they began with a hundred signs of joy the most atrocious of all feasts. Until then we had had the strength to watch them, and had been overwhelmed with compassion watching the poor Abaquis burn; but the horror of this last spectacle made us bow our heads and close our eyes. We remained in that posture for the remainder of this abominable meal, unable even to open our mouths to express our consternation.

I know not what my wife's thoughts were. Mine were so confounded that I could not without difficulty describe them. An attentive reader quite realizes that my discomfiture came not just from witnessing such a barbaric scene, and that even while the simplest humanitarian reaction made me sympathize so with the fate of the Abaquis, I was prey to another sort of terror. Although the Rouintons' initial treatment of us threatened us with nothing baleful, and I knew for certain that they were not habitually cannibals, but only on such occasions as most of America's savages are cannibals like them, that is with respect to enemies they have taken in war,³⁰⁸ I ought not conclude anything terrifying

³⁰⁸ This is approximately what Father Louis Hennepin asserts: "They do this only in the extreme cases where they have resolved to exterminate an entire nation. If they eat human flesh, it is not out of hunger. It is to show the entire Iroquois nation that they must fight without any quarter for their enemies; they must even eat them rather than allow one to survive" (*Nouveau Voyage dans un pays plus grand que l'Europe*, Utrecht 1968, pp. 210-211). Guillaume de l'Isle's map of Louisiana (Covens et Mortier) denotes in Florida and Louisiana the presence of "anthrophages."

for us from the barbarity with which they treated the Abaquis; nevertheless, I did not feel as much reassured by this reasoning as I was tormented by my fears. However the mind stiffens itself, it is not always the extent of the peril that determines the degree of terror, but rather the importance of what one has to lose. Did I not need to tremble for all those I loved? Were we not in the power of a cruel band of savages? Could we defend ourselves against them, if they took a fancy to harm us? But they will not: ah, that reason is too weak to calm such a terrible and justified anxiety. Moreover, even supposing, with the most perfect assurance, that the example of the Abaquis did not predict anything too terrible for us, did I have any idea at any one moment what would happen to me in the next? Among a hundred things I might fear, was there a single one that could inspire in me a favorable feeling of hope? Could the happiest turn our fortune could take be anything other than extreme misery? Thus I contemplated my woes in all their forms. Far from trying to delude myself, I imagined one after the other all the most fearful things that could happen to me; and after sparing myself so little in this grim examination, it turned out that the blow that threatened me was more terrible than all my forebodings and more horrible than all my fears.

The six groups of Rouintons had placed themselves in such a way that we were more or less surrounded. Most of them went to sleep after their inhumane execution. [229] To me it nevertheless seemed that they were not so deprived of reason and common sense that they did not know how to conduct themselves with a degree of order and take certain precautions. I observed that they had designated guards to keep watch over the prisoners. A few of them came over to me. I seized this moment to beg them kindly to tell me in what manner they proposed to deal with us. But whether they did not understand my language well enough, or because our tranquillity provoked scorn for our little band, they did not deign to reply other than by grimaces and bursts of laughter. I

attempt in vain to move them with entreaties and supplications. Night having fallen, we were guarded as closely as the Abaqui prisoners. The next day, with the same dread we saw the cruel festival recommence, which was to last as long as there were Abaquis to devour. The fourth day it was over. Fortunately, we had the provisions with which we had supplied ourselves for our journey. We were allowed to keep them. It was with great difficulty that I persuaded my wife to take some food for sustenance.

Finally, there being nothing further to retain our enemies where we were, I awaited with inexpressible dread what choice they would make with respect to us. I watched their every movement. They were preparing to leave, and twenty-five or thirty of them, who had come towards me, indicated to me that we were to get up and follow them. We obeyed without objection. My intention was to have Mrs Riding's stretcher borne by my two Englishmen, and to bear my wife's along with Rem: but the savages, seeing what we were preparing to do, took the stretchers from us, broke them to pieces, and forced us to walk. I took my daughter on one arm, and lent the other to provide some support to my wife. I ordered the Englishmen to render the same service to Mrs Riding, whose age and weight would not have allowed her to make a hundred paces without help. We walked for about a half-hour in this sorry state. It was impossible for Mrs Riding to go on any more. She slumped down, uttering a heavy sigh, and told me that since she could go no farther, she was resigned to dying there. An inner movement seemed to warn all of a sudden about what she had to fear. I urged her in vain to take heart and summon all her strength. As nothing could induce her to rise, or rather, as her strength was no longer sufficient for that, the savages went to her. They paused for a time looking her over. Then they conferred together, and let out a great shout once they had reached a decision, and most of them sat down around us. I had unfortunately felt my arm so tired from carrying my daughter

that, no longer able to hold her, I had taken this moment for relief by handing her to one of my wife's servants. The Rouintons saw it, and that was apparently what caused them to include the unfortunate creature in the sentence brought against Mrs Riding. Their desire of moving on quickly gave them the desire to get rid of anything that could slow our movement.

I search for reasons to justify their cruelty. Alas, I search for them! For otherwise who could believe that there exist behind faces like our own monsters capable of attaining willfully the ultimate excess of inhumanity? Mrs Riding first was brutally seized by a dozen of those barbarians. She uttered cries that the noise of those about her did not long allow me to hear. I even lost sight of her in the crowd. A moment later, several savages plucked my daughter from the arms of the servant. Too certain of their intentions, I lunged violently at them; I knocked down several who tried to block my way; I managed to get to my daughter. But what fruit could I expect from my efforts? She was carried off before my eyes. I was restrained and pinned to the ground. My wife, who had launched out at our barbarous enemies with a fury equal to mine, was detained as well. My two Englishmen and the two servants were detained; and with my resistance undiminished to those who held me down, they decided to bind me hand and foot, and subsequently do the same to everyone in my party.

[230] I was still unable to make the slightest movement. My reason, as if clouded by the emotion of all my senses, abandoned me to the point that I bit the earth in that initial transport, and that thinking no more of what I owed my wife than of what I owed myself, for a few minutes I was incapable of either thought or reflection. The pounding of my heart made me even unable to utter cries and lamentations. Scarcely a few words, feeble and broken, issued from my mouth: Oh my daughter! Oh, my child! Oh you barbarians who steal her from me! My face, which I was

holding against the ground, was covered with tears, and I felt wrenching in my bowels a hundred times more cruel than one imagines the agonies of death.

In the meantime, my wife was four paces from me, in a posture much like mine. More fortunate than I in that first moment of shock and horror, she had lost all consciousness, and death would not have made her more still. I soon turned my sad attention to her, and began to think that she might need me to help her. I opened my eyes, and saw her in the state I have just described. Imagine if you he can the state I was in, torn as I was almost equally between impulses of paternal affection and conjugal love. I crawled over to her. I found my voice to utter a hundred tender and affectionate things to her. She was pale and devoid of warmth. Her faint took a long time to end. The Rouintons who were about us watched us without no appearance of emotion, and without offering us the least assistance. Seeing she had no sign of life or sentiment, I indeed believed she was dead, and immediately resolved not to survive her. I stretched out beside her as decently as I could; I implored heaven to cut short my sufferings by a quick death; and I closed my eyes, determined never to open them again.³⁰⁹

In begging heaven to take my life, it was a favor I was asking; and it had no intention to grant me any. Fanny and I

³⁰⁹ This scene is remarkably similar to that of Manon's death (*Manon Lescaut*, p. 439), both in geographical setting and in the desperate wanderings of the two couples in the wilds, brought about by their criminal status in the Old World. Prévost was moreover writing the two stories about the same time. The most probable explanation is Jean Sgard's brilliant and persuasive argument that the end of *Manon Lescaut* is a transposition of the one first intended for *Cleveland* (*Prévost romancier*, pp. 227–241). The *Cleveland* project would then, as a result, have become engaged on a radically new track with a return to the Old World.

would have been too fortunate if the earth had opened up to take us together and hide us forever in a single tomb. We were condemned to live a long time, and always to suffer. I remained more than a quarter-hour where I had lain down by her side. By dint of wishing for death, I came to believe intensely that it was not far off; and the thought that my torments were about to end may have helped ease them some. Meanwhile, my wife having made a slight movement that made me aware she was still breathing, I emerged from that painful lethargy to be of some assistance to her. I called her by her name. She answered with mine, and a moment later asked me sadly what I thought had become of her daughter. Love, more powerful than all woes, immediately made me realize that she did not imagine our misfortune as terrible as it was. I decided to abet her error by turning her fear away from the direction it ought to take; and feeling good about this intention, which could spare her a redoubling of dreadful suffering, I drew sufficient strength from it to compose my voice and think of a response in keeping with her thought. You are aware, I said, that heaven has allowed those barbarous Rouintons to take her away from us. Wherever they lead her, let us hope it will not refuse her its succor. It is a misfortune that is now beyond remedy. They have taken off Mrs Riding with her. Apparently, wanting to take us farther, they thought it suited them best to send both of them to some nearby village, because they feared they would be an impediment to our journey. Ah, she cried, what have they done with my daughter? I do not wish to live for a minute unless they bring her back to me. I interrupted her to confirm her more and more in the belief which I continued to see her holding to. I chided her tenderly for talking about dying if her daughter was not returned. Do you then prefer her to me, I said, and not wish to consider my love and my presence as two compelling reasons that oblige you to live? We [231] shall find our child: a happy chance, such as we have a hundred times experienced, can restore her to us at the

moment we least expect it. But what would become of me, were you to persist in hating life? And what am I to think of your love, if it does not make you prefer over death the pleasure of living with me? I added a number of other equally pressing reasons, without allowing her time to reply; and I finally got her to confess that, however it pleased heaven to dispose of our daughter and everything we had, we ought to seek our consolation in the assurance of being loved by each other, and in the favor the savages did us by not separating us.

Only an extraordinary assistance from heaven could have inspired me with the mettle I needed thus to contain my wife's despair; for turning my head at the very moment I was speaking, I saw the flames rising fifty paces away above the circle of savages, and could not doubt that my daughter and Mrs Riding were serving as prey to the flames, to be served up next to our cruel enemies. Let any father as tender as I, if there be any, transfer himself into my situation: let him weigh my torments, and judge them; and if he feels that compassion alone stirs him mightily enough to draw him into this dreadful adventure, let him conceive what I must have felt when I underwent it; and let him grant me the sad distinction I claim of having been my whole life long the most unfortunate of all men.³¹⁰

I did myself enough violence, not only to hide from Fanny the excess of my suffering, but also to make sure she not perceive those terrible flames, which might have given rise in her to some suspicion. I sat down in so that, lying on the ground as she was, it was impossible for her to see them. I even gave her to understand that the savages had gathered at some distance from us only in order to choose which of them they destined to take Mrs Riding and my daughter to the nearest village. I confessed that the bonds

³¹⁰ The frequent superlatives, found also in the narratives of Des Grieux and the Doyen de Killerine, make of the protagonist an archetype.

she saw on her hands as well as mine, which they had applied to her during her faint, were a precaution the savages had taken so we would have no thought of following our child, and to prevent me from making any attempt for her deliverance. In short, I gave such a casual turn to my words, and to all the answers I made to her objections, that if I did not diminish her suffering, at least I warded off the transports into which our misfortune would have propelled her had she known its full tragic extent.

Our servants were with us. They saw as I did the pyre burning, and that spectacle spoke so clearly that they could not be unaware of its terrible meaning: but they were shrewd enough to go along with the innocent deceit I was practicing with my wife. It was only two months later that she was openly informed of the death of Mrs Riding and her daughter; and even then I was careful to withhold from her the horrible circumstances.³¹¹

I prolonged my discussion with her, and the situation the two of us we were in, until the savages' return informed me that their barbarity had been completely satiated. Then I held out my arms to them so that they could undo our bonds. They granted us this favor. The first thing I did was have my wife take some refreshments, which she was barely willing to accept. I feared lest the weakness in which such emotion could not fail to leave her make her unable to walk, and this fear was only too capable of making me imagine a far greater one: but it turned out fortunately that the savages made the decision to spend the night in the same place. I spent part of it restoring her courage, and urged her to get some sleep only after she promised me to do what she could to contribute to her own consolation. It will seem incredible that with frail health and a most delicate body she was able to survive so many sufferings and fatigues, especially during the six weeks

³¹¹ The details of Mrs Riding's fate and their daughter's will be related in book X.

and more that we thus spent among the Rouintons, obliged almost every day to undertake a demanding march, and exposed at night to the elements. But what cannot one do with the two motives that impelled her, her affection for her father, and her love for [232] her husband? Fanny loved me. Alas, that dear wife had for me the affection of a hundred hearts combined. The slightest expression of my own, a mere word, would have been enough to reassure her and embolden her in the greatest of dangers. She scarcely love his lordship less, her dear father. The uncertainty of his fate, the perils to which she feared he was continually exposed, the hope however feeble and distant of finding him thanks to some whim of fate, sustained her every day in the midst of her fatigues and woes. That was our sole conversation until the unhappy day when she lost her daughter; and even the grief she experienced at that loss could not diminish those two principal sentiments. Moreover, as cruel as the Rouintons were, they did not prevent me from doing everything I could, particularly during the night, to provide her with whatever comforts and conveniences our miserable condition allowed. We had brought some pelts with us from the Abaqui village: they allowed us compose a bed for her; and the aid of her two women and the two Englishmen who watched over her constantly kept her at least from anything that could be terribly harmful to her health. If I may say so without understating the importance of what such a dear wife has suffered and undertaken for me, I was incomparably the more pitiable in this string of misfortunes which we shared. I speak not of the pains and fatigue of the body: mine seemed hardened to them. But what a notion will you not have of the torments of my soul, if you think how devoured I was by my woes, that I was bearing those of another, and that I was constrained not only to hide them all, but to find besides sufficient resources in my reason to sustain and comfort the others, I who needed at every moment to make every effort possible for my own consolation?

As the savages explained nothing of the reasons for their movements, we marched for a long time at their whim, not knowing what their intentions for us were, and without the slightest hint of a better fate which might lead us to the end of our miseries. I leave aside a hundred difficulties that our courage enabled us to overcome. Providence, which up till then had treated me so harshly, at least spared me in my most vulnerable point by preserving the health of my dear wife. It also was preparing a few moments' rest for me, like a sort of relief at the end of that sorrowful path³¹² I had endlessly followed since I left France. I had nevertheless to pay for it again very dearly, and be subjected thus, my whole life long, to the decree by which it had condemned me never to enjoy a pleasure that was not almost immediately poisoned by anguish.³¹³

After a six weeks' march, during which I could easily perceive that the Rouintons were not holding to a set course, but wandered here and there in hopes of taking prisoners, they began to follow more consistently a single direction. Seeing them do this for several days, I had no doubt they had a place in mind where they proposed to end up. I observed that they were advancing toward the south. I pointed this out to Fanny, who was gladdened, because we were both persuaded that if there was some hope of ever finding his lordship, it was in that direction we had to look. The captives the Rouintons had taken were quite numerous, and their plan was indeed to take them to the place of their

³¹² Though he never of course compares himself to Christ, his repeated superlatives about his life of suffering almost imply such a comparison. There are, moreover, other occasional Christic overtones in the text, as here, where the French term is *voie douloureuse*, a transparent analogy with the *via dolorosa* of Christ.

³¹³ Here ends volume III in the Paris edition by Guérin (d), in which the next sentence begins volume IV of his "book VI".

retreat, for the use for which they destined them. They therefore pressed our march with such diligence that we soon reached their new village. They were greeted with joy by their wives and children. Our group was closely guarded for several days during which they were resting from their journey. As soon as they were ready to undertake another, they obliged us to set out again with them, having informed not one of our miserable companions of their intentions. This new expedition was not of long duration. In less than two days we came to a vast forest, into which they had us advance a good distance, and we were surprised to find ourselves suddenly in the midst of a hoard of other savages, who greeted us with great acclamations. I never learned the name of their nation, nor what sort of relations the Rouintons [233] maintained with them: but reflecting on the manner in which we were received, I surmised then that, having relinquished their proximity to the Abaquis, the Rouintons had chosen their retreat in the region where we were now; and that, their small numbers obliging them to come to terms with their neighbors, they had committed themselves, either by some treaty or on their own volition, to supplying them with slaves. They did not remain long with us once they had turned us over. Whatever might be our fate in this change of situation, I thanked heaven for saving us from the hands of those cruel masters. Recalling the terrible alarms they had caused me, I had for the first time a thought which would have increased them had it occurred to me earlier. What ghastly treatment ought I to have expected at the hands of that dreadful nation, had one of them suspected me of being the instrument of their ruin, and the chief who had had such harsh conditions for peace put to them by Youngster and the Abaquis? Heaven, which did not wish my utter demise, no doubt took this thought from them. Moreover, they had found me with too few Abaquis, and too far from the village, to think I was that fearsome governor whose reputation had made them quake; not to mention that, not

seeing Youngster, their primitiveness might have caused them to forget ideas that his presence might have recalled to them.

In any case, this happy change was a wonderful mercy from heaven. We found kindness in our new masters. They locked us up with fifty-three other prisoners in a space surrounded by tall, thick stakes and covered with branches that at least provided us shelter from the elements. Food was furnished us in abundance. It is true that such gentle treatment seemed suspect to me for the first few days, and that it did occur to me that it was for some morbid purpose that they wanted us to gain strength and weight. But the absence of anything absolutely ferocious in the savages' faces, and the tranquillity with which they appeared before us, completely reassured me. I even began to flatter myself at that point with an expectation that was, in the long run, to be happily fulfilled. I remember the report made to me among the Abaquis about certain savages who maintained a slave trade with the European colonies; and being unable to give any other explanation for the care with which we were being treated, I imagined that our fate would be to be sold with all those who were captives like us. I shared this thought with my wife. She readily subscribed to it; but I do not know whether one can call joy the reaction my words seemed to cause her. Wholly preoccupied with the memory of her father and of her daughter, she said she could not consider as a good thing, nor consequently desire, what could not fail to take her farther away from her daughter, and make her lose, perhaps irrevocably, the hope of some day finding her dear father and dear child. I had nothing to reply to such justifiable feelings. I was obliged to fall back on general reasons for consolation, which I derived from the will of heaven and the necessity for us of following the unhappy course of a fortune it was not in our power to alter.

Finally, the rest we had for a few weeks appearing to the savages adequate to restore us, they opened our prison, and

indicated to us that we must prepare to accompany them. Our journey lasted but four days. Early on the fifth, we reached the banks of a medium-size river, where our escorts brought us to a halt.³¹⁴ Many branches and tree trunks which were dispersed all about told us that this place was sometimes visited by men. We spent several more days there, learning nothing of our fate. But I became more and more convinced that we were to be sold to new masters, whether savages or Europeans. About a week after our arrival, I heard the savages who escorted us shout with joy; and turning my head to discover its cause, I saw five or six large barques coming towards us on the river. I was soon able to make out the sailors, and see from their clothing that they were Europeans. [234] I confess that I felt a surge of real joy in my heart; I raised my hands toward heaven, I embraced my wife, and I believed at least a part of my wishes fulfilled. The barques were quickly upon us. I recognized the sailors as Spaniards. From whatever nation they might be, they were men; they were not just dumb, pitiless savages; and in that particular moment, our greatest satisfaction had doubtless to be seeing ourselves with creatures able like us to reason, and to understand our language.³¹⁵

³¹⁴ This is the Conchaques or Alabama River, as we will see further on; as they will require about nine days to reach Mobile Bay, we can suppose them to be somewhere in the middle of today's Alabama. They must also, in their two months' wanderings, have crossed the "Drexara desert".

³¹⁵ The close association between "our way of speaking" and capacity for thought seems to suggest that it is language (or certain languages) that think or in any case make one capable of thought, and recalls Michel Foucault's point that in the classical period language is held to be analytic. At this point in the story Cleveland is no doubt full of bitterness and scorn over the Abaquis' ingratitude, but he has always considered them something less than human; he said moreover in book IV that they were not generally capable of reflection, and Fanny,

However, my wife took these appearances of our change of fortune in a completely different way. Being the daughter of a Spanish mother, she knew the language of that country; so that having no more doubt, after some things she heard the sailors say, that we were momentarily to separate from the savages, and consequently go farther than ever away from the Rouintons, she shed a stream of tears, and nothing seemed able to comfort her. We were seated on the ground, and she had her head resting on my knees. I knew full well what was afflicting her so. Moreover, I understood from her daughter's name which constantly came from her lips what she feared she would lose irrevocably by leaving the savages behind. It was then I thought I should tell her that our dear daughter was no longer alive,³¹⁶ persuaded not only that she would be delighted after that to leave the savages, but that she would see her child's death as a much more bearable misfortune than leaving her behind us with the Rouintons. So I told her, not even going about it too circuitously, that she was less pitiable than she thought; that she had nothing more to fear for her daughter; that that little creature was in the bosom of God; that if I had not broken this news to her earlier, I was held back by the fear of causing her a too great affliction; but that seeing her in a state where should doubtless hear me willingly, I no longer hesitated to tell her that our daughter was happier than us, because she enjoyed a happiness that is never lost.

My words had a stunning impact on Fanny's mind. She looked at me intently, and I saw that her surprise had all of a sudden dried her tears. But, dear Cleveland, she said, are you not deceiving me? Is it true that my poor child is dead? I so assured

observing "their crudeness and animality", asserted pointedly that they were "beneath the quality of men" (book IV).

³¹⁶ This is two months after their separation, according to what Cleveland said earlier.

her with every protestation that could heal her doubts. As for the circumstances, these I carefully concealed, and invented others, as much with respect to Mrs Riding as her daughter, which I also thought suitable to ease her pain. She listened with rapt attention. When I had finished speaking, I could see her tears beginning to flow again. She joined her hands, and pressing them together: Oh God, she cried tenderly, keep my child in your arms. Be a mother to her. Let her want nothing to be happy. Live, my dear daughter, live in the bosom of God; you will be more tranquil there than your unhappy mother. And then, turning toward me, with a countenance half comforted: Oh, that is a death, she said, that gives me back my life. Wherever on earth it may be, I shall never grieve to see one I love go before me to heaven. I have nothing more to worry about now for my daughter. There I am quite assured of joining her some day. I confirmed her as much as I could in these sentiments, even though I could easily judge that such prompt consolation came less from the happy state where she believed her daughter now, than from the miserable state, if I may put it that way, where she began to be assured she no longer was. The image of that child, which she could not see unaccompanied by the horrible thought of the Rouintons and the memory of their cruelties, was a continual agony from which I had just delivered her; and by turning her thoughts, as I had done, toward heaven, where her imagination brought to mind only what was happy and agreeable, I had put her into a delightful situation, at least in comparison with the one where she had just been. I could propose to her nothing so consoling with regard to her father; but I nevertheless had no difficulty getting her to see that, in whatever manner the Spanish dealt with us, we would always have more freedom among them than among the savages, and it would consequently be easier for us then to take measures to save his lordship.

[235] While I was in this conversation with her, the Spanish

traders were negotiating the price of their slaves with the savages. They arranged the deal by means of signs. The goods being present on both sides, they could understand each other and come to agreement without much explanation. All the slaves were ready to be counted and examined; and the Spanish riches, which consisted of a large number of small barrels of spirits, of mirrors, whistles, and small knives, were spread out on the grass, as if to excite the savages' desires by such a fine display. Once they had agreed to the price, and the goods were delivered, the savages withdrew with much shouting. The Spanish then brought us down to the bank to board their barques. Although I like my whole family was covered in pelts, they were very far from imagining there were six Europeans among their slaves. Had they known what we were, their greed might have made them refuse to buy us, because there was no profit to be expected from us. Because of that thought, which occurred to me right away, I ordered everyone in my party to observe a strict silence until the deal was completely concluded. There are savages of all sorts of stature and color in America; and fatigue moreover had so changed us that with exception of a little more whiteness, we were no different from our companions in slavery.

It was therefore at the moment when they were going to have us board that I politely addressed a few words to the Spanish traders. I spoke their tongue well enough to be understood. My wife, whom I took by the hand, her two servants, Rem and my two Englishmen, forming a small circle about me, had at once attracted their attention. But it was quite another thing when they had heard me. Their surprise showed in their curious gaze, which they fixed on us for a long time without breaking the silence. My wife, fearing they had not understood my words because I expressed myself imprecisely, spoke up to explain to them briefly that we were English, and that we were infinitely grateful for the service they had just rendered us. Finally they opened their

mouths to ask us how it happened that we found ourselves in such a sorry situation. I replied that we would give them the satisfaction of being informed of that once they had the generosity to provide us a secure place for rest.

Although no trace of contentment appeared on their faces, they could not refuse to proffer us some civilities, and to separate us from the band of slaves. The first thing I bade them tell us was in what place and what part of America we found ourselves with them. They told me we were on the river of the Conchaques, which flows into the great Mobile river, and thence with it into the most northerly part of the Gulf of Mexico; that they were inhabitants of a little settlement called St. Joseph, located on the gulf coast, east of the mouth of that river³¹⁷; that it was their custom to go up the river several times each year to carry on various sorts of trade with the savages: with some, a slave trade, a fur trade with others; and that they derived great profit from it. I was satisfied with this explanation, which suited our interests and intentions well enough. Since these traders appeared neither wealthy nor refined, I put as little stock in their civility as in their assistance, and decided to reveal to them no more than the situations might dictate. They were not long in noticing, nevertheless, that our natural station hardly corresponded to the state in which they had found us. This discovery piqued their curiosity enormously; but I did not deem it appropriate to satisfy it.

It took us twelve days to reach the settlement of St. Joseph. There were few Spaniards in that town who were any better than those who had brought us there. They could not deny us freedom,

³¹⁷ Going eastward, it is about 60 km from Mobile Bay to Pensacola, and about 180 km from there to St. Joseph Bay; it will be seen that the voyage from St. Joseph to Pensacola could be made in two days. This action along the coast takes place not far from the New Orleans of *Manon Lescaut*.

but it was accompanied by no offer of service, no signs of generosity that could give us a good opinion of those who tendered them. [236] We scarcely obtained among them the means of satisfying life's most common necessities. We were nonetheless forced to stay there for more than six weeks, awaiting an opportunity to leave them which was not to present itself any sooner. This time could not but seem very long to us, in our avid impatience to do something that could enlighten us on the fate of his lordship. After a hundred reflections over anything that could serve as basis for my conjectures or motive for my conclusions, I had resolved to do a thing which had seemed to me the most solid choice I could settle on. I was without any kind of aid; yet I needed more than one kind to be in a position to serve his lordship. I had decided to get to the island of Cuba, which is not at too great a distance from St. Joseph, and go beg the assistance of the governor, who was my grandfather now that I was Fanny's husband. Although he had earlier refused his lordship his assistance in making war on England, I was sure he would hasten to grant it to me in such a different circumstance. At the same time I planned to leave my wife with him, while I would return to the continent with everything I required to serve his lordship effectively. But this resolution, which was also approved by my wife, I could not put carry out for want of means of travel, before a certain time when the barques of St. Joseph went to Carlos³¹⁸ for to trade for slaves. This last city being situated near the tip of the Tegesta peninsula, I had no doubt that there opportunities for passage to Havana would be available every day.

³¹⁸ Carlos is the name of another Spanish mission, not far, as Cleveland says, from the southern tip of Florida, in the region of a bay now called Charlotte Harbor; most of the maps of the period indicate Cape Carlos, or Carlos Bay, which are in the same location. Cleveland and Fanny will spend a week there on their way to Havana.

We therefore awaited that moment with impatience and vexation that grew by the day. Fanny's tender heart, which had been relieved of a part of its burdens when her anxiety over her daughter ceased, had still not for that become more tranquil and happy: her continually extreme anxiety for his lordship allowed her no time to attend to anything else. For my part, I had no other occupation than to lament my own woes, and to comfort her in hers. Thus we passed what seemed to us like eternally long days and nights. One day, a few of the Spaniards who had manifested the least callousness for our hardships came to apprise us that a boat from Pensacola had entered the port, and that, the man who appeared to command it having declared he was going to Havana, he probably would not refuse us passage if we still had the same intention of pursuing the same route. I hastened to go find him. The sorry condition of my clothing did not prevent him from greeting me civilly, once he had recognized that I was a foreigner. He spoke our language. I told him very naturally that being called to Havana for important business, and having long been seeking the opportunity to make the crossing, I wished to ask him for me and the six persons who accompanied me the favor of being taken on board his boat. He immediately pointed out, but very politely, that if there were seven of us, his boat was too weak to bear that large a number. I am generally disposed, he said, to render service to all unfortunates, but particularly to foreigners. The very voyage I have undertaken is indeed but an effect of that sentiment. But, although I plan to follow the coastline as I have done from Pensacola, and you could perhaps go with me without danger down to the point of Tegesta, I would not dare risk taking you across the Bahama Sea.³¹⁹ I left him, without pressing him further. I could have accepted the offer he seemed to be making to take us

³¹⁹ The Bahama Canal or Straits of Florida, already mentioned in book IV.

with him for a part of the voyage; but as the barques from St. Joseph were to leave a few days later for Carlos, I did not wish to cause him the slightest inconvenience.

Having returned to the little cabin we had been given to stay in, I related to Fanny what had just taken place, and added that since I had been quite pleased by the Spanish captain's physiognomy, I regretted that he could not take us on. As we continued to converse, I perceived him a few paces from our cabin asking some neighboring colonists to point it out to him. He came straight to our door, and entered in a civil manner. After looking about our lodging and at us for a few moments, [237] he recognized me as the same person who had spoken with him a quarter of an hour earlier. You are surprised to see me here, he said; but I confess that, in the sorrow I felt not to be able to give you passage, I inquired some into your situation, and what I have learned of your misery inspires in me a compassion which I would like to be able to show you in some way. I am going to Havana. Do you have someone there who takes an interest in you? May I bring you news of them, or take them news of you? Can I otherwise be of service to you? He paid me this compliment and asked all these questions with such simplicity and such a prepossessing air of generosity and goodness of soul that, unable to express myself easily enough in Spanish to thank him in a manner commensurate with the favor he was doing us, I bade my wife do it for me. She did so graciously, and since she spoke perfect Spanish, it was hard for him to see her as English. This doubt having given rise to a more careful observation of her, he soon realized, despite the deformity of her clothes and the toll that sorrow and fatigue had taken on her countenance, that he was not speaking with an ordinary woman. He was a young man from a very fine family, who having received from nature a kind and generous character, and filled his head with extraordinary adventures, as most Spaniards do by reading novels, related everything to his own notions,

and was eager for opportunities to put his courage, affection, and generosity heroically into practice.³²⁰ Delighted with what he thought he had detected, he told Fanny that his eyes could not deceive him when he looked at her, and that fortune could not treat her so badly that it was not easy to perceive she was not in her natural situation. To this compliment he added renewed offers of service. My wife replied that she the only one she desired was to be conveyed without delay to the island of Cuba.

The young Spaniard, having expressed his renewed disappointment at not being able to give us that sign of esteem and good will, took the opportunity to tell us about the reason for his voyage. I am, he said, the son of the corregidor of Pensacola. Some of our inhabitants who carry on a slave trade with the savages brought us several a fortnight ago, and among them a European whose name and particular country I still do not know. He knows several languages, and speaks them all perfectly. I was there to see him arrive with his companions in misery: I was struck by his demeanor; and my curiosity having led me to approach him, I easily discerned that he deserved a better fate. I offered him asylum in my father's house. He had not been there two days before this sudden transition from the misery he had been in, to the gentle life I was attentively providing him, caused him a dangerous illness. He is still ill; but being no less assiduous in visiting him and conversing with him, I have found in him such politeness, intelligence, and elevation of soul, that I have come to regard him as one of the finest men on earth. I have several times probed him about his birth and the adventures of his life: of these he reveals nothing. The only thing he has implied is that he was

³²⁰ The "Spanish character" had already played an important role in *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* and will do so again later in *Cleveland*; cf. the portrait Rosemont gives of it in *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, I, 234.

hoping to find a ship bound for the island of Cuba. I figured he wanted to go there himself, and offered to take him there: but he informed me that he merely wanted to get a letter to the governor, who is a friend of his. My zeal for his service led me to assume this errand myself. From some words that have escaped from him in our conversations, added the Spaniard, I think he has been separated by fortune from some persons who are dear to him; and that is the reason why he will not think of leaving the continent, where he fears leaving them behind.

We could not hear the end of this story without being gripped by a violent emotion. My wife especially could not control the wild pounding of her heart. Her tears and sobs broke forth in spite of her. Oh, it is my father, she repeated twenty times, although she had scarcely the strength to utter it. It is my father, it is he, I can have no doubt! She wanted to leave immediately to go to Pensacola; and when I restrained her to keep her from going, she sat down, holding me by the [238] arm, and continuing to say to me with renewed tears: It is my father; is that not so, Cleveland, that it is my father? Oh, let us hurry, let us not lose a minute. I was persuaded as she was that it could be none other than his lordship. Everything concurred to confirm me happily in this opinion. I nevertheless clarified things with the Spaniard, and having told him briefly what it was we were searching for, and what little information we had acquired at various times about the fate of our dear father, he too had no more doubt that it was his lordship himself he had in his house.

Such a happy outcome seemed to fill him with joy and wonder. He raised his hands toward heaven; he protested that he believed himself the most fortunate of men, to be able to contribute to our change of fortune; he invited us to dispose of his possessions, his strength and his life. Never was Spanish generosity expressed in such noble and eloquent terms. I thanked him with heartfelt gratitude. It is clear, I said, that it is with my wife's

father that we have found thanks to you. It is a gift dearer than life that you are going to make to the three of us. Your generous heart has the best opportunity there ever was to satisfy itself. But if you can, do quickly take us to Pensacola. You may be sure that the mission entrusted to you is now needless, and that there is no more precious service you can render to your guest than to put us promptly in his arms. He wanted at least to take the time to have some clothing made for us; we beseeched him to postpone that concern until Pensacola, where we would happily accept all sorts of kind favors from him, sure enough henceforth that we would have a hundred ways of showing him our rightful gratitude.

Pensacola³²¹ is a rather nice Spanish settlement, situated to the west of St. Joseph on the same coast. Without knowing precisely how far these two places are apart, I surmise it is not great, since we covered the distance by sea in less than two days. When we arrived the port, the Spaniard, who saw a few colonists of his acquaintance, asked them whether there was any news since he had left. Nothing, they said; except that the foreigner you had taken into your house is at death's door. My wife and I heard this fatal reply only too well. It changed our joy into the most mortal fear. Trembling, we got as quickly as we could to the house of the corregidor. His son first entered alone into his lordship's room. This was a necessary precaution, so as to prepare him gradually for our arrival. We waited at his door; and in the jumble of the movements of joy, fear, and sorrow that agitated us, we clung to each other, shedding a torrent of tears without even feeling them. His lordship was quickly informed that we were nearby. God, how tender are the sentiments of nature! His weakness did not prevent him from making every effort to spring from his bed. We

³²¹ Despite the anachronism, Pensacola for the novelist had the advantage of being a recognizable name, since the French had set siege to it in 1720.

heard the sound of his movements, and the name of Fanny which he uttered in a voice that seemed muffled by his tears and sighs. We entered at the moment when the Spaniard was restraining him. He himself held back when he saw us appear; and remaining seated on his bed, he opened his arms, which he extended passionately towards us. Oh, my daughter! Oh, Cleveland! He was so moved that he found no voice to express anything more.

We fell to our knees beside him. I kissed one hand; Fanny held her lips pressed to the other, and bathed it in her tears. We uttered some sounds, but they were less articulated words than a tender, plaintive murmur that signified how stirred and emotional we were. We remained for some time in this posture, and his lordship kept his head bent over us, no more able than ourselves to say a word. Finally, I was the first to break this tender and passionate silence. So we are together again, I said; Oh, my lord, we have the happiness of seeing you again! Your absence and the uncertainty of your fate, have always been the most unbearable of my misfortunes. I forget them all. I forgive Fortune for them. She has given you back to us! What more precious thing could we have asked of her? But we find you ill, and in the gravest danger! Oh, will heaven not consummate the miracle it has [239] begun in our favor? Has it brought us so happily to your side only perhaps to snatch away from us the satisfaction it grants us? May it at least take our lives with yours; may it separate us no more, if it is out of goodness and compassion that it has reunited us. I added a hundred other things, while the dear viscount and my wife were composing themselves a bit. He spoke up in turn, and although he was indeed in very dangerous condition, he drew sufficient strength from his affection to express to us his joy in the most touching terms. But what he added at the end was too apt to prevent us from feeling any. I see, he said, that I have little time left to live. Death seemed terrible to me a quarter of an hour ago, I could not envisage it without horror; but now I see nothing that

should make me fear it. Both of you are safe here. It will be easy for you to get to the island of Cuba, where you will find your grandfather, who will be happy to see you arrive. You will have my body transported there, if you conveniently can, and will see to my burial. Oh heaven, he added with a new fervor, so you have restored my dear children to me, my dear Fanny, my dear Cleveland! They will close my eyes, they will receive my last sighs, I shall die in their arms! Then he began to embrace us again with renewed transports of joy and tenderness.

I could answer only by tears to his words of which each rent my soul. My wife continued also to weep, unable to express herself otherwise than with a few broken words. The young Spaniard, who seemed deeply moved by such a touching scene, and who knew better than we how grave was the danger his lordship was in, urged us to withdraw for a few minutes, to permit him to regain some tranquillity. This was my intention; I even made an effort to tell him that we had better hopes for his life than he did, and that we were going to leave him for a moment, lest such extreme emotion worsen his condition. But he absolutely refused. Do not take from me, he said, the only contentment I can now claim in life. Do you not see that your presence revived me? I was in the languors of death only a moment ago; it is you who are retaining my soul in this feeble, exhausted body; and if I did not realize that my recovery is impossible, I would expect it much more certainly from your presence than from remedies. We had to stay with him. He related to us, as much as his weakness could allow, the misfortunes which had befallen him since our separation. There were few circumstances that did not accord with the report the Abaqui prisoner had given us. Iglou and the Englishmen who had accompanied him had perished in his defense. He had long been held captive, forced to follow the savages in all their movements, and continually exposed to such excessive misery and trials that they had finally wrecked his

constitution, which had already long since been weakened by the woes he had borne during much of his life. It was only a fortnight earlier that he had been brought by the savages to the same river where we had been brought, and had been sold there with a large number of other slaves to the Spaniards of Pensacola.

After telling us this story, he wanted to hear in turn the story of our adventures. I told it briefly, and intentionally omitted everything that could have caused him renewed emotion. He never learned that heaven had given us a dear daughter. My wife looked at me tenderly when I reached that point in my narrative. I read in her eyes that she would have wished she could tell him about this important event, which would doubtless have given him some satisfaction, had it been possible to detach it from its baleful sequel. I also made a point of not mentioning the name of Mrs Riding. But although the distress he had been in up to that point had perhaps prevented him from thinking of her, he was not long in asking me where we had left her, and why he did not see her with us. Disguise would have been too hard for me in that tender moment of communication and openness of heart. I told him straightforwardly that heaven had seen fit to call her to itself, and she had died during our journey. We then all together offered [240] tears to her memory. Yet his lordship halted his. Why weep for her? he said; it will not be two days before I will join her. You, alas, he added, will be more pitiable than she and I. The legacy I leave to you may be the wrath of heaven, which has pursued me relentlessly, and now will doubtless attach itself to you. Oh God, how can I hope to be tranquil after my death, if I must carry this sad thought with me in dying? But, he added, interrupting himself, why willingly torment myself like this? Is it not natural, on the contrary, for me to explain favorably our unhopd-for reunion, and the satisfaction of embracing you which is granted me in the final moments of my life? Heaven is not deceitful. It is beginning to treat me as a friend. I wish to take this

as a favorable omen, for you, my dear children, and for myself.

I attempted, during the little time he had left to live, to confirm him in this consoling thought, and I noted that it contributed greatly to providing him a peaceful death. He was no doubt not mistaken in hoping for heaven's most generous favors. His virtue, so long tested, was at the moment of reward; and this happy anticipation, which made his last sighs tranquil, was already one of them. But his poor children were not included in the decree that was ending his sufferings and calling him to happiness.

We lost him the third day after our arrival. He had spent part of the previous day, not only giving us advice on our return to Europe and the conduct we should observe there when we arrived, but also explaining to us all the resources we could find there for the establishment of our fortune, either through the king's favor, or through the considerable property he had left in Lord Terwill's hands, and which he was confident that his generous friend would faithfully restore to us. He became much weaker toward nightfall. Nevertheless, as he preserved his full reason, he did find strength enough from time to time to speak a few tender and moving words to us. He kissed his daughter's hands, pressed mine in his; he earnestly bade us hold back our tears, and preserve an everlasting affection for each other; finally, he alerted us himself that he felt on the point of expiration, and he expired in fact a moment later, as he had desired it, in other words in his daughter's arms and mine.

In the inexpressible overflow of sorrow and dejection I felt at this sight, I would have preferred to remove myself from the men's sight, and give up every other sentiment but that of grief. I would have preferred to be alone, in the most barren part of America, silently immersed in meditation over my misfortunes, brooding about myself in this sorry state, questioning heaven on its severity, beseeching its justice or its goodness with my wail-

ing, supposing it afforded me patience enough not to irritate it even further by my lamentations and protests. For a few moments I put myself into that state by the force of my imagination, and found consolation in entertaining such a baleful image. But my wife's tears and sighs having brought me back from that sort of roaming, I felt on seeing her how one can be moved at one and the same time by various passions, to an almost equal degree of violence. She was embracing her father's pale, cold body. Her grief expressed itself in such an affecting manner that the corregidor, his son, and his whole household, who were present, melted into tears beside her. I could not see her so moved without being deeply moved myself. That natural goodness that assured me so well of her sincere affection for me; her gentle demeanor which never abandoned her, even in distraction that was akin to despair; that torrent of sweet tears which flowed with such grace down her cheeks; and more than all of that, the sentiment of my affection, ever intense and dominant, carried me away to the point that I yielded without reflection to the movement of my heart. I took her suddenly in my arms. I sat down, holding her thus in my embrace. Come, I said to her in a voice full of fire and [241] love, come, my sweet Fanny, mix your tears with mine, shed not one but falls in my bosom; send all your pains into my heart. I alone wish to bear them all, and die a thousand deaths to spare you one. However filled she was with the subject of her grief, she was moved by this transport of affection. I have no one left but you, she replied languidly: father, mother, daughter, I have seen the death of everyone I should love. Alas, if I did not have you, what would I do with life, and would I wish to preserve it for a moment? We continued thus a conversation such as love and sorrow could inspire. The corregidor and his son made very astute use of this time to transfer his lordship's body to an adjoining room; and we asked in vain to have him back, once we became aware of what they had done.

It is not for nothing that I add to the narrative of one of my greatest misfortunes that of a movement of love, and of some expressions of Fanny's affection and mine. This observation will not seem indifferent to those of my readers who have the insight to gauge the nature of a passion which two years of marriage, and a continual series of misfortunes, had been so powerless to diminish that it had the strength to make itself heard so forcefully amidst the very transports of the most intense of all sufferings. Will they be surprised after this to see it produce the terrible effects they must expect to read, and which I have promised to relate? Fanny loved me more than herself. I became even dearer to her after the loss of her dear father. Alas, I who bear this witness to her love, what terms shall I employ to express my own? Will I ever have said enough, if I confess simply that she was my idol? So I worshiped her. I was dearly loved by her. By what spell did it come to pass that mistrust and dark suspicions took the place of such sweet certainty? That is the sole point on which they must prepare themselves for surprise; for it is well enough known that, once confidence is snuffed out, the most ardent love is the quickest to change to fury, and cause all the effects of hatred.

I know not what dismal pleasure I take, as I progress in this story, in interrupting myself in this way, and alerting my readers, as I do, to what remains for me to tell. Is there not enough in each event of my life to attach them by its moving singularities, and does one require the help of another to engage a reader with some attention? No, but it is the taste of my sorrow I consult, much more than the rules of narration and the duties of the historian. However numerous my misfortunes, and however diverse, today they act all at one and the same time upon my heart; the sentiment I retain of them has not the variety of its cause; all that remains is, so to speak, a uniform mass of suffering, the weight of which endlessly presses down on me and oppresses me. Thus I would

wish, if my pen could accomplish it, to combine in a single stroke all my sad adventures, as their effect is combined in my soul. The reader would have a much better idea of what takes place there. Order constrains me; and being unable to represent all my misfortunes at once, the greatest ones are those that come most vividly to mind, and which I would like at least to be able to set forth first.³²²

I shall nevertheless continue to follow the course of events. After several days passed in the most extreme grief, and yet in disguising it to make my wife more receptive to consolation by my example, I thought about our departure from Pensacola, and of getting his lordship's body ready to be transported with us. The corregidor and his son were unfailing in their civilities and attentions. I had thought I could reveal to them something of his lordship's birth and rank, to sustain their zeal during the final days of his illness. Although they were generous by inclination, this

³²² Another discussion of the problems of narration: this "uniform mass of suffering" in which component events are difficult to discriminate from each other and can be only imperfectly translated, is the antecedent tragic sentiment of the whole novel, which the different episodes play out to justify. On the one hand, there is an excess of competing sentiments, none of which can claim priority of expression. On the other, the notion of a simultaneity of opposites which cannot be resolved and can at best alternate is a commonplace of the period, corresponding, as Michel Foucault has shown, to an epistemic structure set forth for example by Condillac's *Grammaire*: "In truth, in the mind there is neither natural order, nor reversed order, since it perceives all the ideas it weighs at once; it would utter them all at once, if it could utter them as it perceives them. [...] Consequently, it is only in discourse that ideas have a natural or reversed order, since only there do they come in succession" (*Œuvres*, Paris, Ch. Houel, 1798, V, 336; see also Michel Foucault, *Les Mots et les choses*, Paris: Gallimard, 1966, pp. 96–97).

knowledge was not incidental in disposing them even more favorably towards us. The father and the son then spared neither services nor expense. We accepted their offer of clothing, for us and for our servants, of whom there were still five; and [242] when the day arrived which we had set for our departure, not only did we find a boat well festooned and ready to take us on board, but we were surprised to find our benefactors prepared to accompany us and themselves serve as our guides. I made no objection, being quite pleased on the contrary to have them with us in Havana, where I depended on Don Pedro d'Arpez not to deny us the means of showing our gratitude. The only thing that caused me some unease as we left was the smallness of our boat, which could scarcely contain the nine of us plus a few sailors. There was no larger or more convenient one in the Pensacola harbor. Nothing could have made me consent to expose my wife to the slightest peril; therefore I concluded that we should go to Carlos by skirting the shore, and from there send one of my Englishmen to give notice of our approach to the governor of Cuba, who would not fail to send a good vessel for us. We reached Carlos without incident. I dispatched Drink,³²³ one of my Englishmen. He was back in less than a week, with one of the governor's ships, on which we at once embarked. In twenty hours the wind put us in the port of Havana.³²⁴

Don Pedro d'Arpez greeted us with all the affection of a grandfather who had no other child than his granddaughter Fanny. He never tired of embracing us and telling us we were going to be the consolation of his old age. The body of his lordship, which we

³²³ *Drink* is a common noun which is rather curious as a proper noun; some of the English editions of *Cleveland* therefore changed it to *Dring*, a name attested by Bradsley.

³²⁴ This makes about 400 kilometers in twenty hours, or 20 km per hour, which indeed would suppose a brisk wind.

brought in a coffin, was a sad present to offer him. He shed tears in recalling the efforts he had made to retain the unfortunate viscount when he had come through Cuba.³²⁵ He would still be alive, he said to us; he would have been more the master here than I, and he would have wanted nothing to make his life comfortable and agreeable. His regrets were far more acute when he had learned of the extreme misery in which we had lived the last two years, and through how many hardships heaven had brought his lordship to his last hour. The good old man could not get over his astonishment. First he would blame himself for our misfortunes, as if he had been responsible for them; and then he would take heaven to witness that far from having contributing to them, he had spared nothing to prevent them. Over and over he would say: Did I not do everything in my power to keep him here? Did I not even predict part of the awful accidents that befell him? Could I grant him the help in men and arms he asked me for, when peace had just been concluded between Spain and England? Was it not his true interests I was reminding him of? Why did he not at least leave his daughter here? Ought he not to have had more confidence in me, who was his father, than in everyone else? Why did he not at least return to Cuba once his undertaking in Virginia had failed? As futile as these laments were, they served to assure me that we could depend entirely on our grandfather's kindness and affection. A few days later he made this abundantly clear from the magnificence of the last respects he rendered to his lordship. That sorrowful ceremony renewed all our pains. The only thing that had some ability to console me was that, being now safe in Havana from all danger and all fear, I would have the freedom to return to the study of wisdom, which for several years I had been able to cultivate only in my reflections. I have Fanny, I said; and I rediscover books. These are two

³²⁵ These attempts were related to Cleveland in book IV.

powerful remedies which can gradually quiet my mind and heal all the wounds of my heart.

Don Pedro began from the day we arrived to treat us as his dear children, and subsequently never wavered in this disposition. His gratitude was first manifested for the services we had received from the corregidor of Pensacola. He made the father a magnificent gift, and retained the son in one of the island's most important functions. As I still had with my wife no other bond than that of good faith and paternal consent, Don Pedro urged me strongly to add to them the ceremonies of the Church. This gave rise to a dilemma. We were not Roman Catholics; it was not among the Spanish that we could seek out a protestant minister; so Don Pedro's desire as well as our own would [243] not have been satisfied for a long time had we absolutely refused to receive the nuptial benediction from a priest of the Roman Church. But although properly speaking I was not attached to any particular religion, I did not believe there was a single one, of all those that profess to recognize and serve one God, whose ministers were not respectable for the honor they have of representing him. Therefore I urged Fanny not to scruple to pronounce her vows in the presence of Don Pedro's chaplain. It would have been a cause of great joy, not only for him, but also for all the inhabitants of Havana, for us to enter the communion of their Church; but worship is so strange and so superstitious among the Spanish, that a man of good sense, who is not attached to it by the prejudices of education, could hardly take from it a favorable impression of the Roman Church. I therefore besought the governor leave me free on this item.³²⁶ I merely promised him that I for my part would

³²⁶ "This subject" appears to refer to the Catholic practice designated earlier by the expression "the communion of their church," or participation in the rites, rather than to the Catholic marriage proposed by Don Pedro, which later appears indeed to have been celebrated. A

grant the same freedom to Fanny, whatever side she might choose to embrace.

That dear wife, despite all the fatigues of our journeys and the grief of our losses, was besides at an advanced stage of pregnancy. I had a hundred times trembled, amongst so many agitations, for what she bore in her womb. But the rest in Havana having soon restored her health, three months after our arrival she had a most happy double delivery. First she gave birth to a boy. This first delivery having not completely relieved her, I had some misgivings of the dangerous sequels that arise sometimes from such accidents. They continued on for six whole weeks, at the end of which Fanny made me the father of a second son, who was born as happily as the first.³²⁷ I thanked heaven for this present, but nevertheless could not give myself over to joy, still too balefully mindful of the death of our daughter. Oh God, I cried in the bitterness of that thought, you give me more than you have taken; but whatever satisfaction I can ever receive from the birth of my two sons, will it equal the excesses of suffering which the cruel fate of my daughter made me feel? To Don Pedro and my wife, the growth of our family was only cause for joy and consolation.

My occupations in Havana were for some time quite simple and very uniform. I did not go much outside the house. All the time I did not spend with my wife or with Don Pedro was spent in

Catholic priest could at most, with a papal dispensation, marry a mixed couple; but as neither Cleveland nor Fanny is Catholic, such a marriage appears uncanonical.

³²⁷ The event related is extraordinary but apparently not medically impossible. Fanny et Cleveland arrived among the Abaquis and married about September 1660, remaining there more than fifteen months before their departure and this last series of adventures, which seem to span ten or eleven months; yet some time later we will be in 1662 or the beginning of 1663.

study. Although I had little but Spanish books, and most of the time did not much care for either the manner of thinking nor for the style of that nation's writers, I still sometimes found excellent features in their works which were openings for me to enter deeper and more useful meditations. Readings and reflection, I related it all to the regulation of my life and the establishment of peace and serenity in my soul.³²⁸ My old principles, that precious heritage I had received from my mother, had not so departed my memory that I could not still easily recognize traces of them. If my mind had for some years been less attuned to them, because it had almost continually been filled with countless other objects which had divided my attention, I had preserved their roots in my heart, and it has been seen up till now that something of them had always informed my conduct. I rehearsed them all, in the same order I had learned them. I put myself back at the same time into all the situations where I had been, from the time I had left the Rumney-Hole cavern and the tomb of my mother. I compared all my actions, my virtues and my weaknesses, my pains and my pleasures, my fortunes good and ill, and what use I had made of them, with those moral rules of which I had earlier so clearly recognized the wisdom. I examined on what occasions, and for what reason, I had sometimes departed from them. Was it my fault, or theirs? Weakness of soul, ravishment of passion on my part, or on theirs failure of truth to guide me, and strength to sustain me? I discerned better than ever before the sources of all

³²⁸ The tranquillity of reflective retreat is also evoked by Des Grieux before his stay at Saint-Sulpice (*Manon Lescaut* p. 375) and in the early pages of *Le Doyen de Killierine*. Dividing his time between Fanny and his books will always constitute for Cleveland a sort of ideal situation. It is characteristic that Cleveland here provides no information about what books he is reading, and they never seem to serve directly as point of departure for his meditations.

my impulses, and the most hidden keys of my passions. Finally, I was not content to have shone the torch into the recesses of my heart to [244] know it; everything I discovered there I either sought to expel, if it was an evil, or to establish even more firmly if I found it to be something related to virtue. Trying even to extend my efforts into the future, I created for myself a sort of storehouse of moral and philosophical weapons able to serve me on unknown occasions, and in a hundred circumstances which time might produce, and which I did not foresee.

I must recognize, to the glory of philosophy and reason, that these two guides of my conduct were turned out to be still more powerful than all my woes. After so many miseries and suffering, they still had the power to restore a certain calm in my soul, and put it in a situation from which I began at least to envisage happiness as a state to which I was once more allowed to aspire. There was still in me a residual, underlying melancholy which I had no hope that time or my efforts could ever overcome; but I became accustomed to seeing it less as an illness of my soul than as one of those climateric changes³²⁹ that sometimes come from differences of age, and which few people do not experience to some degree as they advance in years. Furthermore, the simple fatigue of my journeys, combined with the continual agitations of anxiety and pain, could have produced this alteration in my humors.³³⁰

³²⁹ *Climaterique* in ancient medicine designates every seventh year of human life (*Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, 1762): climacteric years are marked by humoral changes and for this reason Cleveland attributes his increased melancholy (which results from preponderance of black bile) to one such stage.

³³⁰ Melancholy is a psychological condition with a physiological basis; this is why Cleveland says it is governed by an alteration of the humors. Jean Sgard notes that Cleveland was seven years of age at the time of the death of Charles I and about twenty at this point in the story, two ages noted in Prévost's *Manuel lexique* (article "climatérique"), at

managed then, if not to forget my misfortunes, at least to bear them with that degree of patience and resignation by which one grieves without anxiety, and laments, if I may put it this way, without pain and without murmur. Such were for a long while my dispositions and sentiments in Havana.

During this time, I had been informed of all the revolutions that had taken place in my country since I had left France. I had learned of the overthrow of the Republic and the Protector's family, the re-establishment of the royal household, all the circumstances of the recall of Charles II and the good success which had greeted his first undertakings³³¹ These happy events would have led us to want to return to Europe if we could decently have left the island of Cuba; but we owed gratitude and attachment to Don Pedro d'Arpez, who never slackened his generosity to us. My wife was disposed to remain with him until it pleased heaven to call him to a better life, to give him the consolation of having a loved one to close his eyes. I needed no urging to consent to this. For his part, he relied so much on our remaining forever with him that not the slightest doubt ever occurred to him on that subject. He was indeed my wife's closest kin, and he considered her, along with her children, as the sole direct remnant that remained of his lineage. However, despite the tender affection we all bore the old man, because of the national difference we always considered ourselves as foreigners in his land; so we were very far from expecting that he would institute us, as he subsequently did, as the sole heirs to his entire estate.

which "considerable revolutions in men's health and constitution occur" (*Prévost romancier*, pp. 178–179).

³³¹ Cleveland finally catches up to the post-Cromwell era in Britain. The disappearance of the antagonistic father completely changes the situation that prevailed in the first part of the novel, obviating any further need for flight.

I happened to take part, before the end of that year, in an adventure so extraordinary that it is well worth interrupting the narrative of my own for a moment so that it might grace my story. It is a diversion that will be agreeable to my readers.³³²

The captain of a Spanish vessel that came in from Porto Rico, having come to pay his respects to Don Pedro d'Arpez, told him in my presence that he had weathered an extremely violent tempest between Jamaica and the coast of Nicaragua, and had been driven aground by the wind on a small desert island called Serrana.³³³ He had spent two days there, he told us, waiting for the storm to cease, during which his men had gone ashore and surveyed the island, which was scarcely more than three leagues in circumference. Although it appeared uninhabited to them, they had perceived in several places the traces of a man's foot³³⁴; and having no doubt that with further searching they could find the man who had put them there, they had not left a single corner of the island unvisited and unexplored. Finally, continued the captain, they saw a tall man covered with rather rich but dirty, [245] torn clothing, emerge from a hole in the hollow of a little valley, who immediately fled towards a small wood as soon as he spotted them. They had no difficulty catching up to him; and having

³³² The manner in which this episode is introduced, exceptional in this novel where everything else is interconnected, testifies to a change in the novel's design; it is clear that Prévost had decided to extend the work, or at least not proceed directly to its original conclusion. Nevertheless, its insertion is not fortuitous: in the first place, it corresponds to a plot element indicated in the preface; in addition, a misanthrope isolated on an island can for good thematic reasons exert a particular fascination over our protagonist.

³³³ The island or islands of Serrana (now Serrana Bank) can be seen on maps by Sanson, Ogilby, Vander Aa, and Delisle. They were named, as Cleveland will note further on, after a shipwrecked Spaniard.

³³⁴ A transparent echo of Friday's footprint found by Robinson Crusoe.

captured him, they brought him to me. I asked him in Spanish who he was. He replied in his native tongue that he was English, and that he was surprised that, having offended none of my crew, he had been arrested by force. I extended to him polite apologies and offers of service. He seemed to reflect for a moment, and spoke again to say that he needed two things, and that he would be obliged to me if he could obtain them from me. The first was a small provision of everything needed for writing, that is, of ink, quills and paper; the second, a few books, if I had some on my ship, to provide him sometimes entertainment in his solitude. I did not hesitate to promise him two such slight favors; but being quite satisfied to know him better, I asked him what could attach him to this desert abode, and why he did not wish to take advantage of the opportunity he had to leave it with us. If I believed, he snapped back, that there was a good man in the world, I would not hesitate a minute to return there. But after the betrayals I experienced there, I would willingly hide in the belly of the earth to be farther away from those who live on its surface. He absolutely refused to explain himself further, and after urging me to give him what he had requested, he left me, begging me not to allow my men to disturb him with their visits. I pitied him, the Spanish captain added, because his physiognomy and his manners seemed to be those of a good man and a person of distinction. But not being able to take him away despite himself, the next day I took advantage of a favorable wind, which did not fail me all the way here.

This story, nothing about which ought to have affected me any more than all the others who had heard it with me, nevertheless made such an impression on me that I noticed I was taking a keen interest in it. For several days it never left my memory. I was constantly contemplating that strength of reason and courage with which I supposed a man must be filled to have been capable of making willingly a choice as extraordinary as to live alone on a

desert island. I also thought of the cause that had determined him: it was loathing for injustice and treachery. From these two reflections I fashioned an admirable notion of the unknown man's character. There, I said, is a man whom I would unquestionably love if I were fortunate enough to know him. He would love me too, for he would find in me the uprightness he thought utterly banished among men. I no longer have a friend. Who keeps me from seeking to make one of a person whose humor and principles seem so entirely in harmony with mine? I will moreover render a service of natural charity and generosity to a man who seems not to deserve his misfortune, by helping to comfort him for his suffering, and perhaps to enjoy more pleasures than he now expects in life. Thus I felt strongly inclined to undertake the voyage to Serrana expressly for this purpose. I inquired into its position and distance. Everything I learned was rather a new engagement than an obstacle. This island is south of Jamaica; thus, as I have for some time intended to go to Port Royal³³⁵ to obtain reliable information on the state of England, I could with no detour stop in that city on the way. It was a voyage that could be over in very little time; and all the nations that have settlements in that part of America being completely at peace, there was not the slightest danger to fear. My wife was all the same uneasy at my departure, but I finally brought her around to appreciating my venture. You would not, I said, be opposed to a voyage which I might attempt to take possession of some treasure; and you disapprove one that is prompted by compassion and virtue. Let me seek the riches I value. If you esteem me enough to want me to be happy, what does it matter to you what kind of good will make it so, as long as it really works? And besides, good and generous as you are, can you judge differently from me what can offer felicity to a good heart? When I tell you I want for

³³⁵ The name of the port and bay where Kingston is located.

a friend, and that it is the hope of acquiring one that inspires my voyage, can you not feel [246] that what I desire is worth the seeking? To this she made but one objection. Am I then only your wife? she said. Am I not also your tender and faithful friend? Do you hope to find in another something you do not perceive in me? I replied that what I was calling the happiness of friendship had to be taken in another sense. With respect to me, I said, it is so far from supposing that I do not find in you everything I require for happiness, that it is on the contrary because I am infinitely happy that I now need that other felicity which I seek in friendship. Listen to me, dear Fanny, I added, and understand this enigma if you can: you make me happy, my dear soul; but to feel all the happiness I enjoy with you, I must have someone who is not you, not only to whom I can say it, but in whom I have enough confidence to say it with delight, and who loves me enough to take pleasure in hearing it.

I left Havana, on a good ship, and well accompanied. The wind was so favorable that the next day I was in Jamaica. There I found an English ship newly arrived from London, of which the captain confirmed to me everything I had learned from Don Pedro d'Arpez concerning the happy re-establishment of the royal household. It was not a recent event, since it had already been more than two years since King Charles had reclaimed the throne³³⁶; but there were many circumstances about it which I did not know, and took pleasure in hearing about. I then inquired whether there was some knowledge in Port Royal of an Englishman who had retired to the island of Serrana, and was insistent on living there alone, out of hatred against men. No one had heard of him, but I learned several particularities of that island which increased my eagerness to go there. I was assured that it drew its

³³⁶ Charles II took the throne in May 1660, which fixes this moment at the end of 1662 or in early 1663.

name from a Spanish gentleman named Serrano,³³⁷ who had spent many years there in the same solitude as the Englishman of whom I had spoken; that the approach to it was not only difficult, because of the rocks surrounding it, but even terrifying, especially during the night, because on the Nicaraguan side it seems to belch vortices of flames; that this had not kept curiosity from motivating several persons to visit it, and that some adventures that had occurred there were sufficient indication that those flames had a most extraordinary cause.

Thereupon I was told that Sir George Aiskew, after in the name of the Parlement taking the island of Barbados, of which Lord Willoughby was the king's governor, had undertaken, on the basis of what he had heard about the island of Serrana, to go there to satisfy his curiosity.³³⁸ He reached it safely at nightfall, although somewhat frightened by the flames that seemed to rise

³³⁷ A brief allusion to this story in Prévost's *Histoire générale des voyages* (XV, 579–580) states that Serrano was cast upon the island by a shipwreck and remained alone there for three years. Prévost may have known it in English from the *Royal Commentaries of Peru* (1688), a translation by Paul Ricaut of Garcilaso de la Vega's *Comentarios reales de los Incas* (1609–1617). The flames mentioned further on might be a transposition of the brush fires which Serrano lit to attract the attention of passing ships. See another possible source in Philip Gosse, *Saint-Helena*, pp. 4–10.

³³⁸ After the islands of Jersey, Guernesey, and Man were brought under the authority of the Republic, relates Rapin de Thoyras, "Sir Georges Aiskew reduced the island of Barbados, of which Lord Willoughby was the king's governor" (IX, 48). Upon his arrival in the Barbados in 1650, Francis Willoughby had had Charles II proclaimed, but subsequently tried to reconcile the antagonistic factions on the island. Admiral Ayscue was sent in 1651; Willoughby resisted, but finally capitulated in January of 1652 and in April he was expelled. Ayscue's stop in Serrana would be plausible if the dates coincided.

from all parts of the island. His fright turned to astonishment when, approaching the shore, he thought he observed the flames retreating before him as his ship advanced. He disembarked with his suite, which was composed of men as intrepid as he; and not wanting to put off exploring the cause of this phenomenon to the morrow, he immediately headed inland, still observing that the flames seemed to continue to flee, as it were, before him. Finally, when he was beginning to believe it was only a play of his imagination, they stopped, preventing him from going further. Utterly surprised, for a long time he turned about the flaming place. The fire seemed to rise from the earth itself, and to have no other fuel. He approached it with his hands, which could not bear the heat. The night having passed without further incident, he saw the flame disappear along with the darkness. But as he still could see thick vapor rising from the same place, he ordered some of his men to return to the ship, and bring from it instruments they could use for digging. There were four of them who undertook to open the earth. They had scarcely removed one layer of hot, almost burning stones covering the surface when, the earth opening under their feet, they were swallowed up alive, their comrades not daring to come closer to help them. Sir George, consternated at this misfortune, and perhaps very frightened, wished to head back immediately toward the ship; but both he and his men felt almost dizzy and drunken, [247] whether because it was an effect of the vapor, or from some other cause, in such a way that they had great difficulty getting back to the shore. They even suffered very sharp pains in all their members as they were leaving the island, and it was only after several days' rest that they were entirely restored.

Without seeking to sound the truth of this adventure, which in any case, it seemed to me, could be explained in a very natural way, my only thought was to set out immediately for Serrano. The wind continuing to favor me, I reached it in little time, and

observed no flames on approaching the shore. It is true that it was in full daylight, and that we were coming from the northern side. I found an island quite bare, sandy and arid around the edges. There were so many turtles on the sand that I rightly judged that those who had lived there as solitaires had never wanted for food. The island was barely more than three leagues around: I assumed it would not be difficult for me to look it over before nightfall, and encounter somewhere the principal object of my voyage. However, once I had distanced myself some from the shore, I observed so many small woods and such uneven terrain that I feared it would give me more trouble than I had figured. I walked on both sides with some of my men for part of the afternoon. With evening approaching, I chose to climb to the top of a hill from which I saw not only the sea surrounding the island, but several small valleys which I had not previously noticed. I was not there ten minutes before I saw, about a half-mile away, a man walking slowly towards the floor of a valley. There could be no doubt that this was the man I was looking for. I ordered my men to wait for me, and taking only one along with me, I hurried forward in order to overtake the unknown man before night.

I got near him before he noticed my approach. He was now only a couple of paces from his lodging. I stopped to allow him the time to go inside. It was less a hole, as the Spanish captain had depicted it to us, than a fairly comfortable cabin, although it was made of nothing but wooden poles and mats of grass. I presented myself at once at the entrance. His surprise seemed to me great. However, without showing the least sign of fear, he asked me in English what brought me there, and whether I wanted something from him. As my purpose was to know him before speaking with him openly, I did no more than answer with enough civility to prevent him from taking alarm. He immediately came back with several questions at once: Whether was English? Where was I going? Where had I come from? Once satisfied, he

seemed pleased to hear that I was to return to Jamaica, and proposed that I take him with me on my ship. This request surprised me greatly. You must be weary of solitude, I said, and wish to leave this island for good? Yes, he replied with a pained look. I had come here intending to spend the rest of my life here; but the just reasons I have for hating men cannot outweigh the fundamental sadness and tedium that never leave me here night and day. I wish to leave the island and return to Europe. The world is full of nothing but traitors; but since it is a necessary evil, you have to be patient, and live as you can amongst them.³³⁹

I studied him closely while he was speaking these words. His physiognomy was rather agreeable; but I saw something hard in his eye, and did not feel that pleasant satisfaction I had anticipated in seeing him. He was pale, and his apparel appeared in very bad order. I is hard for me to conceive, I said, how reasons that are not strong enough to keep you here could have been strong enough to bring you here. Are they so secret, I added, that you can tell me nothing of them? He invited me take a seat beside him, and after seeming to reflect a minute, he told me that he had no interest in hiding from me who he was; that, moreover, I seemed to him a good man; and that the service I was going to render him by giving him the means of returning to Europe well deserved his opening up to me with some confidence.

[248] My name is famous, he said. I am General Lambert.³⁴⁰

³³⁹ Cleveland imagines his hero will be happy all alone, no doubt weighed down by some great suffering, but the lesson of this episode will be wholly different: that man is a social animal and needs others despite all. The happy island is as illusory when inhabited by a single individual as by a quasi-utopian colony.

³⁴⁰ John Lambert, like Cromwell, had commanded parliamentary troops since the beginning of the revolution, and perhaps expected to succeed him. When a military coup forced the Protector Richard Cromwell to

Cromwell, who owed his entire fortune to me, and for whom I had sacrificed everything, abandoned me so perfidiously that he was finally not ashamed to deprive me even of my functions, the reward for my blood and my services.³⁴¹ Fleetwood et Desborough,³⁴² who have never been capable of undertaking anything without my guidance, and would not have maintained themselves for a moment without my protection, betrayed me even more cruelly, and at the very time I was risking my life and my fortune for them. Ingoldsby, the most perfidious of all scoundrels, and yet of all men the one who owed me the most gratitude and attachment, took ungratefulness and perfidy not only to the point of abandoning my interests, but even of attacking me, weapons in hand, seizing my person, selling my head to Monk for a sum of money, and putting me in shackles in one of the darkest dungeons in London.³⁴³ Shall I tell you of all the individual be

dissolve Parliament in April 1659, Lambert for a while enjoyed the favor he had lost towards the end of Oliver's life, but was soon afterward forced to surrender himself to the Tower.

³⁴¹ Lambert had broken with Cromwell in 1657 over the question of the crown; finally Cromwell forced him to resign his commission, and he retired to Wimbledon.

³⁴² Charles Fleetwood and Sir John Desborough, brother-in-law and uncle respectively of Richard Cromwell, took part in the military coup that brought about the dissolution of Parliament in April 1659 and was to constitute Fleetwood as commander in chief. In November, when General Monck (ou Monk) advanced in the name of Parliament, Lambert tried to oppose him: this is the encounter of which Lambert is speaking here. Fleetwood was negotiating with Monck while Desborough, believing a restoration inevitable, tried to flee and was arrested; Parliamentary authority was quickly restored.

³⁴³ General Monck and the Parliamentary party were concerned when Lambert escaped from the Tower (the "dark dungeon") in April 1660 and tried to reorganize his troops, but Ingoldsby defeated him rapidly

trayals I have suffered, on the part of my friends, my creatures, my servants? I would occupy Cromwell's place today, if I had been able to instill in those I had showered with favors, I do not say an acute feeling of gratitude, but those simplest traits of humanity which ought at least keep them from betraying and damning those to whom they owe everything. What a poor devil am I! I have found loyalty in no one, neither for virtue nor for crime. I have been abandoned, betrayed, delivered, condemned to death by a cruel sentence; then pardoned, but with such unbearable signs of scorn and disdain that I could not regard life as a favor. The king remanded me for the rest of my days to the island of Guernesey.³⁴⁴ I hesitated whether I would not be better off ending them by death than going to bury myself in that dismal retreat. I was in this uncertainty when I was plunged back into new misfortunes, by an encounter that now causes me as much shame as it has caused me first pleasure and then pain.

While a prisoner in the Tower, Lambert continued, I had formed an intimate acquaintance with Venables, who had been locked up there on his return from Jamaica. Although that expedition had happily succeeded, and he had subjected that island to

and brought him back to London a prisoner (see Rapin de Thoyras, IX, 152–153). Sir Richard Ingoldsby, who had signed the death warrant for Charles I, was to prove by meritorious acts his loyalty to the new king and obtain a pardon.

³⁴⁴ Lambert was sufficiently powerful that it was difficult to execute him with the other regicides; moreover, he had taken no part in the king's trial. Charles II had him sent to Guernesey in October 1661, but he was brought back by Parliament, tried, and sentenced to death in June 1662 for waging war against King Charles I. But he was pardoned by Charles II and merely exiled to Guernesey. Prévost follows Rapin de Thoyras here, who asserts that "he lived there thirty-six more years" (IX, 207), which is in fact inaccurate, as he was transferred to the island of St. Nicolas in 1667.

England, the Protector was less joyful at this advantage than annoyed that a more considerable undertaking of Venables had miscarried on the island of Hispaniola. The measures which Cromwell had himself taken in London for the conquest of that island had seemed to him so infallible that, unable to attribute its lack of success to anything but the imprudence of Venables, whom he had chosen to carry them out, he had him put on his return in a tight prison, where he remained until the king's restoration.³⁴⁵ Having had the same fate some time later, and not being refused the freedom to see each other, I learned from him the secret causes that had made his purpose fail. He had left England with five thousand men; and though he had received orders from the Protector, he did not know yet what they were, because they were enclosed in a sealed envelope which he was to open only at a certain latitude. Only a few days after its departure, the English fleet encountered a Spanish vessel following the same heading; and after capturing it, Venables found on it a young and very charming Spanish woman, who was returning to San Domingo where she was born. He saw her, he loved her. His passion must have been intense from the start, for after opening the Protector's sealed envelope at about the same time, and finding there the order to take Hispaniola, beginning with San Domingo which is its capital, he lacked the courage to conceal the purpose of the

³⁴⁵ The troops commanded by Robert Venables left in December 1654 on board the fleet of Sir W. Penn to combat the Spanish in their American islands, but his first attack, on Hispaniola, was a dreadful failure. They fell back to Jamaica and took it in May 1655; it has been English ever since. Back in England, Venables and Penn were sent to the Tower (September), but Venables was released at the end of October on condition he resign his commission. Later, he abetted the restoration. Prévost scrambles the dates somewhat here in order to put Lambert in the Tower at the same time; see Rapin de Thoyras IX, 78, and *et Histoire générale des voyages*, XV, 574–575.

expedition from his mistress. This girl was crafty. She was able to take advantage of Venables' weakness to make him betray his duty. It is true that she was his reward, and that, either from gratitude for such a sacrifice, or from zeal for her country, which she felt herself obliged to protect from ruin at the cost of her honor, she surrendered entirely to her lover once he had carried out his promise. So Venables neglected, under various pretexts, to follow the plan prescribed in Cromwell's message. He landed so far from San Domingo that before he could make preparations to attack it, the Spanish had time to fortify themselves sufficiently to make all his efforts futile. Those he made were in any case very feeble, and only to disguise the motive of his conduct. [249] The conquest of Jamaica was subsequently all the easier for him because he put all his energy into it, as if he had hoped to justify thereby what had just happened to him at San Domingo.³⁴⁶ But he was dealing with a master whose weakness was not to allow himself to be easily deceived, and who, without knowing the truth of the mystery, made his pay for his error with his freedom. Meanwhile his Spanish woman, whom he had brought to England, consoled him for this fall from favor. During his captivity he placed her in the hands of several persons of confidence, and who faithfully restored her to him. Once out of prison, he retired with her to a country house, where she was seen by none but him. I do not know whether this dangerous creature wearied of that constraint, or whether she was already thinking at that time about procuring the means of returning to her country; but I had no difficulty recognizing, when I saw her for the first time, that her attachment to Venables had considerably cooled. This was after I had obtained mercy from the king, who commuted my death

³⁴⁶ Prévost closely follows here the details given by Rapin (IX, 78), but mixes in a love story, analogous to that of Judith and Holofernes in the book of Judith.

sentence to permanent banishment. I was still being guarded by a messenger of state, but had the freedom to visit my acquaintances. I went to visit Venables on his country estate. I was enchanted by his mistress. She noticed my sentiments; and deeming me apt, presumably based on her knowledge of the state of my fortune, to serve her in the intention of leaving England, she so shrewdly took advantage of the inclination for her which I did not conceal, that she made of me the blindest and most credulous of dupes. I must confess to my shame that I was putty in her hands. She had seemed infinitely attractive to me. Less accustomed to the pleasures of love than to the intrigues of ambition and to the exercises of war, I was flattered to find her so receptive to me. I fell wildly in love, and thanked Fortune, who had such a consolation in store for me after mistreating me so cruelly. My first plan was to propose that she come with me to Guernesey. But she was cunning enough to persuade me that we would live more agreeably and more securely in San Domingo. I objected only weakly to this project. I was inebriated with love. She gave me the task of finding a ship bound for Spain. I found one that was ready to set sail for Cadiz. We both slipped away so cleanly that we were at sea before anyone could have the least suspicion of our departure and the direction we would take. My artful companion indulged my every desire. In Cadiz we easily found an opportunity to go to Hispaniola. We arrived there; and given the kind of enchantment I was in, it never occurred to me even once that I needed to conceive the least apprehension. Her family greeted her with great joy. She told them publicly, and in my presence, that after being captured by the English and taken prisoner to England, she was indebted to me for her freedom. She added nothing, although we had agreed that she would have me pass as her husband, and I would continue to live with her in that capacity. It is true that her silence on this matter caused me some dismay, and I waited for a moment when I could be alone with her to chide her for it; but

being still without misgivings, I supposed that she wished to explain this privately with her family, and intentionally took myself aside to allow her the opportunity to do so. She indeed took advantage of it; but it was to betray me with the ultimate perfidy. She confessed her whole story to her father and brothers. They decided together to do away with me, no matter how, in order to bury with me their sister's adventures and the dishonor of their family. I do not speak of their intention by conjecture, I learned of it from themselves; and I must consider a miracle my good fortune in escaping from their hands. The deed would doubtless have been committed the night following: but one of them having learned, happily, that there was to be a ship sailing the next day for Cartagena,³⁴⁷ this news led them to revise their plan. They decided to have me embark on it, and to accompany me themselves to that port, where ships for Europe are constantly to be had. Their intention, by going with me, was to be always at my side, to force me to maintain silence until I had left American shores. There were three of them, who were to serve as my guards. Unable to find a [250] moment until evening to speak with or even see my mistress, I began to conceive some suspicions about this affected absence. The cause was explained to me at nightfall by the three brothers; and for fear, apparently, lest I should attempt to cause them trouble by my resistance, they declared to me that the mercy they showed me of granting me life was contrary to their initial designs, and that I must prove myself worthy of it by my promptness in going to the ship, and my docility in going along with my escort. I immediately understood that I had been the sister's dupe, and was about to be the brothers' plaything. Nevertheless, I was so closely guarded that I could do nothing to escape. They took me out of the city and to the port before daybreak, and we set sail almost immediately. You can

³⁴⁷ Presumably he refers to the port on the Caribbean coast of Columbia.

imagine the extent of my fury. I prayed heaven a hundred times to sink us on our way out of the port. The three brothers watched me so closely that it was impossible for me to find a moment to leap into the sea. It was no longer love that tormented me with such violence; it was the shame and despair of being so ignobly deceived. Worse yet, I could barely understand a few words of Spanish. My escorts, to be sure, knew English perfectly; but I wished I could have expressed myself in every language, to give myself the consolation, once they chose the moment to let me go, of publishing the truth of my adventure, and forever dishonoring the vile creature who had so perfidiously made a fool of me. While I was in these agitations, a rather violent east wind blew our ship off its course. The three brothers, who affected treating me with a great appearance of civility, pointed out to me numerous small islands scattered through those waters. When they showed me this one, they told me the story of a certain Serrano who lived here a long time in solitude, and they added to their story such attractive details about the good air and soil, that they made me want suddenly to retire here as to an asylum. I did not hesitate a minute to propose it. They had no interest that should prevent them from agreeing to it. I obtained from the captain, through them, permission to go ashore in the longboat. Never was a resolution taken with such ardor, and carried out with such courage. I accepted reluctantly to receive some provisions, which were nevertheless essential until I could acquire some familiarity with the terrain and reach the point where I would owe my food to nature alone. I saw those who had brought me ashore in the longboat leave, but did not deign to look at them or say goodbye. May the whole perfidious race of men perish, I cried out twenty times in the hateful outburst that aroused me against all mankind; may every inhabited part of the Earth perish, for they contain nothing but traitors and ingrates! I shall live alone here. No one will betray me here. To what other place could go in search

of more peace and consolation? Entry to my country is denied me forever. Is the island of Guernesey, where I am permitted to live, worth the distance I would have to travel to get there? Maybe I could vaunt my name in some foreign court, and obtain honorable employment there under arms: but what constraint and grimaces to win friends and protectors for myself! And besides, would I not find on every side men, that is to say traitors and scoundrels, whose contact I loathe, and with whom I have never enjoyed any sincere satisfaction, even by following in their footsteps and attempting to be like them?

These reflections, Lambert added, have been powerful enough to sustain me here for several months against the tedium of solitude and the miseries of the condition in which you see me. But I confess that my patience is no longer constant at all times of the day. I do not find enough resources within myself to fill continually the void of my imagination, and to still the restless activity that makes me feel all the time that my heart has something to desire.³⁴⁸ Through a bit of good luck I got some books; but when you consider that war and political affairs have always been my principal occupation, you will not be surprised that I have little taste for the sciences, and I read perhaps the best things in the world without knowing them, or at least without feeling them [251] in that way that absorbs the mind and satisfies the heart. Thus you will grant me an enormous favor, if you agree to take me with you to go to Jamaica. My intention is to get from there to the place of my exile. I know that I will find men there. They will persecute me. They will betray me again. But after the effects I have experienced of their ferocity, it seems to me I

³⁴⁸ Emptiness, dissatisfaction, restlessness seeking a fixed point: all these themes will figure in Cleveland's examination of his state of consciousness in Saumur (book VI), but Lambert's restlessness lacks any metaphysical or religious coloration.

should fear them less. I know them. Their maliciousness will not exceed my expectations.

Although Lambert had not told me this story without emotion, it did not approach, by far, what I was feeling while listening. His very name had at once frozen my blood. I knew only too well that he had been one of the principal ministers of my father injustices; and though he was not among those parricides who pronounced the sentence of our unhappy king, everyone knows he had had a considerable share in that crime through his intrigues and counsel. Thus, far from feeling the first inclination grow, which had made me take an interest in his ill fortune, it more than once took an effort for me to control first my indignation and restrain the movements of my wrath. However, the tale of his misfortunes and his woes thereafter for some moments caused a struggle in my heart. Pity would perhaps have produced what I did not feel disposed to do by inclination, if I could have assured myself that he derived his loathing of ingratitude and treachery from a sentiment of virtue, and some affinity for the good. He is a man, I said; he is in difficulty: two reasons that give him a claim on my compassion and assistance. If he has long strayed from his duty, it is possible for timely repentance to bring him back, and that is an effect which the reversals he has experienced must necessarily produce. Being partially occupied by these reflections at the very time I was attending to his words, I could only have appeared extremely distracted and preoccupied. He noticed this as he finished, and asked me uneasily what I thought of his fate and his story.

I looked straight at him, and did not speak until I had chosen my expressions during several minutes of silence. Lambert, I said to him sternly, you have been imprudent. Your own interest requires you carefully to conceal your name, which can only inspire horror in everyone who knows who you are. Take it from me, it ill befits someone who has your crimes on his conscience

to complain of men and call them traitors. Listen to me, I added: you do not know to whom you have revealed yourself. Anyone else, with as much revulsion for your murders and those of your peers, might without hesitation use the opportunity and the power I have here to deliver the earth of a man as evil as you. But the king has pardoned you: it is for heaven now to punish you. It is my hope that prompt repentance will spare you from its wrath. Return to Europe and live there, if you can, as a good man. I willingly grant you passage as far as Jamaica.

He was a man of abrasive and violent character. This reply put him almost in a rage. His eyes gleamed. Whoever you are, he said to me with enormous pride, you are a coward, to abuse me in my present condition. I am alone, and unarmed. You are armed, and well supported. Pray heaven you never encounter me in another place. He then urged me to leave his cabin, adding that he would sooner perish than be indebted to me, and that I could leave the island without disturbing him further. Lambert, I replied tranquilly, it was not my intention to insult you. I told you forthrightly what I think of your past conduct; and I would not express myself less freely were you still in England, with the same power, and at the head of an army. You ought to consider my sincerity a favor, which after the reproach I made to you for your crimes, disposed me also to wish for your transformation. Do not lose your temper for so little; and if you are weary of staying on this island, take the opportunity to leave it, as you have desired. His pride was so wounded at my continuing to speak to him in that tone of voice, that he seemed about to die of rage. He rushed out of the cabin, swearing that some day he would find a way to meet me in [252] a different situation and make me pay dearly for my insults. I made no attempt to call him back. I also left his home and rejoined my comrades. It seemed to me that I had done enough for a man of his kind, by agreeing to take him on board my ship, and take him to Jamaica.

However, in order to take away at least some fruit of my voyage, I continued to explore the island, especially the southern part, where I was glad to verify with my own eyes part of what I had been told with respect to Sir George Aiskew. The night was not yet dark enough to prevent my perceiving anything extraordinary that might present itself. For a long while I followed the shore that is opposite Nicaragua. I observed no flames, nor anything resembling the frightening description I had heard of this part of the island. I did see on the backside of a hill a mixture of whiteness and darkness that maybe has the appearance of flames and smoke for those who pass through these waters by night without approaching the island. Although there was nothing particularly extraordinary about this sight, we walked straight toward the hill to discover its cause. The whiteness appeared to us to increase as we advanced. It turned out to be nothing more than a patch of thick, tarry soil, which had no grass anywhere on it, and seemed to be divided at intervals by very deep ditches. As bright as the night was, we still could not know exactly what these ditches were, and we decided to await daylight to find out. We spent the rest of the time getting rested in a prairie. When daylight came, we distinctly noted that there was smoke coming out of several of those openings, and that the area around them was black and dry, like a place where fire has passed. They were too deep to be examined more closely; but I conjectured that, either because fire from heaven had struck this tarry soil and set it afire, or because the heat came from some underground source, there had been an acute inflammation on this spot: which served to explain Sir George Aiskew's adventure, at least in part.

Being back on the ship, the first thing I learned from my men was that a stranger had just come to them, who had asked first where I was, and who, learning that I had not returned, had begged them to take him on board for passage to Jamaica. It was General Lambert. They told me he had withdrawn to a corner of

the ship, where he was deep in thought and looked vexed; and that he had spoken there with no one, except to inquire briefly who I was, and what purpose had brought me to Serrana. But the Spaniards whom he had addressed, not being privy to my affairs, could only inform him generally about my country and my relations with the governor of the island of Cuba. I surmised that despite all his resentment he had reflected enough to cool his seething humor, and that he preferred being in my debt for his passage than to miss this opportunity to escape his isolation. I decided not only not to object, and to see he was treated civilly, but even to spare him the embarrassment of reappearing before me, by avoiding seeing him all the way to Port Royal. I ordered some of my men to look after him, and offer him all kinds of assistance and refreshments. He accepted only what was necessary, and continued to maintain complete silence. After spending part of the day visiting every part of the island, we put back out to sea. The wind carried us safely to Jamaica. As we touched land, and the crew was beginning to disembark, Lambert sent to ask me for a minute of private conversation in my room. I willingly agreed. He appeared in a civil manner. For the service you have just rendered me in granting me passage, he said, I forget the harsh and offensive way you have treated me. I do not know what reason you had to adopt such a tone, with me who do not know you, and who revealed my name and my misfortunes to you only to obtain your help and your compassion. Yet I leave you without resentment, and would even be delighted if I could express my gratitude. These words, which he spoke very gently, left me uncertain for a few moments [253] how I should reply to him: but finally I concluded after some reflection that there was too little confidence to be placed in a man of his character to expect from him constant sentiments of virtue, and consequently to take a personal interest in what concerned him. Thus, without entering into the slightest explanation, I contented myself with assuring

him that I wished him no harm, and was even prepared to continue my services to him. The only one I ask of you, he replied, is not to divulge my name here to anyone, and to order those of your men who may know it to do likewise. I promised, and we separated. I have not seen him since; but I learn, at the time I have been writing these memoirs, that he has been in Guernesey for a long time, and lives a pleasant and tranquil life there.

Although I had no particular reason that obliged me to return by way of Jamaica, I enjoyed seeing Port Royal again, because of the simple inclination that makes it agreeable to be with one's compatriots, and talk about the country where one was born. I had no ties there, but several persons with whom I had had occasion to speak the first time I passed through again received me civilly. I had not told them of my intentions, or of my fortune. They knew me only from my men's report that I was Englishman who had married the daughter of the governor of Cuba.³⁴⁹ During our conversation, they inquired whether I had not heard of Lord Axminster. The emotion I felt at that dear name almost caused me to answer with a candor I had intend not to have. However, getting hold of myself with a little effort, I thought it best, before going on, to find out from the questioner what his purpose was in asking. He replied simply that he had no purpose other than to have some news of his lordship, who had been much talked about in America a few years earlier, and had subsequently disappeared, without anyone being able to learn what had become of him; that they imagined he had come to a sad end at the hands of the savages; that the king, since his restoration, had several times given orders that an extensive search be made for him, that this was attempted to no avail; that very recently, which is to say since I had come to Jamaica on my way to the island of Serrano, a ship had come through Port Royal of which the captain, who was an

³⁴⁹ More exactly, the granddaughter.

Englishman though his crew was made up of various nationalities, had taken great pains to inform himself of everything to do with the unfortunate viscount and a few Englishmen with him; and having been able to learn nothing certain, he had promptly set sail again, without explaining himself further about the purpose of his voyage.

I thought there could be no doubt, after hearing this report, that it was Mme Lallin who had sent a search party for his lordship, me and our whole unhappy family. I even imagined that she was on the ship I was told of, and that not finding us in Jamaica, she would probably have headed toward the island of Cuba to garner some information from the governor, whose daughter, as she knew, Lord Axminster had married. I hastened, under this impression, to leave Port Royal and return promptly to Havana. For me it would have been a cause of infinite joy to see once more a lady whom I had solid reasons to esteem. With this expectation, the time seemed long to me. Finally we arrived, and I found I was awaited on the shore. But by whom? Will the reader guess? By my brother Bridge and his friend Gelin. The sight of them gave me intense satisfaction. I remembered nothing of our past disputes, and was even farther from foreseeing the woes they were to cause me in the future. I yielded to the pleasure of seeing and embracing them.

They had arrived a week before me, and after presenting themselves to my wife and to the governor, they had been treated most cordially. They had the time, walking toward the city, to relate to me the conclusion of their adventures. It was a mixture of pains and pleasures, as happens in all events that are dependent on fortune. They had found their island, that object of so much search and desire; but they had owed this happy chance only to the most dismaying of accidents. After continuing their [254] meanderings for several months after our separation, they had returned to St. Helena, as much from the despair of seeing all

their efforts futile as from the necessity of renewing their provisions which they had had time to consume. They had wintered there, intending to take to the sea again in the spring. As they were beginning to get ready, one day they saw a boat from the colony entering the port, with a small number of colonists who were sailing it. Their joy equaling their surprise, they hurried to speak with them and greet them warmly, quite determined at the same time to observe them so closely that it would be impossible for them to slip away, and to hide their departure and their course. But for that they needed neither skill nor precautions. These unhappy colonists were coming willingly to reveal their location, their misfortunes, and the need they had of the governor's charity and assistance. A contagious disease, which had spread the previous summer through the colony, had taken most of them. Scarcely a hundred had survived. This poor remnant had nevertheless stiffened itself against fear and danger; they had paid their last respects to their companions, and the power of the disease having waned with the onset of winter, they had hoped they could gradually recover and repair their losses. The poor condition of their fields, however, which had gone untended, the aura of sorrow and isolation that constantly prevailed among them, a thousand present difficulties, and fears even more dire for the future, had finally disposed them unanimously to seek help from outside, and even to wish to abandon the settlement completely. This desire had considerably grown from the knowledge they had acquired about the location of their island. Those who were the guardians of that secret had been forced to communicate it when they died; and in the continual distraction which the presence of death could not fail to cause everyone, they had not adhered to the usual measures for keeping it from getting about. All the colonists who remained were therefore soon informed of it, and what came to pass at the end was what the Elders' prudence had made them apprehend from the time of the settlement's origin, that is, that

awareness of its location gave rise to the desire to leave.

In order to illuminate everything the reader might have found extraordinary in the description I have given of this mysterious colony, I must relate here what I saw of it myself on my return to Europe.³⁵⁰ The southern part of the island of St. Helena is surrounded by cliffs, some of which are extraordinarily high and line that side of the island like so many ramparts; others, visible only at the surface, forbid its approach to large ships, and permit it even to the smallest barques only if those who sail them are perfectly familiar with the eddies and passages. It is for this reason that this coast, which in any case is not appealing in appearance, was long neglected by the island's inhabitants. First it was the Portuguese. They were few in number, and had no more than a most modest settlement in the part that faces north. But what is singular is that these steep cliffs that line the island on the south enclose within them a plain which is not less than five or six leagues in length; and that, surrounding it on the side of land as of sea, they conceal it from view not only to those who approach by sea coming from the south, but even from those who inhabit the main body of the island and who might take a notion to sail all the way around it. These, who can see the cliffs standing between themselves and the plain, suppose that they are at the end of the island, and that on the other side is the sea. The former, on the contrary, believe that the cliffs they see on the sea side bound the part of the island that is known and inhabited. Thus, on one side and the other it is different cliffs that are seen, in between which is situated the plain of which I speak, and their steep height causes them to be taken for a single mass, even though the terrain they contain within is more than three leagues in width.

That expanse of land, so well hidden and well protected by

³⁵⁰ Cleveland and his party will stop there to look for Johnston and his wife.

nature, is the very place where providence had guided the Rochelais, and which Bridge in his story [255] calls the island of the colony. It can now be understood how the inhabitants of this peaceful retreat could have passed so many years there without being known by their neighbors, and without themselves being aware that their abode constituted part of the island of St. Helena. That secret, after being discovered by Drington, had been kept by a small number of Elders who had guarded it religiously, until the disarray caused by the contagious disease had served gradually to bring it out. The colonists who had been spared by the plague could not know for long that they had other men near them without wishing to establish form some intercourse with them³⁵¹; and in the dilemma they faced through the death of their companions, tedium having soon succeeded to the satisfaction they had enjoyed for so many years in their isolation, they finally chose to have their deputies notify the governor of St. Helena of the need they had of his assistance.

If my brother's first reaction and that of and his two friends led them to rejoice at the sight of the deputies, the strange news of the colony's ruin caused them other sentiments. Scarcely did they dare inquire whether their wives were among the unhappy number of those who had perished. Sensitive Bridge feared this enlightenment as his death sentence. As it was, however, by a favorable disposition of heaven, the greatest loss fell on the one who was most able to bear it. I mean that Gelin was the only one

³⁵¹ Mme Eliot had indeed told Bridge that the women, when they arrived on the island, "deplored a situation which would exclude all intercourse with the rest of the world" (book III). This event reinforces the idea of man's intrinsic sociability already illustrated on the individual level by the story of Lambert.

who had lost his wife.³⁵² My brother made them repeat to him a hundred times that his dear Angélique was alive, that he would see her again, that he would freely possess her. Johnston indulged in the same pleasure. Their joy was troubled only by learning of the death of Mme Eliot, of her elder daughter, and of numerous other persons whom they held dear. The three faithless young men who had betrayed their wives and comrades were also dead.³⁵³ At first Gelin was beside himself with pain; but thanks to his character, which made him as incapable of enduring grief as of a moderate grief, he was soon enough resigned to prevent his friends from apprehending the consequences of his despair. Bridge was so impatient he could hardly wait for the deputies to finish putting their proposals to the governor. He contributed greatly to obtaining a favorable hearing for them. Everything they asked for was granted. Some of the St. Helena colonists took to the boats to take them back with them, and curiosity led the governor himself to follow them. They found still enough order among the miserable remnants of the colony, and enough traces of the former discipline, to make them only admire what they saw. The unexpected arrival of my brother and Johnston overwhelmed their wives with joy. There was no more minister, nor pernickety Elders, to oppose their happiness. Love, virtue, and

³⁵² This fact is of capital importance for the rest of the novel – a proof, perhaps, of the devious ways in which Providence persecutes Cleveland. It seems here that Cleveland's family is spared, since Angélique lives; and one must doubtless suppose that Gelin, had his wife also lived, would have remained happy like Bridge. But since Gelin alone has his dreams of happiness destroyed, he is able to compromise those of others.

³⁵³ This is evidence of a degree of immanent justice: indeed they die *because* of their infidelity, for had they remained unmoveable like the three others, they too would have been deported and thus escaped the contagion.

even fortune combined to reward them and make them forget their woes. The happy husbands, who finally saw their tranquillity soundly established, to last without interruption until death.

The governor having proposed to all the colony's inhabitants to have it transported with all their possessions to the other part of the island, to make up but a single body with those were under his government; they accepted, and set to work immediately to effect that transformation. They divided equally the money that was deposited in the storehouse. That treasure was so considerable that each had enough to lead a pleasant and comfortable life. They reflected however that, being Protestants, they might find it difficult to live for long in peace with the Portuguese, who are, as is well known, the most intolerant people of the Roman communion. A wise intuition of what they had to fear for the future led them to entreat the governor to grant them, at some distance from his settlement, a convenient place to establish a new one of their own. They pledged to recognize him as their leader, on the condition that he leave them free to practice their religion, and grant them all the privileges of the island's other inhabitants. This agreement was concluded on both sides by a solemn vow. A few Englishmen who were mingled among the Portuguese joined with their compatriots to create the foundation of a new city. In little time it assumed a regular shape, and has since grown considerably with the addition of many Englishmen and French refugees. [256] My brother along with his two friends established his home there. They spent more than a year there, to recover from their travails and tranquilly get used to their good fortune. But my dear brother's excellent nature did not allow him utterly to forget that I was less happy than he. The situation in which he had left me in Havana constantly returned to his memory and troubled his peace. While his wife's interest and that of his own happiness had caused him to neglect mine, at a time when he was indeed as pitiable as I, he came around instinctively

to the feeling that I was his brother, and had some right to his assistance. Having told Gelin of his determination to search for me, or at least go as far as the island of Cuba to find out what had become of me, he enlisted him to become his travel companion. He entrusted Johnston with the care of his wife and daughter during his absence, and boarding the same ship he had used so long in his wanderings, he went straight to Jamaica, and from there to Havana.

His presence had filled me with joy: his story evoked my immoderate gratitude. Not only was I reunited with a person of my blood, I who was accustomed to considering myself a broken off, rootless branch without ties on earth, at least by natural bonds; but I was acquiring, not having expected it, what I desired with such ardor, and had just sought fruitlessly in Serrana: a friend, a companion of fortune, a witness of my conduct and my sentiments, a confidant of my pleasures and my pains. I told him of all the satisfaction that those two thoughts had to give me. You will never leave me again, I said, embracing him tenderly; or if some necessity calls you elsewhere, you will allow me to go with you. You are my brother; but I can tell you are going to be something even more precious and tender: you will be my dear and faithful friend. Fortune will treat me as she will; she holds nothing I fear, if it now leaves me everything I possess. Indeed, my heart was so content and my imagination so agreeably filled, that I must count that moment as one of the most tranquil and happy in my life. In a moment of attention, I brought together in a single point of view all the circumstances of my happiness, and indulged myself in the contemplation of them. I had my amiable brother in my arms, I was going to be once more in those of my wife; the most painful memories of the past could not hold against the emotion of a pleasure so intense and present. The only thing missing was to have my sister-in-law in Havana, not only for the satisfaction I expected from her presence, but because I foresaw

that my brother would soon grow tired of living without her, and would hasten to leave us to return to St. Helena. This thought led me to propose that we immediately send some trusted friend on the ship he had brought me. It was not hard to persuade him to change residence and settle down with us in Havana; but I could not get him to entrust to someone else the task of bring his wife there. He told me he was absolutely determined to head back to sea a few days later, and go in person to fetch his wife and family in St. Helena.

Fanny had been delighted to see him, and even more so by the hope she would soon have my sister-in-law with her. However, I conceived a project that dismayed her. It was to accompany Bridge on his voyage. Accustomed as I was to travelling and crossing the seas, the relative distances were of no importance to me. My wife was safe in Havana. A few months' absence could only serve to provide us even more contentment at being together again. The way we are, we sometimes need this preventative against the cooling of love. I had many times had this thought. The underlying sentiment never dies out in a naturally tender and constant heart; but familiarity with a loved one, and the unbroken habit of being together, sooner or later cause love to lose something of its liveliness. A bit of art keeps it from going to sleep; and this assistance, which a thinking man can draw from his mind to nourish his sentiments, makes him more capable than ordinary men of a strong and durable passion.³⁵⁴ If experience had something to do with this reasoning, it did not come [257] from the slightest decline in my affection for Fanny: but I had observed

³⁵⁴ Des Grieux also describes an aristocracy of sentiment, in even more explicit terms: "But persons of a nobler character can be moved in a hundred different ways; they seem to have more than five senses, and receive ideas and sensations which exceed the ordinary boundaries of nature" (*Manon Lescaut*, p. 392). See also book XI below.

that these little interventions which I call art in a reasoning lover, had more than once served to renew her ardor and mine; and I concluded that what could cause some increase in a passion like ours should be able *a fortiori* to prevent it from flagging.

I would often, for example, spend most of the day among my books, and admit no one to that private space. Fanny's image then came to mind a hundred times. I wished I were with her. Something was missing for me to be in a tranquil situation. I managed nevertheless to do myself that violence. But when I had fulfilled the time that I had planned to spend in study, I returned to her with all the solitudes of love, and relished more than ever caressing her and talking with her. She did not deny that she experienced the same thing: I myself could perceive the renewal of ardor that occurred in her sentiments. She protested with charming grace the cruelty I had to leave her behind and bury myself in my study. The boredom she felt outside my presence made her desire to be with me even at the times which I had decided always to devote to occupations of the mind. I will be in your room, she said, I will not cause you the slightest disturbance; I shall keep still, busy reading a good book, or knitting on something. I agreed. But I soon observed that her presence was not compatible with the application which study requires. At the slightest movement she made, my eyes turned almost naturally toward her. She refrained from speaking; but a glance, a smile, caused me more disturbance and distraction than the noise of a numerous company would have done. Sometimes I was unable to remain seated in my chair, and check the impulse to go sit beside hers. This seemed to give her great joy, and she laughingly chided me for this excessive weakness, which, she said, dishonored philosophy. The rest of the time was spent in sweet nothings and

banter.³⁵⁵

At bottom, I could not reflect seriously on this bizarre mixture of weighty and frivolous occupations without a sense of shame. The object of my studies was so serious that it deserved to be respected, even by love.³⁵⁶ I earnestly entreated Fanny to stay henceforth in her rooms, and let me observe my initial order of conduct. She granted me this only reluctantly. In exchange she was to be free to enter my study from time to time, promising as she did so to stay only for a moment. But she forgot herself for hours on end, either chatting about trifles, or amusing herself about me with my papers and books. Finally I was bold enough to tell her one day that I wished absolutely to be left alone, and that she annoyed me by disturbing me so often. I do not know whether my mien was so serious as to make her think I was really dissatisfied; but after remaining for a time without answering, and seeing that I continued my reading without saying anything further, she left my room quietly to withdraw to her own. I only paid attention a moment later of the manner in which she had left. It gave me some concern; and knowing how extremely sensitive she was, I hastened to her room to mitigate any excessive harshness in my expressions. I found her seated, her head leaning on her hand, and her eyes full of tears. She tried to assume another countenance when she saw me; but once I had explained to her that it was the fear of having offended her that brought me, she could not halt her tears that began anew to flow in abundance. I pressed her to tell me what it could be that moved her so. It was only after

³⁵⁵ This banter contrasts sharply with Fanny's habitual melancholy; indeed this is her sole witticism in the whole novel.

³⁵⁶ Once more, this object of study remains undefined. Fanny for her part is not attracted by abstract thought, which does not seem to her a very feminine activity; Cleveland does not reproach her for it, but does not wish to be disturbed.

repeated urgings that she began to speak, lowering her eyes, to complain that I was completely changed towards her, and loved her so little that I took more pleasure in a book than in her presence and conversation. She added that she recognized only too clearly that in losing her father she had lost the principal bond that attached me to her; and that if I treated her so unkindly, I would make her the unhappiest of all women.

[258] Although I did not feel guilty enough to deserve such bitter reproach, I did not examine whether it was just, and attempted to comfort her with the most tender assurances of love and loyalty. We made our peace. Far from holding this quarrel against her, and using it to lower my opinion of her character, I explained it as the effect of an extreme delicacy of sentiments, which ought only to make her more dear to me and make her more lovable. I even blamed myself for having misconceived until then one of the principal duties of virtue and wisdom. The end of my studies should be not only to work toward my happiness and improvement, but to make myself useful, insofar as possible, to the happiness of others; for these two obligations almost equally affect a reasonable and virtuous man, who feels he is made for society, and therefore owes himself almost as much to others as to himself. But what a strange fruit was I expecting from my studies, if the very application I brought to them produced an effect quite opposite to what reason should have me desire? I study, I said, to become more humane, more gentle, more accommodating; and the very work by which I think I am approaching this end itself distances me from it, and makes me commit what it ought to serve to make me avoid. It shocks my wife; it makes me distracted, gruff, even harsh and brutish, since I was capable of speaking to her so sharply that she is moved to tears. Therefore I am not on the path that leads to wisdom and virtue; or rather, I am, but I am going awry. I am like a man who would try to please, and who, for want of skill and flexibility in his attentions

and his services, only succeeds in making them bothersome: he would thereby manage to make people hate him by the means that serve to make one loved.

But independently of this motive, which derived simply from ideas of order, and acted, if I may put it thus, solely on my reason, I had only to follow the movement of my heart to dispose me toward whatever could please my dear wife. I scheduled my studies and the length of time alone, in concert with her: I set for it the limits she wished; and one of the main conditions to which I had to agree was that she would have the liberty to enter my study at all hours, and make me mix a bit of love into my most serious occupations. She abused it; for such was still the force of her passion that she could not be content for a moment away from me. I will not deny that my weakness for her was the same. I had never seen her so charming. The reader must have understood that in the first years of our marriage she was still in the age closest to childhood: her charms were still budding. But then she was entering into that flower of youth where the perfection of beauty wants nothing.³⁵⁷ Add that the fatigues she had undergone in America had considerably changed her, and the peace in which she was living in Havana restored to her an appearance of robustness that enhanced all her graces. So I loved her more ardently than ever. Dear Fanny! Alas! I loved her more than myself. Why would I blush at a passion so just, and sanctioned in any case by duty? And how moreover could I succeed in soon expressing the excess of my misfortune, if I did not confess here that of my love?

Nevertheless, as I always kept sufficient watch over myself

³⁵⁷ Fanny, who was twelve in 1661, would now be perhaps fifteen or sixteen. This is the only place where Cleveland speaks of her beauty; according to what he says later about Cécile (book VI), it seems that, objectively, Fanny's is not particularly outstanding.

to maintain moderation in my desires, I did not indulge in sentiments of present affection with so little restraint that I did not often extend my reflections to the future. If Fanny's heart was such as I desired, then for the happiness of my own it must always so remain. It was in this view that I often contemplated the nature of our inclinations and attachments, and that, putting my own heart to every test, I tried to identify what might weaken or augment its sentiments. I made no discovery that I did not immediately verify by experience. Without informing Fanny of my design, I tried out on her, in a way, the efficacy of my remedies, like a physician who might make of the health of someone he loves the object of continual study, and who not waiting for the time of illness, would strive to understand the essence of that person's temperament, discover in what ways it can deviate, prepare the most [259] salutary potions, and occasionally administer a little test of them, either just to be sure what effect they could produce if needed, or in hope they will prevent the illness from arising, which is even better than reserving them for curing it.³⁵⁸ Thus I employed all my attention and skill searching for what could fixate love in Fanny's heart. Brief absences, artfully contrived, had already seemed to me admirably helpful. I had more than once tested their effect, even before my voyage to Serrana and my brother's arrival. Although it was hardly easier for me than for my wife to resign myself to these voluntary separations, I was determined by reason, and sustained by the hope of renewed love and pleasure, which I counted upon at my return.

So I persisted in my decision to leave with Bridge and Gelin

³⁵⁸ His supposedly scientific conduct contributes to Cleveland's excessive confidence in his perfect knowledge of her, which always seems to turn out an illusion. Gelin also will proceed by a method tailored to a medical diagnosis.

for St. Helena. They spent about six weeks in Havana, at the end of which time we boarded the ship which they owned. I had seen to it that it was put in such good condition that there was not a better one in the port. Along the way we stopped in Jamaica, solely to get some news of Europe. A ship had just recently come in from London. I spoke with the captain. While he told me nothing particularly interesting with respect to England, he discussed with me the purpose of his voyage; and when I learned that he was to set sail as soon as possible for Virginia, he inspired me with a plan which I must regard as the era of the most terrible of all my misfortunes. I did not fail to inquire first whether he would go as far as Powhatan. He told me that was his destination. I entreated him earnestly to ask for news of a French woman named Mme Lallin; and if he found her in that city, to tell her I made my home in the island of Cuba, at the home of the governor of Havana, and that I invited her to take the first opportunity available to come join me there. Not only did he willingly accept this mission, he also added that he himself could render service to that lady by transporting her to the place where I wished her to be. His was a merchant vessel. He had disposed of a part of his cargo in Jamaica, and the merchandise he brought from Europe being only for the use of our nation, his intention was to sell the rest in our northern colonies. From there he planned to return, carrying local produce, to the Gulf of Mexico, to sell them to the Spaniards; and take from them new products which he would take to Europe. This arrangement was so favorable to Mme Lallin that I did not doubt she could be in Havana even before my return from St. Helena. Reflecting on the convenience of his voyage, it occurred to me to accompany him myself to Powhatan. I owed enough gratitude to Mme Lallin to pay her this civility. Bridge and Gelin could take no offense at my abandoning them in order to fulfill so just a duty. My company was of no help to them, and our separation would not affect the promise they had made me to

return to Havana. I put my plan to them. They found it just, and showed no dismay when they left me than that of regretting my absence. What shall I say to justify this fateful voyage? If all events are conducted by providence, so that nothing happens but by its direction and order, ought I assign to my enterprise some other cause than its will? And must I not recognize that there was neither reflection nor prudence that could have made me avoid what it had decreed?³⁵⁹

I separated from my friends, after agreeing with them on the time at which they would try to meet up with me. I assumed that my return would assuredly be sooner than theirs. I put out to sea joyfully, exceedingly enjoying the agreeable surprise I was going to give Mme Lallin. My blind desires were thus leading me to my ruin, for every step I took brought me closer to the brink. I was myself about to light the fire that would consume me, and cause both my ruin and that of my wife, my friends, and all those dear to me. How I ought to loathe Mme Lallin! That horrid Fury, whose very memory I should detest! It is she who did me in. Without her, would I not be happy? Had not my fortune once again taken on a smiling and tranquil face? Had I any other [260] reason to fear it might change? Alas, I was so satisfied with my situation that I was beginning to lose the memory of my past misfortunes; already I saw them only in the distance, when a fatal firebrand of hatred and discord came to revive flames that were nearly extinguished, open up again in my soul the springs of suffering, and add to my old wounds such terrible and unforeseen blows, that they placed in the same danger my honor, my life, and my reason. Yet in blaming that lady for all my woes, I must

³⁵⁹ Cleveland, like Bridge, feels the need to underscore his excellent intentions and even the sound reasoning behind his worst decisions, and is tempted by the argument invoked constantly by Des Grieux which denied his freedom to explain everything by fate.

confess that she was only innocently their cause. In whatever place on earth her despair and ill fate lay have taken her,³⁶⁰ I owe her this justice. She was good, kind, obliging, attached to my family, a friend of peace, and incapable of contributing willingly to the misfortunes she has caused me. She undid me without intending to. But her innocence does nothing to change my misery!

With the wind never ceasing to favor us right up to the entrance of the Powhatan River, we reached that city without incident. I learned from the first passer-by that Mme Lallin was still there, and that she had lived very honorably to that time. I at once had myself taken to her house. My arrival caused her one of the greatest joys she had ever known. I expressed no less joy at seeing her again, and greatly increased her satisfaction by assuring her that it was solely for the love of her that I had undertaken the voyage.³⁶¹ She eagerly accepted the haven I offered her in the island of Cuba at my wife's side, and invited me consider her, after Fanny, as the person on earth who would always have the most affection for me, and try the most sincerely to keep mine for her. She gave me a lengthy narrative of her adventures, which were moving enough to engage my compassion considerably. Captain Will had consummated his treachery by obliging her to marry him; or rather by making her receive despite herself, from the ship's chaplain, a benediction that was vain and ineffectual, since it was forced, and since neither caresses nor threats had

³⁶⁰ In fact he will know exactly where at the end of the story, for it is specified (book XV) that Mme Lallin retires to the convent of Hautebruyère.

³⁶¹ This terminology is as ambiguous for her as for him, and doubtless reflects, despite the essential innocence of their intentions and conduct, an unconscious attraction which necessarily will never be expressed openly.

been able to persuade that unhappy lady to consent. Even he had never intended to consider this engagement as a legitimate marriage. He had wished to shield his reputation by putting an honest veil over his foul deed, and avoid not only the shame, but even the punishment he could fear for an act of such violence when he got back to England. Being the absolute master on his ship, he had subsequently made Mme Lallin submit to all the laws that his passion had impelled him to impose on her. He had taken her to Jamaica and to Virginia; and if he had always treated her properly, it had been less on a wife's footing than that of a mistress over whom he thought he had acquired the right to dispose. For her part, constantly lamenting the slavery in which she was held, no opportunity for escape had arisen that she had not tried to profit by; but her efforts had been futile, so long as the captain had enough love to keep a constant eye on her. Finally, when he began to cool, and thinking of a return to Europe he perhaps wished to be rid of her and leave her in America, she noticed that she was less closely watched. Will had then returned to Jamaica, where he was to leave some of his troops. He had granted her the freedom to leave the ship to take a few days' rest at Port Royal. She confided her travails to a good man who promised to facilitate her flight, and who indeed found the means of getting her embarked secretly on a ship bound for Lucayoneque.³⁶² It was only after various adventures and endless pains that she reached Virginia, where she hoped to find Lord Axminster, and perhaps meet with him. Having preserved the sums of money she had brought from France, she lacked nothing to live an agreeable life at Powhatan, and she acquired such a good reputation for her civility and propriety that she inspired enough esteem in several

³⁶² An island now called the Great Abaco, east of Bahama; it was designated at the time, according to the map, as Lucayoneque, Lucayes or Grande Lucaye, just as the Bahama islands were called the Lucayes.

of the most prominent Englishmen in that city to make them want to marry her.

She was so satisfied with what I had undertaken for her and the expectation I gave her of living tranquilly in my family, where she looked forward to great amenity in the company of my wife, that she showed herself extremely impatient [261] to leave Powhatan. The captain's business did not detain us beyond a fortnight. We left with a good wind. I had the pleasure, in leaving the city, to see many finest people come to tell my companion how much they regretted her departure, and shower her with expressions of their esteem.

During the voyage I found in the continual conversations I had with her that her mind and heart had lost nothing through misfortune. It seemed to me on the contrary that her miseries had fortified her reason, and for having been able to reap such an excellent fruit from adversity, I thought all the more of her. Her mind was keen, she expressed herself gracefully, and there was something thoughtful in everything she said which enormously gratified the penchant I myself had for reflection and contemplation. I made no secret of the satisfaction I had at finding such good taste in her. I gain much more than you, I said, for having found you. You are going to serve to make my life happy. What I thought I owed you out of gratitude, I will now do for reasons of my own interests and utility. Your conversation will be for me a charming form of study, from which I am sure to garner more than from my books. Thereupon, I informed her that I expected in Havana my brother Bridge, whose character much resembled ours. What a delight, I continued, will we not find in the manner in which we are going to live. Our life will be entirely composed of reason. My wife herself is not incapable of joining in this project. We will want for nothing to be happy; for, I added, it does not appear we will have any further trouble with Fortune. Our situation is fixed. I do not see from where we could appre-

hend her blows. Such was my blindness to the greatest peril by which I had ever been threatened. I was almost there, without the slightest inkling that could warn me of it; and everything served to confirm me for a long time in the most unfortunate of all errors.

We landed in Havana. Some orders I had to give for the service of the captain who had brought us having long retained me in the port, the news of my return was so quickly spread that my wife was informed of it soon enough to come greet me with Don Pedro d'Arpez. I was surprised to see the governor's carriage appear, and suspecting that he had Fanny with him, I offered my hand to Mme Lallin to walk forward together. Fanny at first took her to be my sister-in-law, with whom she supposed I was arriving from St. Helena. But I promptly explained, and told her this was the same lady who had written to me among the Abaquis, and had left France with me, who had given me on a hundred occasions signs of friendship and generosity; in short, that it was Mme Lallin, whom I was offering to her as a friend and companion whose cleverness and merit she would soon recognize. I went on to relate briefly by what chance I had had the possibility of going myself to Powhatan, to offer this lady a retreat with us, in accordance with the intention that had brought her to America. This is another Mrs Riding, I added, whom I am presenting to you, and whom entreat you to receive in friendship.³⁶³

If one recalls everything I have related, on more than one occasion, about Fanny's character and that fretful susceptibility that inclined her naturally to jealousy, one will easily enter into the meaning of everything that remains for me to tell. Do but remember the profound sadness in which she seemed to have persisted among the Abaquis; those anxieties she had not been

³⁶³ In book IX, Fanny will later describe her own reactions to Mme Lallin's arrival.

able to hide, even in the early days of our engagement; her distractions, her tears even and her sighs; and anyone who reads this ominous part of my story will be much better informed of the cause of my misfortune than I myself was at the time it happened to me. Who would understand it without this key? But after the care I have taken to prepare my readers well in advance for this story, they will find nothing obscure in the darkness where they will see me walk. They will enjoy a clear view of the spectacle of my woes. Alas, would I had then, to avoid them, the insights I here provide to make them understood!

[262] Far as I was from any shadow of misgiving, I did not even remark on the way my wife was receiving my words; I was thinking only of the pleasure of seeing her again and providing a friend for her. However, had I reflected on it, from that first moment I could have detected, as I have subsequently learned too certainly, some alteration in her face and much constraint in her demeanor. The opinion she had acquired of my sentiments for Mme Lallin, since she learned that that lady had left her country to accompany me all the way to America, and the confirmation she thought she had of it in the care with which I had so long hidden from her this circumstance of my voyage, these two reasons, I say, would alone have sufficed to make Mme Lallin odious to her, and her presence disagreeable. When she saw not only that it was I myself who wished to have her with us, but also that I had incurred the fatigue of making on purpose the voyage to Virginia to bring her to Havana and offer her a retreat in my company, she thought herself only too assured that there was an element of passion in such excessive civility, and that I had consequently deceived her from the beginning of our marriage, or had abandoned her in my heart since I had found her rival again. What progress did this thought not immediately make in a character such as my wife's! Tender beyond my expressions, timid and easily alarmed, ever full of fear she was not well enough loved;

possessed moreover of a gentle melancholy such that she sought solitude to lose herself in reverie at every moment she did not spend with me. The minute of my arrival was alas the last of her tranquillity! Thereafter that dear wife no more joys except feigned, which she was controlled enough to pretend so as to save appearances; and her habitual disposition was suffering, with all the unhappy effects that accompany it.

I took so little notice of this change that I thought myself on that contrary in one of the most agreeable circumstances in my life. I now lacked only my brother and his Angélique to persuade me absolutely that I had nothing left to desire.³⁶⁴ I expressed these sentiments to my wife. She replied with her usual tenderness. I encouraged her to show friendship to Mme Lallin, and as that lady seemed to me to be completely over the weakness she had long had for me, I had no hesitation on all occasions to lavish all sorts of innocent civilities on her, which she received as so many signs of the sincere affection I had for her. Fanny did herself enough violence to give her, from time to time, some exterior displays of her esteem. But it is easy to judge that they were not sincere. She suffered terribly when it happened that she witnessed my own. It was torture for her to see me sometimes converse with her enemy in private, or take a stroll with her in the governor's garden. She often came to interrupt us, and although she tried then to put on a happy face, I later reflected that it would have been simple for me to detect agitation in it, if I had not been accustomed to regarding her little changes moods as an ordinary effect of her melancholy.

Two months went by without anything escaping her that could suggest to me her turmoil and cause me any concern. My

³⁶⁴ The ambition of bringing together all his friends and relatives in the happy “garden” of Cuba foreshadows the garden of *Candide* and perhaps even more the “Elysian fields” in Rousseau’s *Julie*.

brother's arrival with his wife and Gelin soon became for her and for me a new source of irreparable setbacks. Don Pedro, who took pains to anticipate our desires, judged by the satisfaction we had at seeing them arrive that he could do us no greater favor than by inviting them to live in his house. I got them to consent by my insistence. Bridge loved Gelin inseparably: thus to engage one of them was to retain both. There was all the less difficulty that the governor's house, or rather palace, was so vast that each of us could occupy his own apartment without causing the least trouble. We thus found ourselves all lodged under one roof.³⁶⁵

Once we had more or less gotten over the initial movement inspired by the joy of reunion with people we love, each one set about finding occupations according to taste to fill the moments we could not always spend together. My choice [263] was made: it was study. Bridge, who was no less drawn to study than I by inclination, made the same choice. Mme Lallin also decided to devote part of each day to reading something; and since I had put together in my study a library of all the good books I could find in Havana, she became accustomed to coming often to join me there, either to choose those that seemed to her the most agreeable, or to procure a few minutes' conversation with me. I had assumed my wife also would choose this serious form of diversion, which had always appealed to her. However, she declared openly that her intention was to keep continual company with my sister-in-law, doing some sort of handiwork with her. It was her hidden despair, and her aversion for Mme Lallin, that made her take this resolution, especially when she had noticed that this lady

³⁶⁵ As will be seen in Fanny's story in book IX and Gelin's in book XI, what follows is dependent on the close proximity in which they live and not only on the fact that they are all together in Cuba; the "one roof" which symbolized this unity and solidarity of the group for Cleveland only foments latent problems.

came often to my study. As for herself, she never again set foot there. That former ardor she manifested to see me and talk with me seemed to disappear entirely. If she sometimes left my sister-in-law, it was to withdraw alone to some outlying avenue in the garden, and to give herself over to all the agitations of her soul. I could not fail to take some notice of the change in her behavior; but what reason would I have had to attribute it to such a cruel cause, and how would I have suspected her of suspecting my heart, when it felt for her nothing but the tenderest movements of love, and the inner certainty of unending constancy?

Gelin, who had no inclination either for study, attached himself to the company of my sister-in-law and Fanny. With the notions of courtesy and gallantry that are common to all Frenchmen, he would have thought he was offending his nation's honor if he had abandoned those two ladies when he could entertain them with his conversation. His vivacity, sustained by great ease of expression, left scarcely any void in the longest conversation; and I am obliged, despite the harm he did me, to confess that he was agreeable company. So he spent part of the day with my wife and Angélique. I can believe that at first he had no other intention than to satisfy his courtesy, or at most to procure for himself a quite innocent pleasure in the company of two infinitely endearing ladies. If I am not mistaken in this opinion, I must pity him: I know the tyranny of the passions, and I still cannot bring myself to believe, even as I loathe his memory, that he might have been more unfortunate than culpable.³⁶⁶ But if it was voluntarily that he plunged into crime, if it was by deliberate design that he conjured my ruin, in on those principles too ordinary to the French, which make them consider a love intrigue as a trifle, will there be anyone who does not hate him as with me, as a monster who violated

³⁶⁶ Cleveland sets up here a situation which Prévost did not develop: at the end of book XIV, Gelin will still be alive and even amply redeemed.

the most sacred rights, and committed the darkest of all crimes?

He fell in love with my wife. In a character like his, no passion could be weak and moderate. It has been seen in the relation of his adventure in St. Helena that he was shrewd and inventive. First he concentrated on understanding Fanny's underlying temperament thoroughly, so as to attack her virtue at its weakest point. He had no difficulty observing that she was melancholic. But his sharp eyes penetrated much farther. He could not see and observe her continually without discovering that she was torn by some violent passion. He followed her closely, and examined everything she did with such skill and perseverance that he finally seized her heart's secret. It was on this knowledge that he based all the hope of his amorous successes. I am entering here into detail of which one will be surprised to find me so perfectly informed. But will I ask too much of my readers, if I entreat them suspend their judgment and attention?³⁶⁷

The cruel Gelin lost no time, after this discovery, in putting to work all the resources he could draw from his devious mind. The first design he formed was to make use of his insights to insinuate himself into my wife's confidence. He took advantage of a stroll she was taking alone one day in the garden to have a private talk with her. There, after a thousand protestations of respect and sincere esteem, he let her know, not [264] that he had detected her sadness, but that he had discovered something that might well cause her a good deal of it. He even excused himself for putting off speaking to her about it for so long; and however

³⁶⁷ By "attention," Cleveland means skeptical attention paid to these details. He will, moreover, justify the wait, for his sources – the stories of Fanny and Gelin – will become quite clear in the long run. Faithful to the pseudo-historical technique, Prévost scrupulously avoids giving information which the narrator could not have known, and always explains in detail what his sources are.

pressed he might have been, he said, by the gratitude he thought he owed our family, he had been held back by the fear of creating dissension within it, or in any case some cooling of friendship. But the disease seemed to him to be growing by the day, and since its consequences could only be quite deplorable, he felt himself obliged to tell her that Mme Lallin was full of passion for me, and that she was so unguarded that she gave scandalous evidence of it; that she was alone with me in my study at all hours of the day; that he had heard things he did not deem it proper to repeat; that in truth, he had no idea at all whether I reciprocated this passion; but that it was this very reason that obliged him to break the silence, so that my wife could cure the disease, if there was still time to arrest it.

Such skillful rhetoric had all the effect Gelin had counted on. The good and credulous Fanny could only see in it only the warning of a faithful, disinterested friend, which accorded perfectly with her own thoughts, and confirmed all the premonitions of her jealousy. At first she responded only with a stream of tears, and by laments at her ill fortune. Gelin pretended he wanted to comfort her, but he did so in a way that induced her to reveal more. She confided all her woes in him. She confessed that she had heard nothing from him that she had not be aware of for a long time. She was even imprudent enough to admit to him that she thought I had betrayed her, and that she was quite certain that I loved Mme Lallin as much as I was loved by her. Nothing could suit Gelin better. His aim was to make himself, in a manner of speaking, necessary to my wife under the pretext of helping or consoling her. He had observed that she still loved me too fervently for him to dare expect her heart could easily be won; but he hoped that in the intimate relationship he planned to have with her, he would by degrees find the means of moving her. Outpourings of the heart, communications of sentiments, and the mysterious aura of confidence, are so many symptoms which belong to

love, and which hardly ever fail to cause it when they are not its effect. Gelin indeed achieved part of what he was attempting with Fanny; and if he did not obtain her affection, at least he held first place in her esteem and friendship.

Between her and him it was soon nothing but secret meetings, reports, arcana, private signs of collusion. Not a word to me any longer escaped Mme Lallin, or a glance cast in my direction, without it being interpreted in the most devious way. Gelin had his eye on our every movement. He kept a precise account of them, which he did not fail to give daily to my wife. If he perceived nothing that could be subjected to a bad meaning, his maliciousness made up for the lack of material. He carried impudence to the point of slipping into my apartment and lending an ear at the door of my study to garner something of my conversations with Mme Lallin. The most innocent expressions of friendship and confidence took on in his mouth a corrupt and poisonous turn. This unworthy confidant thus succeeded in depraving more and more my unfortunate wife. It is true that the fruits he got from it were hardly favorable to his passion. He wanted to inspire love in her, and slipped into her heart nothing but turmoil and sorrow. Too certain of her unhappiness, and as if overwhelmed by the new confirmations she received of it every day, she less lived than languished in continual despair. She no longer had but two occupations, but both baleful and violent: one was to do nothing but grieve when she was alone and could avoid being observed; the other, to make infinite efforts to hide it, when she was obliged to appear in company. Her health could not long stand up to agitations of this nature. She was visibly wasting away. Her color and healthy mien waned by the day. The poison, which she had had the strength to bottle up for so long, was gradually oozing out, and beginning to corrupt her blood and her strength, having already infected all the faculties of her soul.

[265] I was living during that time in a confidence and

security that made my misfortune infinitely more deplorable. Far from conceiving the slightest suspicion averse to my tranquillity, if I did happen to take some note of the change I perceived in Fanny's behavior, it was to delight in it as something which I had desired, and thought to be highly advantageous to her. I supposed that she was finding in the company of my sister-in-law and Gelin such agreeable distraction that it got the best of her melancholy. If my affection suffered from it, because I spent part of the day without seeing her, it made me feel good to think that she was tranquil and contented. I even expressed to her often the joy it gave me, and more than once thanked Gelin and Angélique for finding a way to change her humor so. This was to blow on the flames, and stir the fire that was consuming her, for she did not fail to understand these signs of satisfaction as manifest proof of my unfaithfulness. I was delighted for her to leave me alone with Mme Lallin. I had come to find her presence repugnant and annoying. Such was the sad reasoning of her sick heart and troubled mind. While we kept on seeing each other several times each day, that was in public. In the evening, it was always well into the night before we retired. I attributed her torpor and dejection to sleepiness. She did not reject my caresses, but I could scarcely get her to say anything. She pretended to fall asleep almost at once. I nevertheless spent the night delightfully by her side, happy in that single thought, that her heart belonged to me, and was as tranquil as mine.

Meanwhile, her health continuing to decline each day, it appeared clearly on her face that she was suffering some pain of which she did not complain. I expressed my concern to her. She admitted she was not well, and took the opportunity to have a bed prepared for her separate from mine. Alarmed at her slightest ills, I interrupted the order of my studies to remain more regularly with her. I noted, observing her, that she was distraught. She said little. Her eyes sometimes rested languidly on me, and despite the

effort she made to control herself, there were sighs that often escaped her. My sister-in-law told me in confidence that she thought she had perceived that the source of the illness was less in the body than in the heart and mind, and she had no doubt that Fanny had some considerable reason for distress. I arranged to have a moment alone with her. I embraced her with all my affection. I begged her to explain, to open her heart to me who was her dear husband, who adored her, and could not live an easy instant if her tranquillity and happiness were wanting in something. She appeared uncertain for some moments, as if the ardor of my expressions had moved her, and she had been on the point of telling me the secret of her distress. Alas, I am sure of it, that fatal secret came to the tip of her tongue, and we could still be happy if it had completely come out. But some fateful reflection which was the effect of Gelin's devious inspirations made it return to the darkness where my eyes could not go. She answered with a sigh that she was not always master of her imagination; that despite herself, the tragic adventures of her father and mother often came back to mind; that she could not think without trembling about the cruel catastrophes that had destroyed her family; that having no reason to hope that the wrath of heaven would be any kinder to her, she anticipated some ominous end which would complement her life's unhappy beginnings. She could not hold back her tears as she finished these words; and her heart, which was heavy with sorrow, vented itself in endless sighs.

I felt so sad at seeing her in this state that, had she still been in possession of her freedom of mind and reason, it would have been impossible for such sincere signs of my affection and pain would not have made her open her eyes to her injustice and my innocence. I took one of her hands, which I pressed against my face. Oh, dear Fanny! I said with inexpressible feeling in my heart; oh all-powerful charm of my life and my travails, how can you worry over such unjust fears, and over memories that you

ought to have blotted out? The past is not in our power; [266] but where do you see cause to tremble for the future? Do we not have each other? Can all the power of nature keep me from adoring you, keep you from loving me and from being forever mine? And if that is as sure as it ought to appear to you, what is there presently in life that can be a misfortune for you and me? No, no, I added, embracing her, to worry continually about losing the happiness we enjoy is not to feel its value. Your heart is too unquiet. I want to give you the means of reassuring it: it is for the place of fear always be occupied by love.

As I had no reason to mistrust her sincerity, I took the answer she had given as the confession of her true sorrows, and my thought only of finding diversions for her that could hold at bay the thoughts that were troubling her. I had some of the first ladies of Havana invited to pay us visits after dinner, and partake in her room in games and other pleasures. I myself was constantly present. Either thanks to this distraction, or because my continual presence helped to calm her, she was soon much better, and we resumed our usual occupations. I noted Gelin's service to her during her illness, but it never even occurred to me that there was anything involved beyond generosity and friendship.

I was obliged a few months later, as a favor to the governor, to take care of some business he needed to settle in Vera Cruz.³⁶⁸ This voyage was less onerous than long and trying. Upon my return, I found my family and friends in perfect health. Gelin was closer than ever to Fanny, in other words he was continued to poison her with his insinuations and advice. He did not fail to point out to her that several months' absence had in no way diminished my supposed passion for Mme Lallin. If I were not to

³⁶⁸ Port of New Spain (Mexico), on the south rim of the Gulf of Mexico. Although the trip's purpose remains vague, Fanny will say later that its success has made them inherit her grandfather's estate (book IX).

present, later on, clear and irrefutable evidence of my wife's unshakeable virtue, it would seem incredible that with the confidence and affection she had for Gelin, she could have held out for so long against his seductions. That dog had so become master of her mind that she no longer did anything without consulting him. He had by this time confessed his passion to her, but had gone about it so cleverly that she could not take offense at it. However, because of the manner in which she received his declaration, he was not bold enough to renew it, and what he saw every day of her character having nearly made him give up what hope he had left, he had gone back to his original plan, which was to kindle her jealousy more and more, sure that her affection for me would sooner or later die along with her esteem, and it would become easier for him to work his way into her heart after banishing me from it. Therefore he made a point of avoiding the appearance of love, and manifesting in everything a disinterested desire to serve her. She, who was sweetness itself, and who had never had the sort of experience that teaches her sex to be wary of ours, thought she was risking nothing in giving her esteem and confidence to a person who showed such attachment to her. Moreover, she had a thousand times heard my brother praise the generosity of his friend Gelin. She saw that even I treated him as a friend; and to do him justice, he lacked none of those qualities that constitute, by common agreement, the winsome and meritorious man.³⁶⁹ Heaven, how can I speak with such moderation of a cruel man who plunged me into the most extreme despair and misery!

³⁶⁹ In order that the reader not be too surprised at the ease with which Fanny falls into Gelin's trap, Cleveland underscores the fact that although impetuous and shady, Gelin is not a demon. It will be seen that his behavior is in truth not utterly devoid of sincerity; for her part, Fanny, although credulous, is not foolish, and the way he preys on her mind is plausible.

The time of my ruin was approaching. Don Pedro d'Arpez, broken with age and sensing the end drawing nigh, made a will in which he left me everything he owned. He did not long survive this last disposition. A sudden illness put him in the grave. As soon as our gratitude had paid its debt by magnificently acquitting our last duties, my only thought was to reap his inheritance and return to Europe. My intention was to equip a ship for that purpose, so as to be complete master of my course. The property which Don Pedro had left me was so considerable that this expense seemed to me slight: and since I had decided to go straight to [267] England with my wealth, my family, and my friends, I was not of a mind to entrust myself to the discretion of a Spanish captain. My brother had sent back to St. Helena the ship that had brought him with his wife and Gelin³⁷⁰: I therefore chose to buy one which had been built not long before the governor's death, and gave such pressing orders that it was swiftly made ready. But as we were getting ready to put to sea, one day I heard Bridge complaining with Gelin of the necessity for them, by returning to England, of leaving their friend Johnston behind in St. Helena. I loved Bridge as myself. I chided him for not letting me know earlier that he took enough interest in Johnston to wish he could be with him. You should have brought him, I said, when you came to settle here with me. Anyone who is dear to you could only be very dear to me. But I know a remedy, I added, which is to go by way of St. Helena. The detour is not infinite; and with the pleasure of reuniting with Johnston and his wife, which will be your principal objective, you will have also that of showing us that lovely countryside where your Angélique was born, and of which you have told us so many marvels. This proposal caused my brother an extreme joy. We lost no time departing, and it was

³⁷⁰ It is hardly clear why, especially if it is the one they had purchased at the end of book III.

for St. Helena that we set sail.

We made a safe voyage, but we did not complete it without fear. England and Holland were then in a state of war. Holmes, in command of an English squadron, had taken the Cape Verde Islands, and several Dutch forts of the on the coasts of Guinea. I had been informed before leaving Havana that the States of Holland had recently sent their admiral Ruyter into these waters with a considerable fleet³⁷¹; and in his eagerness to take vengeance on the English, it could only be extremely dangerous for me to fall into his hands. It was not that normally we ought to fear running into him; but everyone knows that in the sea a gust of wind sometimes bring ships that were far apart suddenly towards each other. This fear had led me to fly the Spanish flag, and ask all the Englishmen on my ship not to express themselves in their tongue if we should have the bad luck to happen across Ruyter's fleet. With this precaution, I avoided a danger from which nothing could otherwise have saved me; for we did indeed encounter Ruyter in the Ethiopian Sea, and we owed our salvation only to the fact that we claimed and appeared to be Spanish.

After so happily escaping from such danger, it was not in the bosom of peace and confidence, nor by the hand of a wife and of a friend, that I expected to perish. My whole life I had experienced adversities and losses, and already had only too well ac-

³⁷¹ The events mentioned here, related by Rapin de Thoyras (IX, 223 and 230), in fact precede the declaration of war by England in January 1665. In August and September of 1664, Sir Robert Holmes had captured several Dutch forts at Cap Vert (not the Cape Verde Islands, which have always been Portuguese) and in Guinea, then sailed to America where he took Nieuw Amsterdam, which thereby became New York. Immediately afterwards, Ruyter took back the African forts before attacking English possessions in the Antilles. The departure therefore takes place towards the beginning of 1665. The war lasted until the peace of Breda, signed in July 1667.

quired already the distinction of unfortunate: but I had always had at least some reason for anticipating my woes; I had had some sign or some premonition that had preceded them. Moreover, when I lost something dear and precious, I had always retained something dearer still, which could help comfort me with the sole thought that heaven, by taking away the good thing I missed, had at least left me other things the loss of which would have made me infinitely more miserable. Here, without any intimation or reflection, and almost without the least interval, fortune hurls me in two turns of the wheel to the bottom of the abyss. She puts me there definitively. She takes away hope, remedy, consolations; in short, she made me what the reader will see, and will scarcely believe.

We arrive in St. Helena. A French ship from the Indies was entering the port just as we arrived.³⁷² We docked at the same time. The first news to reach my brother is the death of Johnston and his wife. This loss causing him much anguish, and I attempt for a few days to comfort him. There was nothing to keep us in St. Helena once we had visited the site of the colony; and it was easy for us to obtain this satisfaction, since the Portuguese, having blasted with powder some parts of the cliffs that separated it from the rest of the island, so getting there by land had become free and simple. We were therefore about to [268] put back to sea, and having no further ports of call before England, I made shared with Mme Lallin and Gelin, who were French, the satisfaction I felt at to be able to offer them a peaceful retreat in my country. Malefic signal of my doom! Fanny had sworn not to set foot in England if I brought Mme Lallin there with me. Gelin's ruses had persuaded her to take this brash resolution; and seeing that she could carry it out only by fleeing with him, she gave her consent once she saw clearly that I had no intention of separating from her

³⁷² This is the ship of des Ogères in book IX.

rival. The next night was set for our departure; and horror to tell, during my sleep Fanny rose from the bed she shared with me, left my side to follow a scoundrel, who was perhaps laughing at her weakness at the moment he abducted her as his prey and thought he was about to vanquish her honor and virtue.

We did not learn this news until the next day, and it was even very late before we were quite sure of it. The French ship had sailed; Fanny and Gelin were not to be seen. First they searched for them, they asked in all quarters whether anyone had seen them; and once all the searching had proved futile, they realized they must assume what was true. I was perhaps the last of all the inhabitants of the island who was still uninformed about it. I asked several times where my wife was. For as long as they did not know, they answered in a way that made me uneasy; and once they were fully assured of my misfortune, they took care to calm me by disguising it. However, since it was impossible to hide it from me past the day's end, Bridge decided to tell me about it. That dear brother, who loved me with the ultimate tenderness, and was himself so consternated by my misfortune that he needed consoling almost as much as I did, found himself extremely disconcerted when he had to open his mouth and find expressions to make himself understood. He knew from the confession I had made to him a hundred times that there was nothing in my heart above Fanny. He was thoroughly familiar with my sentiments from the tender and sincere expressions of them which I made to him every day. All my passions indeed came down to that one. Ever keeping close watch on the movements of my heart and controlling its inclinations, I left it free only to be tender and give itself over to love. That was the whole pleasure of my life, the charm of my pains, and compensation for the perpetual constraint under which I kept all my other desires. Reason, duty, the natural penchant of an infinitely sensitive heart, all combined to make love essential to my happiness. It had

become such a congenial part of me that, just as one must breathe in order to live, to be happy I had to love Fanny and be loved by her. Bridge knew that; he was consequently only too certain that he was about to deal me a fatal blow by telling me what I had lost.

I was alone reading in my room. He entered with a look that made me shudder, such that I knew right away a part of his restlessness. But what likelihood was there that I could guess the cause? I thought he had been attacked by some sudden illness; or if I glimpsed something more baleful in his eyes, it was on him that my fears and compassion first fell. He did not leave me long in this error. I started to rise: Stay, stay where you are, he said, making me sit back down in my chair. He sat down beside me. His voice was trembling, and his face so changed that, unable to understand what I was seeing, I remained speechless, keeping my eyes fixed on him. Oh poor Cleveland! he continued quickly, how must I prepare you for the blow I am going to deal you? Does your heart not bleed already? Oh my unhappy brother! Do you not at least half understand what I have not the strength to tell you about? These few words, spoken in the most passionate and tragic tone of voice, filled me with horror and stupor. Despite the multitude of horrendous thoughts that immediately came to mind, I thought I grasped at once the cruelest misfortune I had to dread. Fanny is dead! I cried mournfully; Fanny is dead! No, he interrupted: what I have to tell you is more terrible than Fanny's death! Oh, Bridge, go ahead, then, and [269] take my life at once! Alas, that is what I fear! he replied, moved to tears. Too unhappy Cleveland! I know I am going to pierce your heart, and I cannot hide your misfortune, nor even disguise it. But, my dear brother, he added, embracing me, you have strength of mind and constancy; receive the blow I am about to deal you as you have already received so many others. Remember that we are not made to be happy, either you or I; and that heaven having made us to be

wretched, our sorry destiny must be accomplished. I made some efforts to compose myself. Well, speak then, dear Bridge, spare me not; I am ready to hear everything: if Fanny is not dead, I think I am steady enough to bear any other loss.

After replying that he hoped so, but that I would soon cease to consider Fanny's death as the greatest ill that could befall me, he broke to me the dreadful news of her flight with Gelin, and all the circumstances he had been able to discover. They had gone out together during the night, alone except for Gelin's manservant and a chambermaid. They had taken with them scarcely any clothing; but they had taken a large sum of money with them. Gelin had doubtless had little difficulty persuading the French captain to take him on board with his prey; and as it appeared, he had not waited till the last minute to strike up a friendship with him. The ship had set sail before dawn, which clearly showed that they were acting in concert. Bridge, as his finished this story, poured maledictions on the traitorous Gelin; and whether to soothe my pain by expressing his own, or because the excellence of his character made him share my grief as much as he said, he made it clear to me in a hundred ways that he was inconsolable.

For my part, who believed I had reached the epitome of misfortune and grief, I nevertheless held up for a few minutes against a attack of the most terrible despair. I even did myself unbelievable violence to assume that air of constancy and resolve which I had vaunted to my brother. It is clear, I said in subdued voice, that I am the most unfortunate of all men, even beyond my fears and imagination. What I am hearing is without doubt sadder than the death of Fanny, and a thousand times more terrible and unbearable than my own. Your report, I added, forcing myself to look him straight in the eye, is apparently undeniable? I have not the least cause for hope left? He replied that I ought to conclude that the damage was beyond remedy because he had found it impossible to conceal it from me, and necessary to inform me

about. He added to this confirmation several deductions about what he thought we should now do, such as setting sail at once, and pursuing the French ship, which it might not be impossible to catch. I managed to listen to him and to respond properly to his proposals. But though my soul still had enough control of itself to constrain itself to this extreme degree, it did not have enough of my senses to check their consternation and disarray any longer. The cruel impulses rending my heart were quickly communicated to the brain; I felt my reason suddenly darkening; I extended my arms toward Bridge, as if the earth had given way under my feet, and I tried to hold onto something. Oh, my brother, I said, I am dying! And indeed I fell upon him, without the slightest flicker left of sensation or consciousness.³⁷³

He sent for help, and they tried in vain for a long while to bring me around. Mme Lallin and my sister-in-law contributed with all the ardor of their friendship. They finally succeeded, but my strength had been so strangely drained that it was more than an hour before I could summon enough to reply to their questions and make them aware that I had regained consciousness. My eyes were closed, and my head leaned limply against the back of my chair. My breathing was heavy and convulsive. I could hear everything said around me, but I felt neither the power nor the will to bestir my tongue to participate. Imagine a victim sprawled at the foot of the altar after receiving the sacrificial blow: I was in that very [270] state, with no other movement than that of violent palpitation, which was communicated from the heart to all parts of my body, and caused a visible trembling in all my members.

Meanwhile, after fully recovering consciousness thanks to such care and assistance, I embraced those who had so zealously

³⁷³ This state is the psychological result of Cleveland's control: the safety valve being, so to speak, closed by an act of will, the overload deranges his mind, leaving him long paralyzed (next paragraph).

attended to me. I said to them, Alas, your friendship has erred by recalling me to life! You knew what a burden I will have to bear. You have seen nature declare herself in my swoon and prolonged unconsciousness. Why did you revive her? Was it not a sign that she is too feeble to endure for long sufferings of which she could not withstand even the initial effect? They replied that they were sure my courage would be stronger than her. I took this opportunity to ask them to leave me alone: If you think so, I said, I ask you as a favor to leave me to myself for a while, so I can make my best efforts to summoning it. Although I had succeeded only imperfectly in concealing my despair from them, they knew my character so well that they relied on the word I gave them not resort to anything fateful. I was allowed to be alone, as I wished. My brother asked me whether I did not concur with the proposal he had made that we set forth promptly in pursuit of the French ship. I left everything up to his affection and prudence. He had the arrangements for our departure carried out so diligently that we were ready to set sail at noon the next day.

One easily imagines, no doubt, that it was not out of indifference that I abandoned myself thus to his guidance. On the contrary, all my thoughts and sentiments were in upheaval and tumult; and it was this very reason that led me to entrust my most important responsibilities to a brother whose wisdom and devotion to my interests were known to me. I must confess that I was then incapable of making the slightest decision by choice. With my mind and heart as troubled as they were, I could not even make out which movements were dominant in my soul. It was impossible, after two hours of solitude and meditation, for me to answer myself clearly when I asked myself whether I detested my wife or still worshipped her; whether I wished I could take her away from her perfidious lover, or whether it was not better for my honor, and even for my peace of mind, to abandon both of them to the justice of heaven and to their ill fate. I had not the

strength to concentrate for two minutes at a time on this examination, and even less to picture Fanny prepared to flee with Gelin, resolved to abandon willingly her husband and her children, leaving my bed to follow an adulterer, perhaps now accepting his caresses. My whole being turned to confusion at the very approach of that thought; and feeling myself incapable of bearing its presence for a single instant, I turned my attention away from it and was reduced to bemoaning my fate, almost not daring to think of that feeble, wretched creature.

This disposition, which I retrace here in a few words, was long my habitual state. It was as if the weight of my woes was locked up in my heart. My courage was attempting less to heal it through my efforts, or lessen it through my reflections, than to give me a continual illusion to keep it from my sight. My soul shrank from fear at that object, as my hand would have withdrawn from a hot iron which it might have touched inadvertently. Yet everything brought me back to it: my children, who were constantly before me once we were back at sea; my sister-in-law, who grieved continually over her friend's shame, and uttered Gelin's name a hundred times a day with loathing; even Mme Lallin, who increased my pains, and renewed them at every moment, by saying a hundred things which she thought could comfort me. As for Bridge, who was the only one to whom I did not fear to expose myself openly, he would doubtless have contributed more than anyone to my healing had I been capable of accepting any remedy. It was in the wisdom of that dear brother, in his gentleness, in his tender and sincere affection, that I would have found my soundest consolations. But far from reaping the fruits of his friendship which I had reason to look forward to some day, such was the [271] wretchedness of my destiny that he himself served as the cataclysm of my sad American adventures. The reader will see from his example whether it is here below that virtue can expect its reward; and from mine, that there can be

endless progression of misfortune, since when one thinks he is already infinitely miserable, he can become still more so.

Despite the swiftness of our departure from St. Helena, the winds were so contrary that we made little progress on our course. My brother was in despair over this delay, which destroyed all the hope he had had of catching up to the French ship. For my part, my sentiments being still so uncertain that I did not know what I ought to fear or desire, I spent less time reflecting or reasoning than lamenting. It took us more than three months to reach the latitude of Spain. I had taken on board my ship, in Havana, several distinguished Spaniards, who had requested that I put them ashore at La Coruña. Bridge saw to it that our pilot followed that course. We reached it safely; but as it was not our intention to make a stop there, we did not enter the port. My brother had the anchor dropped some distance away, and climbing into the largest of our longboats with the Spaniards and three Englishmen in our party, and was quickly ashore. His only motive was curiosity. He even tried hard to persuade me to come along with him, as a distraction to dissipate my sorrows somewhat; but there being nothing that could distract or amuse me, I refused to accede to his wish. Alas, I refused! My intention was to avoid a pleasure I was incapable of appreciating; and heaven, which wished to exhaust all its wrath upon me before my return to Europe, took this opportunity to consummate my ruin and make my misery complete.

And so it was that my poor brother entered the port of La Coruña. It was from his own mouth that I soon learned the circumstances I am about to relate. Once ashore, he took leave of the Spaniards, who were going to take the post coach for Madrid; and purely in the interest of enjoying a visit to the city, he spent most of the day doing that, intending to return to the ship before night-fall. He was returning to the port toward evening for immediate departure. As he was about to set foot in the boat, he feels some-

one take his arm, and turning his head at once, he recognizes Gelin. What a surprise! At first he scarcely believed his eyes, and in the initial confusion of his impulses, he stood so bewildered as to be speechless. Meanwhile, the traitor throws his arms about him, embraces him tightly, and expressing an infinite joy at seeing him again, confesses that having just spotted him in the port, he was unable to resist the desire to rush to him and assure him that he was still the tenderest and most sincere of all his friends. My friend? Bridge said to him, recovering from his astonishment only to vent indignation and anger: What, traitor, is it not you who has dishonored my brother, and violated the most sacred rights of honor and friendship? How dare you appear before me, and how do you think you can escape here the punishment for your crimes? Although Gelin should not have expected to be treated any better, he appeared extremely perplexed by this reply. You have to have known his character to understand how strange the whole episode I am relating is. At bottom, that knave had a hundred excellent qualities. He was clever, generous, affectionate at heart; and any other motive than an amorous passion would never have made him capable of villainy. But with his impulsiveness overpowering his reflections, he had stopped at nothing to satisfy himself with respect to love. However tempestuous his passion for my wife, and whatever crimes he had on his conscience, he could not see my brother, whom he passionately loved, without feeling a compelling desire to embrace him. Perhaps his thoughtlessness prevented him even from thinking that he ought to fear his anger, and could no longer expect to be treated by him as a friend. However that may be, he seemed to be more wounded than resentful after hearing his accusations; and melting even to tears, he begged him to grant him a moment's private conversation.

[272] Bridge was uncertain whether the thing he ought to do first was have him arrested. However, having such a good heart

that he could not see him so moved without being moved somewhat himself, and without feeling some flashes of his former friendship, he agreed to hear him. His tears, and his very boldness in showing himself, could be the effect of some repentance. Bridge flattered himself with this thought; and going off with him along the beach, to the least frequented part of the port, they began a conversation which one could judge by its conclusion, even if I were to dispense with relating the first part. Gelin confessed his guilt squarely. But imputing his crime to the violence of a limitless passion, he tried to elicit my brother's pity and persuade him that he did not deserve his hatred. Well, what feelings ought I to have for you then? said Bridge, when you betray my friendship and my confidence, take away my family's honor, and put a dagger in the breast of a brother who is as dear to me as myself? Perfidious Gelin! What had we done to you? Did I not always consider you my dearest friend? Did my poor brother not have that opinion of you; and did he not himself treat you, at my behest, with a civility and affection that deserved all your affection? Did he not offer you his house, a share in his estate and fortune? Could he have been kinder to you had you been as close a blood relative as I? And as recompense, you cover him with opprobrium! You brutally attack him by taking from him everything his heart loved. Say after that that you deserve my compassion, and that I must not hate you, I who am obliged to detest you more than Cleveland. For are not all your betrayals my responsibility? Did I not introduce you into his house? Was it not on my recommendation that he showed esteem and confidence toward you? When I now blame you for our common misfortunes, is he not entitled to blame me in particular for all of his? But what have you done with his wife? Bridge continued. Did you hasten to consummate our shame? Did your scurrilous desires take long to satisfy themselves? It was no doubt in concert with her that you have betrayed us, and together you have more than once offended

our misfortune and our pains?

Despite Gelin's obstinacy in his crime, I learned from my brother that these reproaches had deeply shaken him. He defended himself only by muttering a few indistinct words. Meanwhile, being pressed once more, and doubtless too aggressively, to explain himself about the place where he had left Fanny and the manner in which he was living with her, he replied proudly that she was safe, and that he would always have more consideration for her than I had had. These last words galled Bridge. How is that, traitor? he replied, so you think you are going to keep her? For as long, said the other, as she is satisfied with my services, and requires my assistance. Perhaps my brother was wrong not to ask him for a clarification of explain these words. Although I did not rightly understand them better than he did when he related them to me, I understood long afterwards that, with a little more explanation, they might have enabled me to see through this fatal mystery; and if that knowledge had changed none of my misfortunes, it could have given me a bit more strength to bear them. Perhaps Gelin, out of some remnant of honor and friendship, was going to reveal to him not only where my wife was sheltered, but also the reason for her flight, and the circumstances that could diminish its crime and ignominy. There is at least some reason to think that with more restraint Bridge would have avoided the pitfall that threatened him. But he was swept along by the ascendant of both his evil destiny and mine; and he, who was the gentlest and most patient of all men, gave in too soon to the just resentment he felt at being insulted by a traitor. As long, he shouted, as she requires your services? Far from expressing regret, as I had expected, you compound ingratitude with mockery, and betrayal with calumny? Enough: we shall use surer means to punish your betrayals. And while he was speaking these words most heatedly, he attempted to seize him by the collar and arrest him, so as to bring him afterward to my ship, where we

would have conferred over the manner in which we should deal with him.

[273] Gelin was powerful. He freed himself from my brother's hands and fled. However, being closely pursued, and seeing that he would have pass by the longboat again, where he could not fail to be stopped by our Englishmen, who even seemed already to have seen him and to be coming towards him, he spared nothing to save his freedom. He drew his sword, and suddenly turning on my brother, he charged him so ferociously that, even though he too would have had time to draw his own sword and defend himself, he could not elude a thrust that pierced him through.³⁷⁴ Poor Bridge fell motionless. Gelin, withdrawing his sword from his friend's breast, saw a river of blood flow from it. This sight profoundly shook him. It made him forget the risk to his own freedom and life; and the affection of friendship taking precedence over all other passions, he threw himself wildly on the ground to embrace a hundred times the man he had just massacred.

While he was clasping him with all his strength, begging his pardon and crying out pitifully, the three Englishmen, who had hurried over when they saw the combat from afar, reached the place where their master's blood was flowing. In the furor that seized them at this sight, they did not bother to ascertain whether it was hatred or friendship that kept Gelin attached to his body. They pierced him several times, and the poor fellow did not so much as utter a cry, or make the slightest movement in self-defense.³⁷⁵ My brother was still breathing, but he had completely

³⁷⁴ Curiously, nothing in the story up to this point has suggested that any of the characters was wearing a sword – which was normally a noble prerogative.

³⁷⁵ By comparing this event with what Cleveland says earlier of the death of Gelin, it might be concluded that Prévost's first intention was

lost consciousness. They debated what they should do next. Being uncertain what the Spanish might do to them if they were discovered in the vicinity of two apparently lifeless bodies, they concluded that the surest path for them was to return promptly to the ship with their master's corpse. They brought the boat over to the place where the combat had occurred, which was right on the seafront, and immediately embarked, reaching the ship at nightfall.

Such a ominous accident spread immediately throughout the ship. Bridge was loved by everyone. His death, which right away passed as certain, brought cries from the most insensitive. However little attention I had paid, since we left St. Helena, to what was taking place around me, I was struck to hear a noise I had never heard. I feared that in the absence of my brother, who served as my lieutenant, some disorder had broken out among the sailors, and I sent a manservant who was always in my room with me and my family to find out. The noise ceased, and my manservant did not return. He had been retained for the same reason that made my room the only place on the ship where our loss was not yet known, which is to say to spare my sister-in-law, her daughter,³⁷⁶ and me, whose grief, as they rightly supposed, would not fail to be extreme. Our servants were responsible for this consideration. It was indeed to render my sister-in-law and her daughter a significant service, to spare them the acute transports that a sudden and unexpected pain almost always provokes, and to take measures to prepare them for it. But for me, who was accustomed more than ever to sizing up an event at first glance, and stripping it of all its circumstances to perceive it as it is, the manner in

to make him disappear from the story at this point, punished for his crime.

³⁷⁶ First mention since book III of this child of Bridge and Angélique, which was supposed to be a son.

which the most awful misfortune was announced to me was of little importance. In my state, my brother's death was the most dreadful thing that could befall me. Perhaps I would not have judged it that way before it happened, but only because then it would not have occurred to me that it was possible, or at least that it could be so imminent; and because preoccupied as I was with my wife's infidelity, there was nothing more terrible before my eyes than the present subject of my pains.

I was awaiting the return of my manservant, or rather my unease and curiosity had ceased with the noise, when the same boy I had sent, upon returning to my room, whispered to me to step outside for a moment. One of the three Englishmen who had accompanied my brother to La Coruña was outside waiting for me. He told me in few words, not that his master was dead or dying, but that having been wounded on shore, he had brought him back safely by him and his comrades; and that before bringing me this [274] news, they had taken care to put him in a convenient place for bringing him around and dressing his wound. He added that it was for fear of alarming me too greatly that they had taken this precaution; and that they had even felt obliged further to alert me before my sister-in-law, so that I could myself determine how I wished this sad adventure to be communicated to her. I praised him for his wisdom and discretion, and asked to be taken immediately to the room where they had put my brother. I ordered that nothing be said to the ladies until my return. Although I was not free of concern on my way there, I was so far from believing my dear Bridge was in the state where I was going to find him that I had not even imagined that his wound could have come from any other cause than a fall or some other ordinary accident. However, the languorous air and the utter silence with which he extended his arms to me when he saw me appear suddenly gave me strange suspicions. I came near to embrace him. He was pale, listless, almost unable to utter a word: in short,

as he must be after losing almost all his blood from his wound, and after an unconsciousness of two hours, from which he had just revived. I asked him to tell me by what awful adventure he was reduced to this extremity. Although he could barely open his lips, his answer gave me a premonition of all the horror of the fate that awaited me, compounding my present pains with the thought of new anguish by which I was threatened. He told me about his encounter with Gelin, the conversation he had had with him, what little information he had got from him, but which he judged sufficient, he said, to confirm my wife's shame, and make me forget that miserable creature forever. He told me about his fight, and about Gelin's act, falling on him to embrace him after running him through with a sword. As for his death, he could tell me only what his own men had related to him after he regained consciousness. After saying this he fell silent for a few moments, as if to recover his breath, and he looked at me with eyes as downcast by grief as by the exhaustion of his strength. Such, my dear Cleveland, is the state of your fortune and mine. I have one advantage over you, which is that I am at the moment when one loses the sentiment of pleasures and pains, and when everything becomes alike and indifferent in death. Yet reflecting on what is now taking place in my heart, he added, it is hard for me to understand how I could become as insensitive as they say, once I have lost what little life I have left. That was what was going through my mind when you came into this room. I know the situation in which I leave you: upset, languishing, overwhelmed with grief, and deprived of the comfort you were certain always to find in a brother who had nothing dearer than you. I leave my wife and daughter in the same situation. Oh God, with such sad memories, will I be at peace even in thine own bosom?

Although the witness of my own eyes assured me as much as his words of the extreme danger his life was in, I answered only by encouraging him to trust his strong constitution and the

strength of the remedies; and despite the unbelievable agitations of my distress, I took control of all my emotions. The efforts I made to stifle even my sighs were so violent that I more than once felt the sort of tremor I imagine the soul must experience when it is about to separate from the body. However, a moment's reflection on the necessity, for the interests of my brother, my sister-in-law, my children, and even myself, for me to preserve all my freedom of mind, helped me find enough strength to suspend in this manner the effects of the most acute and invincible despair. One must not assume that by making a point of my stolidness, I have in view here that smoke people call glory, and the esteem of those who will learn of my woes and my constancy. Alas, if I have not said it enough, let me repeat it once more: I ask nothing more than their compassion.

The ship's surgeon, whom I ordered in private to tell me candidly his opinion of the wound, confirmed me in the opinion I had formed of it. It is so mortal, he said, that I cannot see how he was able to live for a minute after receiving it. [275] All the bowels are pierced, and you can now hope to keep him only as long as heaven wishes to perform a miracle. I went to the patient's side after this verdict. He anticipated what I intended to say to him, by entreating me urgently to let him see his wife and daughter. I found this request so appropriate, and was so fearful lest he be denied the consolation of embracing them one last time, that I left him at once to go prepare my sister-in-law for this visit. My men, seeing me go by, proposed that we set sail before the night was over, for fear of being exposed the next day, by the Spanish, to some inquiries that could cause us problems. I gave my permission. We at once weighed anchor. I did not pause for an instant to give this order, and took little longer to declare to my sister-in-law that she must gird herself with courage and resolution to see her husband in a state she was not expecting. This brief absence nevertheless cost me the satisfaction of receiving my

dear brother's last sighs. He expired before I could get back to his room, in other words four minutes after I had left it.

Whatever habit I had developed, as I have said, of considering all my misfortunes independently of their circumstances to consider only what was real about them, I confess that this deceit of fate was a terrible and quite unbearable one, which seemed to have taken me away from my brother for a moment only quickly to seize that moment to spirit him away from me. I had scarcely said four words to him since I was notified of his wound. A hundred tender sentiments, which billowed up confusedly from pain and friendship in my heart, were compressed within it, unable to escape. I had controlled myself with him, to go easy on him in the state I saw him in; and when I learned his death I was obliged to do myself even more violence to go easy on my sister-in-law and her daughter, and encourage their moderation by my example. I was leaving my room with them, when a manservant came to me. It is too late, sir, he said, with tears in his eyes; my master has just expired. My sister-in-law and her daughter heard him. Their cries, their efforts to run, the one to her husband, the other to her father, exceed all my expressions. I had an extreme difficulty holding them back, with the help of some of my servants, and getting them to return to my room, where I allowed them to lament freely. Mme Lallin and their maids were there to contain their transports. I asked them to assume that role, while I withdrew to an opposite corner, and gave free rein to that kind of suffering that is the soul's most deadly poison, because none of it is released outside, and the soul becomes inebriated, as it were, by devouring it all.

However, after spending some time in this sad occupation, I could not refuse to respond to some of my servants who burst into my room asking to speak with me. Drink, one of those to whom I had given the most authority, told me with apparent fright that they saw something horrible happening at sea, and I ought to

come out for a moment to see what I thought of it. I climbed up to the deck. It was still night, but the darkness only helped me detect more clearly what was before my eyes. It was a globe of flames that seemed to be rather far off, and which was rising toward the sky with enormous energy. After watching it a long while, unable to imagine what could be feeding it surrounded by water, I finally concluded that it must be some ship which had caught fire, and which was consequently in extreme peril. I immediately ordered we should turn sail in its direction to come to its rescue. I even had several cannon shots fired, and several torches lit, to alert the crew to our approach. This precaution was not without usefulness. A moment later we saw two longboats appear, each filled with fifteen or sixteen persons who were extending their arms toward us and asking pathetically to be taken on board and helped. I had no hesitation in allowing them to come aboard. They told me about their mishap. Fire had indeed broken out on their ship, and they had risked being consumed by the flames. They were [276] French, coming from Martinique, and returning to Nantes in Brittany, where almost all of them were born. I ordered that they be treated with kindness. They asked me where we were headed. I myself did not know. We were not yet very far from the coast of Spain. Despite the distraction of my grief, and the present image of my brother's death, I could not forget that my wife was doubtless at La Coruña, and that it was probably within my power to capture her. This thought threw me into a disarray that rent my heart still more, and it was a good while before I could even begin to deliberate. I was ashamed to feel that love still interested me in her to such a point. I sighed, inwardly calling on heaven as witness of my pains; but I could not resign myself to leaving a place where I had reason to believe she still was. Nevertheless, my brother's last words coming to mind in full force, the sense of my shame reawakened so that I at once came to a decision. Let us be off, I told my men sharply, let our sails take us from these wretch-

ed shores; let us go to Nantes, since charity requires me, once I have accepted these good Frenchmen, to take them to their home. That is our course for England; and it is moreover a matter of indifference to me where I go to live out my sad life. Although this resolution had not been the result of calm reasoning, I became more and more confirmed in it as we proceeded.

The wind, which continued to be against us, made our voyage extremely long and arduous. I spent it in such profound dejection that I did not even make use of my mind to meditate and reflect. Every capacity of my soul, if I dare put it thus, was absorbed by sentiment. Among the Frenchmen I had on board were some persons of merit, who being soon informed of my losses graciously volunteered to comfort me by their company and their conversation. I invited them to render this service to my sister-in-law, and they went about it with such intelligence and civility that their ministries were not entirely in vain. For my part, who was as incapable of desiring consolation as of receiving any, I kept myself closed up from morning to evening in the chamber adjoining my room, unwilling even to suffer the presence of anybody. I had no books. I had always had little esteem for those I had in America, and while they had served for a long time to keep me occupied, I counted them for almost nothing; so that, hoping soon to be in Europe, I had neglected to take any on board when we left Havana. I had thus, to sustain me against the poison that was ravaging my heart, only the invisible succor of heaven, and the strength of my temperament.

Finally we got to Nantes. The good service I had rendered the inhabitants of that city by taking their countrymen onto my ship obtained for me a ready welcome and much friendship there. I was immediately offered all sorts of pleasures and entertainment; but I lost no time declaring that expressions of joy annoyed me; and that given my present disposition, the greatest favor they could do me was to leave me alone and at liberty. I spent the first

few days having my dear brother properly buried. Alas, how I envied him, seeing him take possession of eternal peace in the haven of the tomb!

The misery to which most of the Frenchmen whom I had brought there were reduced by the loss of their ship inspired me with a desire which I carried out to the applause and admiration of all the people of Nantes. It was to make them a present of mine. I was rich, little attached to my riches, and extremely sensitive to compassion. It was to satisfy myself to grant them this favor. It was nevertheless regarded as an unprecedented effect of generosity. Nothing pressed me to go to England; I could always get there easily from France, where passage was to be found at any time in every port. I also liberally rewarded the sailors who had served me since Havana, and retained only six domestics, besides my sister-in-law's women and Mme Lallin.

[277] BOOK SIX

Upon reaching Europe I reflected, despite my dejection, that I had things to take care of and measures to take from which nothing could dispense me. I had to arrange for the education of my children and the daughter of my poor brother, who ought not to be less dear to me than my two sons. I had to find a retreat for my sister-in-law and Mme Lallin, and secure them an honest subsistence. I had enough liquid wealth to satisfy these obligations, and nothing could worry me from that standpoint, especially as far as the two ladies were concerned, with respect to whom it was easy for me to acquit myself by leaving to them the choice of their place of residence. But while I was in a position to have my two sons and little Miss Bridge properly raised, I did not easily come to a decision on the place or the method of their education. As for method, I would have preferred it were possible to structure it myself, and do for them what my mother had done for me. I even for a long time thought this over; but I did not think my mind was settled enough for an undertaking which would have required all my attention and care. I considered, moreover, that the deep sorrow that prevailed in my soul could not but color my teaching, and perhaps communicate something too gloomy and too unsocial to children of that age. In addition, I had learned from my own example that singular methods of education, however wise we judge them, do not always produce an advantageous effect. We are made for society: right reasoning would therefore have the first lessons we are given correspond to that natural destiny. It seems to me that you steer a child away from it if you keep him in solitude, and prevented him from acquiring from his earliest years the knowledge of which he must make perpetual use in the course of his life. The precepts of philosophy are, in truth, for all time and all ages; but since they can be regarded in their greatest usefulness only as assistance and

means of wisdom, in other words as rules which must guide and sustain us in the exercise of our duties, it is clear that their knowledge must be preceded, or at least always accompanied, by that of those very duties without which I do not see how it can produce reasonable and certain fruit. Now the most natural and consequently the most indispensable of all our duties are those of society; and it is not by mere speculations that we can learn about them: they constitute the science of the world properly so called, which is acquired only through practice. Thus I concluded that the most useful method I could choose for my children's education was to have them enter into ordinary course of things by placing them in a public school: not that this path does not also have its drawbacks, but I considered them minor in comparison with the large number and the substance of its advantages.³⁷⁷

Once I had chosen this method, the next question was to decide where. I was in France, free to remain there or continue on to England. But as I did not intend to separate myself from my children, I would have liked to know of a city in one kingdom [278] or the other which would be equally suited to them and to me. All they required was a school, which was not hard to find; my dilemma concerned only me. After experiencing so many losses and tribulations, in what part of the world did it suit me to seek an asylum? Were I to follow only the blind impulse of a permanently present suffering, there was no further asylum for me to desire but the grave. I was no longer able to make any distinction of esteem or inclination between one place to live and another. The excess of my sorrow caused me to view everything

³⁷⁷ In function of his conviction that man is a social animal beholden to society, Cleveland, who after the death of Arpez and Axminster is able to pay a tutor, renounces this aristocratic practice. "Public" schools were neither free nor open to all, but at least they were not restricted to nobility.

with indifference, not to say with aversion and distaste, like a sick man confined to his bed of suffering by a raging fever. The fire flowing in his veins bans sleep from his eyes, and allows him to enjoy not a minute's respite; he turns over a hundred times; and constantly shifts position to find one that can relieve his cruel pain. He extends his tired members to every corner of his bed, and hopes in vain for in the part he now tries the relief he did not find in the one he has left. Each new posture which he assumes in his discomfort always seems to him the most painful and unbearable. Thus, considering only the torments of my soul, I saw no place on earth that could attract my preference, and offer me the slightest hope of remedy or lessening for my pains.

But I had perhaps something more comforting to expect from my reason. Although the resources it offered me were still powerless, at least I knew from past experience that if my present woes were not absolutely incurable, it was from reason alone that I could hope for healing. Without yet feeling the efficacy of its assistance, I knew its strength, and was not unaware in what ways it would help me find peace, if I could prevail on myself sufficiently to follow its direction. The principal difficulty thus consisted in putting myself in a position to listen to it, and begin again little by little to accept its principles, which my pain had not destroyed, though it had more or less suspended their exercise. For that, I needed to choose a place to live where I might find, either in intercourse with those among whom I lived, or in the renewal of my former application to study, means and tools to appease the revolt of my senses, and restore to my reason its full authority. It is nevertheless true that my most recent misfortune was of such a nature that it required more powerful remedies than those which had preceded it. Whatever no longer exists may be forgotten: resentment of affronts, or of loss of possessions and a miserable condition, fades away with the passing of years which dims their memory. Even the loss of loved ones, however painful

the circumstances have been, is not a pain that can resist the power of time; regrets and desires, like expectations, are ultimately buried. But could a wife's infidelity, with the ugly circumstances I have related, grief as just as I imagined mine, the still extant cause of which appeared endlessly in memory, cease for a moment to afflict me? What time could my reason choose to put an end to my heart's continual laments, or make itself heard amongst such sorrow and confusion?

Nevertheless, the hope I founded on its assistance was the single motive that led me to prefer Saumur to all the places where I could have established my and my children's residence. That city was then at a high degree of splendor, and its reputation could not have been founded on two better features, since it was owing to learning and religion. It abounded in pious persons, able professors, and endless numbers of foreigners who came there from every Protestant land to draw wisdom and virtue as if from the spring itself.³⁷⁸ My children could not have been raised in a better school; and I thought that for myself there were few places where I could look forward to as much relief and solid consolation. Wherever on earth my faithless wife might be, it was not my intention, as I have already said, to look for her. It seemed to me,

³⁷⁸ This portrait evokes the prosperity of Saumur, a protestant stronghold even before the Edict of Nantes and until its revocation, which must have had a population in the neighborhood of 25,000. Duplessis-Mornay, the city's governor under Henri IV, founded an academy there in the reign of Louis XIII that soon acquired great renown. The foreigners who streamed into the city gave rise to a suspicion of sedition or at least served as pretext to the threats that were already weighing on it at the time Cleveland settles there in 1667 (cf. p. 293). See E. Merzeau, *L'Académie protestante de Saumur, 1604–1685* (Alençon: Veuve Felix Guy, 1908), and Joseph Prost, *La Philosophie à l'académie protestante de Saumur, 1606–1685* (Paris: Henry Paulin, 1907).

on the contrary, that despite all the love I still had for her, I would have refused to see her had chance offered me the opportunity. The sole resolution I could have adopted with respect to [279] her, had I known where she lived, would perhaps have been to have her arrested, without letting her know it was at my behest, and have her locked up in some secure place, where her confinement would have assured me of her proper conduct for the rest of her life. It was not a desire for vengeance that inspired this thought in me: let her live, I said, despite the bitter sentiment of my spurned affection and trust; let her even be as happy as her infamy makes her unworthy of being; let all the happiness she robbed me of be compounded with her own, to form a more perfect one for her; or if the justice of heaven requires she be punished, at least let it be only by her own repentance and remorse. But I owe too much to the memory of Viscount Axminster to allow his daughter to dishonor it, if I am in a position to prevent it. I will seize her person, and lock her up in a secure but adequate place, where I will procure her every comfort in my power. She is gentle, I added: Gelin's death will doubtless make her open her eyes to her crime; she will not suffer her isolation impatiently. Maybe she will even live happily there, and only I shall be miserable.

And so it was that the old custom I had created of moderating my passions still sustained me against those that had not wholly surpassed my reason. Never have hatred and vengeance had the power spread their poison in my heart. There only pain and love have been able to contest the reign of wisdom. But those two tyrants have wreaked only too much damage, and I still do not know when it will please heaven to deliver me wholly from their power.

As soon as I was set in my determination to go to Saumur, I communicated my intention to Mme Lallin and my sister-in-law, and invited them at the same time to think about choosing a

retreat for themselves. Their reply came more quickly than I had expected. It was so unanimous that I had no doubt it had been concerted. We will not leave you, they said almost at the same time; that is our determination, and we beg you not to object. You need to be comforted; no one will render you that service more willingly than we will. And as I had intimated to them that I was determined to put my children in a public school, they argued that they were still too frail to be entrusted to strange hands. Mme Lallin promised to be a mother to my two sons, while my sister-in-law would see to the education of her daughter. She urged me so adamantly that, having no reasonable objection to make, I readily assented; and so, continuing in this way to blind myself more than ever about the principal cause of my misfortune and that of my wife, I imprudently consented to what was going to help perpetuate it. We agreed to go without delay to Saumur, and let a house there where we would all live in common. Although my name was not well enough known to draw distinctions to me, we decided that I would assume a different one, wishing to avoid anything that might smack of celebrity and might impede the application I intended to bring to study. The two ladies also assumed completely unknown names. We left Nantes immediately after the conclusion of the peace of 1667 between France and England,³⁷⁹ and soon completed our journey, which was short and easy.

³⁷⁹ As France had declared war on England (though without pursuing it) in 1666, a treaty between the two countries was part of the Peace of Breda signed in July 1667 (see Rapin de Thoyras, IX, 257 ff.). It seems there is a gap here, for the events already recounted, including the voyage, seem only to fill the time through 1664 or 1665; but temporal indications are vague in book V, and one must suppose that the stay in Cuba extended for longer than the narrative provides direct evidence for, at least from 1662 to 1666.

The peace had brought so many outsiders to Saumur that it was not without difficulty that we found a suitable house. The first thing I did was to stock it with books, and whatever else could serve my new philosophical projects. I had chosen it in a spot remote from the city, for the purpose of being master of my peace, and to apportion as I saw fit the time of my solitude and of my communications outside. I left the management of my household and my children to my two women companions; and closed up from morning to night in my study, I began once more to nourish myself on readings and reflections: the cherished exercise that had constituted all the pleasure of my life's early years, and from which I flattered myself I would derive the same fruits. Although I had spent several years without books, the traces of my former studies still subsisted; so having no need to return to the basics, it was a simple matter for me to return to the paths of which I had [280] never completely lost sight. I began at the very point where I had left them: which is to say that, still relying of the soundness of the principles I had assimilated in my earliest youth, I sought in my books and reflections by what means I should apply them to the present state of my soul. This objective kept me occupied for several weeks. I put all my effort and attention into it; by that I mean what attention and effort I was capable of: for I must needs confess here, either to my shame or to that of philosophy itself, that my outward solitude and apparent assiduousness for study were unfaithful images of the inner disposition of my mind. At the time when my eyes were fixed on a book, my attention progressively roamed off to all the places where the scene of my losses and misfortunes had taken place. It dwelt on the bloody spectacle of my daughter and Mrs Riding, slaughtered before my eyes and devoured by tigers wearing human faces; on my horrible sufferings in the American wilderness; on the lamentable death of Lord Axminster; on the infidelity and flight of my wife; on the fatal effect of the valor and friendship of my dear

Bridge; in short, on all the cruel blows I had received from fortune, and, by an intimation of the future, on those I still had to apprehend. That terrible review acted scarcely less intensely on my heart than the very presence of those same objects had previously had; and when I returned to myself, for want of courage and strength to sustain such sad contemplation any longer, I usually found my eyes filled with tears, and my heart heavy with sighs violently seeking a way out. If I sometimes managed to rivet my attention more firmly on my reading, I was far from deriving from it the help I had expected: the conclusions I deduced from it were not felt by my soul; my meditations were dry and sterile; I perceived truths, but without discovering the relationship they might have to my situation, and without knowing in what manner I needed to use them to enable them to serve me as remedies. Is this, I sometimes said with astonishment after many futile reflections, is this that spring from which I once so profitably drew peace and wisdom? Are these those same principles on which my strength and tranquillity were once so well founded? Is it on their side, or on mine, that change has occurred? I can understand how they could have failed me on occasion, when the insurmountable turmoil of my imagination hid them from view; how then could I have felt their influence? They could be neither perceived nor heard by a soul which neither saw nor heard anything but its pain. But what now prevents them from regaining their former control over it? I am trying here to recall them; I seek them, I invoke them, I open to them a sick and afflicted heart, which languishes while awaiting their aid. Why are they so slow to make it felt there? Why do they not restore to it the calm it desires, that wonderful calm it used to enjoy, and thought it owed to them?³⁸⁰

³⁸⁰ Cleveland's meditations in this book begin with an empirical observation, but one which has important theoretical consequences: the philosophy inherited from his mother, and which he thought sufficient

The inefficacy of my readings and reflections ultimately made me think that there must necessarily be some fundamental error in the essence of my philosophy; and unable to persuade myself that it was entirely to blame for the futility of my efforts, I preferred to believe that it was I who was straying from the straight path in my principles or my method. Here was my manner of reasoning: Nature, I said, or, to speak without figures, divine wisdom could not have allowed men to be exposed to woes without remedy. By giving them being, it more or less promises to provide them with the means of preserving themselves: otherwise, in the infinite multitude of accidents than can constantly befall them, they would be the most unfortunate of all beings, for finding themselves subject to continual sufferings, and endowed at the same time with reason, because it would then seem that it had been granted them only in order to feel them. Thus there are few diseases for which our natural lights or felicitous experiments do not lead us to discover some remedy. If some are incurable, they must not, any more than monsters, be imputed to nature; it suffices that, in accordance with ordinary [281] laws, we find scarcely any infirmities that cannot be cured with the help of medicine. Has not this provision of Providence been extended even to animals? We observe every day that they know the usage of simples, and of many beneficial things which they take for relief when they are ill. Thus has God's wisdom made provision for the preservation of what subsists, not excepting animals devoid of reason.

for a wise and tranquil life, is of no help in the face of the wrenching disappearance of Fanny. ("For why was it failing me when it had become the most necessary?"). The failure of a system, itself apparently impervious to attack, was thus unforeseeable; but since it fails in its most crucial test, Cleveland feels obligated to start over at the beginning.

Now if this disposition appears just and necessary with respect to the body, that part of our being that is incontrovertibly the basest, and which derives its dignity only from its union with our soul, shall we believe, without offending the wisdom and justice of our creator, that he has so neglected the nobler of our two substances as to deny it the relief he grants to the more contemptible one? Suffering, and all the other violent passions, are properly speaking the diseases of our souls.³⁸¹ There is not more damage in the blood mass caused by a foul fever, than disorder sown by these tyrants in reason. Could there possibly be no resource against their cruel attacks, and the most painful of all ills be an incurable malady? It is not so, I added, or I have but a false idea of the creator's justice. Therefore if I succeed so poorly in delivering myself from my suffering, I am certain it is my fault, or that of the remedy I employ: mine, if it is true that I have been mistaken in my method, or in one of my principles; the remedy's, if the healing of the soul perhaps surpasses the power of philosophy, and if heaven attaches so great an effect to some other cause.

But, I countered, what cause have I for mistrusting philosophy? Is it not philosophy which has been regarded at all times as the rule of mores, and the moderator of passions? Have not the greatest men resorted to philosophy when they had something in their hearts to heal or reform? Were they attributing to it a power it does not have, and might they have been as mistaken as I in expecting help from it which it could not give? Thereupon I resolved to retrace my own steps, to begin a new examination of my principles and all the things I used to know. The fidelity of my memory made this an easy undertaking. For several days I concentrated on recalling what I had learned from my mother's teachings, or from my readings, and the most reasonable things I

³⁸¹ The notion that the passions are diseases of the soul is a Stoic one (see Cicéron, *Tusculanes*, III, IV, 8).

had myself thought until then with respect to with happiness and wisdom.

I took everything back to the beginnings.³⁸² I placed myself in the first moment where one can suppose that a man begins to make a free use of his reason. There being nothing more present than himself, his first attention must land on his own being. He examines its nature; he recognizes that it is compound. Two different substances, and of unequal dignity in their essence, are found to be combined and as if fused to produce actions which are common to both. Each of the two, considered in itself, is utterly incapable of the actions of the other; and conjointly they produce a single operation. Our body moves, it walks, it acts: this is what its nature enables it to do; yet it would not stir without the collaboration of the soul, which is incapable of movement. Our soul receives sensations of pain and pleasure: that also is its nature; however, it could not receive them without the collaboration and mediation of the body, which is incapable of feeling.

So we have two parts of the same being, which are necessary to each other. The body will execute nothing without the help of the soul; and without the intermediary of the body, the soul will remain in continual apathy. Does this mutual dependency establish their equality? No. I see on the contrary that the body contributes to the actions which are common to it and the soul only in a base and gross manner, in other words by simple movements; if it possesses some other property peculiar to itself, it is not nobler: it is solely that of receiving a limited number of figures and combinations, so slim an advantage that it does not even deserve the name of perfection. On the other hand, I per-

³⁸² It seems at first that he is going to review his mother's book, which he had memorized. But in fact he recalls it only to subject it to doubt: a process which, like many of the axioms he draws from it, resembles that of Descartes in the *Discourse on Method*.

ceive in the soul all the marks of a genuine grandeur. What name shall I give to this admirable faculty [282] which it has of knowing, judging, and feeling? It is itself that it studies, which it observes, which doubles back on its substance, and which discerns its nature and properties. Despite its dependency with respect to the body, it detaches sufficiently from it to consider it as a being entirely different from itself, inferior to itself, and which has value only insofar as it is has the honor of being joined to itself to form one whole with it. The soul penetrates, gauges, evaluates it, and finds it so unworthy that it can scarcely distinguish between not being at all, and being like it merely a vile, insensible portion of matter.

From there, if it focuses on considering all that it is capable of perceiving, it soon discovers that, if it is dependent on a material body by laws it does not yet understand, it is on the other hand dependent on something more elevated and worthy of itself. It has only to make use of its power of reflection to arrive at notions of order and of perfections and virtues; and sensing that what it perceives is not itself, it concludes that what so perfectly appears to it must necessarily have a real existence, since there is no way that nothingness could be perceived. A discovery of this importance at first renders the soul uneasy and uncertain: it wonders what it must think of a being that manifests itself only in part, but in so luminous and sublime a way. Its attention grows. It recognizes with no difficulty that it must be more perfect than itself, since that is what enlightens itself. But has it no other connection to it than that of a simple and passing perception? How, in any event, did it happen that the perception was not had earlier? At that point it tries to return to the past to examine the progress of its knowledge, and it recognizes with astonishment that it has only begun to know.

This is where its wonderment redoubles with its surprise. It does not require many attempts to discover at the same time that

its own existence is of very recent date. But from whom has it been received? The soul sees manifestly that it was not received from itself. Who will help it to know the author and source of its life?

The soul goes outside itself for this intriguing search. It focuses its attention on everything around it. How many objects to be seen, and how avidly it wishes to comprehend everything! Nevertheless it soon finds that its examination will extend less far than it thought. In all it perceives, there is nothing capable of clarifying its doubts. This immense composite called the world holds it only for a moment, for with a little attention directed to the least of its parts, it learns to gauge all the others. It sees nothing but matter, which is to say a gross, insensitive substance, of which all the differences consist only in the variety of its configurations and motions, and of precisely the same nature as that of its body which it has already recognized and scorned. It is too aware of its own nobility to attribute its origin to so base a cause.

It is true that among those parts of matter which seem capable only of passive, blind motion, it sees some that seem to move with more choice and freedom. It notes that their actions are too varied, and at the same time too coherent and too regular in their variety, not to be based on a principle of knowledge and reason. Moreover, their shape is exactly like that of its own body; they seem to have the same inclinations, and be sensible to the same needs. It concludes from this that they do not act alone; that they are accompanied by something like the soul itself; finally that they are, like its own body, the envelope of some being more noble than themselves. What a happy discovery! Might it not be to one of these noble, immaterial beings that it owes its own existence? They think, they feel, they reflect as it does; might they not have been able to communicate to it what they possess?

But if they are like itself, as the soul cannot doubt, why would they enjoy a power which it well knows it does not itself

possess? Even supposing that they indeed have it, from whom could they have received it? For it is only too clear that they could not have [283] given it to themselves. No more than the soul itself would they long remain in humiliating dependency on a body, if they could dispose of themselves and change anything about their condition. The soul must then abandon the examination of what is around it as a consideration useless to its search. It finds itself placed in the world; but it understands too well that it does not come from that world, and cannot relate its own origin to what is inferior to itself, or to what being at most its equal, could not more than itself have begun to exist without a cause.³⁸³

However, it derives a precious fruit from this excursion it has made outside. Surveying the matter of which this vast universe is composed, it seems to the soul that it has noted something which has naturally, as it were, attracted its wonderment. It is not the basis of matter itself, which had seemed equally contemptible in all its forms; but what must it think of this astonishing order that shines in the arrangement of its parts? What precision of relations! What regularity of proportions! What exact connection of causes and subordinate effects! Moreover, what grandeur in the general disposition of the design! What noble simplicity in the execution! What constant uniformity in its duration! Who made matter capable of thus forming the most magnificent and marvelous of all sights? Whatever desire the author of such fine handiwork may have to remain hidden, it is impossible not to recognize him by his stamp. His power must be infinite, to have drawn from such a lowly substance as matter the material of so many admirable productions. His wisdom must be no more bounded than his power, to have represented himself in so striking a manner in the order and distribution of his handi-

³⁸³ The argument is similar to the second proof of the existence of God in Descartes's third *Meditation*.

work. Finally, his goodness must be equal to his power and wisdom, to have taken pleasure in showering his creatures with such splendor and ornaments.

Here the philosopher-soul, which I suppose ever attentive, feels its full capacity for comparison and reflection awaken. It recalls with an avid joy the primary ideas that gave rise to its search, and begins to see distinctly that they are being realized. That unknown Being, which it perceived only through the vague notions of order and perfections, unveils itself and makes itself known to the soul in an almost sensorial way. Its uncertainties cannot longer continue. It holds what it has sought, which is the author of nature, and its own author; it is the source of life and principle of all light; it is the rule of order, of wisdom, of goodness, of justice, of all perfections and all virtues; or rather, it is order itself; its essence is wisdom, justice and goodness. It is all virtue, all perfection and all excellence.

A philosopher who has once been able to rise to this felicitous point of knowledge justly flatters himself that he has attained the highest degree of light that his soul can reach. Everything else is but its development and exercise. He will henceforth go from science to science, in other words from certainty to certainty. What a vast course has opened before him!³⁸⁴ He is now assured of the truth of all his ideas, and the infallibility of his judgments, if he makes them with attentive reflection. Since it is the handiwork of a Being whose wisdom and goodness are infinite, he has no fear that the qualities he has received from his hand could be deceitful gifts. The same fund of intelligence that has made him

³⁸⁴ The exuberance and confidence reflected in this affirmations recall those of Descartes, who did not despair of knowing everything, in part VI of his *Discourse on Method*. But with Descartes it is the method that will produce these results; here, everything apparently derives from a perception.

capable of these great ideas of order, justice, goodness, and wisdom, could not abandon him in less difficult examinations: he has found the principles; he can now apply himself tranquilly and agreeably to the study of the consequences.

First, he examines again the nature of his soul, to discern with greater clarity the traits of the creator. If he has recognized such divine ones in matter, what must he expect from an infinitely more lofty substance? Indeed, he finds two, which seem to him of a greatness with which nothing can be compared. One is that very faculty of thinking by which it is capable of knowing and infinitely multiplying its knowledge, a faculty so noble that he who possesses it is hard-pressed to explain it. He sees better what it is and what it is not. [284] It is nothing similar to matter; all the possible variety of the figures and movements of matter will produce nothing similar to a thought. Nor is it the harmony, the order, the precision and the perfection that results from a certain arrangement of the parts of matter: for if this harmony and this perfection have their own, real existence, it is clear that it depends upon the that of matter; and the soul senses too well that its own depends upon nothing material. The very repugnance and chagrin it feels at seeing itself subjected to its body in some of its operations is a natural proof that it owes nothing to it, and is joined with it only by laws that constrain it. Moreover, if the soul were but the order, the harmony, and the perfection of the body, how could it be greater than the extension of that body?³⁸⁵ Its greatness ought to correspond exactly to the parts of the body to which it belonged. But the soul feels itself greater than all the mass of matter put together; it rises infinitely above it, and sees its boundaries: therefore it is nothing that belongs to matter. But what then is it? Perhaps it is reserved for a more perfect knowledge of itself

³⁸⁵ For Descartes, extension is the property of matter, as thought is that of the soul.

in another time or another state; but it is sure at least that it thinks: an inestimable advantage, which suffices to establish its dignity and the infinite greatness of its author.

This first feature of a divine worker is doubtless the most prominent; but it is not the only one that is worthy of him. The philosopher has only to consult himself for a moment: what does he perceive? I misspeak, for here he ceases to perceive; but he feels deep in his being an hidden inclination, an active penchant, which impels him he knows not to what. How can he define this sentiment? It is the exigence of some unknown need, which wants to be fulfilled. If it is not a pain, it is at least the privation of a necessary pleasure. He is missing some good without which he cannot be tranquil; he is constantly drawn to it, solicited to seek it by an involuntary impulse and as if carried along by an irresistible ascendant.

He therefore recognizes, not only that he is capable of desires, but that he has invincible ones, and more extended than his knowledge. This observation at first only alarms him. It is not all at once that he comprehends the wise disposition of the creator. At first he considers his desires as a natural admission and a humiliating sign of the imperfection of his being, and he is all the more grieved that he does not even understand what their object and end can be. Disturbing clouds, which can only trouble the serenity of his soul! The annoying detour, which will slow the progress of his knowledge, and prevent him from making a tranquil use of its power of thinking! If he dares not complain of his author, and doubt his goodness or his wisdom, at least he laments his condition, he loses something of the opinion he had of his own greatness, and in order to salvage its remnants, he chooses to repress and extinguish his desires if he can, to devote himself by exercising a nobler faculty to the contemplation of truth. But his error cannot last long. He has no sooner taken a few steps towards truth before he recognizes it as the very object of his desires. In

this he cannot be mistaken; his heart catches fire as he approaches it. His disquiet seems about to settle, and his needs about to be filled. Truth seems to be made for him, or at least he for it. It is true that the more he advances towards its discovery, the more his ardor increases to discover it perfectly. But there is no longer anything inconvenient or disturbing about this redoubling of desires; it is the situation of a man who enjoys great happiness and cannot have enough of it: he is happy, and wishes to be happier still. Thus the philosopher finds a new source of contentment and wonderment in what was causing his pain. What he regarded as an imperfection in his being now seems a new feature in the infinite perfections of his author. Not only does he see that he has been made by him, but he also can tell it was for him only that he was made. His desires turn out, so to speak, to match his ideas. Through his ideas, he knows him as the author of his being; and he is drawn to him as to his highest good and the author of his felicity.

[285] A man who lives in slavery to his senses, and has perhaps never paid attention to the two great faculties of his soul, is incapable of conceiving of the joy which these sublime and attractive discoveries sow in the soul of a philosopher. No, of that he is not capable: for if he were, he would envy him, and quickly come to scorn all other joys. So it is from this point that we must begin to measure the happy course of a reasonable and genuinely philosophical life. Whoever has known his author, and has known himself well, thereafter takes, if he wishes, only steps that are certain towards happiness and wisdom. The path is open, he is constantly within sight of the goal. Guided by his reason at the same time he is impelled by his desires, he is from this point on no more liable to go astray out of ignorance than of halting out of torpor. If his quality as a man obliges him to some relationship with the creatures of his kind, he knows just how far that duty goes. He finds its rule in the very source of order and justice,

which he ceaselessly contemplates. The duties of blood, such as affection and attachment for his relatives; those of humanity, such as goodness, kindness, forgiveness of offenses, compassion for suffering; those of reason, like equanimity, constancy, scorn for the superfluous, and the moderate usage of the necessary, are so many consequences that flow naturally from his principles, and which constitute his moral system. He copies his author, so to speak, and grows by imitating the supreme perfections through which his author communicates himself to him. Moreover, human intercourse is not an obstacle to wisdom for him who loves and sincerely seeks it. On the contrary, he finds some use in knowing them. Have I not said that they all bear the mark of the creator? The philosopher sees it, even though they disfigure it. That sight helps nurture his desires. He turns even the effects of their dissolute passions to his advantage: he puts their arts and sciences, which for the most part are inventions of self-interest or vanity, to his own purposes as so many helps to extend his knowledge. They are the excellent effects of a bad cause, which he rectifies more and more by the use he knows how to make of them, and which he thereby restores to their true destination. Finally, he derives considerable advantage from the very spectacle of men's weaknesses and foolish agitations. The comparison he makes of them with the vigor and continual tranquillity of his soul serves to attach him more and more to his principles. It makes his happiness more dear, and the fruit of his research more precious. He devotes himself unreservedly to wisdom for this double reason for loving it: it makes him happy, and he sees outside it nothing but foolish and wretched men.

What more does he then need to deserve to be called wise? Let us combine all our natural knowledge, and all our powers of reason, to reach a clearer idea of him. Someone will perhaps give it further extension, but I doubt anyone can form a more sublime one. It is in this happy state that the philosopher must be equally

insensitive both to ills that cannot make him lose it, and to goods that may come to him from another cause: the former should be too feeble to cause him the emotions of suffering; and the latter must appear to him too contemptible to afford him a true sentiment of pleasure. In truth, the natural order subjects his soul to the body's organs: it cannot avoid seeing when the eyes open, hearing when the nerves of the ear are struck, and failing to sense whenever some exceptional motion occurs in that portion of matter to which it is seemingly attached. But is that sentiment capable of diminishing its grandeur and lessening its freedom? The soul rejects it when it is recognized as unworthy of itself. At least it receives it without noticing and without consenting to it. The more the soul's dependency on the body seems awkward and humiliating, the more it takes comfort in the certainty that a state so violent cannot long endure. How can it doubt this? It knows too well the invariable laws of the original and eternal order. The order of nature is but an exception to them. It is even assured that the one must have some invisible connection to the other, although that connection still appears obscure; and it looks forward to [286] a time of manifestation and understanding when, with the cessation of the obscurities and exceptions, and it will see everything revert to its end, and peacefully enter into the general order. Thus the soul senses it was made for another state: it is already almost there in the ardor of its desires and the certainty of its hopes; and constantly indifferent to everything that cannot prevent it from attaining it one day, it scorns pleasure, it counts suffering as naught, it views impassively the agitation of everything around it: it would view in the same way the upheaval of nature and the total destruction of the universe.

Such are the foundations on which I had believed my strength and constancy established. Such had been the first lessons of my childhood. My studies and the examples and teachings of my mother, had continually turned on those principles. They

had become second nature to me, by dint of hearing them and attempting to keep them ever present in my memory. Indeed their impression had been felt by my heart, so long as they had found in it no obstacle that could prevent their being easily felt. They had been my rule for life while it was tranquil. I had believed myself a philosopher; and perhaps I really was one, before I reached a certain level of misery and misfortune. But it was this very thought that confounded me, and made philosophy suspect to me. For why was it failing me when it had become the most necessary? What notion should I adopt for a remedy the usefulness of which disappeared at the moment of illness? However, I could not deny that the principles which I had just re-examined were still equally sound. There is nothing certain in the world, I said, nothing one can depend upon, if what seems to me unshakably established by such clear reasoning is nothing but a sophism and an unfortunate illusion. If it is to true wisdom that I have constantly clung, why does it not allow me to reap the fruits it promises me? And if it is error I have mistaken for truth, how pitiable am I, to be at the same time tormented by suffering and abandoned by reason!

It occurred to me that there was perhaps also some injustice in my laments, since it seemed to me that it was not enough to know the excellence of a remedy, but that in order to make a wise application of it one must at the same time understand the nature of the illness. Thereupon I examined carefully what properly constitutes suffering. I soon recognized that being a pure sentiment of the soul, and incapable of being represented by ideas, it could not be better defined than by the very word *suffering* which serves to express it; for it is to define it in a most unclear and imperfect way to call it simply an aversion of the soul, as some philosophers do. In general, since we do not know the nature itself of the soul, it is not reasonable to pretend we can explain what a sentiment is. Now if it is impossible to know in what

suffering consists, it is clear that it is not directly to that it that the remedy should be applied. That method would be an affront to reason. From this I could easily conclude that I must necessarily go back to its cause.

I did not enter into the discussion of all the different paths by which the sentiment of suffering can be communicated to the soul; all my reflections related to my needs alone. It was clear that my came only from the loss or infidelity of what was dearest to me, and from the terrible circumstances which had always accompanied my misfortunes. Such was the cause of my soul's sickness. I then asked myself whether it was likely that philosophy could cut off this source of my woes. Supposing it were capable of this miracle, I conceived that there were only three ways it could do so. One was to remove from the spectacle of my misfortunes, which was constantly present to me, that dominant force with which it acted on me, which, not being limited to filling me with the most acute sense of suffering, sometimes forced me to utter involuntary cries, of which I became aware only by the astonishment of those who lived with me and who seemed frightened to hear them. What likelihood was there that philosophy could produce such a marvelous effect? Could heaven itself have done so, without changing the nature of [287] things? It is contradictory that you can lose with no regret someone you love; but if you love with the tenderest and most perfect passion, if you lose the one you love so perfectly by the cruellest of all deaths, or the blackest betrayal, what power will check the transports and tears which those fearsome blows must necessarily provoke? The action of a consuming fire is not more prompt or more infallible. I well understood that with philosophy's aid I could perhaps have succeeded in protecting myself from the excesses of love or friendship; but having once opened my heart to those two passions, I saw no less clearly that all their effects appeared necessary, and that those misfortunes that drew their

force from those two causes surpassed the power of philosophy.

The second path it could take for the relief of my suffering was to impart to me at least as much strength to bear my misfortunes as they had to make themselves felt. What a lovely and flattering thought! Alas, since it is pleasing to reason, why does it not act on the heart as well? Experience, more powerful than all reasoning, constantly taught me that it is not from its ideas that the soul can expect help against its sentiments. It did not even seem to me possible to imagine a new situation of my soul in which I could suppose it might be more tranquil. Augmented strength and insight could only be an increase in my pains, because it would have meant a new level of capacity for feeling them.

The third means, finally, was to turn my attention imperceptibly away from the principal causes of my suffering, and make me, so to speak, decoy my soul, by habituating it gradually to occupy itself with some other object. This path to healing at first seemed to me trivial and frivolous, and I rejected it even more quickly than I had the first two. However, I finally came back to it as the soundest one, once I had reflected that it was the only one possible. It is certain, I would say to myself, that the nature of my misfortunes is such that my soul will necessarily feel them as long as it dwells on them. It is not less certain that it can draw neither from itself nor from philosophy sufficient strength to fend off this sentiment; and that as long as it retains it, it must consequently abandon any expectation of peace and happiness. But who prevents me from hoping that its attention could take another object, which will little by little cause it pass on to some other sentiment? This great change could doubtless not be the work of a moment; but it is clear that it can happen by degrees. Yes, I added, that is a service which philosophy is able to render to me, and which I wish to expect of it. Maybe I was on the verge of condemning it unjustly. What I was asking of it is indeed impos-

sible, because it is contrary to nature: but what it offers me here is infinitely reasonable. It can take control of my mind, by filling it little by little with the sublime truths it will propose for its contemplation: the heart, which has only blind movements, inevitably turns towards the mind's objects. Mine will therefore become more tranquil when I am occupied by a peaceful meditation; and I shall thus find peace, happiness, and wisdom once more.

This thought reconciled me for a few moments with philosophy. I flattered myself it would produce its effect on me, at least in the future; and I went from this hope to the thought that it was in that sense, no doubt, that one must explain the praise philosophy given to it in all times, and the power attributed to it to heal sicknesses of the soul. But heaven, which had surer remedies in store for me, ones better suited to my ailments,³⁸⁶ allowed this thought to be followed by another reflection which plunged me back into my uncertainties, and made me revert to as poor an opinion of it as I had ever had. It will cure me then, I said, by diverting my attention away from my pains. But if that is all the power it has over our souls, I retorted, what is its particular advantage? I see in this effect no attribute specific to it, and which I cannot equally expect from the most everyday sciences. Indeed, the most vain and derisory occupation will produce it much more [288] certainly; for the performance of a comedy, for example, a harmonious concert of musical instruments, a hunt or fine meal, in short, anything that can make a strong impression on my senses, will be even more capable of attracting my mind's attention than dry, thankless speculations that have not the power to make themselves felt by my heart. That then, I went on with a sort of anger, is what the celebrated virtue of philosophy comes

³⁸⁶ It appears uncertain whether his ultimate deliverance refers to the events at the end of book VI or the more definitive solution that will not come until book XV.

down to, and that sovereign mastery over the passions to which it pretends! Impotent phantom, which I have too long revered, and in which I had foolishly placed all my confidence! No, no, I added, I shall no longer be the plaything of a false and useless wisdom. If I have rightly persuaded myself that heaven's goodness owes a remedy to maladies of the soul, I must also have been thinking that it could not be a vague and ineffective remedy that can accomplish nothing on its own. I require one that surely heals; and since philosophy is not capable of that, I do not trust it, and henceforth reject its succor.³⁸⁷

I would have gained a good deal by thus recognizing the impotence of all philosophical speculations, had I at the same time discovered some sound resource on which I could have founded firmer expectations. But by rejecting an unreliable support, my pains and uncertainty were not lessened. On the contrary, they could only increase, since having nothing to put in the place of the phantom I had destroyed, I remained in a sense more disarmed and less protected. As a result, I spent the days following in a dejection it is impossible for me to describe. Everything weighed down on me, and seemed to conspire to augment my despair. Books, which until then I had loved and adored, became loathsome and unbearable to me. I regarded them as so many imposters that had seduced me with false promises, and cruelly abandoned me in need. To avoid their presence, I no longer set foot in my study, imagining when I was in the middle of my library as if I were surrounded by a host of traitorous friends. I would not have suffered patiently that the names of Plato and

³⁸⁷ This insistence on a remedy again underscores the fact that the objection to philosophy is less theoretical than practical: there must be a consolation for man, the goodness of God demands it; but philosophy is no more likely to provide it than is distraction. Sentiment is the basic given of which any reason must take account.

Seneca be spoken in my presence, and I more than once thought of burning their works. My sole occupation, for seven or eight days, was to walk alone in a rather large garden adjoining my house, burying myself in an abyss of grim and dark meditations. Mme Lallin and my sister-in-law manifested great worry for my health, and great attention for my every action; but I let them know that their concerns annoyed me, and absolutely forbade them to interrupt my profound contemplation and solitude.

There are few persons who, in narrating an adventure such as I am about to tell, would not feel obliged for love of their reputation to camouflage some circumstances. But I, who have always professed to believe that the good or evil of a deed must derive from the principle which makes one act, and therefore that only the motive can bring dishonor, am not ashamed to let myself be seen by the public as I am, and to make the candid admission of my faults. It suffices that I can bear this honorable testimony for myself, that my heart has always by inclination followed virtue and wisdom; and though it has sometimes been mistaken in its object, it has never lacked rectitude in its intentions.³⁸⁸

Far from my finding in the solitude of my garden the relief I was seeking there, my suffering grew so much through my grim meditations that within a few days I fell into the most dangerous and terrible of all maladies. I cannot communicate it better than to call it *an invincible abhorrence for life*. It is a sort of frantic delirium, which is more common among the English than among the other peoples of Europe.³⁸⁹ But although this reason causes it

³⁸⁸ Cleveland's justification and morality, like those of Rousseau in the *Confessions*, are intentional, and therefore essentialist; innocence is a given, however difficult it may be to justify particular acts.

³⁸⁹ Cleveland apparently a victim of *spleen*, although Prévost does not use that term specifically. Nor does Montesquieu when he notes in *L'Esprit des lois* that "the English kill themselves without any

to be considered an illness specific to our nation, it is none the less surprising that I felt such critical attacks of it, I who had spent several years in distant climes, and was moreover now in France, where the air is so pure that our Englishmen go take it as a remedy against that black disposition of the soul.³⁹⁰ It would be difficult for me to explain by what [289] stages I arrived at the ultimate excess of folly and blindness: but what will seem unbelievable to my readers, for a few days I considered my mad transports as the effect of the most lofty wisdom, and do not believe that in my whole life I have performed more methodical reasoning than that which led me to the edge of the most awesome abyss.³⁹¹

It was the third day after I had abandoned my books that I absorbed the first attack of the illness of which I speak. It was so acute and insistent that had I had a dagger in hand, at that first

imaginable reason for doing so, they kill themselves in the very bosom of happiness,” and imputes this malady to “a filtration flaw in the nervous fluid” (XIV, 12; *Œuvres complètes*, Pléiade, 11, 485–486). The temptation to suicide here enters the history of the novel and is to be long-lived. Nevertheless, Cleveland’s case is special, as Jean Sgard has noted: “His hero’s delirium has less to do with his English complexion than with a deliberate abandonment to his illness. He had only too many reasons to yield to melancholy, but he plunges into despair with a sort of rapture” (*Prévost romancier*, p. 180; see also, with respect to the term *cœur brisé*, or “broken heart,” *ibid.*, p. 181 and the note to *Le Pour et Contre*, t. I, p. 334).

³⁹⁰ Melancholy is physiological, a matter of humours (cf. p. 289, n. 17); it is thus explained by English air, and a change of air is literally the proper remedy. But the fact that Cleveland suffers from melancholy in France is a sign of the exceptional case he represents.

³⁹¹ This affirmation foreshadows the long justification of suicide by St. Preux in *Julie* (part III, letter XXI). Note that Manon Lescaut also is tempted by the idea of suicide: see *Manon Lescaut*, p. 432.

moment I would have pierced my own heart without reflection. However, as a great revolution in my spirits had suddenly occurred, it was not long before I perceived that some extraordinary alteration had come over me. This thought having made me more attentive, I at once discerned what was taking place in my soul, although it was still no more than a blind and involuntary impression. But what was strange is that I was not at all alarmed by this discovery. The disorder of my humours had already corrupted my reason.³⁹² In an instant I befriended the image of death; if I was surprised at anything, it was having waited so long to choose death, which seemed to me as welcome as it was necessary. I was seeking the remedy for maladies of the soul, I said; and here it is. It is simple, it is short, it is what my woes require. What blindness was keeping me from discovering it sooner? Yes, I added, it has all the features that can prove its excellence. It is easy, it is available to all unfortunates, its effect is certain, and moreover I see nothing bitter or repulsive about it. How many paths can in an instant lead me to death? It remains only for me to choose the surest and most expeditious.

My memory did not fail to furnish me many examples which further served to confirm my resolution. I reflected that the greatest men had had recourse to this means of delivering themselves from their pains. Will one say it was a failure of wisdom and virtue in Cato, a failure of spirit in Demosthenes, or of cour-

³⁹² Melancholy is supposed to be produced by a preponderance of black bile; the expression “the black melancholy which had possessed me” (book IV) is not merely a metaphor. Or rather, as Jean Sgard puts it: “It is not clear whether he yields to the power of feeling, or to that of vapors: psychology draws its metaphors from medicine; but at the same time, Prévost shows that one can willingly make oneself ill; and that is when endemic melancholy really takes the form of a pathological crisis, which can lead to death or madness” (*Prévost romancier*, p.180).

age in Mithridate and Mark Anthony? It is certain then, I concluded, that courage, spirit, virtue and wisdom are in no way offended by a voluntary death. Now that which accords so well with the finest qualities of soul which are gifts from heaven, could not be an evil; it must even be a virtue. Indeed, does the light of reason not incline us to desire death? The most peaceful and happy soul must groan under its enslavement to the body. It is a violent state of weight and obscurity, which it must desire to see end. The bonds that hold it captive are hard, humiliating, unjust, and contrary to order. How ardently it must desire to break them!³⁹³

Although the resolution I made to die became only more firm by the minute, and I found nothing in my reason to oppose it, I had strength enough to put off for several days the execution of my intention. The motive behind this delay was quite different from what one might think he can imagine. I had nothing more in mind than to justify this strange action in my own eyes by renewed reflection, and to convince myself more and more that heaven itself would not disapprove. It took an infinite effort to force myself to this deferral. Every moment I added to my life by putting off that of death seemed to me a sort of theft I was making from my peace and happiness. I spent four full days re-examining the reasons I had for dying. It did not seem to me that they had lost any of their force. The only objection that gave me pause for a while was this: my soul is enclosed in a body by the will of the sovereign author of my being. He does not keep it in this captivity without a reason. I cannot understand the secret of his impenetrable views, but I am sure that he could not be acting on rules other

³⁹³ The idea that the soul is a captive in the body comes from Plato's *Phaedon* (62 bc); but in that same dialogue, Socrates condemns suicide as desertion from one's duty. Cleveland is aware of the objection and will attempt some time later to answer it in stoic fashion.

than those of an infinite justice and wisdom. I must therefore respect them, even though I do not know them. He has fixed the length of my days; I violate his orders if I precipitate their ending. Yes, I replied after a long meditation, doubtless I violate them, if I am as persuaded that they subsist [290] as I am that he gave them: but if he himself has changed them, or at least if he interprets them differently for me than for ordinary men, do I owe less respect to his latest intentions than to the first ones? By allowing me to fall into the extremity of misfortune and suffering, he has exempted me from the number of those he condemns to live long. It is not possible that, being infinitely good in essence, he should take pleasure in seeing me drag out a miserable life. The very excess of my pains is clear and intelligible evidence that he allows me to die.³⁹⁴

After this conclusion, the only thing left was for me to choose the kind and the time of my death. These two items caused me little problem. I decided to run my sword through my heart, and not to defer the time of execution beyond the afternoon of that same day. In the garden were several deep alleys, distant from the main house: I chose the one that seemed to me best suited to my design. A bower at its darkest extremity was to be the theatre of my bloody act. I examined carefully whether I could be sure no one would see me there. Moreover, I took these few measures with supreme tranquillity. I felt neither turmoil nor urgency. It was as if my great sufferings were suspended by an anticipated effect of my resolution. For what little time they were still to last, it was not worth making themselves felt. When you are ready to emerge from a harsh enslavement, you hardly stop to contemplate the woes you have suffered, or the fetters you are

³⁹⁴ This really extraordinary reasoning underscores the degree to which Cleveland is an exceptional creature on earth, even exempted from universal rules.

about to relinquish; you are aware only of the pleasures of freedom.

I therefore returned calmly toward the house; and as dinner time was approaching, I thought that in order to avoid any affection, I must once more sit down to table with my family. The two ladies noticed that I seemed more tranquil than I had been for a long time. They said something to that effect; my reply confirmed them in their opinion. I left them as usual, and having gone up to my room only to get my sword, I went directly to the garden. My heart continued to be deeply at peace. I was not even uneasy about the afterlife. I felt guilty of nothing as far as heaven was concerned; and however obscure my fate might be after the life I was about to lose, I derived from general notions of the justice and goodness of my creator a kind of assurance that there was nothing for me to fear in the new condition into which I was about to enter. I came to the bower. I seated myself tranquilly in its remotest corner. I drew my sword from its scabbard, and intently studied its point for a moment. I cannot deny that I felt a slight tremor that spread to all my limbs; but far from being anything that could be called fear, it only brought forth in me a consoling thought about the happiness of my soul, which was on the verge of being free. I even smiled at the weakness of my body, and looking at it with disdain: Your reign is over, I said; return to the dust from which you came. If for a moment yet I require your help, it is to make you yourself bring about our everlasting separation. Author of my being, I added, closing my eyes, and making a sort of effort to reflect upon myself, take pity on thy creature, and guide my first steps in the darkness I am about to enter. Thou art everywhere; my soul cannot fail to come into thy bosom.

My arm was raised. It is certain that there remained but an instant of interval between my life and my death. Heaven, by what miracle did you arrest the point of my sword, which already

should have been in the center of my heart! A sound I heard a few paces from the bower made me lower my hand suddenly, and hide my sword behind me, for fear of its being seen. It was my children. Mme Lallin and my sister-in-law, who had thought me more tranquil than usual while dining, had sent them after me to contribute by their caresses and prattle to maintaining me in this new air of tranquility. They approached, and embracing me one after the other with signs of a tender affection, they took my hands, asking several childish and innocent questions commensurate with their age. At first I let them go on, while I remained in [291] a sort of inaction owing to my uncertainty and surprise. However, as they continued to caress and question me, my attention turned to them. I looked at them for a while, with the tender indulgence that nature so readily awakens in the heart of a father. The elder one was not above eight, and both of them possessed the most affecting graces of childhood. They are going to lose me, I said to myself; they will remain after me without protection and support, abandoned by a denatured mother, and deprived of their miserable father. What will become of them? My sister-in-law and Mme Lallin have so far shown them much affection; but who can promise they will keep it when I am no longer? Will a simple movement of friendship work in them what nature could not in their mother? Oh God! Why did you let me bring them into the world! Is not a man as unhappy as I a sort of monster in the society of other men? How can your wisdom and goodness suffer his seed to be perpetuated?

These reflections, combining with the black poison that circulated in my veins and infected my soul, led me gradually to one of the most horrendous thoughts that ever entered the mind of man; and what will doubtless appear incredible is that in progressing from one reason to the next, I drew no conclusion but that appeared to me manifestly of a piece with the most just and well-established principles. I have resolved to die, said I, so as to

end a life that is too miserable to be borne with patience. I am convinced not only that heaven not only approves my resolution, but itself inspires it. Now if I am allowed to put myself to death in order to put an end to incurable woes, would I not also be allowed to do it in order to prevent unavoidable woes? Suppose for a moment that I am only in this latter case, in other words threatened with a multitude of extreme and certain calamities: it is evident that whatever I may do today to deliver myself from a present ill, I could then do to escape a future one. This is precisely the situation of my children. They were not born to be happier than I. Their destiny is too clear. Had they only to fear the contagion of my misfortunes, they must expect a sad and miserable life. What better favor can I then do them than to close to them the entrance to a succession of sufferings by ending their days with a quick death? They will pass with me into a happier condition. They will die with their father. If I consider death a good, why should I refuse to share it with my dear children?

As I finished this grim reasoning, I took them both into my arms, still seated as I was; and leaning my head between their faces, I pressed them on each side against mine. I was acting without reflection, solely by natural instinct. I remained some time in this position, my mind not committed to anything certain, without daring to make the slightest movement to execute the bloody resolution I had just taken. My heart, which I felt so free and calm a moment earlier, had suddenly become heavy; and as a result of this change which I did not yet perceive, an occasional tear dropped from my eyes. However, when I focused on my own uncertainty, I regarded it as a weakness. I rose abruptly. It is decided, I cried out; I shall die, and the two of them shall die with me. I am their father; their happiness is in my hands: vain pity shall not prevent me from offering them the only good they can receive from me. I uttered these words with an agitation that prevent me from realize that they possessed enough reason to

understand their meaning; so that, seeing my naked sword in my hand, which I had kept hidden until then, they rushed terrified from the bower. Here the reader will be hard pressed to decide which is the more remarkable, my crazed, stubborn cruelty, or the respect and submission of my poor children. Irritated at seeing them flee, I called them back threateningly; and those timid, innocent victims, who were accustomed to respecting my every order, did not hesitate to retrace [292] their steps. They came weeping up to the bower; and stopping only at the entrance, they both knelt down as if to ask for their lives, which as they saw too clearly that I intended to take from them. I could not resist this sight. I admit that it stirred me to the bottom of my heart. There is neither wisdom nor folly that can harden one against the sentiments of nature. My sword of itself fell from my hands; and far from continuing to think of slaughtering my dear children, I felt that I would have a hundred times laid down my life to defend theirs. I abandoned myself entirely to this latter impulse. Come, my little unfortunates, I said to them, opening my arms tenderly; come embrace your unhappy father: come, have no fear! The disorder of my senses had made my voice crack, and I attempted in vain to hold back my tears. They came to me. I pressed them for a long time in my arms, with a transport of paternal affection. They took confidence. The younger, whom I called Tom,³⁹⁵ and whom I had always somewhat favored, asked me with the innocence of his age why I had wished to kill him. This question, uttered in a meek and tender voice, overwhelmed me. I replied

³⁹⁵ In the original this name is written *Thoms*, doubtless reflecting an abbreviation of *Thomas*. This is the son who, according to the preface, is destined to die, though that will not come to pass in the novel; the author of the apocryphal t. V has him duly executed, mistakenly calling him Will. This is the only time in the novel that one of the quasi-twins is named.

only by embracing him again; and for a few minutes, I could do nothing but weep and sigh.

However, as my imagination had filled itself for several days with the purpose and preparations of my death, whatever the change I had just experienced, those horrible thoughts could hardly vanish all at once and leave me completely. I was aware of the danger they represented if they should return with all their force; and wishing to assure at least the safety of my children, I ordered them to withdraw and return to the house. They left me without daring to utter another word.

Remaining alone, I recalled everything that had just happened to me. I was at first uncertain whether I should thank heaven for it as a favor, or reproach myself for it as a weakness. Supposing that it was sound reasoning that had produced my resolution to die, it could not be doubted that the opposite sentiment which had prevented its execution, as much with respect to my children as to myself, was a failure of courage and an act of real cowardice. But if the old principle of my mother's philosophy, that all natural impulses are good and in keeping with order; if, I say, that principle, of dear and sacred memory, which had so long served as my rule of conduct, was as just as it had always appeared to me, what opinion must I have of my most recent reasoning, when it was directly contrary to the most necessary and most intense of all the impulses of nature? There was no middle ground between these two alternatives: I must necessarily recognize either that my reason had deceived me by having me make a decision that offended nature, or that nature's inspirations were unjust and contrary to order if they were contrary to reason which is itself the example and rule of order. Whichever way I tipped the scale, it could only be after long examination; and this discussion was too important and too delicate to be the work of a moment. I therefore began again to meditate again on this obscure

problem, the resolution of which would entail my life or my death. But although the purpose of this delay was not to undertake anything in a haste condemned by wisdom, I could easily sense that some change had occurred in my fundamental dispositions. Whether because the dark melancholy by which I had been possessed was beginning to dissipate of its own accord, or because paternal affection had caused a great revolution in my humors, I perceived that if I still had some desire to die, it was no longer so impetuous and difficult to check.

Even if it had been much more urgent, I could not have satisfied it that same day. My children, following my orders, had returned to the house. Their fright was so clearly painted on their faces that the two ladies had noticed the signs of it. They had questioned them; and although they had not been able to extract from them the truth of the adventure, which they had the discretion to hide, I know not for what reason, they had discovered enough to be worried. Their affection for me made them rush to the garden. I heard [293] them coming up the alley, and not doubting at first that they were coming on the report of my children who could have informed them of all they had seen, I thought with some confusion about how I was to act when they reached me. I had time to hide my sword. They entered the bower. I waited for them to say something. The signs of their concern were ingratiating; but I had reason to be reassured that they did not know the disorder I had found myself in, and I affected to converse with them in such a way as to take away any suspicion of it. It has never been known to any but my children, who still remember it, and to my lord the Earl of Clarendon, to whom I later confided it in mutual communications of a tender friendship³⁹⁶; so that it is one of my most intimate secrets I now reveal

³⁹⁶ Cleveland will make Clarendon's acquaintance in book VI; but it is especially much later, in book XV, that he will confide in him.

to the public.³⁹⁷

Meanwhile, Mme Lallin and my sister-in-law, who never failed to notice a single act of mine, and who were too clever to be fooled by appearances, did not entirely trust the tranquil countenance I had managed to assume in their presence. Though unable to get to the bottom of the mystery, they rightly judged that something extraordinary had taken place; and hoping to prevent everything their friendship made them fear, together they took some very astute measures to procure for me despite myself distractions which until then they had proposed to me in vain. Saumur was full of persons of merit and men of letters. They contacted the most famous ones, and having communicated to them the need I had to be comforted, they recruited them to pay me frequent visits. But as they feared I would not be disposed to accept this remedy, should I become aware that it was being offered me at their instigation, they contrived with the persons who were to visit me how they would go about making me find the motive of their visits agreeable.

The first who did me this honor was one of the principal ministers of the French protestant churches.³⁹⁸ My manservant,

³⁹⁷ Here ends the fourth volume of the Paris edition, seemingly because of the censorship to which it was subjected. The possible reasons will be only too clear in the theological discussions to be found in the remainder of books VI and VII. Until now only the reasoning of an amateur philosopher has been at issue, or a naive sort of theology; henceforth, priests will speak, which is another matter since they oversee the moral welfare of the kingdom.

³⁹⁸ This pastor of the Saumur academy will be identified in book VI as “M. C.”, which might suggest the Cartesian Jean Robert Chouet; or else, and more probably, Jean Claude (1619–1687), for Prévost seems, in the Catholic-Protestant dialogue in question, to draw on Bossuet’s *Conférence avec M. Claude* (1682) as well as on Fontenelle’s *Relation de l’île de Borneo* (1686).

who had received instructions from the two ladies, came to announce him to me as a person of the highest distinction, who eagerly asked to see me, on matters of the utmost importance which he had to communicate to me. At first I protested this incursion. Nevertheless, I did not think I could refuse to see him. He was ushered in. His bearing was grave. He explained to me the purpose that brought him. Having learned, he said, of my stay in Saumur for some time, and my claims to the favor of the king of England, he had felt he could speak to me in confidence to interest me in support of the Reformed Religion, which more than ever had need of powerful protectors. It is threatened in France, he continued, with such a terrible blow that this is already the eve of its destruction.³⁹⁹ The hatred of the clergy against us is breaking out in a hundred ways. We are informed by good sources that what is being contemplated is nothing less than the abolition of all our privileges⁴⁰⁰; and knowing the character of our persecutors, we are every day expectant of the most extreme acts of violence. We might perhaps do best to anticipate the storm by voluntary flight; but it is uncertain whether they would even leave us the freedom to flee. However, since we will be forced sooner or later to attempt just that, we feel we should be thinking early about making arrangements for an asylum for us. We would have to have one, especially for this academy, which among us is re-

³⁹⁹ The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) is not far off, but the pressure was on well in advance of it; despite the date here (1667 or early 1668), the Protestants whom Cleveland will encounter in this section of the novel are more and more threatened. Louis XIV's policy deliberately restricted their religious and civil liberties, and used tax reductions and other rewards to encourage defections to Catholicism.

⁴⁰⁰ Allusion to various guarantees of the Edict of Nantes, in particular which cities (like Saumur and Quevilly further on) were havens for Protestant worship.

garded as the center of the sciences and the sanctuary of religion.

Then the minister explained to me more particularly his views with respect to England. He described to me a plan which was too well worked-out to have been hatched on the spot; and since he could not have foreseen twenty-four hours earlier the opportunity he would have to speak with me, is it beyond doubt that his project had preceded the invitation of the two ladies and the hope of comforting me. His principal desire was to obtain from the king of England a place of shelter in his kingdom for the Saumur Academy.⁴⁰¹ Winchester or Southampton would have been the two cities he would most willingly have chosen. We would make religion and the sciences flourish there, he told me. The arrival of so many Frenchmen who would not fail to leave their homeland to follow us would be a gain in strength and wealth for England, not to mention the blessing of heaven, which would surely be showered on an institution brought into existence solely by the zeal of piety and religion.

[294] After listening to him long enough to take in his whole plan, I replied sincerely that, although I had never professed to be specifically attached to the Protestant religion, and had until that point limited myself to that of nature, which teaches

⁴⁰¹ It is perfectly plausible for the pastor to be worrying already in 1667 about the future of his academy and thinking of finding protestant allies: the bishops of France had already demanded in 1665 the suppression of the protestant academies which would be granted (but only in principle) the following year. In 1669 these academies had been ordered to forbid the employment of foreign professors, who were expelled by a writ of 1671. Jean-Baptiste Voisin had made a private report to the king about the Saumur academy in March 1670, but in fact it was not completely suppressed until 1685. See E. Merzeau, *L'Académie protestante de Saumur*, p. 24, and Joseph Prost, *La Philosophie à l'Académie protestante de Saumur*, pp. 133–134; cf. *supra* p. 278, n. 2.

us to honor God as sole master, and to love the creatures because they are his handiwork, those two principles sufficed to incline me to render service willingly to everyone; that I even found additional motivation in the violence of those who persecuted his religion, being persuaded that men should be free, at least in the homage of their heart; and that there was injustice in the constraining consciences tyrannically. I added that it was this last reason that had led me to choose Saumur as my residence in France, because, without being specifically familiar with all the principles of the Protestant religion, I had learned that one was to force no one, and to consider the sincerest form of worship as the best.⁴⁰² But the service you ask of me, I added, exceeds my power, and I do not see what I can offer you beyond my own good will.

My response gave the minister two advantages over me, for the intention he had of contributing to my consolation with his visits and thoughts. He immediately put them to use with such cleverness and civility that I was not the least bit on guard. With respect to your power, he replied, I know, sir, what we can expect of it. Do not think you are entirely unknown here. We know to what point you were in the king's favor in Rouen and Bayonne; the services which you attempted to render him in America will not diminish it. If you would allow me to doubt something, it would rather be your good will; for after your admission that you are unfamiliar with the principles of our religion, I do not see what interest or motivation you could have for wanting to favor it. Thereupon he invited me allow him to visit me from time to time, to explain to me in what the Protestant religion consisted, and to interest me thus in its defense by other motives than general

⁴⁰² An important detail: Cleveland had already explained at the beginning of book VI (p. 278) his reasons for settling in Saumur, but he had not included the fact of the city's being Protestant.

reasons of natural equity and aversion to violence.

This proposal placed me in a quandary. The reader has already seen what my dispositions were with respect to religion. My mother having taken pains to instill no prejudices in me during my childhood, I had had, as I have said, all the freedom necessary to make a disinterested choice once I had the full use of my reason. But it was this very freedom to choose that had then prevented me from embracing any. I had been struck by the diversity of sentiments that spawns the various sects; and considering them dispassionately, as one can who is free from prejudices, I had discovered nothing, at first sight, that had seemed to me sufficiently conclusive to make me prefer one to all the others. Here is my manner of reasoning. Let us suppose, I had said, that the number of all sects were reduced to fifty. There is not one of them that does not damn all the others, and does not believe itself to be in sole possession of the true faith. But the forty-nine others that claim the same advantage damn that one too. If I question them, separately or all together, I always find forty-nine votes opposed to each one, and a single one in its favor; and even this vote is its own. Therefore I always have forty-nine reasons to one for rejecting all of them and believing them false without exception. Nevertheless I am willing to suppose further that there are only forty-nine sects in error, which is absolutely necessary if it is true that there is one that is not: am I further advanced after this supposition? Where will I gain enough insight to discern which one possesses that precious treasure of truth? And if I succeed through my efforts in imagining I see some light in this labyrinth, how can I rely more on my own judgment, which will be my sole guide, than on forty-nine testimonies that will always agree to pretend I have made a mistake? It does not help to reply that in a matter as important as religion we must hold as suspect anything we do not see by ourselves, and consequently that a degree of one's own inner certainty is equivalent to forty-nine [295] exter-

nal testimonies: this response, I say, is powerless; for the importance of religion is the same with respect to all men, in all sects, and I cannot reasonably think that I am the only one who has his soul's interests and the love of truth at heart.⁴⁰³

This reasoning had kept me on guard against all individual sects, whether in France, during the time I stayed there after I left England, or in America, in the relationship I had with the Spanish, and even with my compatriots. I was not at all ready to believe on the faith of someone else. Nor had I ever had either the time or the necessary facilities for instructing myself through my own study; so I had always put off making a decision about it until I should find opportunities and means which had not yet been available. I should add that I had derived enough enlightenment from philosophy to fashion a religion for myself with which my reason was satisfied. That I have already pointed out in the story of my American government, and in the plan of religious ceremonies which I then traced for my savages. Finally, an infinite respect for the power and majesty of the sovereign Being, a great deal of gratitude for his favors and submission to his will, much righteousness, charity, and temperance, had constituted the whole essence of my religion up to the time of my arrival in Saumur.

The minister's proposition thus placed me at once in something of a quandary. I remained silent for a moment before answering him. Why should I try, I said to myself, to acquire new knowledge that will make me neither wiser, nor more tranquil? I

⁴⁰³ The critic of the periodical *Bibliothèque belge* (October 1731, pp. 436–443) devoted several pages to refuting this argument, which he considers particularly dangerous, and reproaches Prévost for placing it in a monologue whereas in a dialogue the pastor could have responded to it. Note that this passage occurs only a few pages after the end of the Paris edition.

sincerely worship my creator. What is wanting in the love and respect I have for him, and why embroil myself in questions that do not concern me? Nevertheless, a brief reminder to myself of the powerlessness of philosophy, about which I had so bitterly protested two days earlier, made me wish to hear the minister reason about his religion. He seemed to me an intelligent man. I imagined I might receive from him some new thought that could serve as an opening to attain peace through some path unknown to me. I spoke up again, just as he was beginning to be surprised by my silence, and informed politely that I would always be disposed to hear him with pleasure.

I do not know whether it was zeal for my conversion, or simple compassion for my sorrow, that inspired all the fervor with which he seemed ready to instruct me. He returned that very afternoon. His lessons were methodical. In the first, he gave me a general outline of his religion so I could perceive at a glance, he said, the interconnection of all its parts. I do not intend here to repeat all his words, which would doubtless be less novel to my readers than they were then to me; but I confess that I found some satisfaction in listening to him, and that his system seemed to me reasonable enough to make me hope he could subsequently support it with solid evidence. It gave him great joy to leave me in this disposition, and assured me that it would increase with each visit.

I did not conceal that evening from my sister-in-law and Mme Lallin that I was pleased with my conversation with the minister, and that his ideas on religion were to my liking. My sister-in-law, who could hardly fail to be a fervent Protestant, having been raised in the St. Helena colony, expressed extreme satisfaction at what she was hearing. Mme Lallin was attached to the Roman religion; her reaction was more chilly. But though she had enough control over herself not to express other than by her silence what was going on in her mind, she was busy, while I was

talking with my sister, with ways of halting the effect of the minister's zeal. She had been unaware until then that I had yet make a decision about religion; and when she had agreed with my sister-in-law to attract the minister's visits to me, she had nothing in mind except to provide a remedy for my sorrow. But perceiving that she had contributed to furnishing me the occasion for gaining esteem for the Protestant religion, and fearing I might want to embrace it, [296] she reproached herself for it, and resolved to set right what she regarded as most criminal imprudence. She barely waited until the next morning to seek antidotes to the poison she imagined I had swallowed. She went to the Oratorian Fathers; she asked to speak to the superior, whose name was Father Le Bane⁴⁰⁴; and having described to him her consternation and her qualms, asked him to advise her on her conduct. The Father, after having her explain everything concerning me, felt his own zeal kindled. He did not at all think he should yet despair of leading me to the Roman religion, once he learned that I had spoken only twice with the minister. He also gave hope to Mme Lallin, and promised her he would very soon pay me a visit, under some pretext he would manage to arrange.

⁴⁰⁴ Father Le Bane is the only Oratorian in the novel. Since he is also a Jansenist (p. 310), his role is the pendant of the Jesuit's, and shows that Prévost was not simply favoring one camp over the other. Indeed there was at Saumur not only the Protestant academy, but also (and to rival it) beginning in 1619 the Collège de Notre Dame des Ardillers, no less celebrated, founded by the Oratorian Fathers. Its professors, notably Jean Morin and Thomassin, often gave public lectures which Protestants sometimes attended; their philosophical positions may have influenced those of the academy. See Joseph Prost, *La Philosophie à l'Académie protestante de Saumur*, Paris, 1907, p. 70 and ff.) and Jean Roussel, "À propos de Prévost: le passage en Anjou du philosophe anglais," in *Les Angevins de la littérature*, Presses de l'Université d'Angers, 1979, pp. 147–161.

Indeed his visit was announced to me a few hours before dinner time. I received him properly. He seemed refined and polite, very pleasant in appearance, and his manner of presenting himself charmed me. The pretext he used to justify his visit was rather indifferent and forced; but having no suspicion of his purpose, I believed his first compliment to be sincere, and told him I was very pleased to owe his acquaintance to the reasons he offered. Never did anyone ingratiate himself more craftily and deftly than Father Le Bane. In no time he turned our conversation to the subject of religion; and without evincing the slightest affectation, nor asking with which party I was affiliated, he gave me a short summary of the principal tenets of the Catholic religion, using more or less the same method as the minister. I was so surprised at the resemblance I found between the two doctrines that, still being ill informed of the fundamentals, I thought the Oratorian Father was a Protestant. I told him that the day before I had heard from M. C. most of the principles he had just set forth, and that being quite satisfied at these two presentations that seemed to agree, all I desired now was the evidence. Oh God! cried Father Le Bane, you do me the dishonor, sir, of believing I could ever agree with M. C.! I would then abandon the truth to join the party of error? May just heaven protect me from that! It has given me too much illumination and rectitude for that. This sharp exclamation made a strange impression on me. Imagine, Father Le Bane went on, without allowing me time to reply, that a legitimate king, and justly respected, makes laws intended to provide for the happiness of his realm; that they are received and practiced for a long time by his high courts and by his peoples, to the profit and to the genuine happiness of the entire nation. Nevertheless there arise, after a certain time, a few obscure persons, from the throngs of the people, who, urged on by private resentments, or by the love of novelty, undertake to destroy the peace of the state by overturning its just and salutary laws. But wishing to

show restraint, since they require artifice to attract companions in wrath and malice, they do not undertake to overturn them all at once; they attack those that seem the most annoying, in the hope of making partisans of all those who are enemies of the yoke and of dependency. They do in fact succeed in making many such. Finally, the better to edulcorate their insolence and revolt, they affect an extreme attachment to certain of these laws, and to respecting them as much as the subjects who remain the most faithful to them. Do you believe, the Father continued after looking at me for a moment, one could think that this whole people is in agreement? No, I said, to be sure. Which of the two divided parties, he again replied, would you call the right party, the party of the good and faithful subjects? I do not find that difficult, I replied: it is the one that holds to all the laws you suppose just and useful. And how do you believe, he added, one should deal with the other one? But, I replied, it seems to me that justice and the public interest would require that they be punished as rebels and agitators. Then make the application yourself, Father Le Bane then said. The right, the ancient party is the Roman Church. All the separate sects came after it: the Protestants are the last of them. They are so many rebel parties, which have variously attacked our most sacred laws, and have preserved a few of them only in order to destroy all the rest more surely. We want no [297] agreement with them, even in what they still have in common with us. We cut them off from our body, and hand them over to divine justice, which will punish them even more severely on the day marked for retribution.

I was too ill instructed in these matters to make very troublesome objections to the Father. I was content to tell him that if his comparison was accurate, then the adversaries of the Roman Church ought to be accused of folly as much as of malice and fury. Which is why, he answered, there is neither soundness nor good sense to be found in their writings.

In truth, his words, and the confident way he had uttered them, made some impression me. However, since I was not disposed to believe without evidence, I told him it took something less general to persuade me. He withdrew very satisfied with my dispositions, assuring me that he would not discuss them twice with me without thoroughly persuading me.

I remained alone for some time after his departure, more occupied than I can express by all I had just heard. The consequences which Father Le Bane had made me draw from his comparison seemed to me undeniable. If his suppositions are true, I said, it is clear that the Roman Church is the only one that teaches the truth. He assures me that all the other sects issued from her bosom, and have nothing good about them but was taken from her. It was the love of novelty or some individual resentment that impelled them to this separation. Leaving her, they renounced everything they found too severe and onerous in her doctrines in order to make ones less constraining, by the same spirit that caused them to hate the ones they rejected. Who can doubt for a moment that this behavior has every characteristic of an unjust and criminal revolt? These thoughts did not predispose me favorably toward the minister, whose visit I was expecting that afternoon.

He came indeed. In the first moments of our conversation, something told him that I was not as well-disposed as he had thought the day before. He expressed surprise at this. I did not hesitate to relate to him Father Le Bane's comparison almost word for word. He listened to me at first with some consternation, but lost no time recovering a pleasant countenance; and when I asked him in the same terms as Father Le Bane what he thought of these rebel subjects I had just portrayed to him, he gave this question the same reply that I myself had given. I admit I was very taken aback by this conclusion, which I was not expecting. But sir, I said to him vehemently, do you then betray your own

interests, or at the least your original intention was to fool me with fables you knew to be false?

Allow me, sir, he replied, to take in turn the liberty of using a comparison. I will even adduce part of yours. Suppose then a king such as you have described, and laws as wise and necessary as you agree he must have established them. They subsist for some time after his death, and bring happiness to those who observe them. A usurper mounts the throne through fraud and injustice. He perceives that his conduct is condemned by the laws he finds in use; what does he do? At first he pretends to explain them, but it is only to pervert their meaning and turn it toward his interests. Little by little he puts others in their place. As his sole purpose is to maintain his usurped power, he leaves the public weal aside in order to create new institutions by the day that flatter his pride and his greed. However skillfully he has disguised the former laws, he senses that they still condemn him, and that they cast a light that shames him on all his crimes: he decides to forbid the reading of them, to take away awareness of them altogether.

Meanwhile, the face of the state is altered. Ignorance and the corruption of morals are taking over. The desire for good and for true happiness is gradually extinguished. Finally everything falls into disorder and confusion. In vain does someone perceive the fatherland's dismay and dare raise his voice to protest: the usurper uses sword and fire to reduce him to silence.

[298] Who would not suppose that the damage is beyond remedy? It nonetheless comes to pass that a small number of subjects, acutely attuned to the public misery, undertake to open the eyes of their blind countrymen. The means they adopt is short and simple. They merely disinter the former laws, and expose them to the public in their original purity. Indeed, the feeling of past happiness immediately reawakens in every heart. They see how far they have fallen, and they cannot see that without yearn-

ing for the happy condition they have lost. The usurper takes alarm. He thunders, he strikes. But if he succeeds by violence as well as by artifice in keeping throngs of slaves under the yoke, he cannot prevent those who have felt his tyranny from breaking their chains, and beginning once more to live happily by following those wise laws from which they ought never to have strayed. What do you think now, the minister continued, of that portion of the people who had the courage to escape from tyranny? That they fulfilled at one and the same time, I said, their duty and their interests. The application, he replied, is not difficult to make; and he promptly did so in favor of the Protestant church.

I confess that I found myself in a great quandary. However, after a moment's reflection, I decided to reply to him as follows: It is clear, I said, that given the suppositions you have just made, justice and truth are on the side of your church. But you will concede that the opposite consequence follows no less clearly from the principles of your adversary. If you prove the usurpation of the head of the Roman church and his bending of doctrine, I do not see how one can hesitate a moment to take your side; but I will feel I owe the same justice to the Catholics, if they can show me that it is you, as they pretend, who must be accused of innovation. The difficulty is therefore to shed enough light in your evidence to convince me completely of your assertions. But I feel neither the tranquility nor the freedom of mind I would need to hear you. My response did not discourage him. He assured me that nothing being more clear and decisive than the evidence he would bring me, I could not, short of manifesting a criminal indifference for salvation, refuse him such easy attention. It is merely a matter, properly speaking, he said, of using your eyes. I shall open the Gospel, and you shall read: I shall employ no other weapons. You will clearly see our victory there, and the shame of our enemies. I finally yielded to his insistence, and we set a time that we would spend together at this reading.

Father Le Bane did not fail to return the following day. I declared to him that, having yet neither prejudices nor sound motives that could make me lean in his direction more than in his adversary's, I had decided to hear the minister first, for the sole reason that he was the first who had spoken to me about religion. Thus, Father, I added, I ask you leave me free to hear him, without troubling me with your objections: they would diminish the attention I need to weigh the force of his evidence. But as soon as he has communicated all his insights to me, I shall willingly return to you to do a new examination. He was not content with this resolution. Beware, he said; the poison of error is subtle; you will be seduced. I told him that this suspicion offended me, and that he would oblige me by tempering his zeal, of which he had already given me several impetuous examples. He left discontented. It was no doubt on this occasion that he contrived the plan which was executed four days later, and plunged me into dilemmas capable of interrupting my suffering, if anything could have produced such a change.

I saw the minister regularly for several days. On the fourth day, at six in the evening, I was informed that an officer of the provincial intendant⁴⁰⁵ was insisting on speaking with me. I ordered him shown in. He presented me with a *lettre de cachet*,⁴⁰⁶ which contained an order of the king to abduct me and my family and take us to Angers. Me? I said with astonishment. But what interest does the king take in my affairs? How can he even be aware that I am in his kingdom? In France, sir, he replied, there is nothing the king does not know; and I warn you that one must not hesitate to obey [299] him. He then declared that I must prepare

⁴⁰⁵ An *intendant* was the principal administrative officer of the king within a province.

⁴⁰⁶ An order under the king's seal, but issued under the authority of the Intendant (the king's administrator for the region).

to leave that very evening, and that he had brought two carriages which were for me and my family to ride in. It was not without grumbling that I prepared myself for the departure. I asked whether it was likely I would soon be allowed the freedom to return. I was told that that was uncertain, and that it was best to take my measures as if I were not at all counting on being back. I understood the meaning of this admonition. I put my affairs in order, insofar as such a short time allowed; and leaving Drink to finish what required the presence of one of my servants, I set out for Angers with the two ladies, our children, and all our servants.

This mysterious journey was not without causing me great apprehensions. I wracked my brain in vain to find a reasonable cause to which I might attribute it. I was guilty of nothing against the interests of the king or the kingdom. England was at peace with France, and nothing about the manner in which I had lived at Saumur should have made me suspect. However, Mme Lallin, who ought to know better than I the genius and practices of her country, surmised that it was my retreat itself and my dark humor which had caused me to be observed. You may be sure, she said, that seeing you had no ties to anyone, you have been taken for a spy. We traveled very rapidly, so that, Angers being only eight leagues from Saumur, we were there there before the night was over. I was anticipating that, to end this scene more or less the way it had begun, we would be locked up, on arrival, in some secure prison. We were told, however, to exit at the door of a very handsome house. Several menservants who came with torches ushered us into a well-furnished apartment. We were served some refreshments; and as our sadness did not allow us to remain for long at table, we were informed as the table was cleared that we were about to see Monseigneur appear.

Although I did not understand who was designated by such a pretentious name, I did not have the curiosity to ask. At that moment we saw a door open. Two men dressed in white, who I at

first thought to be in their nightshirts, came toward us, candle in hand. They were there to light the way for a third person who walked solemnly behind them, and whose whole person appeared to me most extraordinary. He was tall, wearing a robe of violet cloth that covered down to his feet, with a train that trailed far behind him. A golden cross the length of a finger hung from his neck on his chest. His head was covered with a black cap which was square at the base, although at the top it was triangular. In short, his whole outfit was very new and surprising to me. Mme Lallin came over to tell me in my ear that she figured he was a bishop. We rose when he entered. He acknowledged us most politely, but without breaking the silence; and kneeling down, he invited us with a sign of the hand to do the same. He said a short prayer in Latin, after which he rose to sit in an armchair, bidding us with a civil gesture to take once more the places where we had been seated.

I waited impatiently to see where this comedy was heading.⁴⁰⁷ Finally he opened his mouth, and addressing me, he said that an undertaking as important as his rightly had to begin with prayer; that being entrusted by the king with taking a part in my instruction and that of my family, he was all in favor of seconding the intentions of that pious monarch; that he congratulated me on the plan I had made of applying myself seriously to religious matters, and tending to the interests of my soul; but that I should congratulate myself for the fact that His Majesty's zeal saved me from the peril in which I had imprudently put myself in Saumur; that by delivering myself to minister C..., the most dangerous heretic in the realm, I had exposed myself to an almost inevitable seduction; that nothing would be spared to impart the

⁴⁰⁷ A likely echo of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*: the naive observation of the stranger leads him to reduce traditional pomp to meaningless gestures.

truth peaceably to me in Angers⁴⁰⁸; that they would attend just as carefully to the instruction of my children; finally, that I would receive nothing there but signs of attention and charity for which I would have cause to be eternally grateful to have chosen to settle in France.

[300] This explanation was too clear to leave me any uncertainty. Besides, I had heard of the fervor with which the French clergy solicited the ruin of the Protestants, and the means they employed every day to make proselytes. With my character, violence was a poor path for guiding me toward truth. I lost not a minute in so informing the bishop. I surmise, I said, that you are the bishop of this city, and that I have the honor of being in your house. I do not know if it is your intention to hold me here, but I declare to you that I will not remain willingly. I was born free. Although I have chosen to live in France for a few years, I have entered into no engagements here that should cause me to be considered as a subject of the king. Thus, I expect him in his justice to allow me to live here in freedom, at least as long as I have committed no act that can offend him. If he refuses me this favor, I am prepared to leave the kingdom and return to my country. I made this reply in a civil tone of voice, but one so firm that the prelate seemed unsure of himself. He nevertheless continued to maintain earnestly that there was no intention to use constraint; that I would find nothing but gentleness and civility in his manners, that I could judge of this by the reception given to me upon my arrival, and the trouble he himself had taken to spend the whole night waiting for me; that the rest of his conduct would be in keeping with this prelude, that he knew that I was of a rank that merited such consideration; that he was going to have me

⁴⁰⁸ The bishop of Angers, like Father Le Bane, is a Jansenist: he is Henri Arnauld, brother of the Arnauds (Antoine Robert, Agnès, Angélique) of Port-Royal.

escorted to an apartment where I could consider myself the absolute master; that I doubtless needed a little rest after the fatigue of my journey, that children would be looked after separately; and that I could rely entirely on his good services, and on the zeal of his entire household to respect and obey me.

I agreed to withdraw to get a few hours' sleep. He left me looking forward the next day, he said, to much satisfaction in seeing and conversing with me. I was at liberty to be served by my own domestics. I was quite determined as I went to bed that I would not stay long in that house, for at least I had reason to believe they would not hold me there against my wishes. My manservant having come to awaken me at the time I had indicated to him, I immediately ordered him to go find out how the ladies and my children had passed the night. He was not long in returning, and his report was for me a source of dismay and consternation. He told me that after having the apartment where the women had been put pointed out to him, he had not dared interrupt their sleep once he realized they were still asleep; he had then asked one of the bishop's servants to take him to my children, and the only reply he had received was that they were no longer in his house. I pressed them to tell me where they are, my manservant added; he assured me that he does not know, but that wherever they are, they could hardly be bad off.

I admit I could not hear this report without emotion. I had him dress me quickly, and asked forthwith to speak for a moment with the bishop. He was nice enough to come himself to my apartment. I explained my fears to him. He did not conceal that they were founded. It is true, he said, that, in accordance with the king's order, your children were taken to a suitable place for their education. Your two sons are in a college,⁴⁰⁹ and your niece in a convent of nuns. But you are too reasonable to object or take

⁴⁰⁹ *Collège* = elementary school.

alarm at what was judged appropriate for their own good. How is that? I replied, my children are taken from me without my participation and without my consent, and it is by the king's order that I am treated with such violence? He was about to enter into a long justification of the conduct of the court. I interrupted him heatedly to ask him whether I too must consider myself a prisoner in his house. No, he said; we have no claim on your liberty. It is only by civility and reason that I hope to keep you here. You have indicated the desire to be instructed in religion, and we believe we are rendering you a service for which you owe us some gratitude. In truth, sir, I rejoined, this is such extraordinary conduct that it confounds all my thoughts. I admire your zeal, but I do not admire less the manner in which it acts. If at least you [301] had consulted me! But no, I added, there is nothing I so detest as violence. Please give me back my children; after which I declare to you that I am not only leaving your house, but the kingdom as well, where I have no reason to stay. The prelate then adopted a much graver tone of voice to inform me that it was not in his power to give them back to me, and that the king's will was that they be raised in the Catholic religion. This refusal angered me so that I resolved to leave the episcopal house at that very hour. Good-bye, sir, I said to the bishop; I am withdrawing, since I am at liberty to do so. It little matters to me in what religion my children are raised; their choice will be up to them when they have reached the age to use their reason. But what does matter to me is that they and I not be treated as slaves in a country where one has no authority over us. I left him, despite the efforts he made to prevent me.

I went to an inn, and sent word to my sister-in-law and Mme Lallin that I was waiting for them there. The bishop made some objection to their leaving, but they persisted in wishing to. His gentleman who brought them to me urged me on his behalf to return at least to dine. I was too occupied by the decision I had to

make in such an important conjuncture to give in to his invitation. I held counsel with the two ladies. My ignorance of the customs of the kingdom led me to heed the sentiment of Mme Lallin. Her opinion was that I should take the post-chaise to Versailles, and address the king in person to ask him for justice.⁴¹⁰ This idea indeed seemed to me the surest. As news of my adventure had already spread through the city, there were several English gentlemen there who were curious to see me. I was about to mount on horseback when they arrived to greet me. I received them politely, and we spoke for a moment about the intention that was about to take me to the court. I learned from them that along the way I could see Lord Clarendon, who had been for several weeks in Orléans. This nobleman, whose name I shall never utter without a feeling of affection and respect, had had the misfortune of falling from grace with King Charles, after serving him faithfully for several years in the first position of the court.⁴¹¹ He had left England to retire in France, and before settling in some part of the kingdom, he was affording himself the pleasure of surveying it to satisfy his curiosity. The praise they expressed of his mind and his virtue made me wish to make his acquaintance⁴¹²; not to

⁴¹⁰ This is exactly what Voltaire's *Ingénu* will do, in similarly naive fashion. If Cleveland's fate at court is more favorable, it is thanks to the intercession of the compassionate and half-English Henriette d'Angleterre.

⁴¹¹ Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, became chancellor at the Restoration and remained so until 1667. The king's faithful servant, who had acquired a reputation as a rigid anti-Catholic, was, as Rapon de Thoyras relates, "sacrificed to the hatred of his enemies" for complex political reasons, and permanently banished in December 1667. He spent the rest of his life in exile in France (see Rapon de Thoyras, IX, pp. 261–268).

⁴¹² Clarendon had shared Charles II's entire exile but did not travel to Bayonne: thus Cleveland did not meet him at the same time he met

mention that, being unknown to anyone at the French court, I hoped that he would be generous enough to obtain some protection for me there. I was not lengthening my route by passing through Orléans. I arrived there easily in two days. Although the sad state of my soul hardly permitted me to think of luxury and brilliance, I followed Mme Lallin's advice, which was to appear at court with some distinction. I had taken four domestics to escort me. I sent one off to Paris, as I dismounted in Orléans, with an order to have a carriage and team ready for my arrival.

I had come to the same inn where the Earl of Clarendon was lodging. I immediately sent to request the liberty of greeting him. He received me with that noble, open manner that came naturally to him. I had no trouble relating well enough to him to receive right away from him offers of service and friendship. In his kindness he met me half way. He had known Lord Axminster. I told him a part of his story, and of mine. That was enough to win him over completely. He seemed to take a keen interest in my misfortunes, and I can see this first conversation as the foundation of the tender friendship with which he has never ceased to honor me. If we did not arrive at the ultimate degree of confidence from the first day, it was less for lack of esteem and mutual inclination than a proper effect of prudence, which does not allow one to open up all at once without reservation.

He did not fail to give me two pieces of advice, which already indicated how greatly his generosity had predisposed him in my favor. One, bearing on the business that was taking me to Versailles. Before any audience with the king, he advised me to apply to Madame the [302] Duchess of Orléans, who was the sister of King Charles.⁴¹³ The princess, he said, is kindness itself.

Charles in book II.

⁴¹³ Henriette d'Angleterre (1644–1670), daughter of Charles I and Henriette de France (known in Britain as Henrietta Maria), had spent

She will help you with all her power; and for her you need no other recommendation than the name of English. He added that he had the honor of being personally well enough known to her to flatter himself she would not receive ill a letter which he would write to her for me; but that having recently fallen from the king's favor, he did not think decorum allowed him to take that liberty so soon. The memory of your father, he said, has become the execration of all good people. There is no way it could serve you well in France, no more than in England, to be known as his son. Take any other name than the one that could reveal who your parents were. The honor of being Lord Axminster's son-in-law suffices to assure you proper consideration everywhere. He told me, to confirm what he had said, how extreme had been the reaction in England against the regicides, and against the very corpse of Cromwell.⁴¹⁴ I thanked him for his two suggestions, and promised to follow them. Thus, in the twenty-four hours I spent in Orléans, I acquired something worth being sought for whole centuries, a virtuous and faithful friend. He said to me as we parted that after travelling for a few months France, his intention was to settle in Rouen and spend the rest of his life there, and that I could always get news of him there.

I took the post-chaise again, and when I was alone, my sad heart relieved itself with a deep sigh. Oh God, I cried, can it be

practically her whole life in France. She became the sister-in-law of Louis XIV by marrying Philippe, duke of Orléans, whose official title was "Monsieur", in 1661: it is for this that she is formally referred to simply as "Madame". The king's affection for her was well known, and she served occasionally as intermediary between him and her brother, Charles II of England. At this time she would be about twenty-four.

⁴¹⁴ The regicides (those who had voted for the king's execution) were exempted from the general amnesty and a dozen were executed; by act of Parliament, in January 1661 Cromwell's body was exhumed, hanged, and dismembered, and his head exhibited at Westminster Hall.

possible there could still be for me some return of pleasure and tranquility to hope for? After losing everything through betrayal and death, might your goodness reserve for me so sweet a comfort as friendship? Thus I spent a part of my journey examining whether my heart was still capable of any sentiment other than suffering, and I found that for me it was equally impossible to cease being tender and being unhappy.

Upon reaching Paris, I found lodgings and a carriage awaiting me. I lost not a minute going to St. Cloud, where I learned that Madame the Duchess of Orléans ordinarily resided. That good princess was so accessible that I had no difficulty obtaining the honor of an audience. I explained to her the purpose of my journey, and my need of her protection. She promised it to me without hesitation. That very evening, she was to go to Versailles. I asked for permission to follow her, and for her orders as to how I should conduct myself. You will come see me tomorrow, she said, at the apartment I have at court, and we shall take together what measures are appropriate for the circumstances. I set out for Versailles, with great expectations.

The French court was then so numerous and so brilliant that even finding comfortable lodgings in Versailles was not easy. The king had just concluded a wonderfully glorious peace with the Spanish with the treaty of Aix-La-Chapelle⁴¹⁵; and as he was on good terms with his other neighbors, such general tranquillity had

⁴¹⁵ The treaty, which was a compromise entailing the creation of the Triple Alliance, cannot without hyperbole be called “wonderfully glorious”: signed on 2 May 1668, it ended the War of Devolution following the death of Philippe IV of Spain in 1665; France had to renounce possession of Franche-Comté but retained part of its conquests in Flanders. According to what follows, this scene must in fact take place in March, before the formal signature of the treaty; but its terms were already known.

attracted numerous foreigners to France, who came to verify with their own eyes all the marvels that were published about that great monarch. The baptismal ceremony of the Monsieur le Dauphin, which was soon to be celebrated at Saint Germain en Laye, and for which magnificent preparations were already being made, also attracted all the nobility of the realm, which does not fail on such occasions to contribute with all its power to enhancing the resplendency of the crown.⁴¹⁶ On every side one thus saw magnificent apparel and sumptuous carriages; and judging by outward appearances, the king of France was at the height of glory to which ambition may aspire. It was not a simple matter, the day after my

arrival, to break through the crowd of courtiers flooding all the apartments of the chateau. Nevertheless, having been shown to Madame's apartment, I was allowed in by one of her officers, who had seen me the day before at St. Cloud. She was notified that I was awaiting the honor of speaking with her, and granted me almost immediately the liberty of entering her chamber. Things are taking a good turn for you, she said. The king, who ordinarily comes to see me only in the afternoon, sent word that I would receive his visit this morning. Tell me again about your [303] situation, so I may have it in mind when he pays me the honor of a visit. I then rehearsed my whole story about Saumur and Angers, just as I had already related it to her. As it was impossible for me to deliver this narrative without revealing something of my sad dispositions, she was curious to learn the cause of my sufferings. I gave her that satisfaction, by relating to her part of my life's adventures. I did not conceal even the cruellest of them, which was my wife's infidelity. Her attention expressed the pleasure which hearing this story gave her. But when I had fin-

⁴¹⁶ It was on 24 March 1668 that the baptism of the Dauphin Louis, born in 1661, was finally celebrated in great pomp at Saint Germain en Laye.

ished, I was strangely surprised by her reply. I think I know your wife, she said. Yes, she added after a moment's reflection, I am much mistaken if I do not know her.⁴¹⁷

My wife! Oh, Madame, I said, that is impossible; that disloyal creature would never have the effrontery to come before you. She is not brazen. Would to heaven she were not more false and more inconstant! She would have to have renounced all shame to dare appear in your presence, with her burden of crimes. You are right to believe, interrupted the princess, that she did not confide this in me: but I am more than ever convinced it is she herself I have seen. Six weeks ago, she continued, she paid me a visit in the simple guise of an English lady who needed my protection. I saw her. I found her face was very appealing. I asked her who she was, and what I could do for her. She begged me not to press her to reveal her name to me. But after telling me, with many tears, that she had just come from America, and had suffered a hundred misfortunes which merited all my compassion, she implored me to obtain an asylum for her where she could spend the rest of her days. I felt such an inclination for her that, had she wished to explain her situation more fully, I would certainly have kept her in my entourage: but she insisted on concealing it from me, and continuing merely to ask me for an asylum. I advised her to retire to the convent of Chaillot, and gave her one of my servants to take her there, and commend her to the abbess on my behalf.⁴¹⁸ Comparing what you are telling me with what

⁴¹⁷ It has been about four years since Cleveland has seen Fanny, and there is no reason she might not have arrived at St. Cloud before he did. She has spent several months in Bayonne and has only been in Paris for six weeks, as Madame will say; thus her adventures entail the same chronological hiatus as those of Cleveland (beginning of book VI).

⁴¹⁸ This choice of convent is hardly arbitrary: the monastery at Chaillot was the preferred retreat of Henriette Marie de France, mother of the

little clarification I extracted from her, I have no doubt at all that she is your wife. Are you not curious to see her?

To see her, I replied with a deep sigh; alas, on the contrary I must flee her, and forever do all I can to forget her! I do not any the less, Madame, owe you infinite gratitude. She is, through your kindness, in a place where at least I need not fear she will continue to dishonor me. Faithless woman! Such is then the fruit of her crime! She intends to devote the remainder of her days, no doubt, to weeping for her lover! I pity you, and also her, replied the princess; for basically I cannot rightly exhort you to see her again; and yet I sense that pity draws me to her almost as much as to you.⁴¹⁹ Just as she was ending these words, she was notified that the king was entering her apartment. She told me to withdraw, and to await her orders. I paced for some time in an antechamber, occupied by my usual torments, which this conversation had just renewed. I could not doubt, any more than Madame, that it was my wife who was at Chaillot. Although it was one less pain for me to know she was in a place that answered to me for her conduct, I found myself as moved as I had been at the first news of her infidelity. What tormented me the most was being unable to discern how I was disposed toward her, and whether love still had some place in my agitations. I explored the matter sincerely; for I was not seeking to delude myself, and was strong enough to assure myself that whatever my sentiments

Duchess of Orléans, who had founded it with the king's help in 1651; its second abbess had been Louise Angélique de La Fayette (who died in 1665), sister-in-law of author Mme de La Fayette.

⁴¹⁹ Madame not only serves as mediator between the two spouses, but re-establishes the balance between their two testimonies in a story dominated up till now by the bias of the primary narrator. Long before Fanny's own story, Madame's sure intuition is a counter to Cleveland's excessive certainty, and foreshadows an eventual explanation.

might be, there were none that could possibly make me desire to see her. I should see a woman without honor, I said, who has covered me with shame, a faithless woman who has betrayed all her vows, a cruel woman who has pierced my heart? I should see a shameless hypocrite, who deceived me for several years with the appearances of honor and virtue, and who doubtless was laughing inwardly at my tenderness and credulity! Oh, I shall never see her! But why does her memory cause me such emotion? Whence these tears I am on the verge of shedding, and this despair that [304] lives on, and endlessly gnaws at my heart? Have I not wished to die, to put an end to pains I had no longer the strength to bear? Even now when I think my reason is fully restored, would I not tear my hair, and utter the most woeful cries, if I obeyed to the transport that still possesses all my senses?

I could not sort out this chaos of confused, involuntary movements, and reverted to lamenting and grieving, without reflecting distinctly on the cause of my pains. One of Madame's pages shook me out of this violent reverie by bringing me a summons to return to her chamber. Sadness was so visibly painted on my face that Madame used the occasion to point it out to the king: You see him, sire, she said: he touches me; I do not think there has ever been an example of such an unhappy life. The great prince addressed a few words to me, which could only come from a great store of humanity and natural kindness; then, turning toward Madame: As for what happened to him in Angers, he continued, I have already told you that I knew nothing of it. I leave all religious affairs to my director of conscience, and am persuaded that he sometimes abuses my authority.⁴²⁰ But it is not

⁴²⁰ Through a familiar practice of the times, Prévost avoids criticizing the king by attacking only "abuses" committed by others in his name. Though the king uses the term *conseil de conscience*, he doubtless

my desire that foreigners be harassed in my kingdom, and I shall call those who are guilty of this injustice to account for it. Madame, who was not unaware that such general promises are easily forgotten, and who wished to assure they would be carried out, replied pleasantly that I would gladly forgo punishment by His Majesty's justice of those who had offended me; but that I was dying to see my children again, and that this favor could not be granted me too soon. The king understood the meaning of this banter; he sent for an officer of his guards, whom he dispatched straightaway to M. de Louvois⁴²¹ bearing with him orders as favorable as I could desire. I went out with the officer: We shall meet again, Madame said to me most graciously: do not go away.⁴²²

I remained in the antechamber until the king's departure. There I heard various kinds of talk about the assiduousness of his visits to the princess, whether she was at Versailles or St. Cloud. Without mixing among the courtiers, to whom I was not known,

means the same thing as *director de conscience*, which to the Jesuits meant (with particular theological overtones) a confessor. The confessor of Louis XIV at this date was the Jesuit François Annat (who died in 1670), but Prévost doubtless has in mind principally Père de La Chaise, also a Jesuit, even though he became the king's confessor only later.

⁴²¹ Son of Michel Le Tellier, secretary of war, whom he will succeed when his father becomes chancellor in 1677.

⁴²² This is the only appearance of Louis XIV in the novel, but it is all the same striking to see him enter the stage after the depths of misery into which the protagonist has fallen. Great historical figures often appear on the fringes of Prévost's plots: we have already seen Charles II of England in exile in book II; in *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* the protagonist serves William of Orange in 1688 and facilitates the escape of king James II (pp. 53–56); and he and Rosemont speak with Georges I, the French regent Philippe d'Orléans, and John Law (p. 278–280, 291).

by walking alone in their midst I picked up the gist of a good part of their discourse. Some thought the prince was in love with Madame. Others held that it was just politics in their conversations, and were already predicting quite accurately the treaty that was concluded soon thereafter between France and England against Holland.⁴²³ But I heard no one who seemed to have the least suspicion of the true reason for the king's visits as it soon become apparent. I speak of his secret attraction to one of Madame's maidens of honor.⁴²⁴ Nevertheless, he never came a single time into the apartment without finding a way to speak for a moment with that lady. I saw her with some of her companions; and although there was nothing extraordinary about her, and I like everyone was then unaware of the king's passion, I thought I could detect from some glances which the great monarch cast her way upon leaving Madame's chamber, that he did not look on her indifferently. The language of the eyes must have expressed a great deal to make me note this, I who had never seen him but that one day.

Madame having sent for me as soon as she was free, I went back into her chamber. You should be content, she said, with the king's goodness. After the orders he has given, your business will be concluded before long. But I am curious to know how you will treat your wife. I replied that I did not think there were two possible choices for me, and that my intention was to leave her in the retreat which she had chosen under the protection of Her Royal Highness. Why? replied the princess. She is appealing, you are

⁴²³ Allusion to the treaty of Dover: this is the purpose of Madame's journey to Flanders, beginning at the end of book VI.

⁴²⁴ Louise de la Vallière. Prévost is here practicing *histoire secrète*; but this liaison, which began in 1661, was a secret to no one, except perhaps (as Mme de La Fayette asserts) to the queen mother, after whose death in 1666 it was publicly recognized.

young; one does not easily do without a woman at your age; I would advise you to make things up with her. Do you forgive nothing to a person you have passionately loved, especially when shows a repentance that appears sincere? I understand, moreover, from the account you gave me, that her misconduct has not become known in France. You need not fear that I will let the secret out. Thus your honor runs no risk, and you can begin to live with her again as tranquilly as ever.

[305] These words, in which there entered more kindness than justice and reason, nevertheless made a powerful impression on me. I remained for some time reflecting, uncertain of the manner in which I should respond. The princess pressed me to speak. I confess, Madame, I said finally, that your proposition clarifies for me a doubt that I did not think I could easily resolve. I could not discern whether I still retained some affection for my unfaithful wife; and now I feel only too well, from the avidness with which my heart lends itself to your counsel, that I would flatter myself in vain that I am cured of love. But I am not for that more disposed to forget my wife's crime. When I yielded to the inclination I had for her, I did not have in mind satisfying my heart more than my reason. I wished to become happy in two ways I thought I could be, through love and through wisdom. For a long time I blinded myself enough to persuade myself I had succeeded, or at least that my happiness wanted for nothing more than a few circumstances of fortune, which I had reason to hope would not be forever wanting. However I was betrayed by a false woman who had no doubt never loved me sincerely, since she was capable of abandoning me, and who destroyed in one day the entire edifice of my felicity by its two foundations. My words, I continued, may seem obscure to you; I must, Madame, have the honor of explaining to you the whole of my sentiments, to make myself worthy of the interest which your goodness leads you to take in my misfortune.

I then gave her an exact relation of the manner in which I had been raised, and the principles by which I had conducted myself all my life. I did not even conceal my name or my birth from her; I was content to add at the same time the advice Lord Clarendon had given me, and my intention of following it with respect to anyone other than herself. Finally, after revealing myself to her completely, such as I was before my wife's infidelity and the misfortunes that had followed it, I depicted myself with the same candor as I had become at St. Helena, at La Coruña and at Saumur. Now you see, Madame, I added, the abyss into which my wife has plunged me. Not only did she take from me the one happiness I derived from her through love, but she has also made me lose the other which I thought so well established on the side of wisdom. Whether truth or illusion, I had until then regarded my philosophy as a source of light and strength; I have found it powerless since the misfortune which, as you see, has overwhelmed me. Suppose it was no more than a phantom; it sufficed at least to calm me, and had comforted me for a hundred woes that did not exceed its power. But it is too weak to help me bear the loss of what ought to have provided me perfect happiness with it. Thus my heart and my mind have an equal share in my misfortune. The first thereby loses all its joys and pleasures, the other all its strength and support. I have experienced the most terrible despair over this, I wanted to die; and you advise me, Madame, to receive her who made me so miserable, and even to be reconciled with her?

The princess was looking at me with astonishment during this time. I thought I understood why. Unless I be mistaken, Madame, I continued without a pause, you find something singular in my sentiments and my turns of phrase, and that is the cause of the surprise I think I observe in your eyes. To speak to you sincerely, she replied, you seem to me a most extraordinary man, and I confess to you that what I have just heard is entirely new to

me. But I will have all the more esteem for you to see that you conduct yourself by different principles than all other men. The more I advance in age and in experience of the world, the more I recognize that they are all nothing but wicked and deceitful. I want to learn more about your morale, and assure you that I shall be most pleased to have occasionally at my side a sort of monster like you. Besides, she added, it seems to me that your reasoning is not right. Because your wife has caused you to lose the sweetness of love and made philosophy useless to you, you conclude that you must not see her. And I, I find on the contrary that your interest requires you to make up [306] with her, so as again to have as quickly as possible the pleasures of love and philosophy. Oh, Madame! I replied, what are you saying? What pleasures have I to expect from love, after the cruel manner in which it has treated me? Do you then think that what I loved in my wife was what I can find in her again, that is, external graces, pretty eyes, a rather nice shape and face? Doubtless I was delighted to find in her the natural charms which you have been good enough to recognize; but you may be sure they would not have made me go beyond the boundaries of admiration, if I had not thought noticed with them something else much more likely to inspire love. Uprightness and goodness of soul, modesty, gentleness, indeed a hundred qualities which I imagined I perceived in her soul, are no longer there, or perhaps never have been. Putting honor aside, what would I do if I were with her now? I would lament her inconstancy and weakness. Every look would be complaints or reproaches. Even my silence would be a crushing condemnation for her. And were I to do myself violence to the point of assuming once more a tranquil countenance, would she be less guilty, and I happier? But you have agreed that you still love her, interrupted the princess. Love heals all wounds and has the power to make you forget everything. It is true, I replied, I feel that I still love her; but I nonetheless feel it is a weakness. You will not get over

it, she said to me, laughing; and since it is almost impossible for you not to succumb to it some day, you would do much better to take my insistence today as a pretext: that way you would save the honor of philosophy.

This conversation, which lasted much longer, had extremely advantageous consequences for me. It inspired the princess to such kindness for my family and affection for my interests that she was like a mother to my children for the rest of her life, and a protector for me in a court where nobody knew me. It was she herself who ordered me to let a house in the vicinity of St. Cloud, so I would be near enough to see her often. I found a most agreeable and most comfortable one before I returned to Anjou, and left some of my servants there to take care of having it furnished during my journey. Having taken the road to Angers, I passed through Orléans; but I no longer found Lord Clarendon there. He had left three or four days earlier for Poitiers. I lost no time rejoining Mme Lallin and my sister-in-law. The king's orders had not only arrived, but had already been executed. I found my children and the Bridge girl with the two ladies, who moreover were most satisfied with the civilities they had received from the bishop in my absence. I felt myself obliged to express my gratitude to the prelate. I do not know by what channel he was already informed of the powerful protection I had found at court; but however civilly he had first treated me in his house, I noted in his manners and offers of service something even more polite, which I attributed to information he had received from Versailles. I nonetheless could not help calling implying to him gently that the king did not always approve of his name being used for violence. He understood what I meant; and to justify himself, he told how my adventure had originated. Father Le Bane, he said, the superior of the Oratory, wrote to the intendant that he knew in Saumur a newly settled foreigner who seemed disposed to be enlightened on matters of religion, but had unfortunately fallen into the hands

of the minister C., and would, by appearances, swallow with his whole family the poison of heresy. The intendant sent the letter straight to me. I confess, continued the bishop, that I advised him out of sheer zeal for your salvation to have you brought to this city; and after learning that you were a person of distinction, I offered to host you in my own house and myself undertake your instruction. It may be that the intendant went about it a little too roughly; but it is the custom of those men to see that they are obeyed with almost absolute authority in the provinces. They have a supply of *lettres de cachet* that they fill out at will when the need arises, so everything they undertake always seems to be done in the name of the king. I graciously accepted this justification, which imputed to the intendant all the injustice I had been subjected to.

[307] My only thought was to go promptly to St. Cloud with my family and entire household. Should I say it? Despite the scorn with which I felt justly provoked by my wife, I felt some pleasure at the thought that I would be near her, for Chaillot is scarcely a league from St. Cloud, and there was no point, to reject this thought, for me to try to feel shame for it as a weakness: it occupied me throughout the journey. My agitations were so visible that my two companions daily expressed their surprise to see that time had so little power over my sadness. We arrived at the house, which we found completely prepared. The ladies were very satisfied with it. There was a spacious garden, a wood, and all the comforts that can make for an agreeable retreat. The very next morning I went to pay my respects to Madame, and inform her of my family's arrival. She did not wait for me to request the liberty to presenting my children to her. You will bring them to me this very evening, she said; I want them to know now the way to my house. After thanking her profusely for these tokens of admirable kindness, I mentioned to her my sister-in-law, who could pass for English, since her husband was, and she knew that

country's language perfectly. The excellent princess ordered me to bring her as well. I would have feared causing Mme Lallin some pain if I had troubled the solitude in which she had several times told me that she wished spend her entire life. Her adventures seemed indeed to require her to live in retirement; and I myself had praised the wisdom that led her to make that choice. That was the sole reason why I did not mention her to Madame.⁴²⁵

Leaving the chateau, I saw a carriage entering the courtyards with signs of an equipage of distinction. I inquired who it was. I was told it was Lord Terwill. Although I did not know this gentleman personally, I could not have forgotten that he was an old friend of Lord Axminster, and the one he had made depository of some of his property. My first inclination was to greet him; but a moment of bitter reflection on my fate, and that of his friend's unhappy daughter, obliged me to withdraw without introducing myself. It even occurred to me that it was not appropriate for him to be informed so soon of my affairs; and the fear lest something of them escape Madame in the conversation he was going to have with her caused me to return immediately to her apartment to beg her not to inform him who I was. This encounter so increased my perturbation that I was completely beside myself on returning home. Heaven, what a disgrace, I said, for the memory of Viscount Axminster! How can I introduce myself to his friends without mentioning his daughter, and consequently revealing to them her shame, her father's, and mine? What hope is there of concealing from them what they would read on my face and in my eyes, even if I could succeed in disguising it in my speech?

⁴²⁵ Cleveland repeats the mistake he had committed upon arrival in America, of failing to mention the presence of Mme Lallin. Knowing nothing of the key to the enigma, he naturally cannot know the importance such a factor could have; his silence greatly prolongs the misunderstanding and complicates Madame's efforts at intervention.

Alas, Lord Terwill was once witness to the mother's misfortune: and now he must therefore learn of the daughter's infamy! He will learn about it, with all his friends, and all of England! Thus will implacable destiny persecute the unhappy viscount even after his death. He had not a moment's happiness and peace during his lifetime, and now he will be dishonored in the grave. Indeed I did not see in what way I could avoid revealing my wife's adventure to Lord Terwill if I identified myself to him as the son-in-law of Viscount Axminster; and nevertheless I could not do otherwise than impart this fact to him in interest of my children, since I could not without injustice cause them to lose the property that would come to them from their grandfather. To confess the truth, the principal motive for which I had determined to remain in France since I landed in Nantes was the hope that there my sorry business could be completely buried there before I headed for England. It was this same reason too that had led me to dismiss my sailors and all of my servants whose discretion I could not depend upon, not wishing to be followed by anyone who might reveal, when I finally returned to London, what I intended to hide there forever. But I had not taken into account that, as Lord Terwill must be well along in years, [308] I was exposing my children to the risk of losing their inheritance if I put off presenting them to him for too long. Nor had I anticipated that I might have some difficulty proving to him the right they had to it by their birth and the viscount's last deposition. It is true that his lordship, on his deathbed in Pensacola, had recognized me by a note in his own hand as his son-in-law and heir: but it is easy to imagine that testimony that was not couched in the legal forms could be evaded; and although I had no reason to mistrust Lord Terwill's good faith, I did not doubt that he would desire some proof besides a simple piece of paper and the word of a stranger. My wife's presence sufficed to remove the difficulties at once; by what pretext could I disguise the true cause of her absence?

These reflections serving only to redouble my sadness and perplexity, I resolved to communicate them that evening to Madame, and thus to interest her kindness in taking some cognisance of my domestic affairs. I returned to her house at the hour she had indicated. I had the honor of presenting to her my sister-in-law and our children. She received them in that gentle demeanor and affability that made of her the jewel of the French court. My niece was extremely amiable. She was no more than twelve or thirteen years old. The princess showered her with attentions, and promised to take her into her entourage when she reached her fifteenth year. After a period of general conversation, I brought it around to the encounter I had had with Lord Terwill as I was leaving the chateau that morning. Then I told Madame candidly about the quandary which the sight of him had caused me, and which I again saw coming in the clarification I would be obliged to have with him for the interest of my children. She did not need to understand all of this to grasp what had me worried. I certainly surmised, she said, from the urgency with which you entreated me a while ago not to tell him who you are, that you had something to settle with him. But I know him for an honest man, and you should not fear he would fail to justify the confidence Viscount Axminster had in his friendship. He is only in France for a short while. He is here on business of mine. Although I have no authority over him, I can assure you that at my bidding he will promptly restore everything that belongs to your children. There is no necessity for you even to see him for that. I am sure he will do it on my word alone. Is that not, she added, what you want, and perhaps dare not ask of me? I replied that it was much more than I desired, and would not have dared hope from any other princess who might be as great as she without being as good; but that there might be something strange about pressing Lord Terwill to yield what was in his custody without knowing to whom; that I was not reluctant to see him; that I even felt obligated to

express my esteem and gratitude to him: that all my objections therefore consisted in hiding my wife's misconduct from him, which seem to me impossible if he had to see her, or if he did not see her with me after learning of her return to Europe. I see, she said. The difficulty is not so great as to be insurmountable. Your wife has wisely chosen to go into retreat, and there is little likelihood she will ever leave it. Who will prevent you from telling Lord Terwill that death has taken her from you? Do not fear that she will ever think she has an interest in gainsaying such a rumor, should it reach her. This advice seemed to me wise. I am persuaded, I replied, that that is the only path I can take; and I have no doubt at all, Madame, that the testimony you are willing to offer in my favor to Lord Terwill will have the same result as that of my wife. But was anything ever so deplorable as my fate! Forgive me, Madame, I added with a deep sigh, forgive this involuntary outcry of my misfortune and pain. You see me reduced to using artifice to hide what ought to be a subject of pride for me, and will henceforth bring me nothing but opprobrium. Dear gods, I dare no longer say, then, that I still have a wife! She is dead for me, even more than the rest of mankind that is going to believe she is in the tomb!

[309] The sentiment of heart⁴²⁶ which accompanied these words was so acute and so bitter that I felt tears flowing from my eyes. I felt ashamed, and quickly wiped them. Madame was moved, for the natural expressions of a violent pain can hardly be heard without emotion: I even saw a few tears gather on the edge of her eyelids. Nevertheless she assumed a cheerful countenance to reproach me for my weakness and mock my philosophy. I replied: Oh, Madame, your kindness fails me right where, as you well see, I need it the most. I will abandon my philosophy for

⁴²⁶ The original edition uses the unusual term *sentiment de cœur*, which some other editions simply change to *douleur*.

you: it is a thankless mistress, which I have served in vain, and which betrays me when I need it. But if there is something that has more power than it does to comfort me, I feel it is your compassion; and I implore you not to refuse me tokens of it. Leave it to me, she replied; I have a remedy in mind for you that will do more than you hope to help cure you. I shall see that it is sent to you. We left her after she had ordered my sister-in-law to come see her often with her daughter and my children.

In leasing a house near St. Cloud, I had taken care, as I have said, to choose one that was isolated, and suited to the intention I had always had of having entertaining little intercourse with men. My woods were thick, and large enough to be called a park. In the deepest part of it there was a small structure consisting of just two rooms and a chamber, which was used only for resting when one was weary from walking. I chose this spot as my regular retreat. I had it comfortably furnished; and although I could no longer have any confidence in the help I could reap from study, I collected enough books there to make up a little library. This was where I planned to spend most of my time, in other words all that I did not spend with Madame. I developed the habit of emerging only at mealtimes; and even then I often had my food brought to me there and ate it alone. My occupations there were about the same as in Saumur: to reflect almost constantly on my life's sad adventures; to ask heaven for peace of heart, which I could no longer expect from human assistance; to take sometimes a book and thumb through it, but with a hundred cruel distractions that made it impossible to enjoy my reading; to nod off, by dint of turmoil and agitation, and throw myself on a bed, where I found less repose in sleep than a new source of anxiety and pain, from the baleful and frightening dreams which at once besieged my imagination.

One day I received word that a man of the cloth was asking to speak to me on behalf of Madame. I was in one of those mo-

ments of lethargy when my sadness seemed to augment. I nevertheless ordered him to be brought to me. It was a J... I knew that order only by name, or if I had happened sometimes to hear of it more particularly, it had not been in a manner that would have given me an advantageous impression of it.⁴²⁷ So indisposed, as I already was, toward French clerics, since what happened to me at Saumur, I decided to accept this visit only out of the respect I thought I owed the name of Madame. It even occurred to me that the J... was perhaps bringing me what the princess had promised to me by way of remedy, and I began to fear lest it be one of the same nature as the one of the minister of Saumur and of Father Le Bane, in other words one likely to cause me new displeasures. He was shown into the room where I was surrounded by my books. His greeting was civil. I recognized in his manners all the politeness of Father Le Bane, even a bit more natural and less affected. Of several missions, he said, which Madame had entrusted to him, he would begin by the one he judged the least important, although it was nevertheless extremely important; but he spoke of it in this manner, he added, because he knew well that the advantages it would procure me were not those which I held in the highest esteem. Next he presented me a paper, which he invited

⁴²⁷ Here begins a role which for which the Jesuit periodical *Journal de Trévoux* would not forgive Prévost for a long time. Not only does this whole part of the novel disappear in the Paris edition, but several surgical excisions were made in various editions throughout the century, following the example of the Ryckhoff edition in Amsterdam (1744): on this subject see Berenice Cooper, "Variations in the texts of eighteenth-century editions of *Le Philosophe anglais*," *Transactions of the Wisconsin Academy of the Sciences, Arts and Letters*, vol. 32 (1940), pp. 287–298. It should however be noted that these cuts, which Cooper dates from the 1757 Ryckhoff edition, date back to the edition of 1744, where this passage is reduced to just the following: "It was a J... I knew that order only by name" (V, 51).

me to read before he explained further. The content was in English. I read it. It was an act by Lord Terwill, by which he recognized that Lord Axminster had left in his hands, when he left England, certain properties which he listed, and which, he confessed, [310] he and his family were obliged to remit to the viscount's heirs as soon as they should come to receive them. He added that, not knowing these heirs, he had felt himself committed by honor and conscience to make this declaration to forestall any difficulties that could arise after his death; and that he entrusted it to Madame Henriette of England, duchess of Orléans, to be used as the princess, whose goodness and justice were equally known to him, judged best.

I particularly admired in that great princess the first of these two virtues, which had led her to employ with such care and tact the means most in keeping with the desires I had taken the liberty of expressing to her. This act was what was required, not only to assure my children of their inheritance, but to spare me the uncomfortable processes I had apprehended. There was no longer even any need to resort to artifice to mislead Lord Terwill with the false supposition of my wife's death. Neither she nor I would be required to appear, once Madame thus took on herself the attestation of our rights, and in a sense the whole conduct of this business. As for the satisfaction I had hoped for of seeing Lord Terwill, nothing obliged me to procure it so soon, and I promised myself that sooner or later I would easily find the opportunity again. The favor I received from Madame was therefore accompanied by everything that can enhance a benefit, whether I considered the circumstances or the outcome.

I bade the J., if he was returning to St. Cloud, express to her in advance a part of my keen and respectful gratitude. I was determined not to lose a moment's time in going myself to acquit myself of this duty. But the Father, to whom I mentioned this intention, stopped me just when I was about to rise: My most

important mission is not fulfilled, he said: after securing your interests, monsieur, we must if we can make some contribution to your tranquillity; and I am deceived by Madame's report, he added, if that is not what you have most at heart. I was very apprehensive, hearing him speak in this manner, that Madame might have communicated to him too freely the subject of my sufferings. This fear even kept me from answering. But what he said next made me aware that he was informed only in general of the despondency to which I was reduced by fortune and love. I know, he said, that you have suffered misfortunes without number and without example; that you have long been searching for some remedy to them; that you have found none either in philosophy or in the consolations of the minister of Saumur, of the Oratorian Father, or of the prelate of Angers. But, my dear sir, to whom were you turning? To philosophy? A decrepit crone, who even in her youth was never amiable except in name; who was able then perhaps to make men fools, but was never able to make them happy, and today is good only for busying children in dusty schools. To whom were you turning? To a Protestant, and to two Jansenists! Good lord! In what hands had you delivered yourself! And how could you hope for any remedy where you ought to have feared the greatest of all your woes! Praise God, he added triumphantly, praise him for having spared you the poison of those charlatans, and preserved you to receive the help he is about to offer you by my hands. He rose as he finished these words; and casting a glance at my books, where he saw nothing but philosophers, ancient and modern: What do I see? he continued in the same tone of voice; fools? maniacs? madmen? Oh my dear, dear sir, how can you not be disabused of the sophisms and illusions of these imposters? How can you return to a spring of which you have experienced the vanity and corruption? Throw them in the fire, if you take my advice; and when you begin to want to hear my counsel, leave it to me to put together a library for you.

I cannot adequately depict the energy, the ease, the gracious and lively manner in which these sentences were spoken. The first thought they provoked in me was that I was dealing with a coxcomb of the Catholic church; and when I shared it that evening with Madame, she told me that the name fit not only the one she had sent to me, but [311] most those who make up the same society.⁴²⁸ I do not know if this is to praise them, she added, but I like them that way; and among that whole species of fellows who are called m...,⁴²⁹ I find none so entertaining as they. Those men assume all sorts of shapes. You perceive in everything they do a worldly air, and something so gallant, that you are charmed, when you have a little taste for pleasure, to have them always around. Their presence and their vestment justify a hundred things, and you yield without remorse to whatever pleases you. For my part, added the princess, I admit to you that they make me love religion; and I do not see why it should be thought so austere if it as they describe it.⁴³⁰

This judgment seemed to me all the more just that I had already remarked the same thing in the remainder of the conver-

⁴²⁸ Although Prévost will, in the Notice of t. VI, portray his Jesuit as an exception who fails to adhere to the order's lofty principles, Madame's remark seems to prove that his first intention had rather been for the Jesuit to be seen as representative. Prévost also insists elsewhere on the fact that this Jesuit is not, as his critics asserted, Madame's *confessor* (*Le Pour et contre*, VIII, 354).

⁴²⁹ Probably *moines* (monks), or perhaps *mondains* (men of the world).

⁴³⁰ Madame contrasts with Cleveland by refusing to take this situation as seriously as he wants. Tender, sensitive, respectful of decorum but with an admixture of worldly wisdom and love, Prévost's Henriette Marie obviously resembles the one described by Mme de Lafayette in her *Histoire de Madame Henriette d'Angleterre*.

sation I had had with the J...⁴³¹ Although I was at first a bit surprised at his manners, I admitted to him that I had derived little that was useful from philosophy, and little fruit from what had been attempted at Saumur and Angers for my consolation. I added that the false starts into which I had been led had the effect of making that even more difficult; it was to dispose me very ill toward all the new approaches that might be proposed to me. I have lost hope, I said to him, since I have recognized the powerlessness of philosophy, and have found no more succor in religion. He answered that I had lost it too soon, and that he would in no time bring it to life again; that he saw with pleasure that I was not disposed to let myself be led like a blind man; that he liked use to be made of one's reason; that having nothing but reasonable and sound things to propose to me, he did not fear to give me a glimpse of the sort of remedies he had to offer me, and that he was sure that I would like them at first view. Allow me, he said, to explain them to you briefly. We will begin by rejecting philosophy entirely, unless you wish still to give the same name to the new system I am going to propose to you. As for religion, it will be very useful to us; but not to engage you in obscure and prickly questions, as may have happened to you in Angers and Saumur, but rather by taking from it what is at the same time both most pleasant and most necessary.

First we must establish, he continued, that in the sad situation you are in, there are two things to execute for your healing: one is to make you lose the sentiment of your pains; the other, to restore to your heart the taste for pleasure. Although these two objectives seem at first to be much alike, you will find them quite

⁴³¹ The entire preceding paragraph, with exception of the first sentence and the beginning of this one, disappear in the Ryckhoff editions, although this omission is not among those listed by Ms. Cooper (*op. cit.*).

different if you consider them closely. I do not enter all at once into details of the means I intend to employ. It suffices to tell you today that religion will enable us to achieve the first of these two goals. Alas, it would be most desirable, he added, lifting his eyes toward heaven, if it alone could also lead us to the second! But we are made of flesh and blood, which is to say that spiritual pleasures are not those that flatter us most. Yet that sad and downcast heart requires something that flatters it. I can hear it sigh. I have no trouble understanding what it lacks. Dear God, just leave it to me! I know what it is asking for, and I guarantee you it will become tranquil once it has obtained it. Thus I am going to lead you on two paths, which will end with your happiness. By the one, you will be delivered of that nagging sorrow that devours you, and you will achieve peace of mind. But as something more is required for happiness than mere exemption from pain, especially after the long and grievous sufferings you have experienced, I want your heart to return to feeling the sweet emotions of pleasure, and I shall lead it to that point without its noticing. Once more, I ask you as a favor, my dear sir, to take some confidence in me, and leave everything to me.

Such vague promises could not easily inspire in me the confidence which the Father was asking of me. Nevertheless, my respect for the princess, who was providing me this new consoler, obliged me to answer him with some indications of esteem and approval. That made him more eager; and taking even the civilities which I continued to offer him as [312] total consent, he told me as we parted that he was going first to attend to preparing what would serve his enterprise, and that he would return to see me the next day for further explanation.

I had the honor of seeing Madame before evening, and of thanking her for the two favors I had received from her that day. I told her in all its circumstances about the conversation I had had with the J.... She judged it as I have already reported, and despite

the indisposition I felt the try his method, she got me to agree to it by her insistence. What do you risk? she said. Were you to take the matter only in the guise of entertainment, it is still a considerable diversion that you would give your problems. You would not believe how comical those fellows are.⁴³² I consented. If it was not exactly in order to make a diversion of it, as it seemed Madame wanted to advise me, neither was it with the hope of deriving from it some serious fruit for my consolation. My expectation would have been quite deceived, since I received for my acquiescence nothing but shame and trouble, in an adventure in which I was a hundred times ashamed for my weakness.

The J. F. exactly kept his promise the next day. In the morning I received a chest full of books, which he had carefully assembled for my use. I awaited his arrival to open it. He came about dinner time. As I had already told him I would be pleased to have him come at that time, I had ordered that my table to be well served. He did the good fare honor by eating some of each course with tremendous appetite. However, once we had finished dinner, it was with some reflections on the pleasures of the table that he began his moral treatise. You have served me magnificently, he said; but why such abundance, or rather this profusion of courses? I answered him frankly that it was out of consideration for him that I had given these exceptional orders, and that I was the most indifferent man on earth for fine fare. No, he replied, you do not get my meaning. I do not pretend to condemn a moderate taste for the pleasures of the table, and I even think this sort of pleasure should have a part in the plan of a happy life: but I would like for a man of intelligence to have it consist less in the proliferation of meats, than in order and delicacy. For example, you cannot have too good a cook. You also cannot take too much care in the choice of your house wine. But why such variety of

⁴³² Another sentence omitted in the Ryckhoff editions.

dishes and liqueurs? Believe me, sooner or later taste suffers from it; it can no longer be content with what is excellent; and you would be amazed what a loss that is for happiness. I, alas, I replied, do not think at all of the distinction of the courses set before me; sorrow makes everything bitter to me, and changes the best food to poison. Leave it to me, he replied, I know how to restore your sense of taste. Let us begin with the mind and the heart, you shall see how everything else will follow from my principles.

We went out to the garden apartment, where I had had the chest of books transported. He opened it in my presence, and taking the books out himself, he presented each volume to me as his hand fell upon it.

First he offered me a little French catechism, written by a Jesuit named Canisius.⁴³³ That, he said, is a golden little book. It is the essence and elixir of religion. With this book, which is not thicker than your little finger, you will know in less than an hour as much as all the theologians and all the bishops; even as much as the pope, he added with a smile, glancing at me from the corner of his eye. Limit yourself to that, change nothing in it, and you will be able to claim you are as sound in religion as a council. Then he presented me with a work entitled *La Dévotion aisée*, another book by a Jesuit.⁴³⁴ This is for morals, he continued; the

⁴³³ This shortened form of his *Summa doctrinae christianae* by the Dutch Jesuit Peter Canisius (1521–1597) was published in the 1550s and translated into French in 1686 with the title *Catéchisme, ou instruction familière sur les principales vérités de la religion catholique, par demandes et réponses, très utile aux nouveaux convertis* ('Catechism, or informal instruction on the principal truths of the Catholic religion through questions and answers, most useful to new converts').

⁴³⁴ *La Dévotion aisée* ("Devotion made easy", 1652) is by Pierre Le Moyne (1602–1671); Pascal speaks of him in the ninth of his *Lettres provinciales*, which serves as a model for this whole scene.

other was for doctrine. The first contains the law, and this one the manner of practicing it. You will find here everything an honest man requires for salvation, and you will be surprised to see the way it is all toned down. It is a book after which you can dispense with all others. We shall leaf through it together. That is where I will help you find ways of [313] quieting the feeling of your pains, or you may be sure you will find them nowhere. He took out several more devotional books in the same style, which he praised in succession. Put that, he said, in the place of your Plato and your Seneca, and give it an hour or two of reading every day.

As there remained in the coffer a much larger quantity of volumes, I waited impatiently for him to make them known to me by name. He did not get to that until he had given me a little prelude to instruct me on their use. He said that since it is not possible for the mind always to occupy itself in the same taste for serious things, one had to make concessions to this weakness in nature; but that there were useful amusements, which could be of benefit to a soul well-disposed; that I more than anyone ought to try this experiment out of need; I would find in the books he was going to give me the means of entertaining the mind and heart at the same time, and that consequently nothing was more apt to contribute to the success of the project he had explained to me. Thereupon he read me the title of many volumes of poetry, gallant romances, and novels, which he gave me as the works of the most celebrated authors of the time; and he counseled me most attentively to keep myself occupied with this reading as continually as I could, to avoid reverie and meditation, which were, he said, a fatal occupation for me and for all afflicted persons. Not only did I not know the names of all these entertaining works, but I had not the least idea what they contain. I took them from the J.'s hand, and although I hoped upon his word that they would do me some good, I put off judging their merit until after examination.

What I am giving you here, he added further, is only to avoid idleness and solitude. I expect to be here often, to help you more substantially through conversation with you. I exhort you also to go out a bit more often. Madame will always be happy to see you at St. Cloud. And since it is not always at court and under the gilded roofs of a palace that one finds the most agreeable amusements, I have arranged this morning for you to meet someone who, given your humor, will have a thousand charms for you. It is in the neighborhood. I shall take you there this very afternoon. I have already praised your merit there, and you are impatiently awaited. You are going terribly fast, I said to him, and I am beginning to see how you hope to deliver me from my sadness. It is certain that a life as dissipated as what you are proposing would ultimately produce that effect, if I were capable of adapting myself to it. But that is the difficulty; or rather, that is what I am absolutely unable to do. You do not know that even in the most tranquil situation, nothing goes more against my character than such continual losing of oneself, and there is nothing I less willingly⁴³⁵ give up than introspection and meditation. The remedy you offer me would therefore be almost as difficult to bear as my sorrows themselves. He replied that my interest required me at least to make an attempt; that I was not committing myself to something I could not break off, and that I would always be free to return to my solitude if I found nothing that could satisfy me elsewhere. I finally agreed to accompany him, especially after the portrait he drew me of the persons with whom he wished to put me in contact. He is a Protestant gentleman, he said, who I am trying to turn into a Catholic. I have undertaken his conversion on the king's orders. You will be charmed by his intelligence and wisdom. He is, like you, out in the country with

⁴³⁵ The original says "more willingly" (*plus volontiers*), which is obviously an oversight.

no other company than his wife and his daughter. Your taste is too good, he added with a mysterious smile, not to wish to see them again once you have begun to know them.

We went to their house in my carriage. It was at most two English miles. From the first compliments I surmised that I was expected. I indeed found in the physiognomy and conversation of the gentleman everything my guide had promised me: intelligence, civility, an interest in the sciences, with the most noble sentiments of honor and virtue. Our conversation went on for some while with no sign of the ladies. The J., as if impatient for me to see them, invited de R. (that was the gentleman's name) to allow me that satisfaction. He did so [314] graciously. I found the mother to be a lady of forty, whose face and first impression bespoke a person of condition; but my entire attention was immediately stolen by her daughter, who struck me as less a mortal creature than a divinity. Never did nature bestow its gifts in greater profusion. From the start I could only admire her as the loveliest thing I had ever laid eyes on.⁴³⁶ The whiteness of her skin, the regularity of her features, the dazzling sparkle in her eyes, a hundred charms reflected in her face and her whole person, were for me, for a few moments, a spectacle I could not get enough of. I observed no less grace in her words and the sound of her voice; and to crown so many perfections, they were accompanied by an air of gentleness and modesty that seemed to guarantee that it was not an ordinary soul that inhabited such a beautiful body. However excessive my admiration had grown all of a sudden, I had enough control over myself not to let only moderate signs of it appear. The rest of this visit was spent in mutual civili-

⁴³⁶ As amiable as Fanny is, Cleveland indeed has never much emphasized her beauty as such. His rather fraternal kind of love is not comparable to the seduction he immediately experiences here for the first time.

ties, and we parted company sufficiently pleased with each other that we promised to cultivate diligently this incipient acquaintance.

The J. had observed me much more closely than I had suspected. He accompanied me back home, and asked me with a smile what I thought of the gentleman and his family. I replied that I had perceived nothing but that merited my esteem and praise. And the young lady, he added, did you not find her most amiable? Infinitely, I said, and I doubt there is anything in the world like her. He took on a more serious mien. I had foreseen, he said, that that would be your judgment of her, and I admit it is not without purpose that I brought you to this house. You seek remedies for sadness: will you ever find a more charming one? I looked at him with surprise. Oh, I exclaimed, how little you know me! I see the remedy you are proposing to me; but you do not know that it is love which has caused the most terrible of all my woes. He interrupted me to assure me he knew that, and that that was that very reason that led him to give me this advice. I do not know, he continued, the details of your adventures; but I gauge you here on the general impression that Madame conveyed to me of your character. You are affectionate by nature. Do not think you can cure woes received from love by another remedy than love itself. Trust the long study I have made of the human heart. He added that by now I should easily understand the system he had fashioned for my recovery; he reduced it to four main points: religion, of which the motifs and sublime thoughts would begin to diminish the sensation of my woes; agreeable reading, which would dim the memory of them; the exterior distraction of society, which would take it entirely away; and finally to the pleasures of love, which would seep into my heart like a healing balm, and revive all my sensibility for pleasure.

Although there was nothing more bizarre, and no doubt more impossible, than this assortment of sensual pleasures and

religion, it was not from that aspect that I viewed his system to turn me away from it. I considered only the last parts of it, and believing myself as incapable of devoting myself to dissipation as to love, I declared to him that I expected little fruit from his counsel. He did not lose courage. As I was determined to reveal nothing to him that related to my wife, and he apparently took me for a widower who had become free by the death of the one I had loved, he persisted in maintaining that I would soon experience the efficacy of his method. I am willing to believe that in proposing to me an affectionate involvement with Mademoiselle de R. he envisaged nothing other than a proper and legitimate marriage. But though his plan could not succeed, he managed only too well to make me confess that I had ill known my own heart when I had believed it immune to love's surprises.

He left me when we reached the house. I had nothing so important to do as to have a look without delay at the books he had given me. I first opened that divine catechism in which he had assured me that all the science of religion was contained. [315] As I had yet but a faint notion of the truths of Christianity, one will easily understand that I was very unsatisfied with this reading. I found many obscure things in it. And had I found them clearer, a doctrine exposed without evidence was not what could bring conviction to my mind. That was the first reflection I made after reading it attentively. What reason does this man have to suggest that I submit blindly to his authority, or to that of his book? There is doubtless no religion in the world that has not its principles, and cannot thus present them to me written up. Consequently there is none that has not the same right, or rather which has as little, to require my faith without evidence and without examination. I concluded that I needed to await the J.'s explanations before trying to harvest the fruits he had given me to expect from his catechism and his other books of religion. Next I took up some of those works of amusement and gallantry which he had

placed in the second rank among his remedies. I skimmed some of them. Of several works that I happened upon, I scarcely found two or three with that were satisfactory to my reason. A few ingenious thoughts, a happy turn of phrase, some tender or light images, such were the weapons which the J. was offering me to diminish the ever-present memory of my woes. I could not bear such reading for more than a quarter of an hour. I threw the books down indignantly. Oh God! I exclaimed, are they mocking my sufferings? Is it to insult me that they think I can be comforted by such frivolous amusements?

I renounced more than ever the slim expectations which the J.'s promises had made me entertain. His third means of healing seemed to me still less likely than the first two; and the nature of the fourth was such that it could not hold my attention even for a moment. I resolved to be rid absolutely of this importunate physician, and to apologize to Madame for my inability to benefit from the consolations she had arranged for me. He was to return the next day: I gave orders in advance that he be informed politely of my intention to do without his assistance. Meanwhile, for the rest of the day I found it most agreeable to recall the moments he had had me spend at the home of M. de R. I felt warm esteem for this amiable family, and looked forward to maintaining a close tie with them. The father's character was much to my liking: I did not doubt that in time he might become a true friend to me. The daughter's charms were even more present in my memory. I did not think of her without feeling something less bitter than my usual agitations. I even noted that this thought returned too often, and was more than once obliged to concentrate in order to put it aside. I fell back at once to the perpetual subject of my pains; but even in my misfortunes there was always some circumstance that brought back to me as if spontaneously the image of Mademoiselle de R. If I lamented my wife's infidelity for a moment, it was to make next the comparison of her charms with those I had just

admired. Such was once, I would say, the ungrateful, inconstant Fanny. Thus at least did she appear to my eyes when she was the whole of all my life's happiness.

I spent the evening and part of the night in this sort of uneasiness. However, heaven is my witness that, far from suspecting what was quietly germinating in my heart, my mind never even entertained the thought that I had the least betrayal to fear with respect to my passions. The reader knows in what manner I had always controlled them. Properly speaking, the only thing I had had to combat was grief. Love had never inspired in me anything that was not innocent. I must confess, I was without fear and without precaution, because I did not know what the peril was. Thus it happened that I succumbed to it almost without defense; and what is strange is that my reason was seduced as promptly as my senses. I would no doubt conceal this shameful part of my story from my readers if my aim in writing was glory. But it is not praise of myself which I promised; it is the sincere relation of my misfortunes and of my weaknesses.⁴³⁷

[316] Upon awakening, I found my imagination so filled with Mademoiselle de R. that I was no longer capable of doing anything else. Love, for that is what it was, made me feel the most charming emotions; and whether as an effect of the dreams that had deluded me during sleep, or whether from the nature of the passion itself, I rose with a movement of joy which I had known only in the happiest moments of my life. I did not fail to reflect some on this change. As I was not seeking to deceive myself, it was easy to discover its cause. I am in love, that much is certain. But, I immediately added, anticipating the reproach I

⁴³⁷ This has been a full day. We read earlier that the Jesuit came about dinner time, in other words around noon; the discussion over the books and the visit to the home of the R...’s take place later that same afternoon.

expected from my reason, is it a crime to love? I have recognized a hundred times that love is an innocent passion. I believed it not only legitimate, but essential to my happiness, at a time when I made of virtue and wisdom an object of study. How could it cease to be so now that it can help restore joy and peace to my soul? No, the remedy to my woes is found. That is it. It is love. I can already feel its effect. The good J. had it right, more than I imagined. He knew my own heart better than I.

This argument seemed so sound and clear to me that nothing came to mind for me to oppose to it. I even forgot for a while that I was engaged by bonds which did not allow me to form others; and when this thought came to mind, I regarded it as a feeble and trivial objection. I destroyed it so easily that it seemed my heart had already prepared its response. Yes, I said, I am bound by marriage vows; but this is only about love. My wife has betrayed me. It is certain that I no longer owe her anything. The ingrate! Did I not adore her? Would I not have loved her constantly? Alas, I would still prefer her to the throne of the world, were it possible for her to recover her innocence! But my shame and her betrayal are certain. Can the efforts I wish to make to forget her be faulted?

Let us have a look, I continued; this is a difficulty to be resolved in a minute's time. I cannot break the engagements I have with my wife, and indeed I have no intention of doing so. It is a dreadful chain which I must carry my entire life. But I must scorn her; it is a shameful weakness to have long wondered whether I still loved her. At the same time, my heart must love someone. Heaven does not apprise me for nothing that all my woes may end through love.⁴³⁸ I may therefore follow the pen

⁴³⁸ Cleveland is doubly vulnerable to the temptation that Cécile represents, as these reflections testify: she combines, first of all, his persuasion that love is a natural movement and cannot therefore be

chant that draws me to Mademoiselle de R. It is true that I have nothing to envisage beyond the simple pleasure I may take in following it. But what have I ever sought in love? Is it the pleasure of the senses? It reduces man to the level of animals. No, it is the sweet union of two hearts which accord in all their sentiments; it is the appeal of merit, the inexpressible charm of tenderness, it is everything that I no longer have a right to expect from my unfaithful wife, and that I can seek in another without becoming guilty of infidelity like her: for this sort of bond can be broken; marriage vows do not affect this delicate part of love. The heart is set free when it is betrayed. Only the body remains bound by the promises spoken. Now if I have no other chain, I agree willingly never to break it.

I went round and round all morning with many other reflections. But it will appear surprising that they all tended to justify my new passion. There was not one to resist it; it was a torrent that swept me along and forced all my thoughts to follow its course. After noon, the visit of M. de R. was announced; I eagerly went to greet him. I had not been told that he was accompanied by his wife and daughter. My heart genuinely opened to joy when I saw her appear who had conquered it. I showered all three of them with civilities. We were much more open in this conversation than we had been the first time. M. de R. asked for my friendship with as much ardor as I desired his. I promised it to him; and to make it closer, I persuaded my sister-in-law and my

contrary to God's will (Gelin's argument in book III), and secondly the empirical response to the dilemma that had obsessed him at the beginning of book VI, when his suffering seemed to find no remedy. Cécile is both a pleasure and a comfort in the form of distraction; in short, the Jesuit was right on this subject: Cleveland will say (p. 325) that it is she who has ended his pains, and that in losing her, he fears they will return.

niece also to form some relationship with his wife and daughter. We spoke a good deal about the J., and the zeal with which he endeavored to convert heretics.⁴³⁹ M. de R., who was beginning to know me well enough to be confident he risked nothing by confiding in me, confessed frankly [317] to me that he was much beleaguered by his visits and instruction. I do not know, he said, where all this will end up. Prudence obliges me to allow him in my house, because I have been ordered to do so by the king, who absolutely want me to listen to him. I regretfully lend him my attention, for I am sincerely attached to my religion; but he is becoming so bothersome and so pressing that I do not know how long my patience will be able to endure. On the other hand, I have a hundred precautions to take. My functions, and even my property, may depend on the testimony he will give on my conduct. The king seems to less well-intentioned than ever towards Protestants. Every day we hear of some new violence. The Chamber of the Edict has just been suppressed in Rouen; and we are threatened with nothing less than the abolition of all our privileges.⁴⁴⁰ To crown our misfortunes, he added, we are told that M. de Turenne is thinking of becoming a Catholic.⁴⁴¹ One cannot doubt that the king's zeal will be aroused by such a grand example, and that he will take advantage of it to treat us with even less indulgence. My dilemma is acute. I will have difficulty respecting the

⁴³⁹ "Heretic" was the standard Catholic appellation for Protestants.

⁴⁴⁰ These privileges are the guarantees provided to French protestants by the Edict of Nantes. The Chambers were entrusted with judging matters concerning the king's Protestant subjects. They were located in conjunction with the Parlements of Paris, Rouen, Rennes, Bordeaux, Toulouse and Grenoble. Those of Paris and Rouen were suppressed by a royal declaration in January 1669. Prévost accurately depicts the anxiety raised by such suppressions.

⁴⁴¹ His conversion will take place later in book VI.

interests both of my fortune and of my conscience. I replied that I understood all the peril of his situation; and to confirm to him that his fears were not entirely vain, I told him the story of my adventure in Angers. If they show such little restraint with a foreigner, I said, it would seem they will show even less deference to subjects of the king. I would not have taken long to depart the realm after such an unpleasant scene, had I not been retained by the kindnesses of Madame, and by assurances of protection from the mouth of His Majesty himself. But in your case, what prevents you from escaping from violence by going to some neighboring state? Do England and Holland not offer you an asylum? That is less simple than you imagine it, he replied. The path is not open. Besides, can I leave the realm without a penny, and go expose myself and my family to every extremity of misery? I am too closely observed here to sell my property secretly. I have as many spies of my conduct as I have friends and servants. Thus we went into a hundred details of confidence and friendship, which did not keep me from having an eye always open to observe every little movement of his daughter, and from consummating my ruin through this dangerous sight.

Everyone knows what a difference a little familiarity makes in manners and in the turn of a conversation. We reached this point almost at once. The four ladies, seeming to follow the example of the confident appearance they saw on M. de R.'s face and mine, had very soon adopted among themselves the tone people use when they like each other. That was where I began anew to admire the charms of the amiable Cécile: such was the name I heard her mother use. Although her gentleness and modesty never left her, I recognized easily that her basic humor was gay and spirited; and through an effect endemic only to love, I no longer found anything as charming as that character, I who had until then had no taste for anything but grave and serious manners. A smile, a bantering word that came from her, provoked

even me to joy. It seemed to me in seeing her that my blood circulated more freely, my breathing was easier, and in every part of my body there was a lightness which I had not felt even in my early youth.

Besides that, I felt no desire to express to her what I thought of her, other than by general civilities. I do not know whether she had enough experience to enter into the meaning of my glances and admiration. For my part, I did not have enough experience of what is called gallantry to conceive methodically the design of pleasing her. I was in love, I felt it indulgently; that was perhaps the only fruit I would have thought of reaping from my passion. I would doubtless have sought the pleasure of seeing and speaking with her often; but it is not certain that I would ever have taken the liberty of opening my mouth to utter in her presence the name of love. What I am saying is so sincere that, despite the kind of approbation I had already given to my sentiments, I did still re-examine them after her departure. I calculated, in a sense, what I was ready to concede to my heart. I shall go one day out of two, I said, to M. de R.'s. I will stay part [318] of the afternoon. There I shall have the contentment of seeing the charming Cécile, of being with her, and hearing her. I shall glean from the sight of her and from her conversation enough to occupy me agreeably the day I spend without her. Such was still the innocence of my views. In a word, I gave in so willingly to love on to foster it in my heart, and make it take the place of my sorrow. But as it had entered my heart without my permission, and I had begun to reason so in its favor only since it was already its master, I ought to have recognized from the change in my thinking that I was already its dupe, and that it would not fail to cause me again more than one illusion. However that may be, I do not know what it could have made me do if I had followed its impressions alone, or my own inclinations; and I have this consolation in my shame, that it belongs in part to the counsel of another person.

The J. returned that evening intending to spend the night. I was so content with the events of the day, and my humor was so changed, that I had revoked the order I had left with my porter the day before. He was politely received, and I was pleased to see him enter. You find me, I said to him, very different from what I was yesterday. The joy this gave him made him interrupt me at once. I see it on your face, he replied, and I bless heaven for it. I flatter myself that my books and counsel have had something to do with it. Your books? replied I candidly; not at all: they satisfied me so little that I have given up reading them. But if you call my inclination for Cécile de R. an effect of your counsel, I admit I am obliged to you for it, and that I have already derived much fruit from it. Then I went on about the fine qualities of this young person, with the pleasure you feel to speak of someone you love; and considering the J. as a sort of confidant, I allowed him to see openly all that was happening in my heart. After listening to me with an air that indicated his satisfaction, he told me that from this point he believed my recovery certain; that he had never doubted the success of the method he had proposed to me; that it would have been desirable that I carried out every part of it, that its fruits would have been more perfect; that religion especially would have served me in a way that would have exceeded my expectation and imagination... I interrupted him in turn, to say that it was not my fault if I had not found attractive what he had offered me under the name of religion; that I had read some of it, and had found nothing there that had satisfied my mind. He replied to that in a way that at the time did not seem to me as amusing as it has seemed to me since. I can see, he said, what it is that puts you off in the little work I put into your hands. You like to reason. You must have evidence and demonstrations. But do you know that is taking a wrong path to arrive at something certain where religion is concerned? The greatest minds are not commonly the best Christians. Faith requires simplicity and

submission. Listen, he added: I would like to share with you an observation I have made a hundred times over. A man of intelligence, far from complaining that we ask only docility of him, and that we leave nothing for his reason to do, ought to regard our method as an infinite advantage. By delivering him from the consternation of examination, it leaves him all his time and all his freedom to apply himself to more agreeable things. If knowledge of religion could be acquired only by dint of reasoning, the importance of the matter would require us to devote our entire lives to that task; and what a sad occupation it would be, continually going pale over the Bible and many obscure books to discern their true meaning? You see, all that is necessary for salvation is contained in the little book I gave you. A quarter of an hour's reading does the job. With that you enter into all the rights of religion; you have its great hopes, its motives, its consolations; and afterwards you have all your time left to devote to the most charming occupations, and to enjoy decently the pleasures of life. What do you think of my observation? I said simply that it would take too long to examine it, but that given my temperament, it was not in my power to believe or not believe, and that the assent of [319] my reason had to be won by evidence. Well, he replied, we have no shortage of that; I promise you some that will satisfy you. But there is no hurry. The principal thing was to heal your sorrow, and I am delighted at least that one of the four means I had proposed to you has done you some good. Next he asked me whether I would permit him to inform Madame of the success of his treatment. I had no difficulty recognizing that vanity had more to do than genuine zeal with his undertaking of healing me, and that his goal was to get credit for it from Madame. I agree, I said, to let you inform the princess that I am much more tranquil, and that I owe this change, if you wish, to your good services. I will testify to it also. But I absolutely do not want her to know that love has anything to do with it. He promised me complete discre-

tion. And as I adduced no other reason for committing him to silence than my uncertainty still as to whether the change I experienced would be of long duration, he happily gave me his word that it would be, and that he would know how to make his handiwork complete.

He went about it only too eagerly; and what he had in mind as the completion of his enterprise became most sinister to the amiable Cécile and myself. In the satisfaction he had to see the beginnings answer so well to his hopes, he did not have the patience to remain overnight at my house, as he had intended when he came. He left me to go spend it at M. de R.'s, and without saying anything about the reasons for his departure, he assured me only that he would continue to labor more efficaciously than I thought to be of service to me. I pressed him in vain to tell me more. Depend on my zeal and on my discretion, he said as he departed. Seeing him leave in such apparent haste, I remembered what I had heard Madame say: that all the fellows of his species were to some degree comedians. He did indeed go to M. de R.'s. His plan, as I later learned, was to serve as my Mercury,⁴⁴² and dispose the heart of Cécile to love me. He went about it with wondrous skill; for he was more skillful at conducting an intrigue than at treating a point of religion soundly. It is well known that a girl of sixteen⁴⁴³ is easily seduced when she is led to envisage the pleasures of love, especially if it is a person she respects, and whose counsel leads her go half-way: nature is not slow to do the rest. I was myself surprised the very next day to find dispositions in Cécile that my attentions had not elicited, and which even anticipated my desires. I did not fail to go that afternoon to her house. I encountered her in the house's avenues, where she was walking alone with the J. It was, it is true, opposite the windows

⁴⁴² *I.e.*, as a go-between.

⁴⁴³ Several months later (in book XI) Cleveland will say fourteen.

of the house; but I could only admire the power which this strange man had assumed over M. and Mme de R.: for I could not doubt that they were reluctant to see their daughter in his hands, and that it was fear that forced them to such pragmatic indulgence.

As soon as I spotted Mademoiselle Cécile, I stopped down out of my carriage to accost her. As I had not understood the meaning of the J.'s last promises, I was very far from having the least suspicion of the subject of their conversation. However, the blush which I could see covering that lovely person's face at my approach, and the timid way she kept her eyes lowered, made me judge that she was occupied at the least by something interesting. I was going to excuse myself for the liberty I was taking in interrupting her conversation by my presence. The J. anticipated me. It is about you, monsieur, he said, that I had the honor of speaking with Mademoiselle Cécile. I thought I would be rendering her a service if I made known to her your merit, and something of the sentiments you have for her. I assure you her heart is not capable of ingratitude. Although I had not heard this compliment without emotion, I hastened to reply that I indeed had for that charming miss the most perfect sentiments of esteem and admiration, and that I would think myself most happy to be able to show their sincerity by my services. I have gone farther than you, the J. replied; I have betrayed your secret, and promised her on your behalf something more than esteem. So decisive a declaration [320] made Cécile's blush even deeper, and put me also in an extreme bind. My replies were nevertheless as tender as respectful. I was ardently in love. There was infinite pleasure in saying so; and having been unable to foresee the opportunity I had to do so, my mind and my reason had less a share in this brief conversation than my heart. The arrival of M. de R., who had come out to meet me as soon as he had seen my carriage drive up, did not allow his daughter time to express herself. She got over her

blushing when she saw her father, and we entered the house together.

If it had been less difficult for me to find a way to speak alone with her, I am not sure I would have thought to look for one, given the emotion I continued to be in during the entire afternoon. I was scarcely able to command my attention to hear M. de R. and answer him. The J. sometimes looked at me with a smile, as if he were quite proud of the service he had just rendered me. As for Cécile, I judged by her silence and timidity that her embarrassment was about equal to mine. She appeared preoccupied. I noticed that she often put her hand to her brow, as if to hide her eyes; but her fingers cracked open and allowed her to see. She would look at me languidly; and when she perceived that my eyes were turning toward her, I saw her fingers close at once to hide such a charming sight from me. My emotion redoubled. The more simple and natural I was in my movements, the easier it was for me to understand this tender language that was dictated by nature itself, and consequently the more I should be sensitive to it.

Nevertheless, the pleasure that I had tasted that day at M. de R.'s did not prevent the J.'s actions from seeming most extraordinary to me. As we left, I invited him to come spend the night at my house, and asked him for some explanation of his conduct. He gave me none, other than the desire he had to make me tranquil and happy. He added that, knowing me to be full of honor and reason, he had no apprehension lest I make ill use of the victory he had helped me obtain over Mademoiselle Cécile's heart: For she already loves you, he said; I painted such an amiable portrait of you, and depicted you as so tender and passionate for her, that I saw her little heart gradually catch fire as she listened to me. I believe, he added, pressing my hand, that that heart is a little treasure. I simply replied coldly that I was much obliged to him for his zeal. However keen my passion, it had not yet made me

forget my duty; and although I dared not reveal to him the reasons I had for containing myself within certain limits, I felt myself obliged all the same to make him understand that there were some I did not wish to cross. Maybe I was my heart's plaything, and did not express myself strongly enough; but it is certain that his obliging inclinations were in no way tempered thereby, and that he continued subsequently to serve me with the same attention with respect to Mademoiselle de R.

I lived for several months in that sweet intoxication that love inspires. I was all the more satisfied with myself that in making an almost continual examination of all my dispositions, I did not discover even one that seemed to me to offend duty. Whether it was illusion or certainty, this thought itself helped almost as much as love itself to put me at ease. Few days went by that I did not have the satisfaction of seeing Cécile. Everything that is solicitous in services, tender in manners, delicate in attentions and in little preferences, I constantly employed, as much to follow the penchant of my heart as to nourish in hers the favorable sentiments I already knew her to have for me. But what will be difficult to believe, and appears surprising even to me, is that in such a long time not a single word escaped that betrayed the slightest complicity between my tongue and my sentiments. I let my eyes and outward attentions do all the work. This was doubtless an effect of those inviolable principles of virtue which had already from my youth grown roots so deep in my soul that they acted there as if naturally, and without needing any help from my reflections. It was not hard for me to maintain this reserve. Maybe I was then the unique [321] example of an infinitely tender love, unaccompanied by desires or expectations. I do not doubt that Cécile was astonished to see me maintain such respectful silence after the explanation that the J. had contrived between us. She clearly saw that I adored her. It was no less easy for me to recognize that she was preoccupied by a violent inclination for me. My

whole conduct must have appeared to her a most confusing enigma. I sometimes saw her dreamy, keeping her eyes resting languidly on me, as if she had sought to discover what tied my tongue, and what prevented me from expressing what I found it so agreeable to feel.

I also continued to wait assiduously on Madame. She very soon perceived that a propitious change had taken place in my humor. But though I confessed to her that I found my mind much freer and more tranquil, I concealed the cause from her with considerable care. I willingly abandoned the credit to the J. for healing me with his counsel. The princess was not so much mistress of her countenance that it could not clearly be seen that she herself was in need of consolation. She was visibly wasting away, and it had been noticed for some time that she had lost some of her charm and jocundity. People whispered that it was vexation and jealousy that were causing this alteration. It is certain that she had believed the king loved her; and the prince had perhaps tried to persuade her of it. He had long visited her with the most constant assiduity. Their conversations always took place in private. Gossip had not failed to lend a knowing turn to so many secret meetings. The princess might have ignored the rumor, if the effect had confirmed the public's opinion; but the truth had been suddenly illuminated by the most unforeseen event, and the most mortifying for her. The king had used her as a shadow, to hide another love. He was passionate for one of her maids of honor, whose name was La Vallière. This passion had long grown in secret. But whether by the suitor's weakness or by the mistress's vanity and ambition, it had finally pierced the veils of mystery; and people had been surprised to see a young girl who was barely a demoiselle⁴⁴⁴ placed all of a sudden within an inch of the throne. Such a scandalous scene, the ridiculousness of

⁴⁴⁴ *I.e.*, barely noble by birth.

which seemed to fall partly on Madame, had piqued her resentment to the point of upsetting her humor and her health.⁴⁴⁵ Others pretended nevertheless that her profound sadness came from the continual causes of discontentment she received from Monsieur. That prince and she got along very badly. By the most bizarre of caprices, he publicly maintained several mistresses, and was jealous at the same time of his wife's fidelity.⁴⁴⁶ Every day he had some new complaint; and often he allowed himself such bitter and insulting accusations that he would not have treated a page so harshly. These sorts of quarrels were hardly bruited about, because the respect and infinite affection which the princess attracted from all her servants assured their discretion; but I could not be unaware of them, as I was at St. Cloud almost every day, and was considered less as a stranger there than as an officer of the house. I remember one of the most extraordinary adventures of this sort, and one of the most distressing for that unhappy princess. Monsieur often walked on foot in the streets of Paris, going to the lodgings of one of his mistresses as he was just leaving another. On these occasions he disguised himself in simple clothing. Sometimes he was followed by no more than a single footman. One day when he was crossing the Pont Neuf, he was stopped by four or five bourgeois who were half-drunk, and had been led to this place for a most amusing reason. While

⁴⁴⁵ According to Mme de La Fayette, Madame and the king together chose La Vallière as the object of the king's attentions in order to fend off the suspicions that circulated on their own account; Madame was perhaps a bit peeved, however, when the king genuinely fell in love with the lady. Their liaison lasted for more than ten years.

⁴⁴⁶ Monsieur was capricious and somber, and complained often about Madame. He was particularly suspicious of the Comte de Guiche, and then Vardes; and if it is certain that she was in love, she swore nonetheless on her deathbed, according to Lafayette, that she had never been unfaithful to her husband.

drinking together, they had come around to talking about exterior manners and physiognomy; and one of them had boasted he could identify at first sight, and based solely on the appearances of the person's face and gait, the profession of the first passer-by to come down the street.⁴⁴⁷ This proposition had seemed so singular to the others that they had resolved to put it to the test; and in order to derive even more pleasure from it by adding a profit motive, they had agreed among themselves on a wager of a few pistoles.⁴⁴⁸ Instead of stopping in the nearest street, they chose the Pont Neuf as the most [302] brilliant theatre. Unhappily for Madame, they arrived there at the same time as Monsieur. Warmed by wine, they were not able to maintain much restraint. They stopped him, not recognizing him. The one who was to judge having studied him for a moment, and finding no doubt that the features of his face, which in Monsieur were rather delicate, did not fit any mechanical profession, cried out, to get out of his dilemma, that he was no tradesman, but that he was surely a cuckold. The others found this idea amusing, and since the decision was up to the passer-by, they pressed him with a thousand pleasantries to admit clearly whether it was not true that he was a cuckold. Monsieur had great difficulty extricating himself from their hands. When he finally got away, he made more serious reflections on this adventure than it deserved. He could not imagine that it had occurred by chance; and persuading himself that he had been recognized, and that it was a sort of notice they had served him of Madame's conduct, he immediately set out for St. Cloud. I was at the chateau when he arrived; I was even just exiting the chamber of the princess, with whom I had had the

⁴⁴⁷ This "physiognomical" notion is less a scientific pretension (Lavater, the school's best-known advocate, is not even born until 1741) than an attempt at moral analysis in the manner of La Bruyère.

⁴⁴⁸ A *pistole* was ten francs.

honor of conversing for a long while. His furious demeanor as he entered the apartment convinced everyone that he was in a frightening fit of anger. They withdrew out of respect: but they still heard a part of his railings and insults. The princess's ladies found her in tears after this violent conversation, which had lasted over an hour. The whole household learned from the manservant himself the detail of what had transpired on the Pont Neuf, but they promised one and all to bury it in silence. I omit several comic circumstances, which are not suitable in my sad story.⁴⁴⁹

Whatever the cause of the chagrin that was secretly devouring Madame, it was unable to diminish her gentleness and goodness. It merely gave her more love for her isolation in St. Cloud, and more indifference for the pleasures of the court. She ceased going to Versailles, except when duty or propriety absolutely obligated her to. She stayed no longer than the required by the reason that took her there. Her fondness seemed to have grown for her servants, and for all the persons she honored with her affection. I received a hundred tokens of it then, the memory of which daily renews my gratitude. The notable interest I took in her health and happiness several times inspired in me the boldness to indicate to her that I was aware of her sadness. She answered me only by some sighs which betrayed a sick heart and deep wounds. My respect always checked the desire I felt to press her further. But since I could not do as much as I would have wished for the consolation of such a great princess, I tried to do as much as befitted my modesty if my strength and station. I stayed by her as long as I thought I could without making myself impor-

⁴⁴⁹ Cuckoldry had long been one of the favorite topics of popular farce; it was also deemed a bourgeois trait, which makes the scene even more humiliating for the duke. The source of this anecdote has not been identified; but the jealousy of Monsieur was widely bruited about, as well as Madame's supposed infidelities.

tunate. I went twice almost every day to the chateau, and would have spent entire days there, had I not been called by an even more pressing interest to the estate of M. de R. to sustain myself with the sight of the charming Cécile.

One day when I was at St. Cloud, a servant of M. de R.'s brought me a note from his master, by which that good gentleman summoned me in the most urgent manner, and in the name of friendship, to come immediately to his house. Taken aback by this extraordinary style, which seemed to indicate an imminent danger, I lost not a minute in satisfying him. I found him in his chamber, his face consternated, and a letter in his hand, which seemed to contain the cause of his concern. Ah, sir, he said when he saw me, all is irretrievably lost. Look at what I have received, and help me, if you can, out of this dilemma. I read his letter. It was from a Protestant gentleman friend of his, who related to him many new acts of violence perpetrated in the provinces against the reformed religion. He complained in particular, in the most moving terms, that his sons and two of his daughters had been abducted, to have them raised he knew not where. He added that the adversities experienced in the provinces would soon be felt even in the area around the court and Paris, and that he had it from good sources that the king was awaiting only the abjuration of M. de Turenne in order to apply constraint indifferently [323] against all those who refused to follow his example; that that ceremony was to take place within a few weeks⁴⁵⁰; that he saw no other possible choice for those who wished to remain faithful to their religion, than to leave the kingdom at once; that he advised him to take measures, as he himself was doing, to get secretly for his property what he could; and that he particularly exhorted him

⁴⁵⁰ Turenne abjured his protestant faith on 23 October 1668; he had been leaning toward Catholicism for several years but converted only after the death of his wife, who was a staunch Protestant.

to put his daughter in a safe place, if he did too not wish to be exposed like him to the anguish of seeing her ripped from his arms.

When I had finished reading it, M. de R. said to me: That is not all. Here is a letter from M. de Turenne, which came by the same post. Having the honor of being loved by him, I consulted him candidly about my situation, with no fear that that great soul would assume the right because of his changeover to abuse my confidence. Read his reply to me. I read it. M. de Turenne indicated to him, with much frankness and friendship, the principal motives which had produced his conversion. He exhorted him to do likewise, in the interest of his salvation even more than for that of his fortune. But if he insisted on remaining firm in his religion, he advised him to go promptly to Holland or England with all he could collect of his fortune, because he foresaw the time, he said, when many people would wish to do so but not be able to.⁴⁵¹ I am in an unbelievable turmoil, said M. de R. I know no one in the neighboring countries whom I might address to obtain an asylum. I do not know how to go about divesting myself secretly of my holdings. I fear at every moment that they will abduct my daughter. The peril is pressing, and I see no remedy which can be rapid enough, unless your friendship, he added, opens some path for me which I do not yet know about.

I reflected a moment on all I had just read and heard. I cannot, I said finally, be as useful to you as I would like when it comes to procuring you a place to go in England: for I imagine that is the principal service you expect of me. English though I

⁴⁵¹ As the purpose of the policy of repression was not, in principle, to send Protestants into exile but (forcibly) to convert them, measures were taken to impede their departure: an edict of August 1669 forbade all the king's subjects, under pain of confiscation of all their property, to leave the kingdom to settle in foreign countries.

am, I have no more relations than you in my country. But what I cannot do myself, I may perhaps obtain with the help of my friends.

There is no hope for anything from St. Cloud for an enterprise involving religion: the courtiers are of the prince's religion. But I have a friend who can help you if he is willing, and I am confident he will be willing. It is Lord Clarendon. Although he has lost the king's favor, he has family and correspondents in England. Moreover, being in Rouen, as I have learned from himself by a letter I received from him a few days ago,⁴⁵² he can easily arrange the means for you to cross the water on the first vessel leaving for London. I shall write to him by the first post. I accept your offers, replied M. de R. But while you are writing to him, and awaiting his reply, they will abduct my daughter. Well, I replied, if you fear something for her, you can have her depart in advance for Rouen. Lord Clarendon happily take her in, I am sure; she will be fine there with his wife until you can join her after you have put your affairs in order.

This overture greatly pleased M. de R. He again went over all the circumstances, and here is the plan he himself devised to put into play. Observed as I am, he said, I cannot have my daughter leave for Rouen without her departure being noticed, and my consequently being accused of arranging her escape. Therefore we need to give her flight an appearance which can justify me and obviate all suspicions. You could, he continued, come pick her up in your carriage by night, and take her straight to Rouen. You would take advantage of the darkness to cover a good deal of ground before daylight, so they would be totally unaware what direction she could have taken. The next day I will feign surprise

⁴⁵² For the rest of the novel, Prévost places Clarendon in Rouen, where in fact he spent only the last six months of his life in 1674; from 1668 to 1671 he lived in Montpellier, then moved in June 1671 to Moulins.

and grief at learning of her escape, and will even appear persuaded she has allowed herself to be abducted by some lover. If my guards suspect the truth, at least they will have no proof of it, and even less awareness of the retreat you are willing to arrange for her. There is just one difficulty in this plan, he added; it is about you, who might expose yourself to something [324] problematic by rendering me a service with such zeal. I assured him that this fear would not stop me. It is not my intention, I said, to live forever in France. I even have business that necessarily calls me to England, and I do not expect to stay here long after you. The worst thing that could happen to me, if they discover the part I have played in your family's escape, would be the obligation to precipitate my departure as well.

Everything I had said to M. de R. was sincere, and I was so occupied by the desire to end his dilemma that at first I did not even think about the pain I was going to prepare for myself by helping to send Mademoiselle Cécile away. This thought occurred to me subsequently, but I found it possible to bear it patiently with the thought that I would myself lose no time in passing over to England. Lord Terwill had returned to London. I had determined some time ago to make that journey, to finalize everything relating to my children's inheritance. I conceived in general, at the very time I was speaking to M. de R., that I might well take that occasion to leave France entirely, and would therefore have but more satisfaction and liberty with respect to my loved one when we were all together in my country. I therefore promised him with much zeal and sincerity to be at his house with my carriage and a small number of trustworthy men, about the time of night when I thought I could approach it without being heard.

I left him to allow him time to take the necessary measures with his wife and daughter, and to go take my own as well. Neither Mme Lallin nor even my sister-in-law were informed of my intention. They were accustomed to seeing me leave often with-

out notifying them, to go either to St. Cloud or to Paris, where I had sometimes stayed overnight. I confided only in Drink, who had become the intendant of my affairs, my driver, and two menservants. I secretly ordered Drink to leave on horseback before nightfall, on whatever pretext he chose to invent, and to turn up around midnight close to the house of M. de R. As for me, I waited for darkness to fall before taking the direction of Paris. I followed that road only far enough to mislead the residents of some of the nearby cabins; and when I thought no one saw me, I ordered my driver to halt in some remote spot until the time I had agreed upon with M. de R.

I can feel my hand tremble as I begin to recount one of the most dreadful adventures of my life. I do not mean dreadful in its tragic circumstances, since violence had no part in it, and the sad accident that occurred subsequently can be related only to the course of nature, or to causes it is not in the power of men to foresee or prevent; but by the almost utter shipwreck of my honor and virtue. Only by a miracle from heaven was able to save me so near the brink. In vain would I wish to attribute the honor to my reason: an enlightened reader will certainly feel that I deserved to perish, and that barring supernatural intervention, the weakness that had led me into danger would not have transformed itself into strength to prevent at least the consummation of my ruin.

The time for me to approach M. de R.'s house having come, I soon reached the avenue, and found Drink waiting for me there. We had not been there long before we saw three persons who left the house quietly, by the light of a small lantern, and who joined us just a moment later. It was M. and Mme de R. with their daughter. They put her into my hands, after embracing her a hundred times. I promised them to send news of myself as soon as we were in Rouen, which could hardly take more than two days, in keeping with my intention of travelling very expeditiously. The fear of being noticed by some servant kept our fare-

wells very short. I merely renewed to M. de R. the assurances of Lord Clarendon's goodness and generosity; and with respect to the perils of the road, I protested that my life itself would not be spared for the safety of his amiable daughter, and that therefore he should have no anxiety on any count.

[325] We set out at once. I had seen to it that we brought a lit candle inside the carriage. Cécile remained silent, and appeared preoccupied at my side. At first I chided her a bit about that; but despite all the tender sentiments that were rising in my heart, I began to engage her only on ordinary, indifferent matters. She replied from time to time with few words. I affected not to look at her fixedly, which did not prevent me from occasionally observing the gentleness of her lovely eyes, and feeling an extraordinary emotion when my eyes happened to meet hers. I would just as quickly lower mine, and make an effort to get over it; but I was too close to her to resist for long the subtle poison she projected into a hundred places all at once in my soul. The mere sound of her voice moved me inexpressibly. How much more so to touch her, as I did with the continual motion of the carriage, to breathe the same air in the small space we occupied, alas to see and smell nothing but her! All the flames of love flowed in my veins instead of blood. The agitation they caused me made me still able to sustain the conversation for a while; but burning themselves out, if I may put it thus, with their own intensity, they changed little by little into a heavy and melancholic languor, which was followed by a deep daydream. I began to consider quite differently than I had up till then, that I was taking this person, whom it gave me such delight to see and converse with, to Rouen to leave her there, and perhaps never to see her again. Then I shall no longer have her to charm away my pains, and help me pass the sweetest moments of my life! All my sufferings will be reborn, for it is she who made them cease. If I am allowed to love her, must I consent to losing her? Oh God, how

shall I live without her, and what shall I become when I have her no longer? In making these reflections, in which I was more or less entirely absorbed, sighs escaped me without my knowledge. Cécile could hear them. Her heart was not less tender than mine. She could not doubt that it was she who caused the disorder in which she saw me. She had to struggle with her timidity to indicate to me in a few words the pain she felt at my sadness. But finally her inclination won out. I do not know, sir, she said, what has all of a sudden made you so melancholic. Is it my misfortune to be the cause of it? This question, and the tone of her voice, made me turn my head toward her. I met her eyes, in which I thought I could read such tender signs of concern that they consummated my ruin. I took one of her hands, without noticing I was taking it; and pressing it in mine: Oh, Cécile, I said, what are you reproaching me? Your presence will never cause me anything but happiness and joy. But how I fear it will be very different with your absence! I will bear it for long without dying.

She was young, and inexperienced. Love at the same moment was making her feel, as it did me, all that is most lovely and most seductive. Whence could she find arms to defend herself, when even I found none either in my honor, or in my reason, and did not even think of seeking them there? She was charmed to hear me speak for the first time in a voice that flattered all her desires; and whether by a free movement or an involuntary transport, she made me a reply that signified no less passion than simplicity and innocence. If you consider my absence such a bad thing, she said, why do you wish to leave me? When you love someone, it seems to me there is such pleasure in being with the one you love! But I am not sure you love me, she added, looking at me timidly; for you have never said so. I must confess all of my weakness: this short reply made me feel something I had never yet felt, a movement more intense and a thousand times more delightful than all the pleasures I have received from love in

the span of my entire life. Today, when that memory shames me, I seek in vain in those few words what could then cause me such emotion. Was it their ingenuousness, which could only mean extreme affection in a young person whom I knew besides to be full of wit and vivacity? Was it the sound of a charming voice, [326] the impression of which combined with that which had already spread to all my senses? Or rather was it not solely the disposition of my heart, which was flattered in the extreme by the assurance of being loved, and triumphed in a sense at seeing itself being offered a happiness which perhaps it would not have dared desire?

However that may be, it was my heart alone I consulted to proffer to Cécile a hundred expressions of affection and passion. She appeared charmed to hear them. Soon she indicated that she feared she would be as vulnerable as I to the longings of absence. I told her that my intention was not that they should be everlasting, nor even as lengthy as she seemed to fear: in a word, that I had decided to leave France with her father, and that we would all go together to England. She was most satisfied by this decision. However, looking closely at when it might be that I could rejoin her, it did not seem likely that M. de R. could finish up his business in less than two or three months. So many centuries for the lovely Cécile, and for myself. It was she who was first to open a path to me which she thought apt to shorten them. It seems to me, she said, that you could have avoided my travelling to Rouen, had you proposed to my father to take me into your house, to live with your ladies until his business was finished. I could have lived there as secretly and securely as in Rouen, and we would all have left at the same time for England. Although this thought was not new to me, and I had even rejected it when it had occurred to me before our departure, because it had not seemed to me that Cécile could be better hidden in my house than in her father's, it appeared to me entirely different when it was she who proposed it to

me that way. I thought about it again, and if I was not more persuaded than before that my house was a safe haven for her, I imagined that I could arrange one for her in the summer-house that was in the middle of my park, where it would be easy for me to keep her as hidden as I wished. I dare not say that it was wisdom that inspired this idea. Love and the desire to be continually with Cécile were doubtless the only guides I consulted. After having the power to make me listen to them, they soon had the power to make me follow them. I shared my reflection with Cécile. She found it admirable. What a shame, she said, that this thought did not come to you sooner! But is it too late? she added. Who is to prevent us from returning? My father will be delighted to have me so close to him. I will be able to see him every day. I will be known only to those in whom you see fit to confide the secret. She added several things which I did not hear, so occupied was I myself by this new proposition. I saw in it something so agreeable and flattering for my inclinations that I was indeed surprised to have thought of it so late. Every movement of my heart disposed me to take that option without further deliberation. When I had to make up my mind, however, I was as if held up by a sort of fear the cause of which I could not see, and that is what produced my distraction. Our carriage was hurrying on. Cécile, seeing that I was in deep contemplation, spoke up again to say that there was no point in going farther, if what I had proposed to her could be carried out. I was hard pressed to answer her, and unable to discern what was making me uncertain, I made several objections against my own desires. She fought them; and reflecting on the discomfort she would experience at being alone in Rouen among strangers, she complained that even independently of my affection for her, which ought to make me wish she could remain with me, it was to show very indulgence for her to resist granting her what she desired.

I yielded to her entreaties, or rather to my blind penchant. I

ordered the driver to turn around, and take us to the side gate to my park, through which we could go to the isolated summer-house without being seen. I was delighted by our return. I indicated so to Cécile in the most tender manner. She responded in kind. Yet I was troubled at the same time by an inner sentiment that still seemed to reproach me for this action. I persuaded myself, to calm me down, that it [327] came only from the peril to which Cécile might still be exposed, whatever precautions I might take to conceal her from everyone's sight. It was to follow this thought that I decided to divulge the place of her retreat to no one but her father, and not even to tell my sister-in-law and niece. And the better to distract any who might learn that I had left my house the very night when Mademoiselle de R. had reportedly been abducted, I further decided to send my horses and carriage to Paris as soon as we arrived at the side gate of the park, with orders not to return until the evening of the next day. In that way, I said to Cécile, were I to be suspected of having some part in your flight, at least they will not imagine I am keeping you hidden in my house. She much approved of this whole arrangement.

I do not know whether there will be someone among my readers who is clairvoyant enough to intuit here the secret motives which made me act, and to discover what I did not then know myself, or at least what a blind and fatal passion made me not wish to see. I have recognized it since, with an embarrassment that perhaps diminished the merit of my repentance; but I feel I should confess it here out of a sort of justice that makes me regard this confession as a punishment. Wisdom, study, virtue: alas, what use are you to defend against the most shameful excesses a heart that gives in to itself and loses the duty of controlling its desires? My secret view in all these mysterious precautions I was taking to hide Cécile, that criminal view to which love blinded me, was nothing other than to secure for myself the pleasure of being alone with her, and perhaps of taking advantage

of her vulnerability to deprive her of her innocence. I was very far from recognizing it; the reader will even see, if he looks closely, that prudence ought to have suggested to me many other measures, had I had willful designs on Cécile's innocence: for what likelihood was there I could conceal such misconduct for long, not only from my family, but from M. de R. himself and his wife? I was coming to place myself under their gaze. But that is what proves even more the terrible blindness of passions. My heart was mutely seeking to satisfy all its desires: checked nevertheless, and as if frightened by a remnant of virtue and honor, it would have disavowed this culpable intention, had I asked it for an account of its sentiments; and in a disposition so obscure and so equivocal, it happened that I was incapable of taking either the proper measures to conduct myself wisely, or clear and sure ones to impel me directly towards the crime.

As soon as we had reached the gate to my park, I dispatched the carriage immediately to Paris; and as I intended to return home in my carriage by the usual gate, I ordered my driver to wait for me, when he returned from Paris, in a remote spot where I planned to go meet him on foot. I retained only Drink to serve me. I had him walk ahead of me toward the pavilion in the park, to prepare some light. It is certain that if nothing criminal has slipped into my desires, my first task ought to have been to see that M. de R. was notified of our return, and of our change of plans. But this reflection did not even occur to me when I reached the park. It was still very dark. My servants having left with the carriage, and Drink on his way to the pavilion, I found myself walking slowly alone with the mistress of my heart. Nothing could better indicate her affection for me, and her confidence in mine, than her tranquillity and satisfaction as she walked at my side, holding my arm. Love has no passionate expressions I did not offer her, and which she did not seem to hear with pleasure. We came thus to the pavilion. Drink had already prepared what

was necessary to receive us. Although there were not major provisions in this little retreat, there was enough to be found at any time to serve a light collation. It was ready in a minute. Here, said I to the lovely Cécile, is the asylum you have chosen for yourself. The throne of the world, were I its master, would soon be in your lovely hands, as is this little apartment; and you well know, I added, pointing to my heart, where you reign even more sovereignly. Indeed, I was almost [328] spellbound when I looked at her. The emotion of the walk and the adventures of the night lent her such a fine and dazzling air that I was as unsated of admiration as of love. She perceived with pleasure this effect of her charms; and her eyes told me that she was tender as much as mine told her she was beautiful. As it was now quite late, I thought I ought to send Drink away, so he would be seen by no one when he exited the park on horseback. Having left the house alone, he could reappear there without me. I instructed him to feign not to know whether I was in Paris or St. Cloud; and I ordered him to bring us in the morning the necessities that Cécile might require. He withdrew. I remained alone with that amiable girl.

I repeat: it was not by a clear and intentional design to be left alone with her that I had thus dismissed all my servants in turn. The reader can see that their departure was not entirely without reason, and that up till then everything had been done quite naturally. However, it is only too true that my heart was hoping for something as the witnesses of my actions progressively disappeared. Drink had no sooner turned his back to leave the apartment than I felt extraordinarily moved. Cécile's glances which I met, and which rested a moment on mine, were enough at this point to put all my blood in motion. I lowered my eyes, and remained some time without speaking, as if I were busy admiring her hands. But at bottom, I felt so unnerved that, being in a kind of constraint, and unable to recover enough boldness to raise my

eyes, the only thing I could do to get hold of myself was to leave the table where we were still seated, and make a few turns about the room. Cécile maintained silence, and seemed to be waiting to see how I would begin the conversation. I noted that she sometimes glanced at me, and just as quickly lowered her eyes again. My embarrassment only increased. My heart seemed to take its leave to go to her. I wanted to be at her knees, yet I dared not take that position. I barely dared approach the area where she was seated.

Finally, fearing it might worry her to see me in this state, I made an effort and sat down beside her. Then she turned her head towards me; and giving me a somewhat forced smile, she asked me sweetly whether there was something bothering me. I could not keep myself from seizing one of her hands. Bothering me! I said; bothering me, when I see you, adore you, have the joy of telling you so, and believing that you are willing to hear it! Could I then forget who it is I am so happy to be with, and whose lovely hand I am holding; could I forget all I have desired and all I have obtained! Is your heart not mine, dear Cécile? Have you not given it to me? If I possess it, can I be bothered or unhappy, as long as you do not snatch it away? I continued thus to address a hundred things to her with the same ardor and the same passionate air. Love had taken the upper hand over my reason and all my senses.

She listened to me. I read on her face that she was filled with tenderness and joy. I was in a sense enjoying both her pleasures and mine. In such a tender moment, what could she refuse me? Our desires were the same: the outcry of honor and virtue was no longer loud enough to make itself heard. I pressed a hundred ardent kisses onto her hand, and did not feel they were being resisted. Who will believe this? It was at the very instant when her innocence and mine were as if expiring that I saw the vastness of the precipice where I was about to fall; and I still do not know whether it was in Cécile's favor mine that it pleased

heaven to rescue me by the most unhopèd-for of all miracles.

Cécile was passionate enough to go well beyond her duty: but as she had received the most proper of educations, and it was impossible, even for love, suddenly to erase all its traces, she doubtless needed, as did I, to deceive herself some in order to calm the remorse that could trouble her pleasures. She understood that, being alone with me, there were no more limits at which our tenderness could stop. Perhaps she herself no longer intended any. Nevertheless, some remnant of modesty, which [329] asked to be covered by a pretext, made her suddenly withdraw her hands from mine. Heaven, what am I doing? she said, and how am I so weak! Do you at least promise to marry me? That question, although uttered tenderly and languidly, made me shudder even before I thinking about reply. I remained silent. She perceived my embarrassment. Oh God! she cried with a sigh, you hesitate! My turmoil increased so much that, unable either to look at her or answer her, I again took one of her hands which I tried to hold onto and press despite her. She withdrew it, and seeing that I still said nothing although she had repeated her question, she too ceased to speak.

Thus we both remained in the strangest situation there ever was. A hundred thoughts came to me in a moment, but with such confusion that I could not sort out a single one. I dared not even raise my eyes to meet Cécile's, and to gauge what I had to tell her by what she would allow me to perceive in them. The spell that had blinded me since I had received her from her father's hands seemed to break. Without feeling the slightest lessening of love, I felt all my desires die. Honor and respect recovered their power over my passion; and this change having considerably freed my mind, I was seized with a genuine horror when I thought of what had just taken place. It was then that, much less mindful of the reasons I had for relying on Cécile's affection than of the fear I suddenly realized of losing her esteem, I ventured to turn my eyes

on her to discover something of her feelings. She seemed to me extremely sad; and though her eyes were closed, and she was resting her head on the back of the chair, I thought I could see some tears flowing down her cheeks. I could not bear that sight. My first impulse was to fall at her knees. I do not know what turn love would have given to my expressions, but the sad Cécile anticipated me. Oh, leave me! she cried, turning aside her head to avoid my eyes, I must never see or hear you again: you have deceived me. Alas, it was not at all difficult! she added with redoubled tears: I am undone; I ought to die of shame. This reproach went to the bottom of my heart. I swore to her with the most sacred oaths that nothing was as tender and sincere as my love, and I beseeched heaven to punish me if I had ever intended to deceive her. These assurances seemed to calm her. She asked me very sweetly why I then refused to marry her, and whether I had something else in mind when I had let her know that I loved her. She told me that her father too, who had long since realized I was attracted to her, was persuaded that I would ask for her hand; that he was expecting it; the J. had so assured her more than once; that was the reason, as much as the confidence he had in my friendship and integrity, that led him to place her with such confidence in my hands; that he had instructed her before she left to consider me a man who might one day be her husband, and to conduct herself with me in a manner that could more and more merit my esteem; that she recognized that in truth she had poorly followed this advice; that allowing herself to be too unfortunately persuaded of my affection, she had not had the strength to conceal her own from me, and that she had failed in her duty by giving me signs too free and too natural of what she felt for me: but that after hearing my character spoken of so advantageously by her father and the J., and after studying me herself for long enough to feel assured of the goodness and uprightness of my heart, she would never have believed I could make it a crime for her to love

me too much, and to allow me to see that perhaps with too much candor and simplicity. She added, shedding still more tears, that as young as she was, she could not have been wrong in that; and I would have to have been the cruellest of men, if some other reason had been able to stop me, after beginning to act as I had done with her.

[330] These words, which she spoke with admirable grace and, what touched me even more, with an air of ingenuousness that made clear to me that what was refined and ingenious about her came from the natural qualities of her mind much more than from her experience and skill, made an impression on me which it would be impossible for me to describe. Either out of despair at from seeing myself forever denied any pretension to possess such a charming person, or from shame at having indeed deceived her with the false notion I had given her reason to conceive of my intentions, or from reason, or transport, I could not keep myself from making to her the only confession by which I thought I might be able to justify myself. I did not get there, however, without various detours. Lovely Cécile! I said to her, embracing her knees, heaven is my witness that there was never a passion as sincere and as perfect as mine. My heart is filled with your charms. It loves you more than anyone has ever loved. Oh, if only it could pour itself out to you! Oh charming Cécile, what love you would see then! No, no, you cannot be wrong about it. It adores you. It feels that the happiness of belonging to you is the supreme good. It would make me prefer being called your husband to all the fortunes on earth... She interrupted me, and taking these last words in the sense favorable to her desires, she said to me, extending her hand to me with a tender smile and an air already consoled: How cruel you are to make me pay so dearly for this explanation! Her reply only increased my transport. I refused her hand, and interrupted her in turn. Hate me, I said, look upon me no more except in horror... Or rather, pity my unhappy fate. Alas,

dear Cécile, I cannot belong to you! I am married.

The bewilderment which this declaration cast over her can be better imagined than described. I thought she was about to fall unconscious into my arms. She looked at me for some time with eyes so distraught that they signified nothing; and however closely I tried to observe her, I could conclude nothing from her movements nor from her eyes. Finally she emerged from this fearful torpor, but it was to shed two streams of tears, and utter the most touching protests. I at first was spared. She seemed to forget that I was still on my knees before her; and her grief turning on herself, she bitterly blamed herself for her imprudent conduct. I am undone, she cried a hundred times; I am dishonored beyond redemption. For a moment her tears and sighs made her unable to speak, and then she began crying out again with renewed violence that she was wretched, and that she was going to bring shame on her family, and be mocked by everyone she knew.

As I had avowed my marriage almost without reflection, and was myself in extraordinary turmoil, I did not know how I should go about calming this initial fury. Besides, I would not have expected the turn that her resentment was taking; and if I had thought I ought to expect some outburst after the confession I had just made, I would have imagined that it would be on me that her initial transports would have fallen. I looked at her so consternated that she would have read my justification into it, had she been capable of heeding anything. But from wherever came the motive of her deliberate avoidance of seeing me, she persisted constantly in not turning her eyes on me. I nevertheless made bold to speak to try to tell her that her protests were without foundation, and that nothing had happened to her for which she had any blame or dishonor to fear. She did not give me time to finish. She rose too quickly for me to stop her, and ran from me with a sort of horror, calling me by a hundred harsh and hateful names.

Such an intense effusion making me aware that she was furiously irritated, I feared lest she leave the apartment despite me, and wander about the park, where she might be seen by my servants. Day was beginning to break. I would have been inconsolable if such a horrible scene had been known to anyone. I had to be careful both for her honor and for my own. This thought prompted me to make an effort to recall [331] all the freedom of my reason. I ran to the door of the pavilion before she had thought of leaving. I locked it carefully. Then I returned towards her, and although I saw her affect to hide her face entirely when I approached, I took a chair and sat down beside her. Her tears continued to flow, but she kept such utter silence that I was alarmed by it, after seeing her in such a violent agitation. However, once I had pleaded with her in the most respectful terms to give herself the trouble to listen to me for a minute, she consented to lend me some attention. I began by reassuring her about her honor, to which she had seemed so sensitive. I made her see that nothing prevented us from carrying out the plan we had made in coming to my house. As soon as Drink is back, I said, we can send word to M. de R. that you are here; and your reputation will be protected once you are here with his knowledge and permission. Even more important, I continued, I do not want him to know himself that I have spent part of the night here with you alone. It was not my intention to let my sister-in-law and niece in on the secret, but today I change my mind. I will send for them to come even before M. de R. is informed. If he comes to see you this morning, he will find you with them, and neither he nor anyone will ever have the slightest suspicion of what has passed here between us. You should thus be at ease, I added with a deep sigh. Alas, Mademoiselle, you should be: your honor and tranquillity are safe here. You may also be sure you will have a third advantage here, for which you have indicated no less urgency, which is to be delivered of my presence, which has suddenly

become so odious to you that you have found me worthy of such names as villain and deceiver. Heaven, which knows my heart, knows well that I never deserved them. What I do deserve is the name of most unhappy of all men. But you did not see fit to make the slightest distinction between misfortune and crime.

I fell silent, after uttering these last words in the saddest and most pained tone of voice. I expected she would say a few words in response. She opened her lips only to allow a few sighs to pass. I saw only that her eyes paused two or three times on me, and almost as quickly close. This silence was a hundred times more pernicious to me than her abuse and calumnies could have been. I studied her with an attention that renewed all the wounds in my heart, and destroyed the little freedom my efforts had just restored to my reason. Far from altering her charms, it seemed that grief and tears had only lent her new graces. I anguished in watching her; and my passion, which had grown to overflowing through all the incidents of the night, seemed to me no longer capable of either limits or measures. I was no longer the master of an impulse that made me cry out: Oh God! Must Cécile hate me? Did I deserve her hatred by the strongest proof I could give her of my esteem and love? This brief exclamation seemed to make more of an impression on her than a longer discourse had done. She turned suddenly toward me; and either because she had been silently preparing what she was going to say to me, or because she was more or less awakened by the few words that had escaped me, she said the following, which gave me more admiration than ever for the qualities of her heart and mind: What an enigmatic exclamation, she said, and one which strongly provokes my curiosity. It increases the dilemma I was confronting in your regard at the moment you made it. I was recalling, sir, everything I have seen of you, since you have had a bond of friendship with my father; I was comparing it with what happened tonight. It seems to me that I perceive the strangest contradictions

in your person and your conduct; I would be happy for you to help me reconcile them. I will not conceal from you, she continued with an appearance of tranquillity of which I thought her hardly capable; that I have made up my mind with respect to you. If it is true that you intended to deceive my father with appearances of honor and integrity, and me with appearances of sincerity and affection, I see you not only as a deceiver and a villain, but as an abominable monster with whom [332] we must no longer maintain the slightest relationship. If you are such as we have believed, how will you make me understand it, when you yourself confess to me that you are married, and I have nevertheless seen you employ the most sacred vows and protestations to persuade me of your love, in other words to seduce my innocence and make me forget my duty? I confess it to my shame, alas, I was yielding to the penchant of my heart, and thought myself fortunate to have a suitor such as you. Is it possible you are a deceiver? You seemed so amiable and so tender, she added, beginning again to weep. Must I hate you, after loving you so long! Tell me then what I am to think of you; for I cannot possibly live, if you have meant to mislead me. I opened my mouth to answer her. She interrupted me to say that I must not hope to fool her with fables; that if she had been simple enough to flatter herself she was loved, for until then she had had no reason to doubt it, she defied me to make her believe lies again, and that my ruses would only serve to redouble her scorn and hatred.

If I was enchanted to see her, I was even more enchanted to hear her. I had never had with her a sufficiently serious conversation to know the whole substance of her mind; so that the fruit of this unhappy adventure could only increase my despair by having me discover countless new charms in her, and depriving me of the hope of gleaning even the innocent pleasure of admiring them, which was the only one I had originally had in mind. I saw only too well that, however I could respond to such precise interroga-

tions, I could never justify myself enough to satisfy her. Besides, I was not capable of reaching for specious ways of deceiving her. My justification would have required that she be able to read into my heart. There she would have seen that if I had betrayed some weakness, at bottom at least it was upright, and such no doubt as she seemed to desire it if she was to restore her esteem of me. Perhaps she might have understood it without that, had she noticed that I had declared my marriage voluntarily, and at a time when she might well judge that I would not have owned up to it if I had been as evil as she seemed to believe. I was going to invite her to make that observation, seeing nothing more solid to adduce for my defense. But as I had been extremely touched by what she had said, and had thought over my response for a few moments, she took my silence for the embarrassment of a man who feels guilty, and is confounded by the just blame he deserves. She rose with this assumption. I begged her in vain to stop. Her indignation was apparent in her every movement. She told me that she wanted no further relationship with me, nor asylum in my house, and that she was going to tell her father about my black and scurrilous deeds.

I pause at this detail only to show, through my example, the extremes of turmoil to which passions can lead us. I was so shaken by her action that, seeing her already close to the door, and myself too far away to keep her from going out, I drew my sword with a transport that all my depictions would never convey; and even more torn by the fear of losing her than from fear of the dishonor with which she was threatening me, I cried out that I would put it through my heart if she left without hearing me. The baleful tone in which I uttered these words made her turn her head at the moment she had opened the door. She was so frightened at my posture that she seemed fixated, staring at me. I dropped to my knees right where I was, and extending my arms toward her: Oh Cécile! I said, hear me out. I beg you to listen to

me. Listen to the story of the most unfortunate man there ever was. I am guilty; I do not pretend to justify myself; but I want to elicit your compassion. I ask you as a favor to hear me for a moment, and I die if you refuse. She was too sensitive not to be moved by the natural turn of my supplications. After hesitating for some time, she gently pushed the door closed, and sat down on the closest chair. You are trying to frighten me, she said, and I should not be frightened at all after knowing all your ruses. But let us see what is so important for you to tell me. I moved closer to her; and love, which [333] the moment before had made me wild and senseless, now made me indiscreet, causing me to reveal what I had resolved to keep hidden for my whole life. Alas! I said to her, pray listen to me, and see whether it is your hatred I deserve!

I began by telling her who I was, along with some of the sad circumstances of my early youth. Next I told her what has been seen of the most stirring parts of my story up till now, to lead her up to the unhappy denouement of my wife's infidelity. Even if the subject had been less sad, the disposition I was in would not have failed to make my narrative infinitely moving. She listened at first with more curiosity than emotion; but as the events unfolded, I noticed that she seemed to take an interest and empathize. She sometimes changed color. Often she shifted on her chair, as if she were seeking a new position in which to listen with greater satisfaction. I could see from the rising of her breast that her breathing was rapid, and sometimes changed to sighs. That however was nothing in comparison to what she seemed to feel when I described to her my inner turmoil, and my struggles in favor of virtue, or against grief. Her eyes then fixed on mine; all the movements of her soul were painted on her face; she seemed to be experiencing everything I was relating to her. Finally I came to that unfortunate part of my adventures in which she should take the greatest interest. I had not concealed from her my wife's

excellent qualities, nor the infinite affection I had had for her. Thus I confessed to her that when I lost her I had experienced the bitterest pain and despair there is. I gave her such a vivid portrayed of my overwhelming woes that I saw her eyes cover over with tears; and though she tried to hide them by wiping them carefully, others fell almost as quickly despite her. I ended my story. There, I said, is as it has always been this heart that you accuse of artifice and deceit. I thought it was cured of love, and forever a prey to sorrow. But just as it has not been able to cease being true and sincere, it could not cease either to be tender. I saw you, lovely Cécile. I caught more love from your sweet eyes than I had ever felt before. The charm of your presence dispelled all my sufferings. The delightful passion! It would have sufficed, alas, to make the rest of my life happy and tranquil! My desires went no further. I have never lost sight of the insurmountable obstacle that ought to check them. You know the restraint in under I have always kept them. But is it surprising that I have shown a little less moderation, when I was able to add, to the pleasure of adoring you, that of being loved by you, of hearing it from your lips, and receiving a hundred tender assurances of it? Ah! Will you find men who are capable of the perfection of wisdom, in the excess of happiness? Remember this, moreover: have I so abused your favors as to deserve being called a villain and a deceiver? Did I hesitate to reveal to you the unhappy bonds that prevent me from belonging to you? Did I leave you in an error I can be blamed for? No, no, I have obeyed the strict laws of honor and virtue. I have done myself a violence that deserves much less your hatred than your esteem and compassion.

My narrative had lasted nearly an hour. The agitation I had been in before, and even that which I had felt during such a long and passionate discourse, left me utterly exhausted. Cécile perceived this. She expressed her concern; this was the first sign by which I recognized that some change had occurred in her disposi-

tions. I immediately followed the advice she gave me to take something to restore me. I came back to her side, but with such a sad heart and so discomfited that I had perhaps never appeared more downcast in my worst misfortunes. Although I appreciated the value of the obliging worry she had manifested, I dared not yet raise my eyes to hers. I was timid and trembling at the feet of a girl of sixteen, as if I awaited from her the decree that would determine my destiny. She was too discerning not to intuit from my appearance a part of what was going on in my soul. Nothing is so easily detected as the ways of sincerity, even without the aid [334] of experience. My peace was already made with her; and if she still had some other sentiment than joy, I was not more its object than she herself; in other words, she lamented for herself and for me over the impossibility that we should ever belong to each other. She did not, however, apprise me of her thinking on that subject. She merely assumed a more serene countenance, and began to talk to me again with her usual sweetness. She asked me numerous questions about my wife's qualities, about the cause of her inconstancy, about the place of her retreat, and about the sentiments I still had for her. All my answers were sincere. Our conversation was about nothing else, up to the time when I had set for Drink to return.

It was she herself who ordered him secretly to inform my sister-in-law and niece that she was in the park with me, and that we impatiently awaited them there. She told him to say nothing to all the other persons in my house. You will return immediately afterward, she added; I have something more for you. Drink turned toward me to ask also for my instructions, and seeing that I gave him none, he exited immediately to carry out Cécile's. He must have been surprised at my silence, for I did not speak a single word in his presence. It seemed that everything that had just taken place had given Cécile some authority over me, and that she assumed its demeanor, as naturally as I assumed that of

submission and obedience. I was standing. She told me to take a seat. My hat and sword were on the floor; she told me to pick them up and put them in order, so that my sister could suspect nothing. It is true that there was neither pride nor arrogance in the tone with which she had me carry out her wishes. It was the tone of a person who is sure of being loved, who still loves, and dares not say it; but who want you to think so, and is not unhappy for it to be noticed. For my part, I obeyed out of shame, if I may put it thus, as much as from ardor and simplicity of love. My married status seemed so humiliating that I thought Cécile entitled to make me pay any kind of price for the happiness of being suffered in her presence. No chains she could make me wear would seem to me too heavy. Such was my extreme weakness. I was the plaything of love and of my own heart.

When my sister-in-law and niece arrived, they were quite surprised to learn from Cécile the reasons which obliged her to come hide for some time in my park. They promised to keep her constant company, and to spare nothing to keep her from boredom. We determined that, in order to mislead our servants, my sister-in-law and her daughter would feign that they required the air of the park for a while, and that they would have a bed brought into the pavilion, which with the one that was already there would be sufficient. It was a simple matter to have their food brought there without giving rise to any suspicions. Drink and the two menservants who were in Paris with my carriage could be the only ones employed for this function; and I myself was so accustomed to having my meals served there that it ought not to appear extraordinary. All other conveniences could be provided them with the same ease. The only problem was to conceal this mystery for long from Mme Lallin. There was no pretext that could dispense my sister-in-law from receiving her when she came to visit. We concluded that we absolutely must tell her our secret. The only difficulty I saw was the difference of religions, and the

scruple she might feel at abetting the concealment of a heretic. But I gave her with enough reason to take the matter in the best sense. Moreover, I did not think it necessary to tell her the true motive for Cécile's being hidden. We decided to tell her only that M. de R. had asked me to keep her secretly at my house, for fear lest she be abducted; and give her to understand that the cause of this fear was no more than an amorous intrigue. Sometimes you can do yourself in with too many precautions. A sincere avowal would have succeeded better for us with a woman of Mme Lallin's character than dissembling and ruse; whereas not being on her guard, because we had confided nothing to her secretly, she imprudently did Cécile more harm than we could have feared had we confided in her completely.

[335] We sent for her right away, for fear the delay might seem to her to cover some mystery. She learned from us only what we had agreed to tell her. Cécile then sent Drink go inform her father that she was less far away from him than he imagined. We awaited his return before getting a little sleep. I had more need of it than anyone, all my senses still being in disorder. Drink returned. He reported to us that M. de R., in keeping with the decision we had taken together, was publishing it about that his daughter had been abducted, and that he even made a point of having her searched for in every direction. He added that he had much approved of our change of plans, and that he would come thank me as soon as he could for the friendship I had for him and Cécile. That amiable girl blushed at these words, and I was even more disconcerted than she. Fortunately, I had gone off a ways with her to hear Drink's report. But foreseeing that subsequently I would rarely have the good fortune of speaking with her alone, I felt prompted by her blush to speak to her a bit more boldly than I had done an hour earlier. Without uttering the name of love, I implored her to remember that she had the power to make me content or unhappy, and that to me death was much less dreadful

than her hatred. The tone of my voice was as sad as my countenance. She looked at me for a few moments without answering, as if she were hesitating to do me this favor. However, I saw her eyes suddenly soften; and I was surprised that, lowering her head toward me, she said: Poor dear man, how I pity you! Then she stopped for a minute. But I want to tell you this, she continued: if it is true that you love me, you can still be happy. At that, she left me to go rejoin the other ladies.

I did not feel tranquil enough to follow her. My turmoil would have manifested itself too visibly to other people's eyes; I wanted at least to keep it hidden. I left the pavilion, as if my only intention was to leave her the liberty to rest; and being unconcerned about being seen by my servants once my sister-in-law and Mme Lallin knew of my return, I went further into the park to lose myself in my thoughts. My initial reflections did not fall, as formerly, on the sicknesses of my heart, nor on the disorder of my reason. Although I could not divert my eyes and sentiment from the sorry state to which I was reduced, I pretended to turn my attention away from it. I even defended myself against that thought with a kind of fear. It seemed that remorse and shame were turning about me seeking the entrance to my soul, and that I made continual efforts to fend them off. How shall I put it? I cherished my woes. I had reached that point of blindness where one fears the poison less than the remedy.

What therefore occupied me solely was the obscurity of Cécile's last words, and the meaning of that tender sign of compassion which she had given me as we separated. I applied myself in vain to figuring it out. That she still had some inclination for me I could not doubt. I was sure of it. Love is never wrong. But after what had taken place during the night, I could see not the slightest plausibility in that hope of happiness which she had tried to give me. If I loved her, I could still be happy! Oh, loving her is nothing! I said; she well knows that I adore her. But if we have

recognized that it befits neither her nor me to acquire happiness at the expense of virtue and honor, what path will she open to me to for happiness? There is none. That is an impossible hope. If there is some happiness I can have from her, it can only be that of seeing and loving her. Let us stop there. I have had none other in view. Alas, I added, it is true that I ought to have stopped there: but am I still there? And if I have strayed only too far beyond, will I it be easy for me to return there? Indeed, this unhappy night had caused an almost unbelievable revolution in the very foundation of my character. The body must have a strange power over our souls! Since I had touched Cécile's hands, since I had been alone with her, and become inebriated, so to speak, with her breath and she had becharmed me with her eyes, I felt outside her presence an acute unease, as it happens when one is in a violent [336] state. At every moment I thought I could tell that a necessary part of me was missing. I was drawn towards her by something stronger than the movements of sympathy, and as invincible as all the stories about enchantments.⁴⁵³ Thus the sight of her could no longer be but a feeble relief for my passion. I must, to be happy, have her as my possession and my treasure. I could not hope for that; and consequently love, on which I had based such sweet expectations of comfort and happiness, could henceforth only make me still more miserable.

I caught a few hours' sleep after this futile meditation. That evening I went to St. Cloud to wish Madame, who was to leave the next day with the king and the entire court, a safe journey. Its pretext was to visit the border cities in Flanders; but it was said that it concealed greater purposes, and that the decision to carry the war into Holland had already been taken. It was important to

⁴⁵³ Enchantment, already present in some magic stories in *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* (pp. 186–188), is a fairly subtle theme in this novel; see book XI.

France that England side with her, or at least that she remain neutral, while the French army was busy against the Dutch. Madame, who was dearly loved by King Charles, could succeed better than anyone at putting him in the right mind, and it was soon known that Louis XIV had no other purpose in urging her to accompany him to Flanders. She had even promised that prince that she would go to England to confer more easily with her brother there.⁴⁵⁴ Without revealing to me the essence of this project, she implied that she very much desired the king should allow her to cross the water, and that was her hope. She then asked me if I wished to join the travelling party. This was an embarrassing situation for me. I would have wished to do so in the interest of my children, since I could hardly hope for a better opportunity to resolve all the difficulties they might encounter some day in reclaiming their inheritance; but the reason that held me back is obvious. I was obliged to offer Madame some vague excuses which she was kind enough to accept.

Upon leaving her home, I went to see M. de R. I found him at home, and was most irritated to find the J. there as well, who had come at the news of his daughter's abduction to comfort him for her loss. That zealous consoler, who knew a part of my feelings for Cécile, first whispered into my ear that he expected I was as anguished as M. de R., and that he planned to render me the

⁴⁵⁴ The pretext of the voyage was Louis XIV's intention of introducing Marie-Thérèse in the newly conquered territories in Flanders. The dates here represent a gap of more than a year and a half in the novel's chronology: the departure was 28 April 1670; Madame reached Dover with an escort on 25 May where she was received by her brother and the entire English court. She remained there until 12 June and concluded with Charles the Treaty of Dover, which promised English support in Holland, perhaps the king's public conversion to Catholicism, and a significant subsidy to him from the French crown. The return of the court will be seen in book VII.

same service as to that gentleman. I asked him do it at least some other day. Far from being discouraged by the lack of warmth with which I made this request, he replied that he had just come from Paris with the intention of spending the night at my house, and that he was confident I would not refuse to receive him. His obstinacy annoyed me. Being not in the slightest disposed to being bored part of the night in his conversation, and expecting to find Cécile and the other ladies prepared to receive me in their apartment when I returned, I indicated to him rather clearly that his visit that day would inconvenience me. He was shrewd and perspicacious. I have never doubted that from that moment he had glimpsed some of the reasons that prompted my refusal, and that it is on that basis that he contrived a loathsome plot that spelled doom for Cécile. In the meantime, he continued to treat me most civilly. I left him with M. de R., to whom I found the means to relate, in a moment of private conversation, how his daughter came to be at my house, and the measures I had taken to keep her there secretly.

[337] BOOK SEVEN

I spent several weeks in a most agitated state of mind and heart, such as I have just described. I saw Cécile several times a day, or rather I was almost constantly with her. But I was never the only one. Her three companions never left her; even her father and mother came to see her so often that she had not a free moment. If this facility of seeing and speaking with her kept me from thinking about taking up other occupations, because it would have been impossible for me to do without her presence voluntarily, I did not live the more tranquilly for it. My blind desires continued to exercise their tyranny over my heart and all my senses.⁴⁵⁵ Seeing her could only increase them. The mysterious words with which she had as if intended to comfort me turned over endlessly in my mind, and I waited with impatient submission for it to please her to reveal their meaning to me. My boldness did not go so far as to put this question to her. In any case I would not have been able to find the opportunity, since I never had the chance to talk to her without witnesses, and the fear of displeasing her allowed me even less to write to her. One reflec-

⁴⁵⁵ Cleveland is better able than Des Grieux to distinguish between sentiments and sensual pleasure, and it is that independence of the body that troubles this memory. Prévost expresses elsewhere with more clarity the materiality of the passions, of Cartesian derivation. “In a material body,” says the Conte de S... to the Doyen de Killerine, “everything depends on a mechanism that has no absolutely certain rules, and of which the different movements nevertheless make up what we call the passions” (*Le Doyen de Killerine*, p. 310). See also *Le Pour et Contre*: “The penchant for affection or for sensual pleasure seems to me essentially the same, and is determined for one or the other only by accidental causes. [...] For this reason many people who are merely affectionate in appearance, are secretly very sensuous” (XIV, 243).

tion only had the occasional power to diminish my pain somewhat. I considered how sweetly and how kindly she suffered my presence, and confirmed myself more and more in the assurance of being loved. Now if she loves me, I would say, she thinks about me; she continues to feel sorry for me, and desires I should be happy; and if it is in her power to bring that to pass, she will make it her own happiness to make mine. So it is to her I must abandon that care, and I must wait until she indicates in what way this is possible. Such reasoning was not sensible; it came more from my timidity than from my love: for I had to understand that a girl of Cécile's mind had done a great deal by leaving me some hope, after learning that I was engaged in the bonds of marriage. It was ridiculous to presume that she should wish to take charge of everything else, without my appearing to take at least some part with my zeal and insistence. But I must confess all, and perhaps this avowal will serve to restore me somewhat in my readers' esteem. A remnant of honor and virtue combined with my timidity. Uncertain of the meaning of the offers which Cécile had made to me, and unable to give them any explanation at all that seemed reasonable, I trembled lest they contain something contrary to the laws of duty. The experience of the first night had taught me her weakness and mine. Although she emerged victorious from this dangerous sort of combat, it is certain that her virtue had been exposed to the ultimate peril. It could happen again. Perhaps I wished for this myself; but this desire was a monster that dared not manifest itself, fostered only in the darkest recesses of my heart, and which my reason would still have sufficed to smother, had it spoken loudly enough to make itself heard. From all these reflections one can conclude that, without being entirely criminal, I was extremely unhappy. However, I was not so unhappy that I was not on the verge of becoming infinitely more so. My readers may prepare themselves here for a new scene of misfortunes, and new sentiments of pain.

Cécile, by giving me obscure hopes which caused me such a cruel dilemma, had advanced nothing that she did not believe she could accomplish. But for that she required [338] my assistance, and she was surprised to see me so slow to offer it after the manner in which she had explained herself. Therefore, while timidity or duty forced me to keep silent, she desired nothing so eagerly as for me to speak up and ask her what she was burning to tell me. She would even have had misgivings about the constancy of my affection, seeing me with this kind of reserve, had she not had continual evidence of it in my assiduous attentions, and in the passionate manner that always accompanied it.

During this time, the J. had paid me frequent visits. He had never failed to speak to me of Cécile, and of the misfortune that had befallen her. He pretended to be persuaded of the truth of this adventure, and worked seriously at comforting me, as if he had thought I was overcome with the most acute affliction. But, in addition to the conjectures he had already formulated at the home of M. de R., it was easy for a man as astute as he to detect from my responses that I was not as moved by the loss of my mistress as it seemed to him I ought to be with the affection he knew I had for her. Thus he became more and more convinced of his first thought, that this abduction was just a fantasy, invented to deceive the public, and to hide some purpose he had not yet divined. As his curiosity and his still active zeal prompted him, when he was at my house, to observe carefully everything that went on there, he had soon noticed that some change had taken place in our ordinary manner of living. Although he learned when he arrived that I was in the pavilion in the park, I no longer received him there as before: someone came to notify me of his arrival, and went to meet him in the house. The ladies no longer appeared when he was there, especially my sister-in-law and niece, who were continually with Cécile. He saw only Mme Lallin, and even then only in the evening, when she was returning from the park;

so that in all his visits he found himself generally alone with me. This new behavior, which we perhaps adopted with too little precaution, opened his eyes completely. He no longer doubted, not only that I had a part in the pretended abduction of Mademoiselle de R., but that she was at my place, and that this whole intrigue concealed an important mystery.

All he had to do now was to find out more. Perhaps he had from the start some suspicion of the truth. But not daring to undertake anything without certainty, he made use, to learn more, of a means that could not fail to succeed. Mme Lallin had chosen him as her confessor. It was from her that he figured he could extract all the information he desired. Indeed, after preparing her in the most skillful manner, by making her understand that he needed to speak with her about a matter in which the eternal salvation of her soul was at stake, he asked her if it was not true that Mademoiselle de R. was hidden at my place, and whether religion was not mixed up in the comedy I was playing with M. de R. Mme Lallin, who did not think she could without guilt conceal the truth from her confessor, was left consternated. I have since learned from her that, seeing her hesitate over how she should reply, he lifted all her scruples with this dilemma: What you fear to tell me is an offense to religion, or it is not. If it is, you cannot hide it from me without making yourself deserving of hell. If it is not, you assure your peace of conscience by being frank with your confessor; and you know you run no risk, since that remains hidden by the secrecy of confession. After that she answered without hesitation all the questions he put to her. Although she was unable to tell him the true reason that was keeping Cécile at my place, it was saying it clearly enough for him to supply one as unlikely as her father's fear lest she be abducted by a suitor. He knew this family's affairs too well not to know that Cécile had been raised in seclusion and had never had any suitor but me. But he understood that the abduction her father feared

was an order from the king to have her closed up and educated in a convent. He was even more sure of it when, one question leading to the next, he had coaxed Mme Lallin into confessing that I intended to return soon to England. [339] At that point he thought he understood how our whole system was connected. Cécile was hidden in my house: this was to preserve her liberty to leave the realm. I too was leaving: it was to take her to London. Our departure was delayed for some time: we were waiting for M. de R. to put his affairs in order, and dispose of his property so he could go with us. It was impossible to make more accurate conjectures. But this insight will not appear surprising if one considers that in France, at that time, such examples were heard of on all sides, and scarcely a day went by but some Protestant families chose to flee to escape the persecution that was threatening them.

If the J. had already conceived some project worthy of his zeal, based on the early information he had been able to infer from my reserve and embarrassment when I ran into him with M. de R., the enlightenment he received from Mme Lallin made him act for a new reason. He might have had some affection for me until then; but it seemed there was something so offensive toward him in my conduct that from then on he listened to nothing but the resentment of hatred and the desire for vengeance. I can attribute to no other cause the excesses to which he immediately went. The deference which M. de R. maintained in taking instruction from him had given him hope of converting him in the long run. He was even more confident he would defeat Cécile. The service he had rendered me also made him suppose I would be more disposed to listen to him, and that he could sooner or later lead me to the Roman religion. Three conquests of that importance would have enormously flattered his vanity: for nothing was then more in fashion than amongst men of the church than charity and zeal for the conversion of their *wayward brothers*: that was their name for Protestants. And so it was that, blaming

me alone for dashing his hopes and the fruit of his labors by inciting in M. de R. the design of going to England with his family, he resolved to teach me that one did not trifle with him with impunity. He did not communicate his intentions to Mme Lallin; but on leaving my house he went to the archbishop of Paris, to whom the king had granted almost absolute authority over all ecclesiastical matters. He painted to him the most odious portrait of me; he depicted me as an emissary of the Anglican Church who was in France for the sole purpose of rendering service to Protestants and favoring their passage to England. The archbishop, whose name was M. de Péréfixe,⁴⁵⁶ was too prudent to assent blindly to the impulsions of the zealous J. However, this business seemed to him important enough not to be ignored. He inquired elsewhere who I was, and what was keeping me in France. He learned from one of my neighbors that in truth I professed no religion, but lived in a peaceful and orderly manner, and that Madame did me the honor of treating me with particular consideration. This testimony led him to delay any decision until the return of the king and Madame. He did no more than have me observed by a few clerics from St. Cloud, whom he ordered to report to him everything they could discover about my conduct.

Meanwhile, the J. continued to come to my house regularly; and in his conversations with Mme Lallin he extracted from her everything that could favor the success of his vengeance. He had proposed nothing less to the archbishop than to have me locked up in the Bastille, and Cécile put in a convent. He had even imparted to the prelate that, besides the evil I would be prevented from doing by taking away my freedom, it might be an excellent means of obtaining my conversion; for being passionately in love with Mademoiselle de R., I would then have two reasons for

⁴⁵⁶ Hardouin de Beaumont de Péréfixe was archbishop of Paris from 1662 until his death on 1 January 1771.

embracing the Roman religion: the desire to escape the bonds of prison, and impatience to see a girl I adored. As he felt sufficiently sure of Mme Lallin to induce her to espouse his purposes once they were tinted with the pretext of religion, he told her about this last project. Yet there was much less confidence than politics in this communication. M. de Péréfixe had declared to him that he would undertake nothing against me before the return of the king and Madame. He feared I might precipitate my trip to England; and by confiding [340] as he did in Mme Lallin, his had in mind to oblige her to give him notice of my departure time. However skillfully he had disguised his intentions, he did not obtain what he had hoped for. Such excessive zeal finally alarmed his confidante. She could not without trembling hear him talk about a convent and the Bastille; and her attachment to me overriding all kinds of considerations, she came one day to reveal to me everything that had passed between her and her confessor.

My astonishment was as one can well imagine. You are ruining us, I said to her, with your indiscretion. Had you forgotten how I was treated in Angers and Saumur? I run a hundred times greater risk in Paris. Madame is away. I am without protection. My accusations brought tears to Mme Lallin's eyes, but that was a useless remedy. I asked her repeat what she had told me, in its minutest circumstances; and seeing in it nothing but things to fear, I decided to send word immediately to M. de R. that I had matters of the greatest importance to communicate to him. He lost no time in coming. We conferred for a long time over the common peril of his family and mine. At any other time, he said, I would advise you to scoff at the J.'s designs. The king is a just prince, and would not allow a foreigner to be harassed. But I admit that in our present circumstances, I do not think you safer from violence than I am. I am more touched by your quandary than by my own, he added; for it is clear that it is your friendship for me and your kindness to my daughter that place you in your

present danger. What pretext would they have for arresting you, if not hiding my daughter on your property, and trying to find us an asylum in England? That is what makes me feel bad, and I would willingly give half my blood to repair the harm I have done you. That generous gentleman was moved to tears as he spoke these words. I begged him to believe that far from regretting what I had done for his daughter, I would ever be only too happy to be of service to him at the cost of those dearest to me. I do not know whether it was the passionate turn of my words or friendship alone that led him to explain himself further, but after reflecting for a moment: Let us speak as friends, he said. You love Cécile. I have only her. You know she will inherit wealth. Marry her. That is the only way of avert the problems that threaten you. That cannot say it is a crime to have taken some interest in the safety of a girl whom you intended to take to wife.

I embraced him with transport, unable to find my voice to reply to him. He seemed surprised at my silence. Oh, dear friend! said I finally, if you know that I love Cécile, how will I dare to tell you that I am married? A declaration which he so little expected disconcerted him in the extreme. I surmised that he had supposed up till then that I would marry his daughter, and that it was upon that assumption that he entrusted her to my care with so little reservation. I remembered that she had told me so herself. All my love and all my misfortune acted on my heart at the same instant. I had not the strength to hold back a thousand laments that escaped me without order or attention. M. de R. readily understood that there was something most extraordinary about this adventure. Whatever notion he had of my integrity and my wisdom, he began perhaps to have some doubts about my passion; and fearing for his daughter's virtue, knowing that I was loved by her, he left me after a moment's conversation during which we clarified things no further. We were in an avenue of the park. He headed toward the pavilion. I remained alone, buried in

my sad reflections. As we treated each other with great familiarity, I did not even think to follow him, since he told me when he left me that his intention was to spend the night at my house.

He came back after a quarter of an hour. His reason for leaving so suddenly was simply his uneasiness over Cécile. He had gone to find her to learn from her what terms she was on with me, and to inform her that since I was married, she could not innocently accept the signs of my affection. This explanation produced an effect which filled him with joy. I saw it on his face as I watched him come closer. He [341] came to me with open arms, and said with a tender embrace: I will not deny, he said, that I was not easy when I left you. You are married; you told me so without explanation; I knew you love my daughter, and that she loves you: paternal affection may have taken precedence momentarily over friendship. But why did you not confide in me what you did in Cécile? I would have been able to tell you right away that your dilemma is not without remedy. I am even surprised that you seem still not to know what is commonly done in your kind of situation. My daughter, who is only a child, is not unaware of it, because she has seen an example of it in our family. She told me that she had offered to tell you about it, and that she is surprised at the dispassion with which you have neglected to inquire about it further. I replied to him, with a mixture of fear and joy, that far from having received indifferently some obscure words I had heard Cécile utter, it had continually fed my anxiety and reflections; I had thought of nothing else since I heard them; but as I understood nothing about them, despair had made me timid, and prevented me from asking her for an explanation. I shall give it to you myself, he replied; but it supposes two necessary things: one, that you truly desire to marry my daughter; the other, that your wife's infidelity and her flight with a lover are verifiable. In your situation, he continued, you can easily obtain the dissolution of your marriage, and the freedom to contract

another. The same thing happened to my brother, and that was the basis on which Cécile to tell you what she did. It is true that French law and Roman law would not grant you the right to remarry, even if you are separated from your first wife; but our laws are different. You have only to apply to the Consistory at Charenton.⁴⁵⁷ Moreover, being born English, you are not a subject of the king, and the alternative would be to wait and have your marriage dissolved in England, where this custom is generally established. He added that the only difficulty consisted only in providing certain proof of my wife's infidelity.⁴⁵⁸

Here I would need some new phrase to explain one of the strangest situations in which the human heart has ever found itself. I enter into the relation of an event without precedent, and which will rightly give the impression that my character is unique. Will the reader imagine that with a passion such as I felt for Cécile, after all the desires I have described, after the mortal regrets of being unable to be hers, I was capable of greeting M. de R.'s revelation otherwise than with transports of gratitude and the most delectable movements of joy and love? What more could my heart want, when it was offered everything it wanted to be happy? Had I not forgotten my wife? Did I not despise her? To me was she not still that faithless reprobate who had covered me in shame and suffering, and no longer deserved anything but than

⁴⁵⁷ The consistory is a "council of the Reformed Religion to govern its affairs" (*Dictionnaire de Trévoux*), but not one of what were called the *Chambres de l'Édit*, of which there were only three, in Grenoble, Bordeaux, and Castres. The Protestant church in Charenton, authorized by Henri IV, was to be destroyed in about 1685.

⁴⁵⁸ These conclusions appear dubious: see detailed analysis presented by Jean Deprun in *Œuvres de Prévost*, t. VIII, pp. 152–153. Gelin thinks of a solution which does not occur to Cleveland, which is to ignore the Catholic ceremony that took place in Cuba and simply to claim that his marriage to Fanny was invalid.

my scorn and loathing? Nevertheless, from the first word that made me see what M. de R. was proposing, I felt a painful shudder that spread throughout my body. Every time I heard him utter *dissolve my marriage*, it seemed to me he rent my heart. It was a pure sentiment, which was unaccompanied by any thought. I stood as if speechless after hearing it, and made no reply to him.

He asked me what I thought of his proposal. This question awakened me. I took his hand, and pressed it without speaking. He thought my silence was an effect of my joy, and continued to explain to me by what means we could resolve the difficulties, should any arise. I had the time for several reflections while he spoke. I marvelled at what I had just experienced. But whatever impression of it stayed with me, I tried to suppress it entirely, by arousing myself to the just horror which my wife's conduct deserved. Then I had only to recall Cécile's charms for a moment, to be instantly completely filled with that delightful image. I riveted all my attention on her side. M. de R., having repeated to me that the main problem would be to [342] verify the reasons I had for desiring divorce, he asked me whether I knew what had become of my unfaithful wife, and what evidence I could present of her crime. I informed him straightforwardly that she had retired to Chaillot under the protection of Madame, and that my entire family could testify to her flight with the lover she had preferred to me. It is a good thing, he said, that she is so nearby. You must get her to propose your separation herself. She will doubtless comply, and the matter will be concluded more easily. This new thought again provoked an extreme agitation in my heart. I asked M. de R. to do by himself whatever he judged necessary, on the pretext that I had no familiarity with the laws and ordinary procedures of justice.

I urged him to return with me to the pavilion, less for my need for rest after too long a walk, although that was the reason I gave him, than to avoid a conversation in which every word

seemed to redouble my turmoil. I leave it to you, I said on the way; I rely on your friendship: please make my interests your own. I tried thus to check with general notions the onset of a thousand painful sentiments that seemed about to rise in my soul. I rushed into the room where Cécile was, and took a place beside her. I sighed as I was sitting down, as if I had escaped from some danger, and had begun to breathe easily in a place where my fears should cease. Indeed, joy re-entered my heart beside her. Her face signaled a satisfied soul. She did not doubt, seeing me return with her father, that I had finally been received the enlightenment she had long wished to give me. She thought I was content, and so was she. Perhaps it is the same reason that had caused me, contrary to my custom, to go place myself so boldly beside her.

M. de R., assuming there were no measures to be respected with my sister-in-law and Mme Lallin, picked up the conversation where it had ended in the park. After declaring to his daughter, in their presence, that I had a keen inclination for her, and that I was preparing to break my first marriage so as to offer her my heart and hand, he returned to the means of hastening the matter of my divorce. I was stronger with Cécile there. I listened to him with more tranquillity. He promised me to go to Chaillot that very day, and propose with his own lips to my wife to grant me the voluntary consent I desired of her. I approved everything he seemed to wish. He prepared immediately to set out. Mme Lallin and my sister⁴⁵⁹ were at first strangely surprised by an adventure they had so little anticipated. I observed that they were looking at me in wonder. They had perhaps noted my affection for Cécile, but would never have thought its culmination was so imminent, nor such as they had just learned. Nevertheless they expressed great

⁴⁵⁹ Various readers of *Cleveland* have mistaken the meaning of this word: Cleveland has no sisters but frequently refers this way to his sister-in-law, Mme Bridge.

satisfaction at the news, believing I was cured thereby of that long sorrow which they had despaired of ever seeing me get over, and they showered blandishments on Cécile, whom they credited with all the honor of this transformation. We passed the afternoon pleasantly until M. de R.'s return. My heart was so full of the pleasure of being with Cécile that I gave little thought to the outcome of the mission which the father had taken on. He returned. He entered appearing buoyant and satisfied. I continued to feel the same for some moments.

Everyone was eager to hear his report, especially my sister and Mme Lallin, who until that day had been unaware that my wife was in the vicinity, and that I knew where she was living. He told us at once everything that had taken place between them. He had first asked for her at the door of the convent under the name of Mme Cleveland. I had told him for the first time, the moment he was leaving, that this was my name. He was told there was no one at Chaillot by that name. She had indeed changed her name, in order to live utterly unknown; and by the strangest chance it turned out that she had taken almost the same name as mine, that is, the one I was known by at St. Cloud. She went by the name of [343] Ringsby, and I, Kingsby.⁴⁶⁰ Therefore M. de R. had had great difficulty making clear what lady he wished to see, in a house where there are always many pensioners⁴⁶¹; and he succeeded in being understood only when he finally asked for an English lady who was there on the recommendation of Madame the Duchess of Orléans. With that indication she was recognized. But when they went to notify her that someone was asking to

⁴⁶⁰ Cleveland has already explained that he and his comrades had assumed other names when they arrived in Saumur (p. 279). This similarity of names obviously has a symbolic value, their parallel imagination suggesting the hidden unity between the spouses' souls.

⁴⁶¹ Both pupils and adult ladies might board there temporarily.

she speak with her, she sent in reply that she saw absolutely no one. It had been necessary for M. de R. to send word to her more than once that he had come on business of the greatest importance, and that she absolutely must appear.

Although there was nothing remarkable about this preamble, I could not hear it without feeling moved. Perhaps I would have been less so had M. de R. come at once to the principal point of his mission. Meanwhile a glance at Cécile put my heart back in the same state. I continued to listen. She had finally let herself be persuaded to come, M. de R. told us. They had me enter a cabinet, where I saw her appear at the grate a moment later. She was dressed in black, in full mourning. She seemed to me so gentle and modest that I could not help reflecting some on the injustice and betrayal of nature, which often hides a depraved soul under an exterior that portends only virtue. She asked me in a timid voice what I wanted with her. I told her that I had come to Chaillot on your behalf. Your name made her blush. I allowed her time to settle herself, and explained to her most civilly what I had intended to tell her. She lifted her eyes toward heaven; she kept them closed for a long while; she uttered sighs and shed tears; finally, when I was becoming impatient at her silence, she asked me whether I knew the person you proposed to marry. I answered that I knew her. So do I, she said with another flood of tears, so do I, sir, I know her.⁴⁶² So tell M. Cleveland, may he live more happily with her than he did with me. Tell him I shall ask heaven this favor for him with my most earnest prayers. And since he

⁴⁶² It does not occur to Cleveland to ask the meaning of this curious exclamation; inasmuch as this is the key to the enigma, this missed opportunity for clarifying everything long extends their separation. Even when he identifies the person to whom Fanny refers (later in book VII), Cleveland understands nothing of the mystery, for he seeks no explanations.

wants only my consent to be happy, assure him that I grant it as he desires, and remind him that it has never been I who have stood in the way of his wishes and happiness. I replied, continued M. de R., that you would doubtless be pleased to learn that she was so agreeable, and that knowing your good character, I did not fear to assure her in your name that you forgave her the past. She seemed about to leave me. I indicated to her that you wished her to confirm in writing the permission she had given me orally. She did not object. She sent at once for a pen and ink, and she wrote out everything I saw fit to dictate to her. Here is her note, he added, handing it to me; she signed with her name, and we separated politely, without a single word more.

I took the note. My hand was trembling as I did. I cannot name the sentiment that was agitating me, for I scarcely was free to reason, or see and hear. I turned my eyes toward Cécile. She was still important, but, as if my heart had clenched, I did not feel the particular charm that the slightest glance from her had always had the power to cast. A boulder would have seemed less heavy on my chest than the humor that was oppressing it. I could not breathe: I do not know what is wrong with me, I said, turning languidly toward my sister-in-law. I need some help. It was quickly sent for. Cécile herself did what she could. I caught one of her hands, which I pressed to my lips. Ah, dear Fanny! I exclaimed with a deep sigh. I doubtless meant to say: Ah, dear Cécile! But everything was blurred in my troubled imagination. I had no distinct thoughts or sentiments. I remained for some moments in that state, and only came around with much assistance and care.

The whole company remained silent, and seemed to be watching me in amazement. M. de R. seemed the most surprised. I was myself immeasurably surprised when, after completely coming to I remembered everything that had just happened. I imagined I was emerging from a [344] dream; and reflecting a

moment further on what could have brought about such a strange alteration in me, I was obliged to admit inwardly that I understood nothing of my own heart.. Although I was over the sort of faint I had had, I still had some of the weight that was oppressing my chest. I summoned my reason, however, considering the bad effect this accident could produce. M. de R. continued to look at me in silence. Cécile was no less anxious. I opened my mouth with some shame, and following only my natural candor, I told them with a sigh: I do not really understand better than you do the accident that just happened to me. I loved my unfaithful wife passionately. It is doubtless a remnant of pain and affection that was awakened by what we have just heard. But, my dear friend, and you, lovely Cécile, I continued, addressing both father and daughter, you will know only better the most tender and sensitive heart nature has made. You both know what power you have over it. That shows how I hate: you have just seen it. Judge how I can love!

They accepted my excuses with kindness, and I did not observe that their affection had cooled. For my part, I resumed my usual behavior. I humored Cécile, and her pretty eyes soon restored all my tenderness. I read my wife's note in her presence. If seeing her writing and her name caused another extraordinary revolution in my spirits, at least I retained control over appearances. We took new measures for the execution of our project. M. de R. took the responsibility of presenting my petition to the consistory at Charenton. He told me that, judging from his brother's example, I would encounter so few objections in my project that he expected to be my father-in-law in less than a fortnight; and if conjunctures of the times should give rise to some obstacle, we renewed our resolution to cross promptly into England. It was still to be feared lest the J.'s malice cost us the time and means to do so, but that was something which all the efforts of our prudence could not prevent. One cannot leave a great kingdom in one

night, with an entire family and considerable baggage. For present needs it sufficed to have denied my enemies the only reasonable pretext they could invoke to deprive me of freedom. My intention was to marry Mademoiselle de R. This much was easy to prove. I could no longer be accused of sheltering her in my house only to favor heresy, against the intentions and orders of the king.

I was satisfied with this arrangement. I even spent the rest of the day very tranquilly in the company of Cécile. However, there were dark places in my heart that I dared not sound. I sensed disturbances reawakening there when I had withdrawn at bedtime. The image of Fanny, and all the circumstances of her interview with M. de R., returned to my memory with an insistence I could not dispel. I spent part of the night fighting off these importunate thoughts, which could only have the effect of spoiling my rest. I even avoided examining my deeper sentiments, for fear of finding something which my reason would have had to condemn. I was so different from what I had been that instead of seeking to know myself at a time when everything within and about me seemed obscure, I feared nothing so much as the pain and confusion of such an examination. If some old insights of philosophy recurred to mind, I banished even them, on the sole grounds that I had recognized their futility. As far as my wife was concerned, I was surprised that her name and memory were capable of causing me such uneasiness; but I was also determined to reject anything that could still interest me for her. What, a vile creature, a traitress, an ingrate? No, no, let her expect nothing further from me except horror and hatred. It is for amiable Cécile that all my affection is reserved. She has healed my heart, she has restored peace to my soul: I owe myself entirely to her charms. I went to sleep in the thought of this false peace, which I did not possess. So my sleep was not more tranquil. I had a dream that will remain forever engraved in my memory.

[345] I thought I saw Fanny and Cécile at the same time. Fanny, in that mournful attire which M. de R. had described to me, but more beautiful and charming than I had ever seen her, with that air of sadness which I had been told she had at Chaillot. On the other hand, Cécile appeared with all her graces and gaiety. I imagined myself seated, and seeing them standing before me. Their eyes were fixed on me, and seemed to rivet me to my chair, despite the desire I had to rise. My eyes went from one to the other with extreme avidness, as though attracted by two objects which my heart wished it could join together. Each glance, however, made me feel a different agitation. Fanny's grieving, languishing countenance gave me a feeling of dejection and listlessness. Cécile's keen, bright face had at almost the same time the power to make me smile; but although one does not smile without a feeling of joy, I felt that mine was only superficial, and that at bottom my heart was full of sadness. I suffered violently in this situation. My desires inclined me to both directions at once. I did not remember my wife's infidelity: it would doubtless have tipped the balance in Cécile's favor.⁴⁶³ I saw only two amiable objects, which attracted an equal share of my affection, and each caused me the most acute emotion. Finally I thought I saw my two children leading their mother to me, and as she drew closer, she seemed to extend herself into the part of my heart which Cécile occupied. There was nevertheless something bitter in the pleasure I took in seeing her so close. At the very moment when I was going to embrace her, I thought I saw her shed some tears, and sensed that I was also. I woke up. I did not feel upon awakening the sweet satisfaction that remains in the heart after a dream

⁴⁶³ This dream, where infidelity is not at issue, is the functional equivalent of a supposition of innocence. The fact that Cleveland is capable of such a circumstance reveals his desire, despite little hope, that it might be true.

where one has seen one's loved one. On the contrary, I never got up from my bed so sad. I dressed quickly, and trying not even to remember this importunate play of my imagination, I went to seek diversion and joy in the company of Cécile.

But these moments of turmoil and sadness were nothing compared to what I was soon to experience. It was the custom of my sister-in-law and Mme Lallin to go out in the carriage with my niece and my children for an afternoon ride in the beautiful countryside around St. Cloud. They had interrupted this habit since Cécile was at my place, because they faithfully kept her company. However, the desired came to them to renew it the very next day after M. de R. had seen my wife. They did not tell me their reason for this. I thought it was weariness with solitude. They left my niece with Cécile, and taking my two sons, they told me they were going out for a few hours' ride. The purpose of this outing was to satisfy their curiosity, and get a glance of my wife at Chaillot. They did not intend to ask for her at the gate, nor visit with her; but Mme Lallin, who was familiar with the workings of the cloister, had assured my sister-in-law that they would not fail to see her in the church at the hour when the nuns chant vespers, and they only aimed to get a moment's look at her face.

It was rather late when they returned home. Although persons of their sex succeed better than men at disguising their feelings, I noticed when I saw them come in that they were not their usual selves. I asked them whether anything unpleasant had happened. They replied rather stonily that nothing had occurred. However, having continued to observe them, I perceived clearly that they were both most distraught. I did not press my curiosity farther; but by chance I ran into my children, and was extremely taken aback to find them all in tears. I questioned them, together and separately; they adamantly refused to admit to anything. Still having no inkling of the truth, I inferred that there had some scene had taken place which I ought to know about. I took my

sister-in-law aside. I am surprised, I said, at your dissimulating with me about what has happened. You will not persuade me that my children weep for no reason, nor even that I was wrong to perceive some alteration in your face and that of Mme Lallin. I insist on knowing what is [346] troubling you. She seemed to hesitate a moment. I persisted. Here is what she confessed to me.

You force me to tell you, she said, what you cannot possibly hear without being as moved as we were. Alas, what I have seen will stay with me for the rest of my life. I shall tell you then that instead of going for a ride in the country, our curiosity took us to Chaillot. It was time for vespers. We entered the church, in the hope of seeing your wife there. We saw her. She was kneeling on a prayer-stool, dressed in black, as M. de R. depicted her yesterday. I immediately recognized her, although at first we saw her only from behind. It was my intention that she not be able to see us. Even less did I wish for your children to recognize her. However, I could not resist the desire to remain until she turned her head, just to see her face, and then to withdraw promptly. We were at the grill that separates the choir from the nave, and consequently at some distance from her, she being at the far end of the choir. Finally she turned around. I can scarcely believe that she made us out right away; for although I observed some emotion on her face, she seemed to look at us uncertainly. I was going to take your two sons by the hand and quickly withdraw, but those poor children immediately recognized their unhappy mother. I cannot tell you how eagerly they rushed toward her, unmindful of the grating that prevented them. Their cries, or rather their moans, echoed throughout the church. They put their arms through the grill; they wanted to utter their mother's name; they could not articulate their words. Only a tender, indistinct sound could be heard, which would have melted hardness itself. But that was only the beginning of the scene. You know that their mother had soon spotted them. You cannot possibly picture how impetu-

ously she rushed to come to them. It is beyond imagination. She ran with open arms, oblivious to place and people, and in such a transport that I feared she would kill herself against the grill. But that violent agitation having quickly exhausted her spirits, she fell unconscious in the middle of the choir. This spectacle upset all the nuns. They came to her to provide assistance. During that time I wanted to get your two sons out of the church. I was unable to do so. Their tears and cries increased seeing their mother at full length on the floor, and they continued to extend their arms and press with all their strength against the grill. Finally the younger one also fell at my feet completely unconscious.

This report stirred the depths of my being. I was standing. I begged my sister-in-law to let me to breathe for a moment, and allow me to take a seat. Then she continued. Mme Lallin immediately took it upon herself to carry the child out into the air to help him revive more easily. I did not leave your eldest, for fear the same thing might happen to him. He nevertheless sustained himself with greater strength. The assistance of the nuns having brought back your wife to consciousness, she had them take her to the grill. It is here that you would have been excessively moved, to see and hear the son and mother. Unable to embrace, they held their lips pressed to the grill that separated them, and could be heard to utter in a most passionate manner the tender words mother and son. Your wife then took her child's hands and kissed them a hundred times over, bathing them in her tears. As she no longer saw the other one, she asked eagerly what had become of him. I told her that he had felt ill, and was outside for a moment. My reply caused her to take notice that it was I to whom she was speaking. Ah, my sister, she cried, is it true I am seeing you again? How grateful I am to you for bringing my children to me! Is it friendship that still prompts you to this compassion for a wretch? Seeing all the nuns about her, it occurred to her despite her emotion that I might accidentally say something which her

interests required to be kept from them; so without leaving me time to reply, she bade me allow myself along with her children to be shown into a room where she would go to speak with me.

[347] I was uncertain, continued my sister-in-law, whether I should grant her this small favor; not that I was not indeed very moved by the state in which I saw her; but it occurred to me that I was in a convent; that it is a sort of prison, where they could detain your two sons; and finally that I had something to fear, and precautions to take. I replied that I was obliged to leave promptly, that I dared not tarry in Chaillot without your permission, and would ask you to let me come see her some other time. What, she responded with a stream of tears, you refuse to speak with me for a moment? You will not grant me the satisfaction of embracing my children? It is he no doubt who forces you to this cruelty; for alas, what have I done to you, and why should you hate me? Your son for his part was begging me so insistently to grant her desire, that I was half shaken. During this time, Mme Lallin came in with little Tom. Scarcely had your wife perceived that lady than she let out a cry of pain, and again fell unconscious. The nuns, mindful of the disorder that was causing in the church, carried her out at once to attend to her somewhere else. One of them proposed that I go to a room where I would be quite free to see her. But the fear of displeasing you, and exposing myself to the risk I mentioned, made me decide to climb immediately back into the carriage, and come directly back to the house. I had great difficulty getting your children, who absolutely wanted to remain with their mother, to obey me. I had to threaten them with your anger, and have them physically carried away by your servants. I promised them, as consolation, that we would return together to Chaillot some other day, and forbade them to speak to you about everything that had taken place. I do not know, she added, who the man was that your servants saw running after us. They noticed that at first he was coming at full gallop. As soon as he was close enough to

recognize the carriage, he followed us slowly here, and returned in the direction he had come after he saw us enter the house.

My sister-in-law looked at me as she ended, to see what I was thinking about what she had just told me. I admit, I said, that your story has moved me as much as you had expected. I do not know whether it is love or compassion, but it is certain that I feel something deep inside that still combats in favor of my cheating wife. Alas, I added with a deep sigh, what a fate is mine! The common lot of men can only with effort, they say, achieve love and constancy after a few months of happy and tranquil marriage; and I instead experience continual violence to make myself forget, for a wanton woman who has covered me with shame, and whom for all sorts of reasons I ought to loathe! I did not think you were so pitiable, my sister replied. I imagined we were rather indebted to the lovely Cécile, and that her charms had made you find some peace again. I will not conceal from you that I love her, I interrupted, and you could hardly doubt it, since I am seriously thinking of marrying her. For some time she even made me experience transports that seemed to me as intense as any I had ever known. But I confess to you that I no longer understand anything about what I feel, and that there is as much disorder in my heart as in my reason. Imagine a man away from home and virtually lost, who tries to find his way, but has no hope of doing so, and who out of despair grasps at anything that distracts his anxiety and flatters his pain. That is the sorry portrait of me. I speak to you, my sister, with a candor I have never shown to anyone. Nature gave me too tender a heart. The worst misfortunes that could befall me were those that made me lose what I loved. Perhaps I would have been consoled for the same reason that caused me to lose it, had I been capable at the same time of snuffing out my love at the same time. But it is still intact, with the cruel torment of being now devoid of any object. I have long languished in the most violent agitations of sorrow. You have

never known its full excess. It ought naturally to have lasted to the end of my life. However, it diminished the minute I loved Cécile. You know how charming she is: I recognized that immediately. My heart, [348] as I have told you, was full of sentiments; they flowed to her; and the return I found in her affection increased them as much as was possible. But if I gauge everything I have felt for her up to now by what I experience now as I speak to you, and by the turmoil you saw me in yesterday, I must admit she has inspired almost nothing in me, and that the passion that inclines me to marry her is the doing of someone else. Aye, all I have done is transfer to her all the feelings I already had: it is not she who brought them into being.⁴⁶⁴ I do not doubt that all this seems obscure to you. Nevertheless, do not ask me to explain further. I could not do so without shame. I myself am carefully avoiding turning my own eyes on what is taking place inside me. I neither can nor want to know myself.

My sister-in-law was a very shrewd woman. She understood that I was perhaps on the verge of falling into my former agitations, and that I needed support. This is what made her give her reply a turn I was not expecting, after the manner in which she had spoken to me of Fanny. She told me that she understood part of what I was explaining to her so obscurely; but that whatever disposition I may still be in with regard to my wife, her offense being of a nature to exclude all hope of reconciliation, her opinion was, if I asked her advice, that I ought to cling more than ever to Cécile, and continue to let my sentiments follow the course I given them; that it was not important what their source was, when their object was worthy of them, and the exercise agreeable; that

⁴⁶⁴ The obvious message here is that Cleveland like Fanny has a need to love; and when the object of that love has gone, Cécile is put in its place. But this passage has a deeper meaning which will not be clear until book X.

it was a flaw she had long recognized in me, to be too delicate over the nature and principle of my affections; that more simplicity was required, and less reasoning, to make oneself happy; that of everything she had just heard from my mouth, she approved of nothing so much as my current decision not to apply myself so much to knowing myself; that the anguish of which I complained came from my contemplations, rather than from the natural situation of my heart; that she saw nothing so sad and disagreeable after all in the path my fortune was taking; that in truth I had lost a wife I loved, but that it was a good thing for me to be delivered from her, since she did not deserve my affection; that I would find another, sufficiently lovable one in Cécile; that I ought no longer think of anyone but her, and be sure that the most bitter memories of the past would soon evaporate in her arms, especially once we had reached England. Although some of her advice was acceptable, and I was determined to follow it, it did not make my heart more tranquil nor my mind more free. She asked me as she was leaving me whether it was all right with me if she returned some day to Chaillot. I left her free to do as she thought best.

The next day towards noon a clergyman was announced, who had asked for me at the door under the name of Cleveland. Although I was surprised at being known by anyone under this name, I had him shown in. He told me right off that he was the chaplain of the convent of Chaillot, and that my wife, recognizing his probity and discretion, had not refused to tell him all of her adventures and mine; that she had sent him to implore me, in the name of God and all that was dearest to me, to allow her the satisfaction of seeing and embracing her children; that I could take away her right to be called my wife, but that I could not take away that of mother; that she was languishing in the hope of that favor; and that since she had seen them the day before, she had suffered mortally from impatience to see them again; that she

wished me all the happiness I anticipated in my new marriage, and would still give the better part of her blood to contribute to it; that she would never trouble me with her presence, nor with her reproaches; but that in exchange for the blind submission she had always shown to all my wishes, she begged me on her knees not to deny her the sight of her two sons; that I ought moreover not to worry about his asking for me under the name M. Cleveland: that my wife having had my carriage followed after recovering the day before from a very dangerous swoon which had prevented her from asking Mme Bridge where I was living, she had learned it from the servant she had sent after [349] her; but that not knowing I had changed names, she could not guess it, and that he had learned only at my door that I did not wish to be known as the son of Cromwell, which he promised to reveal to no one.

When he had finished speaking in this very gentle and civil manner, he assumed a more somber mien; and as I had been sufficiently struck at hearing him to need to think over my reply for a moment, he had time to anticipate it. That, sir, he said, is what Mrs Cleveland sent me to tell you. I have related it to you word for word, in keeping with the insistent orders she gave me. It is she who up till now has spoken through my mouth. But you will permit me to express myself for a moment, with the liberty permitted by my ministry. Is it believable, sir, that with all the goodness and wisdom you have always manifested in your conduct, and which your wife herself attributes to you, you can have taken a decision as strange as the one you are on the verge of carrying out? I can understand how a reasonable man can sometimes allow himself to be smitten by an unruly passion, and that he can for a time forget his duty. But to go beyond all limits, to break the most sacred bonds, to renounce all virtue and justice: these are things that do not occur without prodigious corruption of the heart, and are consequently utterly incomprehensible in a person of your character. I know you only on your wife's testi-

mony. I see that with the just causes you give her to complain of you, she does justice to your merit. I can rightly believe that yours is boundless: her testimony of you does you honor, as well as her. But to what use are you putting it? Where is the goodness of your heart, when you abandon a wife who worships you, and whose spirit, virtue, and docility, not to mention a thousand natural charms, ought to have fixed your eternal affection? Where is your mind and your judgment, when you prefer to her a woman who has little merit except what your passion lends to her? It is with my own eyes that I judge. I saw her yesterday at Chaillot. God, what a difference between her and the one you are sacrificing to her! Finally, where is the concern for your honor, when with such intelligence you let become the slave of a shameful passion, and expose yourself to the derision of everyone who will know of your adventure?

I wanted to interrupt this offensive harangue, in which good sense seemed to me as little respected as was civility. He continued with the same fervor. Just a moment, sir, he said, just a moment; I have only one thing to add; and since it seems unlikely I shall often have the honor of seeing you, I will have the satisfaction of having done my duty, and perhaps of leaving behind something for you to reflect usefully upon. So far I have referred only to that which in your behavior offends reason and moral propriety; but do you think it is any more exempt from blame from the standpoint of conscience and religion? By what right and on what pretext do you propose to breach the sacred engagements of marriage? I do not know what the laws are of the religion you profess: but are there any so contemptible as to authorize the violation of your vows, when your wife is faithful in observing hers? I know she had the weakness to lend her consent to it; I have rightly upbraided her for it. She defends herself only by her determination, she says, to prove to you to the end of her life, by her obedience and submission, that she does not deserve the

wrong you are doing her. It is clear that this excess of goodness does not justify her. But you are justified even less, in wishing to commit a crime without any pretext or reason, and could attest none except for an unbridled passion, which is in itself a very great crime. That, sir, he added, is what my ministry, and the interest which all upright people must take in the cause of Mrs Cleveland, have made me believe I could say to you here without witnesses. I have done so without mincing words. I hope my zeal will produce some effect on you. It remains for me to learn your desires concerning the principal mission which procured me the honor of speaking with you.

Although I was extremely shocked by this discourse, and although given the situation as I believed it, I could not fail to see almost as many insults and absurdities as words, there were nevertheless [350] numerous things about which I would not have refused to explain myself, had it been addressed to me by anyone other than an clergyman. But the recent memory of the J.'s malice put me on my guard. Despite my turmoil, I was controlled enough to content myself with replying to the chaplain that I forgave him his invectives; that if he were as much in my wife's confidence as he assured me, he ought to object to her that she had revealed to him only half way, which assuredly was a sign of little esteem and confidence; that had she been more open, she could have informed him of many things that would perhaps diminish what he called his zeal, and serve to make him see more reason, honor, and religion than he found in my behavior. As for my children, I promised to send them occasionally to Chaillot, not being unjust enough to deprive them forever of the pleasure of seeing their mother. He asked my permission to see them and embrace them on behalf of the person who sent him. This I hesitated not a minute to grant.

There was no way I could dispel the reflections that besieged me after his departure. I remembered as if in spite of

myself every last expression of his talk and my reply. The sole point I thought I could make out distinctly among the obscure reproaches he made to me was the character of my new wife. I had no doubt that this woman, whose merit was so inferior to Fanny's, and which he had himself gauged at Chaillot with his own eyes, was Mme Lallin, whom my wife apparently imagined I was to marry. I smiled at this error. But understanding nothing about all the other things he had added, I merely concluded that it was an effect of Fanny's cleverness, who in order to maintain her reputation in the convent was trying to disguise her ignominy, and impute all the blame for our separation to me. Although this conduct was rather natural, given how I was still persuaded she had behaved, I was acutely resentful of it. This sentiment even helped to lessen the turmoil which did not leave me alone, and which still accompanied the thought of her. So this, I said, is what a woman becomes capable of when she has once forsaken her duty! One crime leads to almost all the others. Fanny was upright, sincere, incapable of dissimulation. Now she is deceitful and wily. She has dishonored herself by the most shameful disorder, and wishes to preserve all the glory of innocence. Oh faithless, faithless woman, who would ever have suspected you of harboring such a dastardly heart, and harboring there the seed of so many horrors and foul deeds! By what signs will one ever be sure of recognizing humility, modesty, sincerity, conjugal affection, and all the other virtues in a woman? I went to the park after these reflections to seek my usual consolation in the sight and conversation of Cécile. The impression I retained from what had just transpired caused me to utter another deep sigh as I entered her room. The amiable girl perceived very well how unsettled was my soul; no doubt she even guessed the cause. But she was convinced that I loved her, and herself had limitless affection for me. She received me as a cherished suitor, but an ill one, who needed to be relieved by her goodness and indulgence. She would looked

at me sometimes with languor and uneasiness. I saw then in her eyes all the tender movements of her soul, and, strengthened in a way by the evidence of her compassion, I would thank her for that sentiment that was so well-suited to what ailed me.

In the meantime, M. de R. was tirelessly pressing the matter of my divorce. He had proposed it to the Charenton Consistory; and although the Protestants were so ill-treated in France that some privilege of theirs was retracted each day, he had had sufficient influence to get the elders to overlook their fears and agree to receive my petition. The day was already set for the witnesses' depositions. My sister-in-law, her daughter, Mme Lallin, and my principal servants were to be heard by the commissioners; and the conclusion could not lag much behind such unanimous and unambiguous reports. It was heaven no doubt that intervened to halt this blind project, at a time when it no longer seemed that anything more could oppose its execution. I myself wished to see it over quickly; not that I was not still struggling [351] with uncertainties and fears which a more timid mind might have regarded as so many unhappy portents: but I had become convinced, in keeping with my sister-in-law's remark, that my marriage was the sole means of dissipating them. Moreover, Cécile's charms were acting on me with their usual sway; or if it were true, as I had said to my sister, that this lovely person had inspired nothing in me, the transfer I had made of my sentiments to her was so complete and so sincere that it produced all the effects of a genuine passion.

Some days went by, until the one set by the Consistory to hear my family's depositions. The very morning of that fateful day, a servant came to tell me that a canon from St. Cloud named Mr. Audiger, with whom I had made some acquaintance, was requesting urgently to speak with me, and that he had with him an unknown gentleman who manifested no less desire to see me. I was alone in my room, seated on a daybed where I was think

sadly about what was to be done that afternoon; and this thought having since morning increased my habitual melancholy, I had declared to my servants that I would not be available to see anyone that day. However, having some consideration for Mr. Audiger, who was an intelligent and worthy man, I ordered him to be shown to the room where I was. He entered with the unknown gentleman who accompanied him. Forgive my intrusion he said; I would not have insisted after learning from your servants that your intention was to see no one today: but I have agreed to introduce you to this gentleman, who is recommended to me by a friend, and has urgent business to communicate to you. I invited them both to take a seat. The stranger was a man whose mien and build I recognized. But his kerchief, which he was holding in front of his mouth as if his teeth were giving him some pain, and a large wig which hid part of his face, did not at first quite allow me to place him. Besides, I would have had the same difficulty had he appeared to me in his natural state. I would not have believed my eyes. I would not have been easily convinced that a miscreant who I thought to be dead, and who for all sorts of reasons ought to fear my presence if he were living, could be so tranquilly present in my own house at the moment I least expected him.

As soon as he was seated, he let me see his face. Then I clearly recognized his features. However, the unlikeliness of all this in my thoughts, and the extreme surprise which this adventure caused me, held me a moment further in uncertainty. A hundred tumultuous movements were rising in my soul, when he himself hastened to enlighten me. Your eyes do not deceive you, he said to me in English, so as not to be understood by the canon; I am Gelin. I have had recourse to this disguise to gain entrance to your house without being recognized by your family. Let us therefore speak quietly; and if you are a man of honor, do not allow me to be harmed here. You detest me, he continued with

considerable assurance; I do not object to that, I have done you enough harm to deserve your hatred. So I am not here to seek your friendship. I have come to consummate the measure of my crimes. I seduced your wife, I murdered your brother and my friend. I now mean to take your own life, or else lose mine at your hand. We must cross swords. Let us agree to a time and place.

These extraordinary words checked the signs of astonishment which I would doubtless have manifested upon recognizing him. In my first indignant reaction, I very nearly rose in fury to try to punish him with my hands for all his treachery. Nevertheless, a moment's reflection made me realize that being alone and unarmed, violence might turn out badly with a man of his character. Nor was any deliberation needed over the duel he was proposing. Honor and reason equally forbade me to accept. It was to public justice that both of them required me to entrust my vengeance. The whole difficulty consisted in laying hold of such a bold outlaw, who had doubtless not gained entry to my house without precautions, and whom I judged to be supplied with some pistols, besides a long sword of which he seemed to be making [352] deliberate show. I remained for some time silent seeking the means of securing him, and reflecting on the reasons that could make him want me dead. His impatient fury was evident in his every movement. He pressed me to respond, advising me, with several bitter sarcasms, not to refuse the combat, as much for my safety, he added, as for my honor. I finally made up my mind, and whatever has always been my aversion to deceit, I thought I was entitled to use it on this occasion. I said to him, in order to draw him out a bit, that I did not know the reason for his hatred, and that anyone but him might have had a different opinion of me, after the harm he had done me, and the good he had received from me; that I nonetheless accepted the opportunity he offered me to punish all his crimes, and that I would not let it get away; but that to remove any suspicion among my servants of his inten-

tion and mine, it was necessary, as he himself had asked, to avoid commotion in my house, and adopt an demeanor less indicative of anger and hatred. I asked him whether Mr. Audiger knew anything of his intentions. He assured me that he knew nothing of them. Thereupon I invited both of them to join me for lunch. They accepted.

I at once rose to call a servant. One came, and I ordered him to prepare quickly what was needed for lunch. I had purposely walked toward the door of my room, so I was easily able to whisper to my manservant that I needed help, and that my life was in danger if he did not hasten to summon all my servants to come armed to my defense. An order of this nature, given perhaps in a manner that betrayed consternation and haste, could not fail to spread the alarm in a moment throughout the house. My servants were dispersed. The activity marshalled to assemble them caused the news to carry out to the park. The ladies learned of the danger I was in, and with friendship adding to their fright, they imagined I had already been attacked. Cécile was the most intensely worried for my life. She forgot the reasons that obliged her to remain hidden. She ran ahead of her companions, who also came running after her, and was at the foot of my stairway even before my servants had arrived with their weapons. Gelin might already have been suspecting something when he saw me whisper to the manservant; but hearing some commotion, and Cécile's voice loudly asking my whereabouts, he did not doubt that it was my intention to have him arrested. He was suddenly seized with rage. He drew his sword more rapidly than I can say, and rushed at me to stab me. I was fortunate enough to turn aside the first thrust; but as I was rising from my chair in an attempt to grab hold of him, he pushed me down on the daybed which was beside me, and ran me through twice with his sword. I lay powerless, shedding two streams of blood. The canon, who had been unable to act quickly enough to stop my assassin, fell on him just as he

was started to pierce me a third time, and was succeeded in catching hold of his wrist. The sword fell to the ground, and even tumbled several paces away from the bed. The unfortunate Gelin, hearing my servants coming, did not stop to retrieve it. He drew two pistols from his pockets, and holding one in each hand, attempted to escape down the staircase.

Obviously, all that I have just related took place in an instant. Cécile was only a couple of paces from my door. She was pushed away so roughly by Gelin that she could not stop him; but leaving that problem to my servants who were following her, she entered my room panic-stricken. The first thing that struck her was Gelin's bloody sword. She seized it; and having no doubt that the canon, who was at the bedside attending to me, had contributed to my death, or was being sure to take what life I had left, she charged him with the point lowered to pierce him with a thousand blows. I do not know by what chance he was able to escape her fury. He turned at just the right time so that the initial thrust caught only his robe. He dodged about to fend off her repeated jabs at him. As I was still fully conscious, I implored her in a weak voice to spare him. My entreaty appeared only to provoke her further. It was as if, hearing me speak, this evidence to her that I was alive infused joy into the attempts she was making [353] to avenge me. Happily for the canon, some of my servants came to save him from danger. Drink was the first of them. He had arrested Gelin, despite his daring and resistance. The traitor, seeing nine or ten armed men at the bottom of the stairs, had first threatened to kill the first man who tried to stop him. But Drink, who was a very resolute man, responded only by coming toward him with a pistol in hand, and ordering him boldly to drop his. Such boldness so disconcerted him that he allowed himself to be seized by the collar. It had then been a simple matter to disarm him, and four of my servants had remained to guard him.

Drink was surprised when he entered my room to find Mr. Audiger struggling with Cécile. Seeing me lying wounded on my bed, he imagined, as she had, that the good canon was one of my attackers; and far from rushing to his assistance, I thought I could see from his hesitation that he would not have been disappointed to see him punished at the hands of a girl. Indeed, had he been a criminal, there was hardly a more suitable punishment for his clerical station. I ordered that Cécile be disarmed. She then yielded the sword willingly, and coming over to me, she gave me the tenderest signs of her anxiety and grief. My sister-in-law arrived at the same time, with Mme Lallin and my niece. All of them together examined my wounds. A surgeon was hurriedly summoned from St. Cloud: he found them both dangerous, but he could not determine on the spot whether they were fatal. His principal reason for hope was to see that I still had all my freedom of mind in the midst of such great emotion, and despite my loss of blood.

The trip that was made to St. Cloud to alert the surgeon had a regrettable consequence for my attacker. I had ordered him to be closely guarded, intending to have him brought to my room once my wounds had been dressed, and question him on the reasons that had impelled him to his horrible attempt on my life. But the servant who was sent to St. Cloud, not having been ordered to keep quiet, had published everything that had occurred at my house. The adventure was reported to the chief justices of the precinct, who believed they were entitled to have the criminal brought to their prisons. They sent several archers to take him. I was busy then with the surgeon; and the fear of causing me some new disruption, given the danger I was in, kept my servants from informing me of it. I did not approve their discretion when, having asked for news of the prisoner, they answered that the justice of St Cloud had taken him away. Besides the fact that I felt generous enough to forgive him, I lost the hope of learning what had

provoked his hatred for me. Mr. Augider, who had become reconciled with Cécile, and whom I had asked to give me some insight into this sorry incident, had protested that he had met Gelin only that very day, and that he had brought him to me only at the bidding of the chaplain of Chaillot, who had sent him a note requesting this favor. This recommendation by the chaplain made it quite clear that my wife had not broken off all contact with Gelin⁴⁶⁵; but although I could attribute the profession she was still making of living a devout and pure life only to a damnable hypocrisy, I dared not carry my suspicions to the point of imagining she had some share in the plan to kill me, nor even that she could have had the slightest knowledge of it. She would no longer be a woman, I said; she would be a monster and a detestable fury. I tried to repel that thought, as if I had feared I might make myself guilty by dwelling on it willingly. It had even given me a sort of shudder when it occurred to me the first time. Yet it kept coming back, despite the efforts I made to reject it, and never returned without giving me one of the saddest feelings I had yet experienced. My sister-in-law saw that I was extremely agitated. She asked me what I was imagining. But what do you think, I said, of this connection between Gelin and the chaplain of Chaillot? Could it be that that wretched Fanny... I dared not continue. My sister understood the rest quite well. She lowered her eyes, and made me no answer. I asked her to express herself. She did so only painfully; but she finally admitted that Mme Lallin, Cécile, and herself had the same fears I did, since what they had heard from [354] Mr. Audiger. This cruel confirmation of a doubt that I had at first considered a crime made a mortal impression on my heart. I could feel bitter tears flowing from my eyes. Oh God, I cried, this is how you crown all the misfortunes you with you

⁴⁶⁵ This is true: Fanny will explain in detail in their conversation in book IX.

have sent to oppress me! Unspeakable Fanny! Alas, what have I done to you? So the only pleasure and crime to which you still aspire is to pierce my heart! Cécile was present. Far from taking offense at my protests, I could see in her eyes that she felt them. Ah, Cécile, Cécile, I said, looking at her sadly, your goodness alone can comfort me now. I would hate the life which the traitorous Gelin, and a still more cruel wife, were unable to take, had I not the sweet assurance of spending a completely happy one with you.

Her father, who had set that day for the assembly of commissioners and deposition of the witnesses, had gone early for Charenton. He was very surprised not to find my family there by the agreed-upon hour. He came to my house toward evening, and found a more than adequate excuse in the dreadful news he learned upon arrival. His first sentiment was to pursue the prosecution of Gelin hotly, and get to the bottom of his attempt to identify all the accomplices. I tried to moderate this eagerness. No, I said, I would be too fearful of learning what I do not ever wish to know. Consider too that my honor is at stake. Do you want me to inform the public of my opprobrium, and perhaps expose myself to seeing my wretched wife end her life on a scaffold? She is not worthy of any other fate. But I owe the sacrifice of my resentment to the memory of her father, to my own honor, and even to yours, since you have given me your daughter. I therefore approve so little of your intention, I added, that I urge you on the contrary to use all your influence and that of your friends to halt the course of justice and save Gelin. I was waiting for you impatiently to make this request. Madame is expected any day. Just get the judges to put off the procedures until her return. I hope to obtain from her whatever I take the liberty to asking of her. He conceded the strength of my reasons, and having gone immediately to St. Cloud, he had no trouble obtaining a delay of the trial until Madame's return. They did not

so readily grant him permission to see Gelin in his prison. I had asked him to make this request to the judges, and to try the best he could to extract some information from him. He was not able to procure this favor. I was rather well satisfied with the one he had obtained, and to learn from him that Madame's return could not be far off, since most of her retinue was already at the chateau.

Indeed she arrived two days later, with the whole court.⁴⁶⁶ We were apprised of it by the sound of bells and other displays of public joy; for that excellent princess was so tenderly loved that her shortest absences were borne with pain. Pleasures revived only in her presence. She had then little time remaining to enjoy and inspire them. The course of her fair life was approaching its end. Oh the fragility of human grandeurs! In the flower of her youth, so near to the throne, amidst delights and the abundance of all the goods that can make life dear and precious, she was to see hers taken from her suddenly only a few days later, and serve as a new example to those who count too much on the advantages of birth and fortune.⁴⁶⁷ It was not only to herself that her return became fatal: Cécile was included in the same decree from heaven that condemned her to die; and if that great princess served as a lesson to the worldly given to pleasures, the charming Cécile was an equally terrible lesson to all those who place too high a value on the attractions of nature and the charms of beauty. I alone, wretched castaway of fortune, was destined, after so many misfortunes and wrenching agitations, destined without foreseeing and without hoping for it, to reversals of joy and felicity of which, even ideally and by imagination, I did not think myself

⁴⁶⁶ The court returned to St. Germain on 18 June 1770, and on 24 June Madame and her family went to St. Cloud.

⁴⁶⁷ The death of Madame, foreshadowed here, will not be related until book X.

capable. But it was again to cost my heart enormously before obtaining them; and by the usual disposition of my fate, I was to pay for them most dearly, after possessing them for a few moments.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁸ Here end the four volumes of *Cleveland* published in 1731–1732; the public was not to read Prévost's sequel until 1738. But these volumes, as the *Bibliothèque Belgique* pointed out as early as October 1731, obviously do not conclude the novel and only partially fulfill the preface.

[355] NOTICE

At whatever time it is decided to bring to light the sequel of *The English Philosopher*, and whether the three volumes remaining to be published appear together or in succession, I require of the printer that he add to them this brief preface.⁴⁶⁹

Of the many editions of the first parts which have appeared in France and in foreign countries, not one has been done under my control; and not having even been consulted, I have had the displeasure of being unable to follow the advice of my friends, nor my own inclination, which was to retouch some passages to which I learned that various persons had objected. A writer abandons his manuscript to the press; it is not surprising that human frailty may have induced him into some error; and as the same reason almost always preventing him from perceiving it, he waits, if he is in good faith, for public censure to enlighten him, disposed to repair his mistakes in subsequent editions. But what good to him is such a disposition, if those who arrogate to themselves the right to reprint his work take away his freedom to correct it?⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁹ The obvious uncertainty in this first paragraph about the date and place of final publication suggests that Prévost had composed this notice long before the actual printing of vol. VI in 1738, and perhaps as early as 1736, when he was trying to negotiate the sale of his manuscript in Paris. But insofar as the number of remaining volumes is for the first time specified accurately, one must suppose that the entire sequel was completed or nearing so.

⁴⁷⁰ Prévost often objected to the practice that deprived a writer of all his rights once the manuscript was sold: see, e.g., *Le Pour et Contre* IV, 29–31. Here, however, he uses this practice to explain why changes for which he so willingly concedes the need in principle have not been made in the re-editions of 1734 and 1736. At issue are not textual errors, as will be clear from the rest of this notice, but failures of judgment, specifically concerning the role played in the novel by

It will appear so far that I am not thinking of defending myself against justified complaints. With such a reasonable manner of thinking, shall I not be permitted also to reject those that have been made against me unjustifiably? I have so often purged myself of the most offensive of them that it would seem to me unnecessary to mention it further, if the importance of the subject was not able to justify my repetitions. I have been shamelessly accused of having struck a blow at religion. My reply is in twenty places in my writings⁴⁷¹; and if it has not forced my accusers to change their mind, I accuse them in turn of blindness or maliciousness. Indeed, to invoke the terms I have already used, could one fail to perceive a goal as distinct and an interconnection as clear as that of the adventures of *The English Philosopher*? One must have seen in Cleveland a man who in his youth received no other principles of religion than natural knowledge; who for a good portion of his life had no opportunity to acquire others; who thought he could limit himself to them, so long as they were sufficient for his moral guidance, and to maintain peace in his heart, what he calls happiness and wisdom; but who finally recognizes their powerlessness in the excess of his misfortunes, when he feels that they cannot help remedy his suffering, and abandons them in despair.⁴⁷² He nevertheless has become per

Jesuits, with whom Prévost had been trying to make his peace since 1734.

⁴⁷¹ For a complete discussion of this debate, see Tiziana Goruppi, “La *Bibliothèque Belgique* contro *Le Philosophe anglais*: storia di una polemica sulla religione dell’abbé Prévost,” *Biblioteca della Nova Rivista Storica*, no. 34, Società Editrice Dante Alighieri, 1976. Prévost reiterates his justifications notably in the preface of *Le Doyen de Killerine* in 1735 and in *Le Pour et Contre* in 1736 (VIII, 352–358).

⁴⁷² As all the essence of experience for Cleveland is tragic, the religious question is indeed posed in terms of remedy. Prévost refers to Cleveland’s initial argument in his long recapitulation at the beginning

sueded by reason that the justice of heaven owes a remedy to all our ills, especially when they are involuntary. He desires this, but without knowing where to seek it. If he receives from time to time various notions of religion, it is to chance he owes them, and his continual misfortunes do not allow him to refine them. Moreover, they do not come up in a way that enlightens the mind, which is able to instruct and persuade. Thus he remains so devoid of support that he is on the point of falling into the ultimate frailty.⁴⁷³ He no longer has the assistance of philosophy, which he has renounced; and he lacks that of religion, which he does not yet know. He is sustained only by a remnant of wisdom which does not deserve the name, since it is without principle, and is no longer anything more than an effect of habit.⁴⁷⁴

[356] However, a man of his kind of character cannot long remain in such a sorry state. The feeling of his misery becomes so acute that all his zeal is mobilized to seek a remedy. He renews his efforts. Chance, or rather Providence, puts him in contact with the Earl of Clarendon; and it is through his conversations with that illustrious friend that he finds peace of heart and true wis-

of book VI: “divine wisdom could not have allowed men to be exposed to woes without remedy”.

⁴⁷³ An allusion to Cleveland’s attempted suicide in book VI.

⁴⁷⁴ In the plan of the novel thus summarized, Cleveland’s crisis at the beginning of book VI is the central point at which the whole direction of the novel changes; after pursuing to this impasse the application of his natural philosophy to his experience of misfortune, Cleveland now moves toward the knowledge of God. In order to obtain the permission to publish *Cleveland*, it was reported that Prévost had to promise the Chancellor d’Aguesseau that the protagonist would convert at the end of the novel; this conversion (in book XV) remains nevertheless problematic.

dom, with the perfect knowledge of religion.⁴⁷⁵

Such is the plan of the *English Philosopher*. If my accusers have understood it, how have they accused me of favoring deism in a work the goal of which on the contrary is to show that there is neither peace of heart nor genuine wisdom without the knowledge and practice of religion?⁴⁷⁶ In vain will they pretend that one can derive from some particular reflections of Mr. Cleveland the consequences they attribute to them. That is to feel very little empathy for the situation of an intelligent man who seeks, deliberates, and reasons with his present lights, and moreover is always careful to suggest that he subsequently attained more perfect knowledge.

This last remark should have served as well to fend off another objection. The concluding volumes, it has been said, have not yet appeared. There is no way of guessing that Cleveland will one day become a Christian. I reply that it could be guessed by anyone who had taken note that it was announced in the preface and at a hundred points in the work, especially in volume IV where Mr. Cleveland himself so informs his readers, and where he speaks painfully of his weaknesses: which supposes that when writing about them he is in a state of enlightenment that causes

⁴⁷⁵ As the original preface had already asserted, it is Clarendon who receives credit for confirming Cleveland in the right path; their conversations are described in book XII. Yet Prévost pointedly forgets to mention here that Cleveland has already consulted, on the subject of Christianity, a Protestant minister, a Jansenist priest and bishop, and a Jesuit – without having derived from them, however, any useful or satisfactory enlightenment.

⁴⁷⁶ Prévost was not accused of purposely favoring deism, but rather that certain passages in the novel could lend themselves to an interpretation favorable to deism.

him to condemn them.⁴⁷⁷

What is this justification lacking? And if it is strange that my accusers have so misconceived the design of a work in which I am not accused of being obscure, would it not be even more strange for them still to have some mistrust of my sentiments after this explanation?

Would to God I could so easily satisfy other complaints which I did not even await before I felt their justice, and for which I have no simpler reply than my admission that I have deserved them. This is doubtless the point where they hoped to trap me, but I am not seeking to avoid it: and I am persuaded that after an error, the first degree of reparation, and the best sign of regret, is to recognize oneself guilty by a free and sincere confession. I therefore admit that the course of the work requiring the intervention of a flawed cleric, I imagined that there was no better way to making him an interesting character than to take him from a famous society⁴⁷⁸ whose very merit and reputation would underscore the contrast,⁴⁷⁹ and thereby to attract my readers' attention by the very surprise of seeing him in a corps where one is unaccustomed to finding people of that ilk. In other words, my mistake consists in having made him a Jesuit for the reasons which

⁴⁷⁷ If indeed the novel gives one to understand in several places that Cleveland will reach a personally satisfying philosophical resolution, nothing indicates that it is specifically Christianity (and even less Catholicism) that he will find. For purely strategic reasons, the author thus lends to his story an ostensible clarity which he did not put into the pages of the novel itself.

⁴⁷⁸ *I.e.*, the Society of Jesus.

⁴⁷⁹ Cleveland had noted however, at the moment when the Jesuit Father enters in book VI, that what little he had heard of this order "had not been in a manner that would have given me an advantageous impression of it".

should have prevented me from it, and while believing I would attract my readers by the wonderful, I wandered as far from verisimilitude as from justice. But I can protest at least that I am in good faith in my apologies; and in whatever manner they are received, that is a sentiment I want never to lose.

Thus, into whatever hands my manuscript may fall, I insist that even the initial J..., which could recall traces of the past, be suppressed, and that nothing remain of this chimera than what is absolutely necessary to provide a transition to more accurate characters and descriptions. My depiction of the Collège de Louis le Grand in book XII will appear flattering or uncertain only to those who have never visited that celebrated school of science and virtue.⁴⁸⁰

I have no explanation to give on the rest of the work. The impatience with which readers have done me the honor of desiring it would perhaps reassure me against many fears, were it not also a reason to expect less indulgence from the critics. However that may be, I flatter myself that Cleveland, Fanny, and Cécile will not easily lose [357] the favor they have found in the public's eyes; provided, at least, that I have succeeded in preserving the character that has caused them to receive so many glorious approvals.

N. B. It is well to serve notice that we have labeled this volume Volume VI only to make it fit with the most recent edition of the earlier parts, which are sold in five volumes by PRAULT the younger and DIDOT, although the first edition of the work made in Utrecht in 1732 was in only four tomes, the contents of which are

⁴⁸⁰ See book XII; the first of these portraits of the celebrated Jesuit Collège is all the more flattering in that it is made by a Protestant.

*exactly the same.*⁴⁸¹

⁴⁸¹ This notice follows an *errata* and appears only in the original edition, the one ostensibly published by Étienne Néaulme (e). It was doubtless in order to avoid any confusion with the apocryphal “volume V,” which is not mentioned here, that Prévost chose the irregular designation “volume VI” for what is in fact the fifth volume. Jean Néaulme, moreover, entitled his own edition “Tome V, or tome VI for those who have the tome V of another author.” As for “the most recent edition [...] in five volumes,” that is probably a French edition of 1736 which falsely bears the imprint of Étienne Néaulme, and which, like one in 1734 which is genuinely Néaulme’s, divided the very long volume III into two, constituting thus an edition of four “tomes” in five volumes. The four printed in Utrecht, “the content of which is exactly the same,” were originally issued in 1731 and not 1732. This volume VI (as will be the case for volumes VII and VIII) bear, like those first four, the rubric “À Utrecht, chez Étienne Néaulme”; but it is a false one, explained by the conventions of *permission tacite*, which allowed him to distribute his work in the absence of a formal authorization. As the *Gazette d’Utrecht* reported on 22 April 1738, Prévost “has been granted permission to complete his *History of Cleveland*, which he had begun in Holland. He has just published its volume V, which he is distributing himself at the Hôtel de Conti.”

[359] BOOK EIGHT

Will I forever begin anew to grieve, and will the image of my former troubles be ever before me? What strange familiarity have I contracted with suffering? In the tranquil situation which heaven has permitted me to enjoy for the last several years, sheltered at least from that deluge of misfortunes which destroyed my constancy and strength in the fairest season of my life, should peace not return to my heart? Is it not time for me to forget my pains; and when fortune grants me a bit of rest, shall I still have to combat my imagination, which has always been my next cruellest enemy? But by what charm does it happen that the hurt it causes me, and even the torments I complain of, have become my sweetest and most cherished occupation? Can a sick man cherish the poison that is killing him? I love, I fear, I hope, I grieve, and I am still troubled, at a time when I have lost everything that opened the gates of my heart to these terrible sentiments. The whole pleasure of my life lies in maintaining them, like a precious remnant of what caused them. So I do not tire of repeating my intention: I continue to write in order to maintain my sorrow, and inspire some in all sensitive hearts which are able to be moved and to grieve with me.

My impatience to learn of Madame's return ceased two days later with the arrival of one of her gentlemen, who asked with some urgency to have a word with me. Although the surgeons had recommended solitude and silence for me, my sister, who knew that my wounds were not the most dangerous of my ills, thought that this sign of kindness and attention, on the part of a princess for whom I had the strongest attachment, would contribute more to my recovery than all the remedies. The gentleman was moreover one of my friends, whom Madame's kindness had led her to choose specifically for this mission. After some words on the interest he himself took in my situation, he told me briefly that,

finding me much worse off than he had expected, he thought himself obliged to modify somewhat the orders with which he was charged, but he did not doubt that, upon his reporting of what he had seen, Madame would send him back to me that same day with further explanations; that she was to arrive that evening at St. Cloud,⁴⁸² where she had hoped I could have myself transported, to learn from her own lips a hundred things it behooved me to know, and which she thought she could not impart to me too soon; that he did not know the secret reasons for her urgency, but that she had told him several times to repeat to me that I was happier than I thought, and that she would personally see to my happiness. He added that my wounds appearing to him too dangerous to allow me to leave the house, he was going to await the princess at St. Cloud, where she would be surprised upon her arrival not to find me in person.

My life was not a sufficiently important concern of mine for me to take great care for it. However, as I saw in the compliment I had just received nothing more than an ordinary token of the affection with which Madame honored me, I thought that, the news of my adventure having reached her wherever she had spent the night, her intention was to comfort me with new assurances of her protection. My reply was in keeping with that thought; and without looking beyond that, I bade my sister go forthwith [360] to St. Cloud to express to her my immense gratitude at her arrival. I also instructed her to explain to her the circumstances of Gelin's project, and to beg her in the name of her generosity to use her power in favor of that villain, as much to save his life, which he must infallibly lose by the maximum punishment, as to protect

⁴⁸² Madame returned to St. Cloud with her husband (Monsieur) on 24 June 1670; Prévost seems to be thinking of her return to Saint-Germain on the 18 June, for he situates this day more than a fortnight before her death on 30 June.

the honor of Lord Axminster and my own. My sister left. I remained with M. de R. and his daughter, who had been present during this short exchange, and had understood Madame's orders differently from me. They proposed their conjectures to me. You shall see, said M. de R., that Madame is informed of your inclination for Cécile, and that the desire she has to contribute to your tranquillity has led her to lift some of the obstacles through a recommendation as powerful as her own. Cécile had the same thought without daring to express it. I recalled then everything I had just heard, and I indeed found something obscure in the gentleman's last expressions. This repeated assurance of a happiness I did not know had an appearance of mystery of which Madame seemed to want to reserve the explanation to herself. But to what happiness could I aspire in the extremes of dejection to which sorrow reduced me even more than the pain from my wounds? I replied to M. de R., with a deep sigh, that if his friendship did not delude him in my favor, that was indeed the happiest thing that could befall me.

The night was quite late when my sister returned from St. Cloud; but having been unable so far to get more than a few minutes of peaceful sleep, I quite willingly allowed M. de R. to come into my room at all hours, and retrieve me by his presence or a few minutes' conversation from an abyss of too somber contemplations. His zeal would have prevented him from leaving me, had the surgeons not given other orders. He was there when my sister arrived, and impatience to hear what she had to tell me led him to come with her to my bedside. I noted that this curiosity bothered her. Instead of beginning the report I was awaiting, she sang such vague praise of Madame's kindness and of the interest she took in my health, that M. de R. himself could tell she was hiding something. He imagined it was out of concern for my condition; and indeed, seeing in me some signs of agitation, he proposed to my sister that they withdraw. She followed him

without affectation; but she had scarcely seen him turn towards his rooms than, retracing her steps, she sat down beside my bed, and took my hand, which she pressed with a passionate movement. I looked her straight in the eyes. I saw emotion in her face, and begged her to speak. Oh God, she said, where must I begin, and what terms shall I use to tell you what you must know at once? The presence of M. de R. made me uneasy. I think you will approve of my having waited until I could be alone with you. Oh, my brother, she added, again pressing my hands, what a story have I to tell you!

I confess that this preparation affected my blood to the point of causing me a cold sweat that made my hands and forehead feel wet. It is not that there was anything ominous about my sister's manner and tone of voice; but to me she seemed as if overwhelmed with amazement and sorrow, at a time when I expected only comfort from the arrival and last promises of Madame. Alas, I said, what must I now expect? Be done with it then, if it is some new misfortune. She hastened to reply that it was, but a past misfortune; and that she regretted that the way she had expressed herself seemed to cause me some alarm; that it was impossible for her nevertheless to tell me in a more orderly fashion things which could not be well ordered; that she was still uncertain where to begin her narrative: that she could not go straight to its climax, because it rested on so many delicate circumstances which she thought herself incapable of deciding; that she must take them up one after the other, and that I must have the patience to hear them, simply persuading myself in advance that I had more to hope for than to fear, and that the judgment of Madame herself on these matters was entirely favorable.

The avidness with which I was listening not allowing me to interrupt her, she continued, telling me that Madame had spent the previous night at Chantilly, that she there had [361] received, the morning of that very day, a visit from Fanny; and that it was

from her that she had learned of my most recent misfortune; that being all the more surprised to see her that she had been introduced under an assumed name, she had first let her know that she was informed of the truth of her adventures; that Fanny, whose intention was to come around to this explanation herself, had immediately thrown herself at her feet, with an abundance of tears, and sobs so violent that for a few minutes her very life seemed to be in danger; that getting hold of herself with great difficulty, she had in the most moving manner implored the help of heaven and Madame's compassion; that her laments, her agitations and all the signs of her despair were beyond description, and that Madame herself confessed she found it difficult to understand how a women of such delicate constitution could live through the movements of such impetuous grief.

Madame, who was still unaware of the new reasons she had to abandon herself to such excess of affliction, had first attempted to comfort her with her usual kindness, with all the arguments she could draw from the dispositions of providence; and supposing that it was repentance that was acting on her heart with such violence, she had begun by speaking to her of the gentleness of my character as a reason to hope that I could some day forget her past weaknesses. But that, said my sister, was when her tears had begun anew with new abundance, and when in the confusion of a thousand things which she uttered in her transport, sometimes reproaching me for my injustice, at others vaunting her innocence, at still others recalling our past happiness, and always returning with some painful exclamation to my new marriage and my wound, Madame, who was genuinely moved by this scene, and to whom part of what she was hearing was incomprehensible, had bidden her explain more clearly in what way she had need of her good services, and help her understand what she meant by my wound, my marriage, and the injustice of which she accused me. She had thus extracted from her some fragmentary information,

which had only increased her curiosity; because, not according with most of the notions I had given her of my conduct in entirely different accounts, she found she could only suspect one or the other of us of dissimulation and bad faith, and the present impression of a despair as intense as Fanny's perhaps had made the scale tip in her direction. However that may be, she thought she had reason to lend her all the necessary attention to sort things out, and it was this important conversation which my sister feared she could not relate to me with sufficient fidelity. She nevertheless completed her report, the judgment of which I wish to leave to my readers before I describe the effect it had on me.⁴⁸³

According to Fanny, she was innocent; and far from recognizing herself in the portrayal I had made to Madame of her betrayal and infidelity, she had characterized all the accusations that had been made against her virtue as infernal calumnies. It was not on me nevertheless that she made the accusation fall. No: she admitted, she said, that heaven had given me a righteous heart; but I was artless and credulous. I had allowed myself to be poisoned by her rival; and it was to this hated woman that she attributed all her misfortunes. She had learned the full extent of them only two days earlier. Overwhelmed with grief in her retreat in Chaillot, especially since the fateful consent to our separation which I had sent to ask for, she invoked death as the sole remedy for an ill fortune that could no longer end, when Gelin, whom she had always considered an honest and faithful friend, had come to alert her to the dark plot being hatched at Charenton. His contacts there as a Protestant had permitted him to discover that I was intending to have my marriage dissolved, and that, needing a

⁴⁸³ Prévost sketches here a technique which will later provide the basis of *Histoire d'une Grecque moderne*, where the narrator takes pains to relate only what he himself knew, explicitly leaving the ultimate judgment to the reader.

pretext to authorize an action that offended every law, I was attesting the most awful impostures. He had exaggerated this outrage; and attacking her through another interest, which was that of her very security in the convent of Chaillot, where she would not fail to pass soon for a miserable adulteress, and be exposed to abuse, or even to punishment, he had put her in such a cruel state [362] of mind and heart that she would have preferred death to the sentence of the Consistory with which she was threatened. He had taken shrewd advantage of her consternation to propose that she leave the monastery and take vengeance on me by marrying him; but having failed to get her to listen to him, he had left her affecting more grief than anger, and promising her to risk his life itself to merit the favor he was asking of her. She had given no other meaning to this promise than the one which ought naturally to come to mind, in other words that she expected signs of zeal and services such as she had received from him on a hundred occasions; and not foreseeing even that he was capable of aiding her, she had no hope left except in the goodness of heaven, when the chaplain of Chaillot, to whom she had confided her woes, had come to notify her that the miserable Gelin had attacked me in my own home, and had even made use of his intervention to gain access to the house by means of a canon of St. Cloud.⁴⁸⁴ Such terrible and unexpected news had reduced her at the same moment to desperation; my ingratitude, my callousness, my betrayal had not prevented love from making her experience the most mortal torments. It was again one of those miracles that she should have found enough strength in her very affection and in the cruel doubt she was in for my life, to inquire immedi-

⁴⁸⁴ In book VII, Audiger had simply said that Gelin had been “recommended to him by a friend”. We did not know that it was Fanny, but Cleveland had guessed as much and even suspected Fanny of being a party to Gelin’s plan.

ately about the condition in which my attacker had left me. Having learned that my wounds were not despaired of, but not daring to present to my sight an object as odious as she had become to me, she had decided, hearing the news of Madame's arrival which had gotten about, and in the confidence she had in her kindness, to summon all her strength to go see her and implore her pity, to ask for her husband, her honor, all that was dear and precious in the eyes of God and men, and to die at her feet if she were unhappy enough not to obtain it.

Madame's tender and generous character had made her extremely sensitive to this story. However, as she had not forgotten the detail of my accusations which she had taken pleasure in having me repeat several times, she had asked Fanny candidly how she could be so affected by my incident after abandoning me in the island of St. Helena, after the favors she had shown to another lover, and after delivering me pitilessly to all extremes of suffering and despair; for I am a witness, the excellent princess told her, I have seen tears that were not feigned, I have heard regrets and sighs that came from an unhappy heart, and which believed itself betrayed by love. Fanny had seemed embarrassed by all these questions; and passing over what pertained to me as if its meaning had been obscure to her, she had bitterly protested Madame's opinion of her behavior. Everything that is sacred in heaven and on earth had been attested in favor of her innocence. She had confessed that her flight from St. Helena could appear a wanton and imprudent act in the minds of those who did not know the sad state to which my neglect had reduced her; but having nothing to reproach herself, and feeling as sure of her innocence as of her misery, she was not, she had replied, expecting a most generous princess whose compassion and aid she was coming to solicit could take pleasure in increasing her sorrow by such cruel and unmerited imputations. The consternated air which had accompanied this short justification had so touched Madame

that, feeling incapable of aggrieving her further, and perhaps by an effect of the inclination for her which she had always expressed to me, everything else was caresses, consolations, and all the assurances of kindness with which that amiable princess always seasoned her favors. She had embraced Fanny with keen affection; she had pitied her for her pains, she had flattered her on her charms; she exhorted her to hope for everything in the future; and conceiving at that very moment a design worthy of her generosity based on the opinion she was already assuming of her innocence, and on the certainty she had of mine, she had sent for one of her gentlemen whom she had sent on the mission I had received before noon, with the order to have me taken that evening to St. Cloud if my wounds allowed it. Her first concern had been to inquire whether I was there on her arrival. My sister added that [363] in the eagerness she had shown to see me and to tell me about other circumstances which she reserved for herself to communicate to me directly, she thought her capable of paying me a surprise visit at my house.

I was motionless during this narrative. All the attention of my soul was riveted by the novelty of so many things that appeared en masse to my imagination. There was nothing to be feared from the agitation of my spirits for my wound. Never had so profound a calm reigned in all my senses. Fanny innocent! The Fanny I had loved! Was such a wonder within heaven's power? Can innocence be restored to a faithless woman?⁴⁸⁵ I had not lost sight of her for an instant during my sister's story; I had followed her in her every position and movement: on her knees before

⁴⁸⁵ This condition will be important in the following narrative: for Cleveland, nothing less than Fanny's innocence will do; he has no interest in a Fanny who is guilty but repentant. Yet it still seems contradicted by evident facts, whence lengthy and painstaking explanations.

Madame, pale, about to faint, melting in tears and uttering my name a hundred times with as many sighs. I had curiously observed her eyes, her face, the sound of her voice. I had drawn indices from her slightest feature and conjectures from the faintest change. Finally coming to after this sort of dream, I turned to my sister who was impatiently awaiting my reply. No, I said to her with an obstinacy that surprised her, I do not have so much credulousness for deceitful appearances. Then, emerging despite myself from this false tranquillity that was beginning to weigh on me: Ah! I exclaimed with the bitterest sentiment in the world, that is no longer a happiness on which I can be allowed to think, and I am ashamed at the eagerness with which I still wish for it.

But if your heart desires it, rejoined my sister, why do refuse yourself the satisfaction of hoping for it, until the new clarification which Madame promises you? That is a gratification that you ought to seize avidly in your present state. I only hastened to see you with that in view. Let me ask you, I replied, what you think, deep down, of your story. Are you blind enough not to see through all those ruses? Does that require such sharp eyes? Only Madame's extreme goodness and predisposition can put such a thick veil over her eyes. What more will she have to tell me? More tears, laments, cries of pain: this is a language as familiar to imposture as to innocence. What needed to be justified was the betrayal of a wanton woman who waited until I was asleep to leave my bed and throw herself into the arms of the despicable assassin she chose over me; it was the baseness she had to love him, the crime she committed by taking her heart from me, the indelible shame with which she covered herself by willingly gallivanting with her abductor, the terrible state into which she plunged me, and perhaps the evil plot to kill me, in which she vainly attempts to disguise the part her lover made her play. Yet the traitoress is still so bold as to attest heaven, which must have nothing more but punishments in store for her! She has the ef-

frontery to accuse me of injustice and cruelty! Me, my sister, I continued ever more indignantly, me, who have never been unjust or cruel to anyone but myself through the sad effects of a shameful constancy and crazy grief that have twenty times had me on the edge of the tomb! She accuses me of planning a new marriage, when with a shred of honor left she ought to desire it herself so as to bury forever the memory of her own; she cries out impetuously, she weeps ostentatiously. Do you not see pride and hypocrisy joining forces, and skillfully playing the role of virtue? Shameless woman! Horrible monster! Will your father's ghost not return to haunt you with its threats, and at least inspire in you some remorse?

The agitation into which I was insensibly again falling led my sister to break off this conversation in order to speak with me about Gelin and the measures Madame had already taken with the judges of St. Cloud. Without replying directly to the plea I had made that she use her authority to save him from execution, she had sent for the chief of justice, and told him in my sister's presence that she wished the procedures to be suspended for a few more days. After obtaining this assurance from him, she had asked him to send the criminal well guarded to her the next day, and take care that his hands be bound tightly enough to cause no one any uneasiness. Her [364] intention was not only to see him, from the curiosity that his adventures were bound to provoke in her, but to speak with him alone and make him elaborate on an endless number of points which she wished to examine. She had particularly enjoined the judge to avoid attracting attention, and the order was given to use one of the carriages of the chateau. There can be no doubt, said my sister, that what Madame has in mind is to shed light on many doubts, and that this process will then serve to provide us some insight; for despite the force of your reasons, she added, and the fear of causing you too much unrest, which prevented me from answering you a few minutes

ago, I cannot help repeating again that I have the same inclination as Madame to find your wife today less guilty. I leave aside, she continued, her flight with Gelin and her long absence, the kernel of which still perplexes me, I admit; but when I remember her basic character, her gentleness, her rectitude, her distaste for artifice, and so many other excellent qualities which I have known in her through long intimacy; when I think especially of the scrupulous and timid modesty which I have a hundred times observed in the minutest circumstances of her behavior, and I compare it to the excess of effrontery and impudence which she would have needed to sustain the brazen role which you attribute to her today, I find nothing in my thoughts that helps me compare things so disparate; moreover, Madame is not a princess who can be accused of flightiness and incaution. She has spoken at length with her, she had her talk, she listened to her; you may be sure that, in a scene of this nature, feigned characters do not long fool an enlightened observer, who knows the true power of the passions from continual experience of the world. Yet Madame is utterly on her side, and I have not told you that she even suffered my objections only impatiently. I interrupted my sister. What do you mean to conclude? I said: that Fanny is innocent, and it we are the guilty ones? That she left me out of affection? That she followed Gelin out of an effort of conjugal fidelity?⁴⁸⁶ No, replied my sister, but I am trying to think of some temperament that could explain such contradictions. If you cannot believe she is innocent, believe that she is touched by a repentance that may surpass her errors. I was going to interrupt again to make her realize she was defending her badly, when turning my head

⁴⁸⁶ This irony, unusual for Cleveland, serves to underscore the apparently irreconcilable gap between the objective truth he knows (the fact that Fanny abandoned him) and the unproven innocence which is the absolute condition of his recovery of happiness.

toward the door of my room where I heard someone coming quietly, I recognized the ***,⁴⁸⁷ my zealous director.⁴⁸⁸ He had kept my servants from announcing his arrival; and passing this attention off as a service, lest he interrupt my repose, he protested in the most affectionate terms that no one had been so moved as he by my dreadful adventure. He had first heard the news of it in St. Cloud, he said, from the mouth of Madame herself, who had reproached him for learning so late the sad situation of one of her best friends; and requiring no other incitement than his zeal, he was coming to acquit forthwith the duties of friendship.

Although the sincerity of his compliment was as suspect to me as his presence was inconvenient, I was patient enough to listen to him, and to want to test how far he was capable of carrying dissimulation. His curiosity over the cause and circumstances of my wounds had not been satisfied at St. Cloud, because secrecy was one of the principal favors I had taken the liberty to have requested of Madame. So he had spared nothing during the quarter-hour he had already been at my house to extract the truth from my servants. All his skill having been unable to make them disobey my orders, he had seen Mme Lallin, who allowed herself to reveal no more than they. They had done no more than say to him, in accordance with the rumor I had put about, that a madman with whom I had had a dispute in a foreign city had caught me in my room and made a cowardly attack on me to avenge himself. Perhaps he thought this unlikely; but figuring he could learn more later by other means, he made a point of talking about it with me, allowing the meaning I seemed to desire, and exhorted me in very Christian tones to make to heaven a sacrifice of my resentment. My sister, who detested his very name since Mme Lallin had admitted his maliciousness to us, pretexted some domestic matter

⁴⁸⁷ The Jesuit: see the notice at the beginning of book VII.

⁴⁸⁸ *I.e., directeur de conscience*, confessor and spiritual counselor.

to withdraw and leave me alone with him.

[365] No sooner had she left than, seeming to draw inward and reflect on something important, he ceased addressing me for a few minutes. Given my weakness, and with my imagination filled with my sister's last observations, I could not be very eager for conversation; thus I waited patiently until he felt like speaking. Finally, breaking the silence with an appearance of composure, he told me that despite the fear of causing me some discomfort by a long discourse, the friendship he professed for me did not allow him to defer for a single minute some matters which he believed essential to my security; that without insisting on secrecy, he felt sure I would myself feel how important it was to him that I be faithful to it, and that indeed only the certainty of my discretion and the sincere attachment he bore me could make a man of his profession override the reasons that committed him to silence. You have been in St. Cloud for several months, he continued, lowering his voice, and in whatever solitude you have lived, you cannot doubt that a thousand persons have observed you here. Those who see you from afar, without knowing as perfectly as I the innocence of your morals and the integrity of your principles, have formed such an unfavorable opinion of you that, having communicated it to some persons in authority, it exposes you to the most unpleasant things an honest man can apprehend. For the fact is, he pursued, that some depict you not only as a man without religion, but as the corruptor of others' religion; others more specifically as an emissary of France's Protestant neighbors, who are here only to spread or confirm error, and facilitate the escape of those who desert the kingdom. Your accusers cite the example of M. de R., who is preparing, they say, on your advice to take refuge in England. They cite his daughter, who they believe to be in sheltered here, where they doubt that her honor is any more secure than her religion. They are trying in this way to stir up civil authority and clerical zeal

against you. The most ardent have proposed that you be arrested, so as to clarify in depth your conduct and your intentions. The order would already have been given, if I had not had the good fortune to have it suspended by the zeal with which I have adopted your interests. Your peril has touched me deeply, he added, giving me a tender glance; I have praised your mind and learning, I have spoken of you as a man of distinction whom Madame honors with her friendship, and who deserved to be respected, especially in the absence of the princess, whom one would risk offending by mistreating you. I have asked for time to observe you more closely, and I have promised an exact and faithful report. In short, I am your guarantor for several weeks, which I was granted to keep an eye on your activities; I would have done more, had I not feared attracting suspicion with an excess of zeal.

He did not appear about to stop, but I interrupted him. The memory of Mme Lallin's admissions was too present for me not to figure out at once that these protestations of service and friendship were so many ruses. The persecution I had to fear was the one he had raised against me, and all this detail was merely the history of his own hatred which he called by another name. Only his motives remained for me to divine; but I did not need to mull it over for long either to judge that, his initial attempts having met with little success, and Madame's return making him foresee that I would be better sheltered than ever under such powerful protection, he wanted to take advantage of his very maliciousness either to re-establish himself in my confidence with false signs of attachment, or to give rise more easily to a new opportunity to betray me under the guise of familiarity and friendship. This thought caused me enough indignation to make me lash out at him; however, forced for a hundred reasons to go lightly, I contented myself with interrupting a discussion which I could no longer bear. My gratitude, I said, will be proportionate to your services. In my present condition, I added with a sigh, one cannot

distress me without cruelty; but I have such just confidence in the king's justice, in Madame's kindness, and in the righteousness of [366] my own heart, that fears of this nature cannot cause me the least worry. I disdain those who are trying to persecute me, because I have given no one any cause to hate me. He started to reply. I politely entreated him to consider that I required rest, and to postpone the remainder of this conversation until after my recovery. Finally, when he rose, I thought I was delivered of his presence; but he paused again, and lowering himself toward me: If it is true that the lovely Cécile is in your house, he said affectionately, you will surely grant me the liberty of seeing her. Whatever distress this proposal caused me, as I was half prepared for it, I hastened to reply without any sign of uncertainty, that it was from M. de R. that he must request the permission he was asking of me; that Cécile was indeed in my house, but with her father and my sister-in-law, and that the innocence of my sentiments requiring no secrecy, I readily confessed that she was soon to become my wife. He pressed my hand with an air of approval, and implied with a smile that he thought he could read much more in my heart.

Mme Lallin's indiscretion had placed me in the necessity of explaining myself with this candor, for I could not attempt to pass off her avowals as fantasies, nor even keep my intention to marry and my other intentions hidden any longer. However an inner premonition seemed to warn me that I was doing something imprudent. M. de R., to whom I immediately communicated what had just taken place, had the same opinion of it, although he recognized at the same time that if it was a mistake, it had been an indispensable one. His status as subject of the king making his fears far more acute than mine, he told me frankly that he now believed his daughter as exposed in my house as in his own, and since that the state of my health could not allow me to conclude so soon the Charenton matter, he fell back on the advice I had

originally given him to send Cécile to Rouen. He had taken measures to divest himself secretly of his property. If they succeed as rapidly as I hope, he said, I foresee that I will be free about the same time as you are beginning to recover from your wounds. Then our departure will not be delayed for a minute. What is to keep you even, he added, from sending your ladies ahead with my daughter, and us from thus preparing ahead of time everything that can hasten our journey?

There was no reasonable objection I could make to this plan. The pain that losing Cécile would cause me being counterbalanced by seeing the dangers her father made me apprehend for her, I felt my heart easier to govern than it would have been in other circumstances; or rather, to leave nothing obscure in my most intimate sentiments, the turmoil remaining in me from my last conversation with my sister, and the inexpressible dejection into which I had fallen through so many stages, had almost reduced me to no longer distinguishing which movements agitated me the most. In this confusion of heart and mind, which I felt neither the strength nor the will to clarify, I decided to abandon to a man whose wisdom and discretion were known to me, duties which I could not acquit myself. Indeed, I said, send them if they are willing; I entrust everything to your friendship. He carried out this decision more rapidly than I was expecting. The *** had scarcely made it back to St. Cloud to be present at supper with Madame, who had ordered him to bring her news of my health, than he declared to his daughter and to my sister-in-law the decision that we had reached together. They had to obtain immediately everything they would need for the journey. In less than an hour the carriage was ready and my men mounted. Drink, whom Lord Clarendon had seen in my party in Orléans, was responsible for explaining to him the reasons for this hasty flight, and entreating him on my behalf, in the name of the friendship he had sworn me, to grant an asylum with his wife to those persons

dearest to me.⁴⁸⁹ Cécile left in the middle of the night, with my sister-in-law, my niece and my two sons. We had included Mme Lallin also in this arrangement, but she insistently requested the liberty to remain. Her past adventures, the memory of which could not yet have been erased in Rouen, hardly permitted her to reappear there decently; and my sister had approved this reason all the more that, leaving St. Cloud [367] only regretfully in the uncertainty of my recovery, she was quite relieved to leave with me someone whose devotion could take the place of her own.

Although sleep had not for a moment followed all the agitations I had undergone, it was not until it was time to rise the next day that I learned from M. de R. of the departure of Cécile and my sister-in-law. He did not conceal that in addition to being tormented by anxiety over his daughter, the desire to spare me new anguish in a separation that would have been painful to me had led him to send them off without bidding me farewell. Impatience to see them again, he said, will be additional motivation to make you hasten your recovery. As he did not fail to notice that I received this news with deep sighs, he added that it was my sister's intention to return in a few days, or at least as soon as she had provided for our children's safety; that she would bring us some information which he had asked her to obtain secretly on ways of facilitating our passage to England; that subsequently we would not lose a minute, even if he had to abandon all his wealth; that as for the procedures he had initiated in the Consistory, his opinion was to halt them definitively, since my current condition did not allow me to pursue them very vigorously, and all the diligence we could apply after my recovery would not be match

⁴⁸⁹ This is the only indication in the novel, aside from a passing allusion earlier, of the presence of Mrs Hyde with her husband in Rouen. In fact, though, Hyde's wife, Frances Aylesbury, had died in August 1667, whereas this part of the novel takes place in 1670.

the speed with which we could get to London, and end the difficulty by much shorter means. Thus, he concluded, everything depends on the care you take to maintain calm in your heart and mind, in order not to counter in any way the effect of the remedies. I did not reply. He nonetheless took up a pen to write on my behalf to Lord Clarendon; and after reading me his letter, which was merely a confirmation of the orders he had given to Drink, he presented it to me for my signature. I signed it with the same silence. He left me to dispatch another of my servants whom he had reserved to carry it.

It is not my intention to pause too long here to depict my situation, but I must confess that I was perhaps in the lowest state to which strength and courage have ever been reduced. I was no longer subject to movements of grief nor to violent agitations; it was as if my heart had lost the ability to feel them. What I would like to depict has no resemblance to known sentiments. It was a languor that was closer to insensibility than to despair, but its effect was a thousand times more devastating than all the most dreadful things I had ever felt, since it seemed to tend to dim all my natural faculties, and lead me little by little into oblivion. All my misfortunes were present, and this sight no longer caused me any emotion. I was no longer capable of distinguishing them, or comparing them, or making two connected observations on their number and strength. To see them was none the less horrible for that, but they were opposite me like a gang of cruel assassins, who rest tranquilly near an unfortunate on whom they have exercised all their rage; and I unfrightened and motionless near them, as if I had nothing more to expect from their fury after all of it I had borne. The awful extremity, which I still cannot recall without finding some remaining consternation in my soul. It is true that my loss of blood and the exhaustion of my spirits caused by my wound could contribute a great deal to this sort of alienation. The unexpected news of the departure of Cécile and my

family had finally atrophied my reason by taking away the sole support I had left. I was no longer attached to anything; everything around me seemed to recede. Now and then I extended my hand, as if to grab hold of the only things to which I still thought I could cling, and keeping it extended without being able even to close it, there was not a moment when I did not believe myself about to fall into an immense void, which caused me, as I have said, the same horror as the approach of oblivion. The surgeons brought me partially to my senses with various potions which they forced me to take before examining my wounds. They assured me, once they had applied the bandages, that they were less dangerous than they had thought in the two previous days. But what would have happened if the prudence and friendship of M. de R. had not hidden from me what he learned before the day was over?

[368] The ladies had left under the escort of five men, resolute enough and well enough armed to defend them against any kind of incident during a journey that could not take more than twenty-four hours. Nevertheless, at the crack of dawn, which began give them light near St. Germain, the team was halted by a company of mounted guards, who commanded my men's respect by showing an order from the king. Drink was no more short on wit than resolution. He understood that resistance could serve no purpose, and convinced at first that only Cécile was concerned, he asked the officer to explain his intentions more specifically. Learning that the order applied without distinction to the ladies and children who were in the carriage, he limited himself to asking where they had in mind to take them, and obtaining permission to follow them. At first they refused to satisfy him with respect to the location, but the rest was granted, and the officer, who seemed to be carrying out his warrant with regret, permitted him at the same time to detach a man from his party to take this unwelcome news to St. Cloud. The messenger not finding M. de

R. at my house, who had gone to the chateau to receive Madame's orders and inquire what had happened with respect to Gelin, had the discretion to keep going without telling anyone anything; and having soon caught up with him, he again had the prudence to communicate so privately to him the misfortune he had come to tell him about that he left it entirely in his power to hide or reveal it as he saw fit. M. de R. was an astute and experienced man whom the most intense and most unforeseen reaction could not induce to make a false step. Although the circumstances were so clear that he could not for a moment doubt the fate of his daughter, and it was no less easy to judge from whose hand the blow came, he saw the ***, who was still at St. Cloud, without betraying the slightest disturbance. But having procured the honor of speaking secretly with Madame, he opened his heart to her, asking for her protection. It was not an extraordinary thing for a Protestant girl of Cécile's age to be taken from her father to be educated in a convent; and as it was not to be feared that she would be mistreated there, Madame did not find the harm as terrible as M. de R. imagined it. Nevertheless, she took a different view of what had happened to my sister-in-law and my children who, being foreigners who were preparing to leave a country in which they had incurred no guilt for anything, could not be arrested with any appearance of justice. The way she first worded her reply would have distressed M. de R. less had he realized that it was solely her desire to oblige him that made her disguise a part of her sentiments: for correctly foreseeing that she would have difficulty getting Cécile exempted from a custom that was observed in all parts of the kingdom where the king's Protestant subjects were concerned, she was thinking of rendering him an indirect service by taking her objections to the court in the name of my sister-in-law, and asking for liberation not only for her, but for all the persons who accompanied her, and whom it was easy, with a little favor, to make pass for so many foreigners. Madame,

who thought up this plan on the spot, did not describe it explicitly enough to calm M. de R.'s alarms. He thought he detected coolness in her face; and not long insisting, he withdrew to seek some remedy more congenial to his impatience.

[369] He nevertheless returned to my house; but purposely hiding his pain from me, he spoke to me only of Gelin, and the curiosity Madame had had to talk to him. She had spent nearly an hour with him. The subject of such an extraordinary conversation was still not known, and Gelin had been sent back afterward to the same prison; but the jailor had received an order to treat him more kindly, without ceasing to guard him closely. With whatever precautions he had been taken to the chateau, it had been difficult to keep him out of everyone's sight. Some of Madame's ladies who had attempted to listen in on the secret conversation thought they had heard him speak of repentance and hope for mercy. What increased the depth of the mystery was that immediately after sending him away, Madame had dispatched a trusted officer on a secret mission. There was much reasoning about this action, the cause of which no one could guess. M. de R. himself, whom I had asked to discuss things with the princess speaking as a man who had my complete confidence, had received from her no other reply than fervent hopes for my recovery, and new assurances of the care she was taking of my happiness. After this account, he said that, the surgeons having a better opinion of my wounds, and assuring him that my life was not in danger, he was going to leave me until the next day, and entrust me to Mme Lallin's devotion. His wish to arrange his affairs for our departure was the only reason he gave me.

His absence was shorter than he could imagine. As he left my room, he found Drink, who had come as fast as his horse could carry him, and spared him from taking actions that would have proven futile. To follow the rule I have imposed on myself up till now, of holding to the order of events, I must not defer

until later explanations which I myself obtained only at length and incrementally.⁴⁹⁰ It was true, as I supposed, that the *** was seeking the opportunity to disoblige me as eagerly as he had desired earlier to serve and please me; but much further advanced than I had suspected, the visit he had paid me the day before, and which I had regarded as a veil with which he wanted to cover his intentions, was already their execution. If the hope he had had of undoing me personally had been dampened by others' refusal to follow his instigations, and had perhaps evaporated completely with Madame's return, he had determined at least to cause me the most poignant displeasure of which he thought me capable by taking Cécile from me, and depriving me of a good which I no longer wanted to receive from his hands. This enterprise had not cost him much effort. Nothing seemed so praiseworthy in a Catholic state as devotion to the instruction of young Protestants, and that pretext was used all the time to remove children of all sorts of stations from the bosom of their families. That was the blow that M. de R. had always apprehended. But it became much more infallible and more easy, when the ***, having depicted Cécile as doomed in my hands, because I had in mind to marry her and take her to England, he had pointed out at the same time that, given the condition to which my wounds reduced me, she could be taken from me with no commotion, and perhaps without

⁴⁹⁰ The narrative challenge is to balance two competing considerations: clarity for the reader, and dramatic effect arising from the protagonist's uncertainty. In order to keep more or less to chronological order, the narrator must bring into the story information obtained at some later stage, which is to step outside the point of view of the character himself; but he tries to combine the two effects as best he can by keeping the reader informed of the disparity between the two levels of awareness.

anyone in my house noticing it.⁴⁹¹ He himself took the responsibility for leading the guards and removing all obstacles. It was with this purpose that he came to my house: the things he divulged to me were less to re-establish himself in my friendship, from which he quite realized he had nothing more to expect, than to obtain by means of so many civilities the permission to see Cécile, and if it were necessary, permission to spend the night in my house, which I could not decently refuse him, even believing him a traitor. He had wished to ascertain which apartment she occupied, and whether it was still the one in the park, where nothing would have been simpler than to surprise her.

Indeed, after requesting the liberty to see her, and having used it to extract skillfully from her and from the other ladies all the information he desired, his only thought had been to rejoin the guards, with whom he had agreed on a place to meet. But before could go, his malicious curiosity had further found an even more felicitous means of being satisfied. As he was leaving the ladies, he had seen M. de R. entering their apartment after leaving mine. He had avoided encountering him, and doubting not that he would talk to them about his visit, he had returned silently to their door, where he had not missed a single word of the order he was bringing them to leave, and of the circumstances of their journey. It was more than he could have hoped for had he been able to arrange the events himself. He hastened to be present at Madame's supper, to cover the imposture to the end; his guards awaited him in the vicinity of St. Cloud, and the betrayal could have been executed twenty paces from my walls; but another

⁴⁹¹ Prévost does not hesitate, on occasion, to make use of subplots that are apparently suggested by the apocryphal "volume V" (see appendix): in that first "book VIII" the Jesuit, taking advantage of Madame's death, which leaves Cleveland without protection, obtains an order from the court to abduct Cécile and lock her up in a convent.

project which his hatred inspired him with during this interval caused him to defer his plan for several hours. He thought that the way to crush me even more cruelly was to have my sister with her daughter and my children arrested at the same time. Since that required a new order, he dispatched one of his guards with a few lines from his hand, by which he alerted M. D. L.⁴⁹² that Cécile was setting out that very night for England, accompanied by several children of the religion⁴⁹³ who like her were fleeing [370] the kingdom, and that it was a simple matter to seize such a fine prey. The guard came back with the warrant, which the rest of the squadron was waiting for, and with the utmost speed they caught up with the carriage near St. Germain. The order specified that the girls be taken to the convent nearest the place where they were arrested, and the boys to the Jesuit Fathers at the Collège de Louis le Grand.⁴⁹⁴

The officer commanding the guards had no other reason for refusing at first to specify the location than the fear of encountering some resistance; but seeing only docility and sadness in his captives, he confessed to my sister that he was free to choose, and was civil enough to leave it up to her. Although she ought to regard indifferently any lodging of which they were going to make a prison for her, a movement of inclination for Fanny led her to ask for Chaillot. She was immediately taken there with

⁴⁹² Doubtless M. de Louvois (1641–1691), who would become, after his father Le Tellier, secretary of state for war and already exercised some of its functions, in addition to those of general superintendent of the mails; he was known for his anti-Protestant zeal and his participation in the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

⁴⁹³ Short for *la religion prétendue réformée* ('the so-called reformed religion'), the government's official term for Protestantism.

⁴⁹⁴ A slight anachronism: the Jesuit Collège de Clermont, founded in 1561, was in fact not renamed Collège de Louis le Grand until 1682.

Cécile and her daughter; my two sons were driven the same day to the Jesuit school. Drink, seeing that his services were not required, had returned at once with the rest of my men to give an account of their misfortune to M. de R., and the first order he received from him and Mme Lallin was not to appear in my presence for four days, which was about the time that he would have taken for the journey to Rouen.

It was at least a cause for consolation to M. de R. to know that his daughter was so close to him. He flattered himself that the satisfaction of seeing her would not be refused him, and this expectation caused him to return to my room with an air of contentment which I noticed. He was there only a moment. The reason he gave me for his return was uttered in a manner so vague and distracted that I suspected some dissimulation. However, as it was nonetheless accompanied by that effusion of joy which had struck me first, and which a satisfied heart never has the art of entirely concealing, I felt no new disquiet arise in my own. He told me that having just learned by express letter that his affairs were taking a rather favorable turn, it would not be as long as he had thought before he saw me again, and he expected to come spend the night at my house. He embraced me with an ardor that again confirmed what I had thought. But whatever interest I took in all his concerns, I asked him no uncomfortable questions, and attributed his joy to his presumed tranquillity of mind henceforth with respect to his daughter.

He was far from having communicated to me the slightest bit of such a pleasant sentiment. I remained on the contrary sadder and more languishing than ever after he left, and the comparison I made despite myself between his situation and mine only plunged me again suddenly into the darkest and most dire melancholy. I nevertheless felt more able than I had for three days to reflect and reason, whether because the new dressing that had just been applied to my wounds had refreshed my blood, or

because the pity of heaven, which foresaw the new scene of torments and anguish that was imminent, wanted to revive what life and warmth I had left to make me able to bear it. But I did not feel more motivated to judge my fate and make use of this glimmer of reason to penetrate the darkness that surrounded me. From now on that was heaven's business. I dispelled all the thoughts the presence of which could force me to examine my condition, and even my desires or fears. What good would it have done me to tire myself with no hope? I paused only at general considerations, which had no power to sustain me, but also added nothing to the weight that was crushing me, and which fed my pains without embittering them.

I was in this state when it was announced to me that Madame was in her carriage at the door of my house, and was asking whether my health allowed me to receive her for a minute. Mme Lallin having not dared to appear and reply to her, and my English servants adhering to the intention of M. de R., who had forbidden them in my presence until his return, it was my butler who, being fortunately at the door, had received the order to announce to me this honorable visit. I tested my strength; a risk to my life would not have prevented me from leaving my bed to go in person to welcome such a favor, had my exhausted legs not failed my desires. I [371] replied that as sad as it was for me not to be able to show otherwise my respect for such a great princess, it would be an equally great joy and comfort from her presence. She was good enough to have herself shown in. I heard her approaching my apartment, and that she was not alone. My heart was extraordinarily agitated, and I attributed this movement to the surprise that such a rare condescension would naturally be causing me. But why such art to bring my readers to the narration I am preparing for them? Do I wish to preserve for them the pleasure of an unforeseen situation, and make of my suffering an agreeable entertainment? Ah! I shall break my quill, and bury

forever in my heart the memory of my misfortunes and my tears, if I require assistance and ornaments to retrace them. Let me rather go back to things in their simple beginnings, and leave it to be sorted out later in my narrative how I came to be informed of a thousand circumstances which I place in a time when I knew nothing of them.

The penchant Madame had always had for Fanny had been so reinforced by the conversation she had had with her at Chantilly that since then she was totally occupied by her compassion for her pains and by the task of restoring her fortune and honor. It was with this in mind that she had wished to see Gelin, and question him rigorously about everything she had found murky and uncertain in the details she had heard from my mouth or from Fanny's. She had taken care to obtain an order from the king which subjected the bailiff of St. Cloud to all of her commands. But as it could happen that a knave who was only a step away from the scaffold would try to distort the truth to conceal his crimes, she had deemed it necessary for Fanny to be herself present at this confrontation, or at least close enough to the criminal to be able to hear him. After taking proper measures with the officers of justice, she had sent to invite her to the chateau, where she had seen to it that she would arrive secretly; and having placed her in a favorable place in her chamber, she had had no rest until the moment Gelin was brought there. Finally the chief of justice, who had taken personal responsibility for bringing him, sent word of his arrival at the appointed time. He held his prisoner by the end of a heavy chain attached about his waist, to which was attached another chain that bound his hands. Madame at first appeared a bit frightened by this spectacle; but once she had verified that he was incapable of attempting anything in this situation, she retained him alone, and began with him a conversation the subject which she had premeditated. She declared to him that his fate depended on the sincerity of the answers he was to

give to her questions, and describing to him on the one hand all the horror of the punishment he could not evade, on the other she pointed out to him that with the measures she had already taken, she could break his chains, and save his life at the same time.

He shook his head with a proud and disdainful smile, as if he were trying to appear as indifferent to the promises as to the threats. Then, adopting a gentle and civil tone, he replied that such a great princess had no need to resort to violence to extract from him what he was disposed to confess willingly, and solely out of the respect he had for her. Despite this affectation of bravery, he seemed somewhat disconcerted when, instead of questioning him merely about the motives for his attack, Madame spoke to him of my family, of the island of Cuba, of the island of St. Helena, and of La Coruña, with detailed facts and circumstances by which he could see that she was informed of all our secrets. He expressed himself nevertheless with much presence of mind, and all his replies were clear and precise. He distinguished the times and places, he cited evidence, he named witnesses, and mixing with each item some tender sentiment or a sigh which indicated the violence of his passion for Fanny, he returned to the unworthy act he had committed, and did not require urging to admit that he had covered himself with the most shameful infamy. But what is one not capable of doing, he added, lowering his eyes, with my natural impetuosity and the terrible passion that devours me? I would have assassinated my father in the same circumstances! He went on to relate how, after leaving Fanny in Chaillot, just as [372] I have recounted it, he had encountered the chaplain of the convent; and knowing him to be a virtuous man in whom she had confided, he had communicated to him the proposal of marriage he had just made to her, the harshness with which she had rejected his offers after so much service and love, and the despair into which this refusal was capable of plunging him; that the chaplain, moved by his grief, had undertaken to comfort him by

pointing out that Fanny, who had embraced the Catholic religion since she had been at Chaillot,⁴⁹⁵ could dispose of neither her heart nor of her hand so long as I was alive, and that according to the laws of the Roman church separation from a husband did not entitle a woman to form other engagements; that this confirmation of the irreparable ruin of his hopes had consummated his fury; that he had not hated me until then; but that seeing in me nothing more now than a detestable tyrant who, not satisfied with scorning a wife worthy of adoration, further had the injustice to deprive everyone else of such a precious treasure, he had inwardly sworn either to be delivered of his woes by losing his life at my hands, or to take mine, so as to restore to Fanny the freedom to dispose of herself; that he had nonetheless concealed his rage from the chaplain; that having merely feigned that he wanted also to use his efforts to make me abandon my intentions, he had consulted him on the means of gaining access to me, and that, learning from him that he was on friendly terms with a canon of St. Cloud, whom I saw casually, he had prevailed upon him to open this path to him with a letter of recommendation; that in truth his intention was only to get me to cross swords with him in secret, and to kill me if he was the more fortunate, but in keeping with all the rules of honor; and that having been impelled to take his advantage only by a movement of fury which he could not control when he saw I was trying to have him arrested, he still shuddered with shame that he had been capable of such awful treachery.

Madame, always was easily moved, could not help pitying his misfortune while continuing to reproach him for his crime. She repeated to him that mercy was certain if he had been sincere,

⁴⁹⁵ This somewhat unexpected new factor is explained in part by Fanny's natural gentleness, and sets up the subsequent moderation of Cleveland's anti-Catholic prejudices.

but that he must abandon all hope of pardon if he had thought he could deceive her by the slightest artifice. And to discomfit him by a present fear, she told him that he was mistaken if he thought he had spoken without a witness; that every word of his replies had been heard by the one person on earth who should take the greatest interest in them; that she was going to appear, and gain-say him on anything that offended truth. Perhaps he imagined that it was I myself he was going to see. His face was a bit distorted by it. But the princess, who had walked toward the spot where she had placed Fanny, lifted the curtain under which she was hidden. Come forth, Madame, she said to her, cover him with the consternation as he deserves, and pronounce his sentence yourself, if he has had the effrontery to entertain me here with impostures. Fanny was hardly expecting to be involved in this scene. The discomfort it caused her made her hold her peace. He, as if struck by lightning, threw himself to his knees before her, and daring not to lift his eyes toward her face, he uttered several inarticulate words. He started to kiss her feet; she withdrew with a startled cry. Finally Madame, moved at the constraint she was in, motioned to the criminal to withdraw, and ordered the bailiff to take him back to his prison.

Her kindness leading her to interpret everything favorably, she remained more persuaded than ever of Fanny's innocence. The very horror she had at first felt for Gelin being greatly attenuated by the evidence of his repentance, and by what had struck her as prepossessing in his physiognomy, she wanted him to be treated less sternly until after the execution of a new plan which she was contemplating. Based on the circumstances he had related of his departure from the island of St. Helena and his stay in La Coruña, she had asked him the name of the captain who had granted him passage, and of several persons of distinction whom he had attested. Combining all this information with that which she had obtained from Fanny and myself, she decided she would

dispatch one of her officers to go verify it, in the places, and by the persons, whose names had been cited. The distance from Bayonne, where the captain lived, and even from [373] La Coruña, did not hinder the passion she had to be satisfied. The officer departed, charged with all the instructions she deemed requisite.⁴⁹⁶

Nevertheless, amidst the caresses and congratulations she showered on Fanny, an important doubt still troubled her. If Fanny was such as her inclination and even the appearances led her to believe, then I was guilty, for her innocence was based solely on my infidelity; and although she had affected gentleness and moderation in her complaints, Gelin, whether to support his earlier insinuations, or because he had indeed formed this idea of me, had just painted my inconstancy in the most odious colors. Thus from accuser I became the criminal and the accused. Madame, who had never seen any woman with me other than my sister-in-law, had at first found it difficult to accept that I was keeping concealed in my house a lady she heard called Lallin, and whom, she was being told, I wished to make my wife; for Fanny's old prejudice still subsisted, and even Gelin, learning the first news of the marriage I was contemplating, and for which I was soliciting the permission of the Consistory, had not pressed his questions farther, in the opinion that it could pertain only to Mme Lallin. Everything that both of them had told her about this pretended passion had therefore seemed so implausible to Madame that she had required their combined testimony to believe it, and this was one of the strongest reasons that had made her wish to

⁴⁹⁶ Another inspiration taken from the anonymous "volume V", in which Cleveland sends Drink to La Coruña with orders to "obtain for all he was told attestations in proper form" (p. 34), and goes himself to Calais to see M. des Ogères. This officer sent to inquire on site by Madame will reappear in book XI.

interview Gelin. However, as she could not deny two proofs such the consent I had had requested of Fanny for our separation, and the confirmation Gelin had received from an Elder of the Consistory, she was almost forced despite herself to discount somewhat the esteem she had given me, and to believe I was indeed all the more guilty for all the efforts I had put into concealing it from her. But how could such artifice be compatible with the sentiments of a heart in which she had observed nothing but uprightness?⁴⁹⁷ In the uncertainty these reflections caused her, she opted, in order to leave nothing to clarify, to check on her behalf at Charenton whether it was true that an English gentleman was to marry a French woman named Mme Lallin. The Elder to whom this question was addressed was reluctant to provide information; but the respect he owed to Madame not permitting him totally to refuse, he replied in general that some propositions of marriage had been made between the gentleman who was named to him and a young person of the vicinity, but that it was not about Mme Lallin, whose name he had never even heard.

This report gave Madame great joy. She thought she grasped all of a sudden the kernel of such a confusing plot, and that she could reconcile all her notions with what she had learned from Fanny and Gelin. She had not forgotten that the *** had undertaken, at her behest, to try to apply himself to my consolation, and had himself vaunted to her a success he attributed to his ministries. He had not failed to emphasize the acquaintance he had arranged between Monsieur de R. and me. Madame, who knew the gentleman, and knew that his daughter was amiable, did not doubt that I had taken a liking to her, and that in order to find the peace I had lost, I could have conceived the idea of marrying her.

⁴⁹⁷ A somewhat familiar quandary for some of Prévost's characters, who on one level believe that sincerity can always be detected by its inherent signs, and on another encounter ambiguous or contradictory cases.

But supposing Fanny innocent, and being aware that my despair was to believe her guilty, concluded that a passion of such recent date would not hold up for an instant in my heart against its former and legitimate sentiments. She hastened to communicate all these thoughts to Fanny. She even added, to reinforce her hopes right away, that her rival was absent because of a misfortune which she could not reveal to her without indiscretion, but which she had from her father himself, and which would perhaps keep her away for a long while. Finally, leaving her scarcely any chance to reply, she assured her that I loved no one but her, that I worshipped her, that I could not be happy without seeing her, and that she had only to appear to regain all the ascendancy she had once had over my heart.

Fanny did not easily yield to promises which she believed to be contradicted by insurmountable objections. But Madame, fixing only her first thoughts, urged her [374] so insistently to rely on her friendship, and to agree to what she wished to do for her, that she prevailed upon her to follow blindly her every wish. She took her into her carriage, without explaining her intentions to her further, and having herself driven to my house with scarcely any retinue, it was only when they were but twenty paces from my door that she revealed to her where she was. The surprise and the fright provoked in her such a violent reaction that she nearly fell unconscious. Meanwhile, the carriage having already arrived, she exhorted her to get hold of herself and to put great hope in an undertaking of which she herself assumed the responsibility.

I do not mean to reproach Madame for this action, recognizing that its source was only an excessive zeal to do something for my happiness. But in my condition, overwhelmed with worries and griefs, assailed by a hundred cruel preoccupations, drained of blood and strength, what chance was there of finding me disposed to the clarifications she was preparing for me; and had she sufficiently known my character not to be concerned for my strength

of spirit, how could she expect that the agitations she was going to cause me voluntarily would not finally destroy my health and envenom my wounds? The great have no knowledge of the effect of violent passions. Whether because the ease with which they can satisfy them prevents them from ever experiencing their full power, or because their continual dissipation soon serves to dampen them, they do not know these tempests of the soul that shake reason to its foundations, and sometimes act upon the body with more fury than all the external ills to which the most dreadful effects are attributed.⁴⁹⁸ Madame, although exercised by various domestic troubles, did not have an accurate notion of mine, and judging me perhaps after herself, she thought I was capable of all the consolations that she would have liked.

So it was Fanny who was approaching my apartment with her, and whose voice I had even heard without identifying it; for who could have helped me recognize it? I would more easily have imagined the sky falling than the boldness of a woman I had always known as timid, and in whom I supposed that shame was beginning to reawaken some sentiments of virtue. The most favorable idea I could have taken from all the stories I had been told of her, was that of her repentance; but does a faithless wife, who has no sentiment but that one to boast, come with such confidence before a gravely offended man? Nevertheless it was she; my eyes were soon forced to look at her, although at the entrance to my room she followed Madame, trying to hide behind her.

Having first turned my eyes on the princess, I attempted to communicate to her by my posture and my gestures much more than with words the eternal gratitude that filled my heart. You

⁴⁹⁸ This paragraph furnishes a theoretical basis for Prévost's preference for relatively unknown protagonists, by implicitly rejecting the classical model of the great tragic hero.

appear weakened, she said as she took a seat. She was going to go on, but I had spotted Fanny. A deathly faint had already closed my eyes. Madame was consternated, and Fanny was rushing to my assistance, when having regained consciousness, and perceiving that she was supporting my head, I pushed her away with my hand: Cruel enemy of my peace, I cried out in a voice more baleful than I can describe, have you come to snatch away what little life I have left? A blind impulsion which still shames me caused me to utter this vicious exclamation. It was like the first exhalation of those dark vapors that had so long haunted my soul, and had begun to corrupt the natural gentleness of my character.⁴⁹⁹ I noted the dismay which such an unexpected reception caused Madame, and attempted to repair it by bowing toward her in silence, with a movement that expressed my disarray and my embarrassment. Fanny, who felt my harshness much more acutely, dropped to her knees against my bed, and began to shed a torrent of tears, holding her head in her two hands.

What is it then that you want, Madame rejoined, looking at me with an air of astonishment, and what is the meaning of the disorder in which I see you? Do you desire something different from what I bring you, a tender and innocent wife, whom your fantasies have made unhappy for only too long, and whose sole presence ought to restore your health at once, if you have ever had for her half the affection that you have so often vaunted to me? [375] I have sent you word, she continued, that I was persuaded of her innocence: is my action in bringing her here myself not a confirmation of that which ought absolutely to cure all your

⁴⁹⁹ These *noires vapeurs* have a physiological meaning, being the equivalent, on the conceptual level, of the atrabilious or black vapors corresponding the melancholy temperament. Fanny's later description of the effect of her "melancholic vapors" in book IX is in effect a medical diagnosis.

doubts? Do you think me capable of having come at random? Is that responding to the friendship I am showing you and the opinion I have of you? She would have said much more to me; but in the terrible combat I was undergoing, between a thousand impetuous movements seeking to break forth, and the fear of having lacked respect for such a great princess, I gathered all my strength to interrupt her: Do hear me, I said, scarcely breathing; ah, Madame, summon your incomparable kindness to listen to me! The tokens of it I have received are engraved in my heart. They shall live there until the tomb. But let it not blind you in favor of a faithless wife. Let it not make you forget my interests for hers. Remember that she betrayed me; that she reduced me to the dire extremity in which you see me; that she has perhaps not for a moment had pity for the woes she has caused me. Do you then wish me to restore to her a heart she disdained, and plunge without reflection into a new kind of infamy? Calling her innocent! Good heaven! Is that a word made for her? But suppose her remorse sincere: will it repair all that I have suffered, and will it restore to me all that I have lost? Oh fatal loss! I cried out with hands joined; oh misfortune! oh eternal despair! Who shall comfort me? Who shall appease the torments of my heart? Who shall take pity on a miserable to whom everything is odious and sinister, and who protests, at two paces from death, that it is still too distant? I finished these last words in a voice so feeble and so low that the waning of my strength was easy to perceive. Madame, surprised at the violence with which I appeared to toss and turn, had tried several times to cut me short; and as if herself carried away by the impetuosity of my sentiments, she signaled to me with her hand to moderate my transport. Fanny, in the posture she had not changed, continued to keep her face pressed against my sheets, and was heard only by the sobs that accompanied her tears. Scarcely had I dared raise my eyes towards her. I had turned my head several times and nearly opened my mouth to

address my accusations directly to her; a power superior to me had stopped me, and my movements had taken a different course. I do not know which of us three would have spoken next, but the sight that struck the eyes of Madame made her utter a piercing cry. It was my blood that was flowing in waves on my bed, and had already soaked everything around me. My wounds had re-opened. I had for several moments felt a humid warmth that ought to have alerted me to this accident, but my agitation had not allowed me to notice it, nor even to perceive that the linens that bound me had come undone.

I finally noticed what was alarming Madame. Let me die, I said to her with doleful indifference; it is time. I shall take with me the satisfaction of having had this faithless woman as witness to the final effects of her cruelty. Oh heartless woman! I added, addressing her directly this time; is that not what you expected and what you come here perhaps to seek? She had risen at Madame's first cry, and with her face flush with tears, she was moving about to provide me assistance. But again I pushed her away with other signs of disdain that were no less bitter. Her heart could not sustain the blow. With a deep sigh she lifted her hands toward heaven: Justice, who protects virtue! she cried; oh you who have counted my sufferings, and who still had all these calumnies in store for me, cut short my life if you are unwilling to relieve my pains! Then, turning towards the princess: Ah, Madame! she said, is this what you had promised me, and do you not see that his heart is closed to me forever? Alas, she added, does an absence to which he forced me by his indifference deserve the shameful reproaches he takes pleasure in heaping on me?

I shall admit, to the shame of that false and violent insensitivity I affected, that the tone of that naturally tender and touching voice, once so long the delight of my ears and the charm of all my senses, those lovely inflections which had so [376] often awakened indulgence and love in my heart, made more of an impres-

sion on me than all of Madame's urgings and my own attempts at reasoning. A precious balm poured into my sores would not have given such a cooling sensation. However, all these circumstances having occurred in a moment's time, help had come running at the first sound Madame had made, and one of my surgeons who was happily in the house had soon restored the dressing that had come loose on my wounds; but in the anxious hurry with which they had sought the necessary aide, someone who imagined that the peril was much more urgent had spoken of it to Mme Lallin as an extremity that made one very much fear for my life. To her there were no precautions that should prevent her from appearing. Moreover, being unknown to Madame, she could not foresee the disastrous effects that her presence would produce. She entered the antechamber at the moment when the princess, who was withdrawing to leave the surgeon free, was passing through, leaning on Fanny's arms. The approach of a fearsome serpent would provoke less of a scare in a timid child than the horror which this unanticipated encounter caused poor Fanny. There she is, she said to Madame, there is the infernal firebrand that set fire to my house, and reduced all my happiness to ashes. Shall I now believe it is not she he is determined to marry? Ah, traitor! she continued, addressing her directly, have you the brazenness to show yourself in my presence?

These biting words, which Mme Lallin could only half hear in the consternation into which this single encounter had plunged her, nevertheless piqued her enough to make her defend herself with some signs of resentment. The opinion she always held of my wife's misconduct caused her to reply that she was surprised to see her forgetting for no reason all decency in the presence of such a great princess; but that it apparently was not the first time that her decency had failed her. This reply was sharp; but how must it have appeared to Fanny, and even to Madame, who perhaps began once more on the basis of such powerful appearances

to have misgivings about my integrity? Any other woman in the same transport as Fanny would have sent back a stinging insult at her rival, and the interest Madame took in her suffering might have prevented the good princess from feeling offended by it. However, as if Fanny were already exhausted by forcing her character as she had just done, all her anger fell back on herself with a long swoon, from which they had great difficulty bringing her around.⁵⁰⁰ Madame, who had been content to cast a look of indignation at Mme Lallin, ordered one of my servants to inform me of her departure and of renewed wishes for my recovery. She had the kindness to assist Fanny with her own hands; and when she saw she was well enough to leave, she forced her to return to the chateau with her, and from there had her driven that evening to Chaillot.

I was so completely unaware of the sorry scene which had taken place in my antechamber that upon learning of Madame's departure, and still persuaded of the generous penchant that led her to hope for an end to my pains, I thought about nothing but the affection and goodness of her character. She allowed herself to be moved, I said, by the repentance of my unfaithful wife. She knows that I am good and sensitive. She convinced herself that I had only to see her tears flow in order to open my arms to her. But if she remembered all the reasons I have to detest her, she could not possibly want to suffer her, and take her side even for a moment. Recalling next every last term of the dreadful conversation I had just undergone, I wondered that, on vague and unproven assurances, I should have been invited to forget my resentments, and accept submissions that had even been accompa-

⁵⁰⁰ All the principal characters in the novel are prone to fainting, Fanny even more than the others, as we will see especially in book IX, a weakness which Des Grieux and Manon share with them.

nied by a word of clarification and excuse.⁵⁰¹ But ought I to have expected the impossible, I added, and what could she have said to justify herself? It is clear that it is not on her innocence, nor perhaps even on her repentance, that she based the hope of making me hear her. It is on her charms, on that deceitful exterior that so long led me on, and which she thought capable of awakening all my weakness. I admit that she has lost nothing of that treacherous sparkle that had dazzled me. She has the same eyes, the same features, the same air, alas, that tender, modest air, that noble and appealing carriage that I adored. Oh God, would she still had the same heart!

[377] Mme Lallin, who came and interrupted my reflections several times, did not even mention to me the displeasure she had received, nor so much as let me know that she had seen Madame and Fanny. She had had no difficulty determining that the accident that had happened to me had been the effect of this visit. M. de R. had the same discretion when he returned; and fearing no less to cause me some new setback with everything that had happened to his daughter and to my children, he left me in the dark about this new misfortune for several days. Yet he had just been to Chaillot, where he had not been denied the liberty to see my sister-in-law and Cécile. Despite the initial heat of his resentment, he had understood that an order of the court would not be quickly revoked, and deferring solicitations until after my recovery, he had decided for a while to make a merit of his patience. It was appreciable that the choice of convent had been left to my sister, and that she had happily decided on the one that was the least distant. Nor had Mme de R., whom he had immediately

⁵⁰¹ Cleveland seems to seek less to resolve difficulties than to find ever new ones; the author, despite the meeting between the spouses, prevents them from discussing their separation, so the misunderstanding continues.

informed of their common misadventure, lost a moment in going to Chaillot, and by agreement with him, she had decided to remain there with her daughter. Although the presence of a Protestant of her age must have been awkward and suspect in a convent, the nuns, who had received no order to object, could not refuse to take a lady of her birth into their house. This arrangement had so comforted M. de R. that he continued to stay with me without any sign of concern.

My sister, who had at first had not anticipated so far, had no other reason for preferring Chaillot than the desire to see and speak with Fanny. She therefore requested this favor on arrival, and they did not hesitate to promise her she could as soon as Fanny returned. The rumors that had been quietly circulating since I was wounded did not permit the nuns to be utterly unaware that she was somehow involved in my adventure; but such suspicious were all the more vague that, the chaplain himself strictly concealing his own role in it, they were unable to learn anything more from anyone; and one of the favors for which I am the most obliged to Madame is the silence with which this business was conducted. Thus no one at the convent knew that Fanny was my wife, and they suspected even less the reason that had forced her until then to maintain her retreat voluntarily. Besides, the entire house, charmed by her spirit and her gentleness, had conceived for her as much friendship as esteem; and amidst the troubles by which they could see well enough that she was overcome, she always had some sister near her seeking to comfort her through conversation and attentions.

The nun who considered herself closest to her no sooner learned that Mme Bridge had spoken of her and asked to see her than she hastened to shower on her a hundred civilities that caused my sister-in-law to judge that this good sister had a greater share than any other in my wife's confidence. She was delighted to find this opportunity in advance to inform herself without

affectation of how she behaved and the impression she had given of herself. She could easily be satisfied, for the nun, as if enthralled by Fanny, of whom she spoke only with admiration, began on her own initiative to relate the manner in which she had been living since she entered, and the new causes she gave every day for regarding her as one of the world's best women. She is so sweet, this kind girl repeated a hundred times, so accommodating, so desirous to oblige, that she wins over everyone's heart. Her friendship gives rise to jealousies among us, as if it were for the favor of a queen. I have been fortunate enough, she added, to make my attentions agreeable to her, and I would not trade her esteem for many precious things.

Such praise did not surprise my sister, who was familiar with Fanny's excellent qualities.⁵⁰² But taking advantage of the vehemence with which the nun spoke, she asked her how her friend was bearing the solitude, and whether she had ever said anything about the reasons she had had for withdrawing from the world. You are asking, she replied, what we long sought to understand, and which have I asked her a hundred [378] times in vain in the intimate conversations I have continually had with her. It is certain that her heart and mind are in great turmoil. She even concedes that fortune has treated her terrible severity; and even if she had refused to admit this to us, her sadness and dejection would betray her despite herself. Every day I come upon her in moments when she thinks she is alone and is expecting no one. I find her engulfed in her tears, her head usually leaning on a table, and so full of the subject of her woes that she does not notice right away that there is someone near her. As soon as she hears

⁵⁰² Just as, in *Manon Lescaut*, the narrator's esteem for Manon is corroborated by other characters, Fanny's merits are often and spontaneously attested by others than Cleveland (at La Coruña, for example).

me, she hastily dries her tears, and I note how she must force herself to compose her eyes and face; but she does not always have the strength, and sometimes begs me let her to weep freely. Often in the middle of a conversation by which I think to entertain her, a distraction makes her lose the pleasure she seemed to find in listening to me; her heart becomes heavy, and her eyes begin again to exercise their sad function. So if you ask me everything I think of her, I know no woman so amiable and so unhappy.

But, rejoined my sister, who has a hundred times taken pleasure in repeating to me all these details, is it possible that nothing has escaped her that that might hint at the cause of her distress? Does she complain of nothing? Does she accuse no one? Can one spend so much time with a suffering woman and not discover the secrets of her heart? No, replied the nun, she has said nothing. Yet since a most extraordinary incident that happened to her last week in our church, most of our ladies are persuaded that she is the victim of some jealous suspicions, either because they are entirely unjust, or because she gave rise to them through some imprudence; for her modesty, she added, and the interest that Madame takes in her situation and in her health, is sufficient warrant for her virtue. Thereupon she related what had taken place in the monastery church, and everything my sister-in-law knew much better than she herself. We cannot doubt, she continued, that the two children she saw are her own, and that she is separated from them against her will. Apparently it is her husband who has done her this violence. And I know, she further added, lowering her voice, that several rumors have gotten about since that might have been misinterpreted; but I am sure that they will be clarified to the advantage of Mme de Ringsby. This name, as I have said several times,⁵⁰³ was the one Fanny bore at Chaillot.

⁵⁰³ In fact Cleveland has mentioned it only once, in book VII.

It is not surprising that the nun did not recognize my sister. The few moments she spent at the choir grill and during the mass, had not allowed her face to be noticed. Moreover, she spoke the French language so perfectly that it was not easy to recognize her as a foreigner; and the order obtained for her arrest, which had to be communicated to the superior of the convent, vaguely regarding three Protestant women and two children of the same religion, who were in the process of fleeing the kingdom, she, like her daughter and Cécile, was taken to be a French lady who was there to be instructed. Hence, nothing being so far from the nuns' notions as that she was Fanny's sister-in-law, she continued to inquire freely about everything that concerned me, pretending to be extremely predisposed in favor of my wife. But whether because truth forced them to give such glorious testimony of her, or because discretion led them to hide part of their conjectures, they did not change their language.

Fanny having returned that evening to St. Cloud, her confidante had nothing so pressing to tell her about as the arrival of the three ladies, one of whom appeared to know her, and expressed a strong desire to see her. Although grief occupied too much of her soul to leave much room for curiosity, she agreed to receive the proposed visit, and that very evening she sent word to my sister to follow the messenger secretly to her quarters. It was not an ordinary motive that lead each of them to desire this interview. They have told me twenty times that with no other appearance of reasons except what one can imagine from my narrative, they had felt their hearts so stirred as the [379] hour set for meeting approached, that ill explaining this premonition by being accustomed to seeing all events turn to our despair, each of them had been tempted to put it off. Fanny, after the response she had received in my house, thought my sister-in-law and my children were in England; and knowing no one in France, she could not attach any very important notion to the curiosity some lady had

expressed to speak with her. My sister perhaps had reason to be a little less tranquil, because the opening of a scene in which she foresaw only sadness could cause her some uneasiness; but this reason was to serve on the contrary to make her fear what she desired. Meanwhile they were both trembling with impatience and eagerness when they approached each other, and even Fanny's surprise when she recognized my sister added almost nothing to what was already taking place in her heart.

She threw her arms around her neck. She pressed her in her arms. She held her a long time in this embrace. Are you here willingly, she said, in a voice of mixed joy and pain; is it a remnant of friendship and compassion that brings you? I thought you were in London. Where are my children? Alas, are you coming to restore life to me or to help me to die? For there is no moderation to hope for with me: I know everything, I have learned it all, I cannot live without honor, without my husband, without my dear children. Oh, my sister! she continued, looking at her tenderly, is it possible you allowed me to be assailed without defense? Can it be that you did not stand up for me? That you suffered an unworthy rival to usurp my place, my titles, my name; that she has acquired everything by the sacrifice of my honor and innocence? What has become of good faith and justice? But no, she rejoined, seeing my sister affectionately kissing her hands, I see you still love me. Tell me then why the cruel Cleveland detests me. He told me so himself. He deigned neither to look at me nor hear me. Tell me why his vile Lallin dares to insult me. Just heaven, you have not taken my life soon enough to end my shame once and for all! Ah, my sister, tell me why I am reduced to the lowest degree of opprobrium and misfortune.

Her tears interrupted her. Mme Bridge, who was no less moved, invited her to sit down with the intention of opening her heart to her candidly, and concealing none of her feelings from her. Thus, not content with meaningless signs of affection and

pity, she entered directly into the clarification she wanted. Dear sister, she said, it will be easy for me to justify the dispositions of my heart; but allow my first concerns to address you, and begin by what causes me the most consternation. You could hide from yourself that past appearances are not favorable to you. I set aside anything that might sound like reproach; but it seems to me that the justice of your complaints is not evident. You accuse those who have complaints against you. You blame your woes on those you have made miserable. You protest that your innocence is impugned, and those to whom you impute this calumny would give all their blood to restore it to you, or would have given it to prevent your losing it. In the name of heaven, shed some light for me into this darkness. Is it then not true (excuse this insisting by a sister who loves you), is it not true that you took from M. Cleveland a heart that was his life's whole happiness; that you gave it to Gelin, that you abandoned us at St. Helena in order to follow that traitor; that you left together, and you... but I only wish to speak of what is certain to me: is it not true that you sacrificed your husband, your children, your reputation to that passion, and that you long appeared unmoved by all our suffering?

In truth, my sister continued, M. Cleveland, after suffering as much as honor, the goodness of his character, and the unbelievable affection he had for you can make you imagine, has recently allowed himself to be persuaded, solely by his need of some distraction for his sorrow, to commit himself to a new marriage: not, as you seem to believe, with the innocent Mme Lallin, for whom he has never had anything more than [380] esteem and friendship, but with a young French woman in his neighborhood, and who after you is the most amiable person he could hope for. I could not disapprove of his intention, and confess to you that in the sorry state I have seen him in since your absence, I myself believed this remedy necessary to bring him peace. I will not conceal from you either that when he thought to

have your marriage dissolved, I had to lend a sort of consent to the depositions which the Consistory required of all the witnesses to your flight. But do me justice: could I deny what my eyes told me, and refuse to confirm such a cruel truth? Alas, at the price of my blood I would have wished to hide it from myself. Cleveland, as enchanted as he is with the young person he is being urged to marry, still worships your image, and spends his life and strength only in deploring the change in you; for you were made for him. Nothing but the possession of your heart could satisfy his.

So tell me now yourself, she added, why you are so terribly disturbed by an unhappy circumstance into which you willingly plunged yourself? Whence these regrets and tears, which seem to me no longer appropriate after the unhappy resolution which you have carried out? Nevertheless I conceive that repentance can succeed a violent passion. I pity you, I have not ceased to love you, and am inclined to offer you a zeal that will stand any test; but if you do not yourself illuminate me, I do not know what use I can make of it.

These words, begun in a grave manner and sustained with a voice driven as much by truth as by affection, immediately caught Fanny's attention. She kept her eyes riveted on my sister; and as if struck by numerous new images at which she seemed to wonder in succession with every word that left her mouth, she recoiled with surprise and shock upon hearing some of them. The agitation they provoked in her brought a sudden halt to her tears. Thus she listened until the end, with a mixture of eagerness to hear and reflection on herself, to compare what she found in her heart and in her memory with what she seemed to perceive for the first time. Especially when my sister came to the explanation of my new marriage, her attention redoubled with a notable movement of curiosity and avidness. Then when she heard her speak of the fundamental constancy and love that still drew me back toward her even while planning a new engagement, she blushed; her

impatience was signalled by her constant shifting of position. She could scarcely contain herself on her chair. Finally, my sister had no sooner finished than, rising to embrace her ecstatically: You are not capable of deceiving me, she said to her tenderly, I know you, you are goodness itself; oh, what veils are being lifted! Oh my sister, what am I glimpsing? How many causes of horror and pity! But if you do not deceive me, she began again, interrupting herself, hurry and notify Cleveland. Go at once to break off his marriage. Go tell him that he would commit a terrible crime, that I love him, that I adore him, she continued, pressing my sister's hands, that I have never loved anyone but him; alas, I see it clearly: we have both been deceived.⁵⁰⁴ Oh what a calamity, oh the cruel treachery! But go, she again repeated; he must break off his marriage, he must not lose a minute.

Whatever obscurity this tender impatience must have had for my sister, she responded to it with caresses; and without putting off the explanations she was awaiting by explaining the reasons that were detaining her despite herself at Chaillot, she reminded Fanny that my wounds would hardly permit me to think of a wedding for some time. Then she urged her not to defer for a moment the satisfaction she had seemed to promise her. Yes, she replied; each instant that it is delayed would become a torture for me as well. But I cannot satisfy either of us better than by retracing my adventures from the beginning, to put you in a position to compare them with the dreadful impressions which, I see only too well, have prejudiced you against my fidelity and perhaps my

⁵⁰⁴ Despite all her good will, Madame was unable to reveal to Fanny the capital fact that Cleveland was not planning to marry Mme Lallin. The effect of this news on Fanny is immediate: she suddenly understands that everything stems from a misunderstanding and, as she knows herself to be innocent, she supposes that everything now can promptly be worked out.

honor. She commenced forthwith this intriguing narrative, every word of which, the reader will not be subsequently surprised to know, I have been able to repeat here.⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁵ Fanny's story, which occupies all of book IX, is told in a single sitting, as will be seen at the end of the book, but not without some interruptions from Mme Bridge. Allowing Fanny this long monologue is an exceptional procedure in this novel; elsewhere she is almost always quoted indirectly, and even then infrequently.

I can breathe, she began with a deep sigh, and already my heart feels more free. Do not think ill of the tears you see me still shed. If it is true that Cleveland has not ceased to love me, and that I was mistaken in the mortal cause of my anguish, I can now weep only for joy. What I have to blame myself for is not a crime. Oh, no, it is not a crime; and if Cleveland still loves me, he will surely distinguish between the unhappy excesses of a delirious affection and the shameful misconduct of an immoral woman. If he loves me, I no judge but him. It matters not whether he condemns or condones me. If he loves me, he will forgive everything for love.

Do you realize, dear sister, she went on, that the way you have put this had more power to make me open my eyes than the unbearable duration of my pains, than the urgings of Madame, than Gelin's most recent crime, and even than the reproaches I have received this day from Cleveland? But, my dear sister, hear me out. I have unbelievable things to tell you. I am frightened by them myself as I compare them to my imagination to put them in order, and if I am fortunate enough not to be wrong about the manner in which I conceive them at this point, I am going to reveal to you the most horrible scene of malice and cruelty there has ever been. Oh heaven! How did I deserve to be its deplorable subject?

Suppose that Cleveland has had nothing more than an innocent esteem for Mme Lallin. But even long before my marriage, I had the strongest reasons to believe he had other sentiments. I will not rehearse everything that is unnecessary for the narrative you are waiting for. She had loved him the first time she saw him. She had made advances to him that are not ordinary in an honorable woman. She had used a ruse to make him to agree to marry her. I am witness to what I am retracing here, and from that time my anxieties could not have appeared strange to anyone. Then she

left her family and her country to follow him to America. I am willing to believe that this voyage of hers had no other motive than those he tried to get me to approve; yet he long concealed it from me, and even then I came to know of it only by chance; and when I learned of it despite his hopes, I perceived only too well the embarrassment that this revelation caused him.⁵⁰⁶ Finally our sad adventures take their course, and end after a thousand misfortunes by the loss of the best of all fathers. My affection, as if it had been until then divided by the sentiments of nature, converged in a single object. I felt that my husband had become more dear than ever; dearer, I say, not only by the circumstances of my fortune, which left me no other support than him in the world, but by the real increase of a passion which I had long believed to be at its limit, and took a new ascendancy over my heart and my reason. Indeed I had never found him so lovable. I was charmed by his constancy and attentions. By what proofs had I not seen his love confirmed? I considered him a model of goodness and virtue. We lived for a while in Havana in a happiness worthy of envy. And did I not have reason to think it unshakeable, when under rather feeble pretexts, and which I long futilely opposed with my tears, he undertook a voyage the sole fruit of which was to bring back Mme Lallin. Imagine what was my surprise, and with what pain I saw [382] her enter my house. It was, if you wish, merely the alarms of a passionate heart. It was delicacy, consternation, affectionate scruple; but had it been only the premonition of a baleful future into which I could not read, the misfortunes that followed have only too well justified it.

You arrived about the same time from St. Helena with my brother and Gelin. The presence and friendship of a sister so dear suspended my anxieties, until the decision taken in common to

⁵⁰⁶ An allusion to the letter received by Cleveland from Mme Lallin in book IV.

participate regularly in some distracting occupation, so as to vary the pleasures of our life together. You and I made the choice that befitted our sex. My brother and Cleveland chose study. Gelin had from that point on, no doubt, his reasons for wishing to be accepted with us: but I was struck by the choice of Mme Lallin. What likelihood is there, I said, that a woman of ordinary merit take such touching pleasure in spending all hours of the day amidst books? You invited her to bring us into her readings by doing them sometimes in our company. She replied that, her intention being to learn the Greek and Latin tongues, we had little satisfaction to expect from our request. You remember that we laughed together at this affectation of mind and learning. I was still keeping at bay suspicions too terrible for my peace. But such a sensitive interest nevertheless forced me to keep my eyes open to all the circumstances. Attribute this behavior to jealousy, accuse me of contributing to my own ruin; to justify me I have only the rectitude of my heart and the ardor of an unrequited affection.

I shall not tell you by what increments I became obsessed with that fatal passion; but the poison had already found its way into all my veins when Gelin, after following me into the garden, requested the liberty to speak with me. His look of dismay as he proposed this, my good opinion for his mind, and the attachment he showed for our family, easily disposed me to hear him. After several detours that gave me to anticipate an important secret, he declared to me that he felt obliged as much by friendship as by honor to tell me about Mme Lallin's unworthy abuse of my confidence. The detail in which he went at once accorded so well with my own observations that I thought examination to be as useless as objections and doubts. I replied only with my tears. He took pity on me; he offered me his services. He made emphasized my husband's injustice and the odious impudence of my rival; finally he persuaded me of all the evils which my heart was still

trying to doubt.

I preserved nevertheless enough presence of mind to hesitate at first whether I should reveal to him the correspondence between his thoughts and mine. But what he added made it so nearly impossible for me to mistrust his prudence and the disinterestedness of his friendship that I thanked heaven for providing me in my misfortune the aid of such a wise and generous friend. He told me that the necessity of alerting me had seemed to him all the more urgent that, the harm not yet being desperate, I had the chance to apply to it remedies that my wisdom and gentleness would surely suggest to me; that a virtuous woman had a hundred resources to win back a husband's heart; that and it was this reason which had kept him from pointing out the disorder to my brother Bridge, for fear he would not be as able as I to take certain precautions. He promised me inviolable secrecy, and again offered me a zeal without reservation.

If you remember, moreover, the esteem which my brother and Cleveland himself showed for Gelin, will you blame me for accepting his offers too imprudently? I therefore no longer hesitated to answer him that I knew the full extent of the misfortune of which he thought he informing me, nor to allow him to see the depth of my wounds. You deserve my confidence, I added, both by the pity you feel for my woes and by the help which you have the generosity to offer me to relieve them; but with what hope do you flatter me? What remedy, alas, what help have you to propose to me? He hastened to assure me that he would seek the means he did not yet have, and that he promised me [383] in advance that I would be faithfully informed of everything my rival did and the progress of her traitorous love. This promise flattered my pain. I pressed him to fulfill it faithfully, as if the knowledge of what I most feared could have served to lessen the torments that suspicion alone was capable of causing me. We agreed that he would give me every day an exact account of

whatever chance or his cunning might cause him to discover. I even entrusted to him the key to several small rooms adjoining Cleveland's, and especially his library, where you know that Mme Lallin sometimes spent part of the day with him. The hour of these ominous revelations was set, and beginning the next day I awaited it like the hour of death.

Could it then be true that all the horrors that are flooding back into my memory have been so many ruses and inventions of Gelin? Oh, my sister, help me believe that! My heart has surrendered itself avidly to that hope, but as the traces of the past begin again to open up, my mind becomes unsteady, and can feel all my agitations and all my fears arising anew. He did not fail to communicate his observations to me the next day. He still had only vague remarks, and added nothing to the predispositions in which he had left me; for as I recall the order of his discoveries, it seems to me that either to spare me suffering, or to maintain more credibility,⁵⁰⁷ he was leading me skillfully by small steps. His fear seemed to be that he would cause me too much pain. He had to be pressed to answer all my questions clearly. From that first time, by telling me that he had spent more than two hours observing my faithless husband, and protesting that despite the favorable position he had assumed in order to see him, he had discovered nothing that should positively distress me: an appearance of constraint which I thought I could detect in spite of him in his expressions and in his eyes made me suspect that he was making a point of going easy on me. You are concealing something from me, I said, unable to hold back my tears; you fear to tell me the extent of my misfortune. And seeing that he defended himself in the same manner: What, I insisted with fateful curiosity, you perceived

⁵⁰⁷ There is a reason for this hesitation: despite the assurances which her sister-in-law has given her about Cleveland, one essential explanation is still missing, which will come a few pages later.

neither glances, nor smiles, nor signs of collusion? You heard nothing that allowed you to gauge their sentiments? Oh gods, I added, I would even explain their silence. He replied with a naive tone, as if surprised at my doubts, that he did not take note of such slight circumstances; that I knew as well as he that they had long engaged in such familiar banter; that after all, a husband who would remain within such innocent limits did not deserve it being held rigorously as an crime; and that he would certainly never had broached the matter to me if he had not had much more powerful reasons for accusing mine of failing in what he owed me. He even gave me to understand that, if he had not elaborated further, it was because in accusations of that nature, the most certain expression has to be confirmed by proofs; and renewing his assurances of zeal and attention, he bade me rely on him for all the information I desired. Alas! I cried, by what am I then threatened, if what already is mortally oppressing me merits only the name of banter!

He left me with that dart in the heart, and all the more sensitive to the gratitude I thought I owed to his friendship, because I saw he was grieved by my pain and burdened, as if regretfully, with the sad mission he accepted in order to oblige me. Several days went by, during which he yet had nothing to report to me except the ordinary signs of a love that disguises itself in public, and which remorse or shame prevent from ever satisfying itself fully, even in the privacy of a study; for he was assiduous at all the posts to which I had yielded him a key. Finally I thought I perceived, one day, that he was more distracted and distressed than he had yet appeared to me. The veiled glances he cast at me, while your presence and that of the others prevented him from speaking with me, were a language which I thought I understood only too well. I am lost! I said to myself. My rival has won; he has seen this, he deplores it, and seeks some roundabout way of giving me this fatal news. Despair was about

to take over of my heart, and I do not know what prevented my transports from erupting. Every moment until the usual hour of explanation was [384] centuries of suffering to me. But far from seeing him eager as he always had been to notify me, I found myself alone in the garden, which was the place fixed for our conferences. I sent for him. He still was long in coming. My impatience no longer permitting me to show any restraint, I myself sought him out, and realized that he was purposely avoiding me. At that point, no longer in possession of myself, and succumbing to the movements that were stifling my heart, I stopped in a room, solely from my inability to take a single step farther. I sat down, thinking I was observed by no one. I abandoned myself to tears and to all the laments that a despair as bitter as mine could inspire me to. Meanwhile he had apparently followed my every movement: for he appeared after a few minutes, and anticipating the reproaches he had to expect, he begged my pardon for a delay which he explained by his reluctance henceforth to fulfill his promises. Do you want my life? he continued. It will be employed without regret to prove my obedience and my devotion: but allow me beginning today to remain forever silent on all that has constituted until now the subject of our conferences. I have said too much. I committed myself too far; and for my peace as much as for yours, I must henceforth close my mouth and eyes to everything that takes place in this house. No, he added, I do not feel able to watch injustice and cruelty being pushed so far.

It did not seem doubtful to me that all my suspicions were verified. However, fearing he might insist on remaining silent if he saw I was too moved by the misfortune he led me to anticipate, I assumed a more tranquil expression to encourage him to speak openly. You will not abandon me, I said, after beginning so helpfully to serve me. I see what is holding you back: you fear either exposing yourself to my husband's resentment, or causing

me too much distress with some event that exceeds all the past horrors. But be reassured, as regards the first of these fears, by my vow to you that I will let nothing escape that can compromise you. As for the second, I added, you may be sure my heart is not so immune to scorn that I am disposed to continue sinking into despair and tears if I lose the hope of winning back a faithless man, or if I learn that he carries infidelity to the ultimate outrage. This reply seemed to satisfy him doubly. Do not doubt, he replied, that I am very sensitive to two motives to which honor and friendship bind me almost equally. M. Cleveland's honor is dear to me, and I would not want him to be able to blame me for endangering it with an indiscretion. Your tranquillity is no less precious to me, and I would not forgive myself for contributing to make you needlessly unhappy. But if you continue, he added, to believe me worthy of a little esteem and confidence, I think that indeed the only choice you have left is to seek your happiness within yourself, or at least no longer to make it depend on a thankless husband, who has in fact never done justice to your sentiments.

I was listening to him with an avidness that could have cast some suspicion on my pretended indifference. However, having repeatedly pressed him to disclose to me anything he deemed potent enough to give me the strength to follow his advice: Are you then ordering me to do so? he said; well, you are going to see just how far ingratitude and insensibility can be taken by men: for the indignation it makes me feel extends to all my sex, and to undeceive an amiable and virtuous woman her about the false virtues of so many hypocrites is indeed to render her a service. This morning, he continued, while you were deep in sleep, or perhaps busy lamenting your misfortune, my eagerness to serve you making me attentive to everything going on in the house, I saw your rival leave her room in such gallant deshabelle that I was dubious about her intentions. M. Cleveland had already left yours

at his customary hour, and I had noticed that instead of going to the library, he had gone down to the garden. I could not doubt that it was a tryst. I took a detour to find a spot suitable for observing them. They facilitated my design; for Mme Lallin [385], after following your husband's steps up to the entrance to the garden, entered the shady lane that runs to the left along the wall, and left me free to reach like her the end of the clearing by taking the other lane. I expected to see her enter the woods, but after not seeing her for some time, I understood that she had stopped in the pavilion which is on that side, and did not hesitate to approach under cover of the trellises. My excuse was easy, if they had discovered me. I positioned myself near a window, favorably enough to see and hear everything. Dispense me, he added, from the necessity to which you reduce me of piercing your heart. I shall not finish a narrative which can only crown your anguish.

My curiosity becoming only more inflamed, I pressed him so adamantly to finish that he granted me that sorry satisfaction. I will go on, he replied, you insist; but blame only yourself for the new pains I am going to cause you. I have seen what I would have refused to believe on any other testimony than that of my eyes. Thereupon he told me what I am ashamed to repeat: wickedness, horrors, the most craven transports!... Alas, more ardor and tenderness than I could have dared pretend to, and than I had ever obtained! But I can allow a fickle heart, he went on, I pardon an ingrate for abandoning himself to a new love. It is his neglect of honor and good faith that appalls me. And continuing to assault me with horrible preparations, he finally dealt me, in the last part of his story, the blow that took away my hope, and made me from that fatal moment the plaything of a blind despair. You are not married, he said, with a timid glance at me. What a doubt! I interrupted with a blush. Of what do you dare suspect me? Do not be offended, he instantly replied; I am repeating what it shames me to have heard. He pretends that your marriage is but an empty

ceremony, because you are joined only by the hand of a Catholic priest, whose religion you do not recognize nor, consequently his authority.⁵⁰⁸ On this basis, he promised Mme Lallin to break it to break it, and contract a more lasting one with her, as soon as he can shake the yoke of propriety. He complained of your melancholic humor and your caprices. It was the gratitude he thought he owed to Lord Axminster that made you Mr. Cleveland's wife. In sum, your affection is burdensome, your presence intrusive; they will continue to meet in the same pavilion, he to seek comfort from the displeasure of being yours, while awaiting the moment of being entirely free of such a heavy chain, and enjoy each other with a freedom they do not have in the library, where they fear at every moment being caught by M. Bridge or yourself.

I made Gelin stop. That is enough, I said, turning my head away, as if my own consternation had made me fear his eyes; after what I have just heard, I have no further enlightenment to ask for. My ruin is consummate. My fatal curiosity is fulfilled. Let him scorn me. Let him detest me. Let him satisfy himself. He will need neither violence nor ruse. My death will anticipate his impatience, and spare him calumnies and perjuries. I am not married! Oh, God, I cried, opening again passage to my tears, were you not witness to his vows? Is your holy name not equally respectable in all religions that recognize your power? Oh my father! To whom did you entrust me? To whom were you deliver-

⁵⁰⁸ As in *Manon Lescaut* and in the La Rochelle episode in book III of *Cleveland*, Prévost derives dramatic effect from a marriage said to be invalid. But the procedure is interiorized with relation to the couple, whereas it was the civil authorities who thought they could take advantage of the unmarried Manon and Des Grieux (a situation imitated by Voltaire when Candide and Cunégonde arrive in America), as with Bridge and Angélique; in this case it will become the source of doubt and suspicion between the spouses.

ing my youth and innocence? Loving, unhappy father! Your goodness blinded you! It is your credulity that was my ruin. What did you do with your daughter? Alas! Happier than her, death makes you, insensitive to her pain and her shame. She has remained alone, with the weight of your misfortunes and her own. Can you not hear her laments? Does your heart no longer take an interest in her, who was so dear to you? Ah, if death extinguishes the sentiments, it is a happiness I envy, and ask it of heaven as my sole remedy. I thus exhausted myself in painful exclamations, to which Gelin listened for a long while without interrupting me. Finally, speaking again to comfort me, he exhorted me to punish, he said, by my indifference, those who offended me with their scorn. He described with such force everything that was offensive to me in my husband's conduct that he indeed put me for [386] a few minutes in a disposition to make every effort to expel him forever from my heart. The mortal resentment that agitated me made me believe that undertaking simple.

It was apparently to strengthen my resolution that he proposed I catch the two lovers the very next day in the midst of their pleasures, and let them know, he added, the choice I was making to disdain them. He was not unaware that I was hardly capable of so bold an act. So he did not wait for me to reject his proposal to admit that it was difficult to carry out, and make me see all the dangers. But at least, he said, you must assure yourself of the state of their amorous activity with your own eyes. You might still have some doubts based on my testimony alone. I shall lead you tomorrow to the same place from which I have observed them, and from there you will see the same spectacle, if you have courage enough to bear it. I indicated no less repugnance for this last option, however easy he made it appear to follow it. What other proof have I to desire, I said, than memory of the past, and the continual sight of what is taking place before my eyes? I would not be able to control my transports at the odious spectacle

you are offering me. Why do you want me to risk revealing my shame, and perhaps making my rival's triumph even greater, by making her aware that I am informed of it, and have the weakness to be too hurt by it? Perhaps he anticipated these difficulties as well; but confessing that they seemed powerful to him, he urged me at least to go to the pavilion opposite the one where they met, to observe all I could discover at that distance.

To this I consented. The rest of that unhappy day was even sadder for me because of the awful constraint in which I passed it. I avoided my husband's conversation and his eyes, as if I had feared he had discovered in my heart the effects of his betrayal. That evening, instead of retiring with him, I found spurious pretexts to remain with my grandfather⁵⁰⁹; and under the guise of a slight indisposition that had kept him in bed for several days, I spent the entire night in his apartment. Never had I so required rest; yet my eyes were open as soon as daylight appeared, and without knowing exactly what motive was leading me, I wandered for a long time through all parts of the house. I ran into Gelin. Listen, I said, anticipating him, I have changed my mind; I want to stand at that window where you can see everything that happens in the pavilion. He seemed surprised; but regaining his composure with a little reflection, he reminded me of all the reasons I had opposed to him the day before, and reinforced them with new difficulties. I had thought at first, he added, that that spot could be occupied without danger, and I took an overbold risk there yesterday; but having studied it since, I have noticed that only extremely good luck, or the strange security of the two lovers, had prevented them from perceiving me. You would not be there a minute without being perceived. Oh, who cares? I replied; what measures have I to maintain with two traitors? Is it

⁵⁰⁹ The narrative rejoins at the point the time when Arpez was still alive, back in book V.

not just for me to cover them with shame? That is my resolution. I want their wickedness to be known. Since the ardor of this insistence came only from my agitation, he had no difficulty making me revert to his plans, especially when, pointing out that I was going to expose him to the reproach of sowing dissension in my family, he had threatened to suspend his services if I refused to have some consideration for him.

We arrived very quickly at the pavilion. It was about seven o'clock, in other words about the time when my husband returned to his books. We had made our way there with many precautions, by one of the shaded lanes. As I entered the pavilion, Gelin told me that he dared not stay there with me, not only out of the respect with which he hoped his zeal would always be accompanied, but for fear of exposing ourselves to the suspicions of gossipers, at a time when we had our eyes so keen on the conduct of others. I approved this sentiment, and was content to ask him for some explanations that could abet my hopes. The two pavilions being at opposite corners of the planting beds, it was possible to see from one, through the lane between them, whoever entered the other, and I did not doubt that, despite the width of the garden, I [387] would easily be able to identify my faithless husband. Gelin left me; but he had scarcely gone out when, retracing his steps, he expressed another scruple. In the turmoil you are in, he said, I fear some transport that would be as pernicious to you as to me. Your resentments are just, but prudence obliges you to conceal them. Allow me to lock you in here, he added, just for an hour, and let this key answer for your moderation. I did not oppose his idea; impatience and fear already bated my breath, and I watched him take the key without saying a single word to him.

Being alone, I kept my face glued for over a quarter of an hour to the window on the side of the pavilion. I accustomed my eyes to all the objects that were at the end of the lane, and to the area around the door, to prepare my imagination not to confuse

anything. Finally I spied my husband. He was in his night robe. He had a handkerchief in his hand, with which he was covering his mouth. His air was uneasy, at least if I could judge it by his behavior: for he turned his head twice, and when he was close to the pavilion, he finished his last four steps very hurriedly. By what movements was I not agitated! I expected to see my rival appear immediately. She did not appear. My heart was relieved by that for a few moments. I wanted to believe that their plans were interrupted by some event which the goodness of heaven could turn my favor. I conjured all the heavenly powers to confirm that premonition. I sighed with hope, and found some comfort in that feeble resource. But another thought suddenly dispelled that fantasy. Alas, I think she is far away, I said to myself, I dare to flatter myself she will not appear; but who assures me she was not the first to arrive, and had not already gone down to the garden when I entered? Ought I not to have judged it so by the eagerness with which my husband rushed into the pavilion? Ah, I am not mistaken. They are there together. She is in his arms. They are in the throes of delight. They mock my despair. Oh gods, you do not punish them! In the transport that took over all my senses, it was indeed a good thing that Gelin had taken the key when he left. My weakness might not have allowed me to take two steps without losing consciousness and even life; but I would have left the pavilion, I would have cried out when the strength to walk failed me, and I would have brought terror and shame into the midst of their criminal pleasures.

I spent in this deplorable situation all the time they remained together; for however I must interpret their meeting today, it is certain that I was not deluded by phantoms, and that I saw them leave with extraordinary signs of joy and connivance. My husband was wearing the night robe I had seen him in two days earlier. She had her arm resting on his; and although I could not so easily make her out, since she was walking between him and

the wall, it was clear that a woman with whom he had just spent a half-hour off by themselves, and whom he continued to caress with all the intensity of love, could only be my rival.⁵¹⁰ The renewed agitation I experienced at this sight caused me to fall unconscious, with no feeling remaining.⁵¹¹

My sister, who had listened to this whole story in utter silence, could not hear these last circumstances without uttering a cry that obliged Fanny to pause. Stop, dear Fanny, she said to her in shock, listen to me. Oh, my sister, lament your misfortunes more than ever; or rather bless heaven, for I cannot decide whether it is pain or joy you ought to feel! But oh, the vicious malice! Oh perfidious Gelin! Heaven, are such evil men the work of your hands? Listen to me, she continued, unhappy victim of love and jealousy; know that if all the causes of your sufferings, and those of all the injustices you have done to the best of all men, never had more reality than the last thing you have related, you are guilty of all your misfortunes and all of his. Judge everything that remains for you to say by what I myself have to tell you. This mysterious tryst of your husband and [388] Mme Lallin, these horrors, these abominations, these plans for separation, and this whole nefarious intercourse the images of which are still torturing your mind, are so many inventions of a scoundrel who made a mockery of your affection and of your credulity. You will tell me, no doubt, what the outcome of such dreadful impostures was.

⁵¹⁰ On both sides there is thus a material barrier to understanding: just as Fanny's flight with Gelin alone constitutes for Cleveland an undeniable proof of his wife's betrayal, this scene where Fanny has not been "deluded by phantoms" remains for her the only objective piece of evidence – but in her eyes irrefutable – against Cleveland.

⁵¹¹ Gelin's whole strategy is apparently borrowed from *Histoire du vaillant chevalier Tiran le Blanc*, by Caylus; see Jean Sgard, *Prévost romancier*, p. 164.

Alas, would to heaven the effects had not been more real than the causes! But here is the testimony that I hasten to give you, while awaiting those that I still have in store for you. She then told her that it was herself and Gelin whom she had taken for Mme Lallin and me in the pavilion in the garden, and that the robe she had seen covering Gelin was in fact one of mine which he was wearing that day. I remember in an instant, she continued, circumstances which I would never have believed related in any way to your story. Comparing them with those in your story, I find that it was three days before the adventure in the garden that Gelin came and asked me under some pretext for a robe belonging to my husband or to yours. His own robes, if I not be mistaken, needed some repairs. I sent him one of Mr. Cleveland's, because it would be closer to his size. The uncomfortable heat of the season, and some health reasons, obliged me at the same time to rise at day-break and go take in the cool air of the woods. I would then return to the pavilion, where I rested by doing some reading. There is no doubt that Gelin had observed all these things, and on them constructed his damnable ruse. Indeed I was very surprised to see him enter the pavilion while I was there reading. He himself feigned great surprise when he saw me, and I remember that he made a point, as you say, of entering in a rather immoderate manner, apparently to make me think that he hardly expected to find me there. I have not forgotten, either, that he had my brother's robe, and was holding his handkerchief in his hand. He said something polite about the boldness he had to interrupt me; and never wanting for means of engaging conversation, he found an inconspicuously way to detain me there for nearly half an hour. Finally I reflected that it was inappropriate for me to be so long alone with him. I suggested we withdraw. He teased me about my scruples, and offering me his hand, escorted me to my apartment with exaggerated gallantries, positioned as you have just described. He left me then, saying that he was going to get into

something more decent.

Such an unambiguous and precise explanation had surprising effects on my wife. After listening to her with an attention that left her not an instant to breathe, she lowered her head onto my sister's knees in the same silence, and keeping her face glued to her hands which were wet with her tears, she remained for a long time in this position, making no other sound than sighs. My sister, who dared not yet interpret these appearances of pain, asked her whether she found some difficulty in her story, or something dubious in her testimony. Oh, she replied, why would I suspect a sister I love, and who has always loved me? How would I find any obscurity in circumstances that speak only too clearly against me? It is true, she continued, that with all the inclination I had to believe you, I was held back despite myself by the fatal enigma which you have just explained. Alas, could I dispute my own eyes? Could I think that jealousy had corrupted even my senses, and for me changed the order of nature? Ah! Finally I can breathe. What a service you have rendered me! The more I now reflect on the consequences of a mad transport, the more my understanding increases along with my grief and consternation. But what have I done! she added; what hope that Cleveland will forgive me, and ever forget my injustices? To what torments have I not perhaps exposed him? But alas! They could not possibly have been greater than mine. Are you sure, she came back, that he suffered something from my absence, and that all the rest accords with the testimony you are giving me? You are asking me so many things at once, said my sister, that I cannot possibly satisfy you all at once. But let us return rather to your story, and be sure that all your alarms are going to end, if it was our affection that you have doubted.

[389] What comfort you give me! she replied; and remembering the point in her narrative where my sister had interrupted her, she continued as follows: My faint lasted until the return of

my deceitful confidant, who was doubtless very surprised to find me lying in the middle of the pavilion. However, the noise he made opening the door, and the air which struck me in the face, serving to reawaken my spirits, there was nothing more for him to do than to extend me his hand to help me up. He expressed equal regret at what I had witnessed and at the excessively violent impression it seemed to make on me. It was nevertheless, he said, a remedy he had thought necessary, and without which I was perhaps doomed to languish the rest of my days, miserably torn between suspicions, fears, and the other torments of anxiety. He had no doubt, he added, that such a heinous example of inconstancy and infidelity would lead me to make the only choice that befitted a woman of intelligence and honor; and only too happy to have proved his devotion to me with such an essential service, he promised me he would blindly carry out whatever I might resolve to do.

I was so possessed by my baleful imaginations that I thought I owed thanks to this monster. I expressed it as well as such misconceived gratitude could prompt me to in my state of disorder and weakness; and without going into resolutions which were still quite obscure even to me, I asked him to take me back, not to my husband's apartment, where nothing could have made me return, but to the one nearest to yours. I immediately sent for you to come, and you were obliging enough to do so; I confessed to you that I was dangerously ill; that the fear of disturbing my husband led me to take a different bed from his; and that, hoping to leave the one I would enter only to be borne to the tomb, I had nothing so dear to desire as your presence and consolations. This language seemed to cause you as much surprise as pain. You did your best to make me take a different view of my illness, and I easily noted in your words and in your glances that although you did not know its true source, neither did you consider it just an ordinary ailment. But I was determined to hide my woes forever,

and if I lacked the strength to overcome them, at least to succumb to them without broadcasting my shame.

The zeal with which I saw Mr. Cleveland come running at the first news of my illness was nothing to me but another ruse, and all his blandishments so many betrayals. I even pushed him away, as if my enervation had made me wish only for solitude and rest, and prevailed upon myself to explain to him gently that the approach of death was not the time for affection. He seemed much affected by such language, but I answered his laments only with sighs. As for Mme Lallin, who also hastened to provide me services and care, I declared politely to her that the sight of so many spectators was oppressive, and that I needed peace and quiet. And so, either from pride or goodwill, she delivered me from the distress of seeing her too often. I saw willingly only you and my brother; the two of you were my most faithful and most agreeable company. Even Gelin's assiduities would have displeased me, and I urged him several times to heed less his zeal than decency, which did not permit him to hover constantly about my bed, as he seemed inclined to do. Not that I had the slightest suspicion of the unworthy passion he had already conceived for me, knowledge of which I owe only two days ago to the kindness of Madame, from that first moment began to open my eyes to my misfortune and his crimes. But whatever value my blindness made me attach to the service he had rendered me, I could not without shuddering see the man who had made me feel all my misery by discovering such dark circumstances. His presence filled my imagination all the details he had recounted. Seeing him was like seeing all my misfortunes at once. Thus, although I considered him as a man to whom I owed gratitude, and who could still help me, I felt for him not even the penchant of friendship, and I listened to him more from self-interest than inclination.

[390] With whatever prejudice I explained my husband's

attentions and passionate utterances, I still noted on several occasions an air of sincerity that I did not think he could have feigned.⁵¹² The constancy with which he spent day and night with me was another conundrum, for in order to remain assiduously in my room, he had to forego the satisfaction of seeing Mme Lallin. It was at the least a violence he seemed to do himself for my benefit, and this sacrifice sometimes disposed me to think he still had some residual affection for me which was perhaps revived by the sorry state to which I was reduced. Why might I not have hoped I could bring him back completely by my docility, sorrow, and submission? My heart sometimes sustained itself with this expectation. But Gelin, who seemed to guess all my thoughts, or was skillful enough to get me to explain them, did not fail to stifle these favorable movements immediately with some new imposture that plunged me back into all my turmoil. It was a tryst accorded while I slept, a favor taken furtively, a word he had heard, referring either to the tedium of being with me, or to the impatience with which he desired the end of this constraint. I was ashamed, after hearing him for a minute, for allowing myself to be tempted by the slightest desire or the slightest hope.

Meanwhile I must confess that it was to this attentiveness, in which my husband did not waver over five or six weeks, that I owed my recovery. Despite my pain and often despite my indignation, I could not believe myself wholly wretched when he was attending to my every need, apparently alert to my slightest variances, and quick to offer me all sorts of care. He procured for me various amusements which also helped to distract somewhat my heart and mind, although Gelin tried with his usual malice to make me see them as so many veils he was using to fool me.

⁵¹² One of the convictions of Prévost's inner circle of protagonists is that sincerity cannot be feigned: "the characteristics of rectitude and innocence shine through any veil" (book X).

Finally, my health being restored, for some time I lived, if not more comfortably, at least with more constancy, because at the end of my illness I had grown accustomed to settling for the exterior signs of civility and esteem that a gentleman can hardly refuse to a woman above reproach. Moreover Gelin, who doubtless wished to spare my life, or perhaps feared I would at length discover his imposture, informed me that the trysts in the pavilion were suspended, and they were no longer meeting without great precautions. He even affected to repeat to me that he marveled at the restraint of the two lovers, and that, their fundamental affection being unchanged, they could maintain outward appearances so well that no one suspected anything. I imagine that, hoping to snuff out love little by little in my heart, he thought he had done enough by persuading me of my husband's habitual infidelity; and that in the designs he perhaps had already for the future, he expected to complete at a later time what he had so felicitously begun. It is also true that reflecting on the past, for which I no longer saw any remedy, and hoping for the return of a wayward heart only through the perseverance of my submission and affection, I no longer received his bulletins and secrets with the same avidness, and even very often avoided conversations which could do no more than irritate my sufferings.

You have not forgotten that Cleveland undertook a long voyage for business of my grandfather, or rather for ours, since we reaped all the advantages of it with the immense inheritance which his death soon left to us.⁵¹³ During this time I lead a life all the more peaceful that, my rival's presence assuring me of my husband's fidelity, my only thought during his absence was to seek means for winning back his affection after his return. He came back, and the intensity of his attentions made me hope that I

⁵¹³ An allusion to Cleveland's voyage of several months to Vera Cruz in book V.

would require no artifice to please him. Gelin, who had promised to observe his initial actions, himself congratulated me on the sway I was regaining, he said, over an unfaithful heart. But it was a new betrayal; for I see too clearly that the traitor only sought to confirm his own sway over my credulity and confidence. The very [391] next day, he approached me with a sorrowful mien, and pitying my fate, he told me with a sigh that my victory had been short lived; though I had received the initial attentions, my rival had gotten the secret favors; my husband and she had just ended a tryst which had lasted a very long time; that with all his skill and efforts he had not been able to hear them, but that in the indignation he felt over it, his intention was to catch them himself some other time and cover them in shame.

The impression of hope and joy which I still had was no defense against this sad declaration. My first resource was tears. But what could they do to touch a hardened heart? Alas, far from having recourse to them, I usually hid to shed them. Meanwhile, reflecting on an unhappiness which seemed to me unexampled, it occurred to me that Cleveland, whose character has never to my knowledge inclined him to perfidy, could perhaps love both Mme Lallin and me at the same time. It seemed incredible to me that a husband who the day before had showered on me expressions of the most intense affection could have carried dissimulation so far, had he nothing but scorn for me, and had he love for my rival alone. This thought somewhat lessened the bitterness of my sentiments. He loves me, I said: can I mistake that after such long experience of his behavior and his character? But a woman without honor has found the art of seducing him. She has long since stolen part of his affection from me. Well then, this heart is up for grabs. Let us see whether it will be Mme Lallin or I who will dispossess her rival. I communicated this determination to Gelin. He expressed wonderment at my goodness. But you are deluding yourself, he said, if you think the sharing is equal, and that a man

can maintain so precise a balance between duty and a unbridled passion. Nevertheless, do try, he added, and show how far a virtuous woman can stoop sometimes out of greatness of soul. He even promised to contribute his as he could to my triumph.

If you ask me what weapons I intended to employ, alas, my sister, do you not know that a heart full of its affection relies entirely on the ardor of its sentiments? I would have made my husband understand that he was unfortunately mistaken in the object of his desires; that if he was sensitive to the pleasure of being loved, I was the only woman in the world who was capable of sating his heart with the transports of mine: I knew him; I would have forced him to confess that he found in my rival neither the constancy of my attentions, nor the ardor of my care, nor my sensitivities, nor my tender alarms and passionate anxieties; finally, leaving to others the resources of wit and ruse, I would have pinned everything on the force of a passion that even my sufferings only stimulated. These details are of little interest to you. Why indeed recall for you the extravagances of a time of inebriety and delirium? But I still find comfort, I know not why, in these strange declarations of my faithfulness and affection. Moreover, I want to make you see the progression by which my error led me to the depths of the abyss.

That time was hardly far off. It did not take Gelin, with a skill which I cannot call by a name awful enough, once I must regard it as an imposture, two days to destroy my new resolutions; and either because chance provided him with the opportunities he was seeking, or because his malevolence was constantly at work spawning them, there was almost nothing that happened up to my grandfather's death that did not become an instrument for the success of his unhappy designs. A young man of the island took a liking to Mme Lallin, and offered her his hand along with a considerable fortune. She rejected his offers. Everyone urged her to relent, and you must remember the efforts you yourself made

to get her to accept a match that greatly exceeded her merit; my husband was the only one who was not urging her; and when she seemed absolutely determined to prefer study and calm, as she would say affectedly, over any other kind of advantage and security, he publicly congratulated her for that choice with such open signs of satisfaction that there was no need for Gelin to call my attention [392] to them.⁵¹⁴ It is true that during the course of this affair he had not failed to alert me to their every movement. He had me observe between them a heightened secrecy and more eagerness than ever to find each other and talk. He had me construe the distracted and absent air which Cleveland took away from his study as an effect of his uneasiness and fear. He depicted him as solely preoccupied by the loss that threatened him, or trying to hold onto a heart he thought about to escape from him; so however this matter may have ended, I was disposed to take it in the sense most destructive of my peace. But the aversion which my rival declared for marriage, in a situation where her honor and fortune equally obliged her to desire it, or at least seemed to force her to consent to it, was in effect the most unfortunate thing that could have happened for me. It seemed so evident to me that my husband's purpose was to keep her for himself, that I spared Gelin the trouble of bending my reflections in that direction. I anticipated his inspirations; and he, who had doubtless noticed that this illusion was the most powerful of his artifices, applied himself fully to multiplying my terrors, and to mastering my credulity by that means.

I leave aside a thousand details, which would tire you with-

⁵¹⁴ Cleveland himself says nothing of this proposition to Mme Lallin in his version of the same events in book V, but this new information corresponds to Fanny's obsession with everything relating to Mme Lallin, and concerns an event which Cleveland might have forgotten or more or less willingly left in the shadows.

out illuminating you further. But when, after my grandfather's death, the plan was adopted to return to Europe, Gelin, who allowed not a day to go by without poisoning me with some new piece of advice, proposed that I should myself sound out my husband's dispositions by some innocent test; and finding me only too eager for anything that could deliver me from an unbearable doubt, he suggested not only what his zeal, he said, allowed him to imagine to illuminate me, but the very terms with which I ought to express myself. For him to commit himself so boldly, he must already have tried out on Cleveland the approach he was proposing to me. It was to remind him that since our marriage had taken place without any civil formality, since we had had neither interests nor rights to settle, we should not leave America without at least obtaining a certificate from the priest who had performed the ceremony.⁵¹⁵ Urge him forcefully, he said, to grant you such a just concession. Do not give in to his initial objections. Since he cannot possibly lend an ear willingly to your request if his determination is to sacrifice you some day to your rival, you shall know his intentions from his response; and you will reflect, he added in an offhand manner, on whether the interests of your honor and tranquillity allow you to follow him to Europe, to suffer public injury there, and abet the triumph of a woman whom you must despise, or whether they do not rather require you to spend the rest of your life on this island, with the certainty you have of being loved and honored by everyone.

This last point, added nonchalantly, was the most pernicious part of his counsel. I did not answer, but it remained in my heart, and soon engaged me in deliberations which had not yet entered my mind. However, the proposal to sound out my husband seeming to me simple and straightforward, I sought the opportunity for

⁵¹⁵ The ceremony celebrated in Havana, at the request of Don Pedro, in book V.

it that same day. He was very busy with the preparations for our departure. I approached him more uncertainly than I normally would have, after foreseeing so little difficulty in it. I was trembling, and am surprised that he in no way perceived my emotion. Finally, having expressed myself most timidly, he replied blithely that I was worrying about a quite useless precaution; that since neither he nor I were Catholics, and we were all on our way to London, the testimony of a Spanish priest would be quite useless; that if anything was wanting in our marriage, all the flaws would easily be remedied in England, and that he advised me to think only about our voyage, so as not to delay it by a hundred difficulties that always trouble women at a time of departure. He left me, under various pretexts which could have been sincere, overwhelmed as he was with tasks, but which I took for the ruses of a guilty man trying to get out of a jam. I could have stopped him despite himself, and repeated my question more insistently. What fruit would I have expected from that? I remained consternated by his reply, and finding it only too much in conformity with my thoughts, I considered it [393] my final sentence. He shall leave alone, I cried when I saw Gelin, who showed up immediately to learn my resolutions; I shall go to the heart of America, I shall return to the awful wildernesses I have travelled through, to live alone there, sad, abandoned, without hope and without consolation, rather than leave to follow him. Does he think, I continued, weeping bitterly, that patience and goodness do not have their limits, and does the cruel man imagine he has the right to insult a woman because she has had the misfortune of showing him too much affection and submission? Gelin now did not hesitate to praise openly the decision I seemed to have reached. He even urged me for my honor's sake not to expose myself to humiliations he thought inevitable for me in any other place than the island of Cuba. Here, he said, your grandfather's memory assures you of the respect and affection of all the inhabitants. Here you

will forget your husband's infidelity, Europe, and all your sufferings. As it was indifferent to him, he also stated, where in the world he might establish his home, he offered to remain as well in Havana, to continue to render me the services of a faithful friendship. I expressed my gratitude, but without accepting his offer. I nevertheless listened to the means he proposed for me to escape from my husband. Several days before the day of departure he was to take me to a neighboring island, to the house of a woman he knew, to whom he admitted having communicated part of my woes in order to dispose her to grant me an asylum if that resource become necessary to me. There, he said, you will be in perfect security, and moreover you ought to have little fear, moreover, that a husband whose only thought is to be rid of you will cause you any fret by trying too long and hard to find you. This plan seemed simple to me. Although I did not yet commit myself to flight with a categorical promise, I conceded at least to my seducer that it was the only course suited to my misfortune, and I am persuaded that from that moment he thought he was sure of his victory.

However, by the usual effect of my irresolutions, this thought then gave way to more moderate reflections. I remember that my rival had always expressed an aversion for England, and Cleveland on the contrary desired nothing so keenly as to be back in London. I flattered myself that when the time came to agree firmly on the choice of one country or the other, this opposition in taste could provoke some cooling between them. Slim cause for hope, but as it was the single one to which I was reduced, it still had the power to make me reject all of Gelin's persuasions and determine to follow the course of my miserable fortune, at least until the last minute that reason and honor would allow me refuse to see. We departed, to the great chagrin of my seducer, who reproached me bitterly for the imprudence that made me rush to my doom, or who rather, far from fearing it, deplored the fact that

heaven's assistance allowed me to avert it. For it is at this moment, my sister, that my eyes open wider than ever, and that I take in the whole plan of his malice. Recalling his regrets and even his tears, I no longer doubt that his original intention had been to keep me in America, and that it was the vexation of having failed at it that wrung those expressions of grief from him. Alas, I took them for the effect of the zeal that attached him to my interests! Great gods, what thanks I owe you! By what miracle did you save me? I would thus be in the power of a traitor, and without hope of seeing again everything on earth that is dearest to me! Ah, my sister, let us banish a memory that is capable of troubling my senses and my reason.

But it is only to recall others which I cannot bear with less turmoil and horror. You are doubtless waiting for this terrible part of my narrative. Your impatience has made you endure the tedium of listening to everything that has delayed the crisis which I have come to. You are, alas, going to hear it. I will not prejudice you with justifications and excuses. The innocence of my heart is sufficiently proven by its own pains and by the very effects of its despair. O heaven, must I attest you, and will you not yourself dispose my sister's mind to believe me? I realize how many sinister interpretations my blind resolution has exposed me. As [394] the traces of the past are reborn in my memory, I see, my dear sister, that every step that remains for me to describe to you is a dreadful fall, every circumstance a crime, and that everything speaks loudly against me. Oh gods, where is Cleveland! Does he not hear me? Will I dare bear his presence and the accusations I already can see in his eyes? But I rush to embrace him with open arms. Let him avenge himself, let him punish me; I offer no resistance if he gives me back his heart. My confidence lies in my integrity, and I sense that it is at least equal to my shame. Hear me out, then, and see whether in the tale of the most horrible of all misfortunes you recognize a guilty woman.

Reasons which you have not forgotten having made us take our course via the island of St. Helena, the monster whom hell had chosen to damn me again had the time to renew his impostures, and to prepare my mind gradually for some opportunity which he apparently hoped he could create during such a long voyage. I had confided to him the hope I had that Mme Lallin would not willingly agree to go to England. He had doubtless felt the weakness of this phantasy; but during the whole time we were at sea, he pretended to appear more persuaded of it than I, and sometimes congratulated me in advance for the change that this occurrence could produce in my situation. I can attribute his behavior only to the notion he might have had that by reinforcing my error he would increase the distress I could not fail to feel at the moment when I would be undeceived, and that in the first heat of my resentment it would be easier for him to get me to follow all his impressions. Indeed we were no sooner in St. Helena than his language changed completely. He did not merely assure me in private that it was Mme Lallin's resolution to surmount all her aversions to follow steadfastly my husband's fortune; he further was adept enough to engage both of them in a discussion which took place in my presence, with my jealousy interpreting all the terms. They were to me so many fatal wounds, which nothing could ever again heal.

The French vessel arrived the same day. We made the acquaintance right away of the captain and his wife, who were two persons of good birth and honor. From my first walk in the port, Gelin showed me their ship, which was being hastily repaired. At least heaven, he whispered to me, is on your side; it is offering you a resource. I grasped his thinking. A sudden tremor that spread to all my limbs obliged me to lean on him for support. I stood for some time looking at the ship, with such violent pounding of my heart and distractions so tumultuous that, frightened myself by what had come over me, I had myself taken back

to the city at once. Gelin continued to support me. He pretended not to notice the change in me, and calmly picking up where he left off, as if he had not doubted that it was the subject of my distraction: I hope, he said, that the choice you make will be the one most conducive to your peace; but do not forget that the opportunity heaven presents to you will not be repeated, and that once you return to your husband's ship, you will not leave it until London. The fear of being heard by those who accompanied us did not permit me to reply. Perhaps he was disconcerted by my silence; for having found the means of rejoining me before night-fall, he came armed with a new ruse, and promoted it so skillfully that he finally overcame all the difficulties that made me hesitate.

I would not easily remember what my thoughts were when I saw him appear. All was confusion in my mind as in my heart. But it is certain that when I saw him approach alone, I felt the same tremor that I had felt at the sight of the ship. There was even a movement of horror mixed in, as if I had something dreadful to fear from his presence. Hardly thinking, however, of identifying the cause of this sentiment, I was not for that less eager to hear him once he had told me with a sense of urgency that he brought me news that would end all my uncertainties, and that in the few days I had left to make up my mind, I would be able [395] to clarify my fate so fully that I would not complain of lacking information. I imagine, he said, that your hesitations stem from your continuing doubt about whether your husband is capable of carrying betrayal to the point of dissolving your marriage; the hope which is the usual sustenance of the unfortunate is the poison that undoes you; for if you were sure of the fate that threatens you, I cannot doubt that with the sentiments of pride and virtue I know you to possess, you would rather do anything than go serve as witness to the ceremony that is to dishonor you. Everything then depends, he continued, on assuring you of your husband's disposition. And can you not do so easily? You have

here a Protestant society, a church, ministers who can repair in a moment whatever is flawed in the celebration of your marriage. Propriety even demands that this duty be fulfilled before you appear in London. Propose to M. Cleveland that he deliver you here from a quandary into which he plunged you himself by the response he made in Havana. If he rejects your request, he added, shaking his head sadly, if he looks for excuses, pretexts, delays, your misfortune is clear; you are doomed, and I know no other resource for you than to save at least your honor by means of a courageous flight.

A monster capable of giving such an imposing turn to the most pernicious and fatal of all counsel, had also no doubt been capable of preparing my husband's mind with the same artifice, and disposing him to treat my proposal as inopportune and foolish. That was indeed the only response I got from Cleveland. I had embraced this new possibility with an eagerness proportionate to my fears. I attached my life or death to this deliberation. Imagine the despair into which such a cruel and decisive refusal plunged me. All my emotions turned into an alternation of spite, shame, and pain. Before the day's end I committed myself with a terrible vow to sail to France and carry my calamity into some retreat unknown to all mankind. Gelin assured me that he would serve me as guide, and that having no other thought than to return to his country, he was delighted that my resolution put him in a position to carry out his own while continuing his services to me. I considered his offers as a favor from heaven. Yes, I said, your compassion and assistance are all I have left. If you know some remote refuge, some wild cave or some tomb, to which entrance is not denied to suffering and virtue, lead an unfortunate, and do not leave her until she is buried there. He had me repeat my vow, for fear, he said, lest the measures he was going to take, expose me, should I change my mind, to something more dreadful than everything I was trying to avoid. He took it on himself to arrange

things with the French captain and his wife, who had already given me individual tokens of esteem and affection. I subsequently learned from her that, after telling him of my woes, he had added, the better to induce him to grant me his assistance more enthusiastically, that was thinking of leaving the Protestant religion, and that besides desiring to flee the opprobrium that threatened me, I also desired to embrace the Catholic religion.

Mme des Ogères, which was this lady's name, paid me a private visit the next day, in the course of which I had to be pressed for a long time to confess to her that I had resolved to leave. Gelin, who was with her, repeated my reasons to her so forcefully and skillfully that he confirmed my determination by heating up my resentment more and more. We settled on the circumstances of the departure. It was to take place at night, at the first wind favorable enough to distance us from the island before daybreak. Mme des Ogères pledged an inviolable friendship to me, and appearing to be deeply moved by my wretched situation, she promised me not only never to flag in her sentiments and care, but not even to leave me for a moment until heaven had opened to me some place to retire where my tranquillity and honor would be secure. I was little concerned about preparations that had to do only with conveniences for the voyage, or even those for my settlement in France, about which my intentions were as yet but vague and ill-examined. Gelin was a part of all these precautions, and my mind has never been free enough for me to wish to learn the details.

[396] Oh my sister, how painful to me is the confession I still have to make to you! How my heart hurts to retrace such a sad and humiliating memory! What wounds are about to reopen! Alas, what a bloody scene! Will you ever be able to believe that when the wind became as we were waiting for, I agreed to leave my room in the middle of the night, in other words as soon as I saw my husband begin to drift into sleep, and be led to the ship

by the captain and Gelin, who were to wait for me at my door, and at once depart the shores where I was leaving Cleveland, my children, you, my brother, all that I love most next to heaven. I agreed to that? Is what I am telling you then quite certain? It is not a dream, an unhappy illusion that yet deceives my senses and my memory, as the ruses of a traitorous seducer had so long been deceiving my reason? Heaven, how pitiful is virtue, being exposed to serving as the plaything of imposture! Where then is the refuge for innocence? Where have uprightness and candor some defense to hope for on earth? Alas, it is doubtless not for a woman lacking strength or insight to examine the purposes of an eternal justice; but my sister, how terrible they are in my example!

I rose at the determined hour, needing no other notice than the mortal fear that chased far away rest from my heart and sleep from my eyes. My husband seemed to be sleeping in deep peace and security. His breathing was as tranquil as his face. I observed him a long time in this state. How can there be, I said to myself, sweet repose for guilty hearts? Faithless man, if you had still the least glimmer of the affection you owe me, would all your blood not feel the cruel agitation of mine? You rest in a deep sleep. Your imagination is full of your new love, and delivered up to dreams as criminal as your pleasures. My rival is meanwhile enjoying the same delights. And I, I die of your cruelty and your scorn! My tears were flowing like a stream during that time. Despite these reflections, which ought to have stirred my resentment and make me hasten my departure, I could neither take my eyes from his face nor walk away from his bed. I would willingly have seized his hands. I would have pressed them with transport. The fear of awakening him could not inhibit the sobs that violently forced their way out. Oh inconstant heart! I repeated from by intervals; oh feeble, lying heart! How little I have known you! What misfortunes and tears is my error going to cost me! But

you, who knew me so well, did you have to choose me as object of your betrayal? Why deceive goodness and innocence? By what baleful art have you inspired love in me while betraying me? For I love you still. I love you always. I flee you, and I shall live unhappily, or soon die of the cruel necessity to which you reduce me. While I was abandoning myself to all these movements, I thought I heard a sound at the door, and doubting not that it was Gelin with the captain, I ran to tell them not to betray me by some indiscretion. But ceasing to hear them, I forgot that my delay was putting me at much greater risk. I retraced my steps, without even opening the door, as if forced by an invisible hand, which still was pushing me toward my duty. I went back to where I had been. My tears began anew with the same laments and the same sighs. The room was lighted by a candle, so the slightest movement could betray me. However, when a second signal no longer allowed me to doubt that I was being impatiently summoned, my transport so increased as to make me entirely ignore the danger. I fell to my knees, extending my arms towards heaven. I called it as witness to the excess of my sufferings. I prayed the most moving prayers. I wished my husband might awaken, see me in this state, let himself be moved by my tears, or put me to death. I do not know whether in such awful turmoil I there did not escape some words articulate enough to be understood; but Gelin, whose venture no doubt caused him turmoil as well, opened the door, saw the posture I had assumed; and perceiving that my husband slept none the less tranquilly for it, he had the boldness to enter, to take me by the [397] hand, and to pull me with all his strength after him. Leaving me for a moment with the captain, he pushed his effrontery to the point of returning to the room to put out the candle, and rejoined us only after carefully closing all the doors.

The night was very dark. My imagination, as heated as my sentiments by all the circumstances of such a violent scene,

caused me to see the street where I at once found myself with my guides as a horrible abyss into which I had blindly hurled myself. I thought I was at the bottom, never to get out, and my husband's apartment which I had just left seemed to me from that moment at an inaccessible height, which no efforts could ever again allow me to attain. Gelin urged me to keep walking, to reach a convenient spot where I was awaited by some of the captain's servants, with a chair which they had disposed to carry me to the shore. I advanced, without responding to his exhortations, as indifferent to all that heaven might have in store for me as if I had thought I was at death's door. Yet we had scarcely gone twenty paces when the memory of my children appeared before me. Will you believe that with so many present pains, some other sentiment could make itself felt? I uttered a pathetic cry, which made the servants carrying me suddenly stop. Ah, said I to the captain, with a heavy heart that carried even into the sound of my voice, let us go no further, I want to embrace my children, I shall not leave until I have obtained that consolation. Alas, what was I to do? Oh, the fatal venture, I added, relieving myself with a deep sigh, which has already ruined my memory and my reason. Indeed I can make no better comparison of the consternation I was in than with that of a criminal condemned to die and already on the way to the scaffold, who no longer sees what he looks at, no longer understands what he hears, and all of whose senses, disrupted by the image of death, seem already to have abandoned nature's function.

Gelin summoned all his skill and his most insinuating phrases to depict to me the peril to which we were exposing ourselves by the slightest delays; and the captain made me fear the wind would not be favorable long enough to carry us out of the harbor. My obstinacy was no less difficult to overcome for that; and this battle would have lasted a long while, had they not

taken another tack to calm me, by reminding me that not only had my husband's affection for my children had never appeared to have diminished, but that you were with them to serve them as mother until such time as it pleased heaven to bring them back to my arms. This last hope was not being proposed to me for the first time. Gelin having always sought to anticipate my hesitations and objections, had not failed to assuage with fanciful promises all the anxieties that my attachment to such dear children was able to cause me. He had promised me a hundred times that after finding me a peaceful situation, he would put all his efforts and even his life into restoring to me my second son at least, and he had detailed his intentions so plausibly that he had succeeded in reassuring me. It was thus less the fear of losing them than the natural movement of my affection that cast me into this new malaise, and although forced to yield to the urgings of my guides, my heart resisted until we boarded the ship.

There I found M^{me} des Ogères awaiting me, and she undertook from the first moment to stanch the flow of my tears with a conversation full of charms. But what consolations was I in a position to receive? I asked her only one favor, which was to be left alone. Seeing the state of dejection I was in, she felt herself obligated to refuse it. Thus I was forced to put up with her talk and blandishments, the very agreeableness of which was a torment for me because of the efforts I was constantly forced to make to answer them. I was in no mood to weary with my laments those who could not take any interest in them other than that of compassion, nor even unburden myself all at once over any circumstance of my misfortune, at least not with the kind of detail that omits nothing, and without which nonetheless the heart derives little relief from confidences. Gelin, in my profound state of error, might perhaps have been more able to provide me some solace [398] in conversation, or in listening to my laments with

the usual signs of his friendship and indulgence; but the first rule I imposed on myself in my husband's absence was to avoid any hint of secret liaison with men, and Gelin's protests no more than his services could make me except him from it. Thus the violence I did myself at every moment of the day soon became detrimental to my health. The vapors of the poison that consumed me, having no path for release, rose to the brain, and thickened to the point of often blocking the flow of my spirits. That is how the doctors in France explained the fainting spells to which I became subject, and which sometimes lasted for hours at a time. Yet if these melancholic vapors were seeking an outlet, it is surprising they did not find one in my tears: for I spent every night weeping.⁵¹⁶

During this time we were running full sail, and assistance of heaven seemed as favorable to our navigation as if it had only virtues to reward. When we passed the point of Africa, Gelin, who saw the ship badly under-armed, and perhaps feared we might be pursued, proposed to the captain that we put into Cape Verde to await the Dutch fleet that was cruising in those waters, and return to Europe with that escort. This plan was communicated to me. I opposed it, without giving any reason. The captain having none himself other than the desire to oblige me, did not persist for a moment. But Gelin seemed quite hurt by my refusal, and reproached me for several days for neglecting both my inter-

⁵¹⁶ This humoral conception of melancholy was standard; to cite Furetière's dictionary (1690), melancholy "is one of the four humors in the body, the heaviest and most disrupting. Melancholy causes sadness and worry. Black melancholy sometimes leads to madness. Melancholy, in medical terms, is also an illness which causes distraction without fever, accompanied by fright and sadness without apparent cause, which comes from a melancholic humor or vapor which dominates the brain and effects its temperature."

ests and his own. Who knows what he had in mind this time? For I remember that in speaking of the Cape, he described it to me as one of the most agreeable abodes on earth, and as a certain refuge against all sorts of fears. He renewed the same proposal when we passed within view of the Canary Islands, and he insisted so forcefully that, having no other objection to make than the inclination that made me desire to live in Europe, possibly with the secret hope of being less distant from my husband and my children, today I consider the strength I had to resist him as another sign of heaven's protection. The more I advance, the more I find myself discovering in all his conduct that he was trying only to evade with me the eyes of any who could know and observe us. I do not know what his true intentions were; but I remember particularly with fright what happened to me on the island of Madeira.

Gusting wind having made us alter our course, we were surprised to find ourselves, after a very dark night, opposite an agreeable coast, which was scarcely a cannon shot away. The captain's familiarity with these seas led him to judge easily that it was the island of Madeira. He spoke of it as a fine Portuguese settlement, where many good people retired, drawn there by the purity of the air and the excellence of the food supply. Gelin, without proposing to spend any time there, simply expressed a great desire to visit it. He invited Mme des Ogères and me to take advantage of such an excellent opportunity to restore ourselves a bit from the fatigues of the sea, and proposed it to me in particular as a diversion that could mitigate my sorrow. I long resisted, and yielded only on the condition we would not go into the city, the bell tower of which rose above a hill that hid the houses from view. He promised that he would leave everything up to my desires. The captain, after dropping anchor, sent a few of his men in the dinghy to reconnoiter the coastline, and ascertain whether we could avoid entering the harbor. Upon their report we left the

ship, and came safely to a charming point of land where we had perceived several houses that looked like so many vacation houses.

That name suited them all the better that their nature owed nothing to art, and seemed to specialize in self-beautification. The houses, which had seemed to us extremely ornate from a distance, were embellished only by the beauty of the stone itself, which dazzled the eyes with its whiteness. A nearby quarry furnished it in abundance. Moreover they were no more than the homes of some simple folk who [399] tilled the land thereabouts, and were rich enough from their labor to appreciate the attractions of tidiness. Indeed there were no others to pursue in a place where all the beauties of nature were combined. The setting of the hills, the verdancy of the trees, the abundance of the most delicious fruits, the multitude of streams and cool water; even the marvelous sweetness of the air, which seemed to be composed of the perfumes which the flowers and fruits continually exhaled, together formed such a delightful habitation that all my sorrow could not keep me from a sensation of pleasure. Leaving the sea after a violent storm which had lasted all night, the transition from the tossing ship to the calm where I suddenly found myself could alone help put my heart in this disposition; but it is true that from breathing such sweet air I felt extremely relieved. I sat down on the first patch of grass we came to. Mme des Ogères, delighted to see me enjoying something, bustles about increasing my satisfaction with all the amenities she could draw from this rural spot. She sent for some of the locals to bring us the most delicious things they had. They came quickly, bringing various fruits, and offered us a more complete meal in their homes. We were not reluctant to follow them; but as there were several of them who eagerly made us the same invitation, we remained uncertain to whom we should give the preference. Finally my mind was made

up by the gentleness and civility of a young woman who, without manifesting such overwhelming eagerness as the others, invited us in a modest way that I found touching.

I asked her along the way whether she was born on the island. She replied that she was Spanish, and recently arrived from her country to spend the rest of her days with an uncle whom I was going to see at her house. Indeed we found there a man along in years, who confirmed with great civility all the offers she had made us, and thanked us for accepting them. I studied these two persons closely, whose physiognomy seemed above their condition. Mme des Ogères, to whom I communicated what I was thinking, immediately concurred. We continued to receive tokens of their civility until the end of a dinner that was very properly served. The young woman, who seemed to appreciate my continual compliments, rose towards the end of the meal; and having gone out for a moment, she returned with a child of the age of my children, and presented him to me. It is just, she said, that every member of our little family share in the honor we are receiving. This child was of amiable appearance. I embraced him, and the memory of my own caused me to shed some tears. But as I returned him to its mother, I noticed that she too was weeping. My curiosity was too stirred not to ask her what was the trouble. Here is her reply. See whether it seems less surprising to you than to me, and to all those who knew me, and who were witnesses to this adventure.

Alas, she said, no interest obliges me to conceal my trials, and I take comfort in the expressions I receive of your compassion. I was born to be happy. I believed I was, and my misfortune comes only from having surrendered myself with foolish confidence to appearances of happiness that have deceived me. She related that being the daughter of a very rich gentleman who loved her solely, she had sought, following his advice, to procure

for herself all the happiness she could expect from her wealth and beauty. With a very tender heart, she had wished to owe that felicity to love. In agreement with her father, she had for a long time put all her efforts into finding the kind of man she desired, to make him the object of the most intense feelings on earth. She had found him. He had the looks, the wit, the character she would have chosen in a hundred, and would have prayed heaven for, had heaven made him depend on her desires. With everything conspiring to seduce her, she had believed he had as much affection for her as she had felt for him from first sight. In short, her father's judgment coinciding with her own, she had not hesitated to make him master of her person and her fortune. For several years nothing had troubled her happiness, which is to say as long as her father [400] was living; but once that restraint, apparently the only one that was capable of holding back a betrayer, was no longer there, she had soon recognized that everything she had taken until then for affection and fidelity in her husband had only been in fact the effect of a horrible dissimulation. No longer having the strength to restrain himself, he had shamelessly and unceremoniously doffed the mask to attach himself to a woman whom she even suspected him of having loved before his marriage, and of never having ceased to see in secret. What an affront to a tender and faithful wife! However, far from provoking him with reproaches and complaints, her only recourse had been to tears. She had redoubled her efforts to please him. She had brought to bear everything that love and virtue can employ, until losing hope, and unable any more to withstand scorn, she had decided to abandon an ingrate whose return even would not have consoled her for such loathsome infidelity. The master of the house where I saw her was her uncle, who had long before retired agreeably to the isle of Madeira. She had resolved to come seek refuge with him; and despite the cost to her heart, she had secretly

fled Spain with the child I saw in her arms, and who was the sole fruit of her marriage.

Her narrative was much longer; but I imagine that is enough to cause you rightful surprise, and to make you understand how surprised I must have been. On an island less distant from Cuba and St. Helena, I would have thought the Spanish woman was informed of my story, and would have suspected her of using this circuitous means to let me know honestly the empathy she felt for it. But how likely was it that my name and misfortunes could be known in a place where mere chance had led us to make a stop? Now that I am discovering all of Gelin's lies, and think I can see the connection between this adventure and his project, I would consider it another of his ruses if I could imagine he had found some means of speaking with the Spanish woman before I did, and preparing her for the role she was playing so disarmingly. But I do not remember any circumstance that can justify this suspicion. I was not even aware that he had left the ship. However that may be, you are about to see what danger heaven delivered me from. Gelin, as if frightened by the resemblance between my adventure and what he had just heard, lifted his eyes with the transport of a man beyond his own control; and raging against ingratitude and betrayal, which are, he said, as common in friendship as in love, he protested that he, to break definitively with the perfidious race of men, intended to stay on the island of Madeira, and spend the rest of his days in solitude. Then, addressing me, and not leaving anyone time to reply: My example does not oblige you, he said; but given your character, and already so cruelly deceived by a faithless husband, what are you going to do in Europe, where all the vices reign in full force? Alone, he went on, without guidance, protection, or assistance, what fate must you expect among the ravenous wolves on the prowl for innocence and virtue? Your doom is certain, he repeated twenty times,

with many additional reasons to persuade me of it; and turning toward the Spanish woman, without taking time to catch his breath, he asked her whether she was not quite surprised that my misfortune should be exactly like hers, and whether she would not join him in advising me to apply the same remedy. She had time enough to say a hundred tender things about the resemblance of our adventures, before the turmoil I was experiencing allowed me to open my mouth. Finally, moved or rather terrified by Gelin's threats, which he had uttered with more force than I have been able to repeat them, and shedding some tears provoked by the sadness of my reflections: Yes, I cried, I want to disappear into this island; I cannot choose a retreat isolated enough, nor flee too far from the enemies of honor and good faith; and since you have experienced the same misfortunes, I added, speaking to the Spanish woman, maybe you will not be unmoved by mine.

She rose eagerly to embrace me; and taking me affectionately [401] by the hand, she led me into the garden, extolling the charms of her remote retreat. Gelin remained with M. and Mme des Ogères, who were extremely surprised by my decision; but the respect they had developed for me, based on what they had learned at St. Helena of my birth and my grandfather's rank, still held them in a certain constraint. They let me leave without telling me what they were thinking. The Spanish woman, with whom I now found myself alone, thanked heaven profusely for the intention it inspired in me. She spoke less of the cause of her woes than of the satisfaction she found in a land whose beauties she held up for my admiration. Indeed all I had seen from afar could not be compared with what I could see about me. Still affected by the impression that Gelin's terrible predictions had made on me, I felt for a few minutes that the peace and innocence that seemed intrinsic to such a lovely abode could make up for all

I had lost. But the very effort I needed to sustain that hope in my heart soon made me realize that it was but an illusion. The objects that had seemed diverting when I first saw them did not bear up under re-examination. They seemed to change form and lose their charms as soon as the feeling of novelty dissipated. I no longer saw in them the second time what I thought I had seen the first. Coming back finally to considerations that were less likely to fade, I spoke of my trials, and told my companion that I had no other consolation to desire than this conversation. She made me a tender and civil reply; but continuing to speak with her with the same sentiment of sorrow, I did not perceive that her words issued from a heart as moved as mine. She is cured, I said to myself. The tears she has shed in telling me her story were only the remnants of a passion that is dead and a memory almost forgotten. How happy she is! But I will not find with her the satisfaction I was looking forward to. She will not sympathize with my pains, since she is no longer moved by her own.

While I was absorbed in these distractions, I saw Gelin entering the garden, turning toward M. des Ogères, who was at the gate, and whom he seemed to be asking, as much as I could judge from various indications, to await his return and not to follow him. He rejoined me quickly; his face was wrenched by some extraordinary movement, yet he assumed a gentle, pleasant voice to ask me whether the sight of such a lovely and remote place did not confirm me in the intention I had expressed of spending my life there. Heaven loves you, he continued: it is its goodness, and not chance, that steered our ship here. It is offering you everything you could have asked for had you been guided by the state of your fortune and your inclinations: a retreat that equals anything they say about the golden age; a woman friend who has the same misfortunes as you to lament, and seeks the

same consolations; tranquility, solitude; for what can you hope for in the rest of creation that you are not sure of finding here? And are you even sure you can evade a hundred misadventures that may await you with the first step you take in Europe? He would have gone on; but I interrupted him, and heaven, which did not will my ruin, reminded me of the only thought that was capable of saving me from it. I would not need encouraging, I said calmly, to follow advice that appealed to me at first sight, if it could be reconciled with other thoughts I cannot shake, and which I do not even mean to conceal from you. A movement of fear and horror perhaps obscured them, when you had me anticipate new misfortunes in the future, but they subsist nonetheless; and I find them so just, that the most dreadful fears should not be able to make me forget them. To stay on this island or any place else on earth where I would have no hope of learning the fate of my husband and letting him know of mine, is to justify his infidelity, by taking from him the power of recognizing and righting it. I want him always to know the place of my retreat, and the way I have conducted myself there, and the paths I have taken to get there, beginning with the moment I left St. Helena. Otherwise I would not have espoused this fatal choice, and you would not see me [402] possess such strength to withstand my pains. Besides, I added, what would become of the vow by which you pledged to restore at least one of my sons to me? Ought I then to renounce forever the pleasure of seeing them again? So what happiness do you offer me on this island that could take the place of what you would take from me? As these last remarks were beginning to make me raise my voice with vehemence, Gelin doubtless understood that all his ruses were undone if he allowed this thought the time to act with all its force. He hurriedly placed again before my eyes the arguments that had proved most apt to trouble my imagination; and interrupting me in a manner even more forceful than

my own, he painted such a horrible picture of the abyss into which he assured me I was about to fall, that by dint of exaggeration his words ceased to seem plausible to me. Nothing being farther from my suspicions, nevertheless, than his desire to deceive me, I expressed no mistrust, and felt none the less indebted to his zeal. You will depart alone, he replied with the same impetuosity. After serving you selflessly, and opening a path to you that led you infallibly to peace, I think I am relieved of all the bonds that honor and friendship had imposed on me. My resolution is unshakable; I am not leaving this island. I replied kindly that he was free to do as he wished; and feeling rather annoyed at the tyrannical manner in which he was expressing himself, I added that I too was free to do as I wished. I promised him, moreover, a gratitude proportionate to his services, for my blindness still made me attach unbelievable value to them; and as for the dangers with which he thought me threatened, I told him that the probity of M. and Mme des Ogères, to whom I entrusted the safekeeping of my honor and conduct, assured me against all sorts of fears.

It was impossible for such a heated discussion not to be heard by M. des Ogères, who was still at the garden gate. His discretion at first prevented him from approaching, but once he was assured of my intentions from my last reply, he hastened to my side with his wife, while Gelin, who saw them coming, went away looking mortified. Those good people, who perhaps had doubts about his purposes, without daring to state their suspicions to me, evinced their joy in a thousand ways. Mme des Ogères seemed almost ecstatic. She kissed my hands a hundred times. Alas, she repeated to her husband, did I not tell you? I would have bet my life on it. Alas, she said again, I would have died of grief. I asked her what caused her such agitation. She told me that the moment when I entered the garden with the Spanish woman,

Gelin had persuaded them to leave the house on the side facing the sea; and as they were approaching the shore together, he had declared to them that, it being his intention to remain on the island of Madeira, and mine, as they had just heard, being also not to return to their ship, the best thing they could do would be to get back on board, without exposing me to the distress that their farewells would inevitably cause me. He had offered to return with them in the longboat, to bring all my possessions from the ship in a dinghy he would take from the shore, thus sparing their servants the trouble of coming back. M. des Ogères replied that he did not take a remark over dinner for a serious resolution, and that with whatever meaning it was to be taken, he was incapable of abandoning me in a land where I was known to no one, without at least hearing my intentions from me, and without receiving my orders more specifically. This resistance had irritated Gelin. In his rage he would doubtless have been capable of some violence, if he had hoped to keep me from learning about it, or to get me to approve of it. But foreseeing even less success by that means, he had been obliged to retrace his steps with the captain, who wished to have an explanation right away with me; and all he could get him to agree to had been the right to enter the garden before him, and speak with me alone for a moment. Mme des Ogères again began to insist vehemently that I return to the ship, and chose nothing over France, where she promised me joys and advantages far surpassing anything I could hope for in Madeira.

[403] The thought of remaining on an unknown island, and the danger I was just in of being forced to without knowing it, struck me enough to cause me considerable alarm; but blaming only my own imprudence, which had made me speak without reflection, and even thinking I was obliged to Gelin, whose intention, I indeed imagined, could only have been to spare me

the pain and discomfort of farewells, I called him back and reproached him mildly for taking too seriously complaints that had escaped me in my grief. He listened with a timid air; however when he apparently had observed that I held him guilty of no devious design, and that his treachery was protected, he asked me for a moment's private conversation. We withdrew into the adjoining path.

There, after looking hard at me, and seeming to mean deeply what he was about to say, he asked me whether I understood his purposes in the choice he proposed to me of leaving the ship and staying in Madeira. As I showed some uncertainty how to answer him: You do not, he replied impatiently; and the delicacy of a fatal friendship that makes me fear causing you the least worry prevents me from explaining them to you openly. We are going to France, he continued, affecting an even more confidential air, and I concede that with your intelligence and decency you can fend off a hundred dangers. But do you realize that in the opinion of the world a woman's honor depends less on reality than on appearances, which is to say, much less on virtue than on the phantom that attracts that name? Will all the decency of your conduct prevent Des Ogères, his wife and their servants, who are hardly unaware that you have left a husband in St. Helena, from recounting what they know and what they have seen, and, the truth being distorted on their lips, you from passing for a fugitive of a character quite different from what she wishes to appear? I moderate my expressions, for fear of holding up images that are too shocking; but knowing your principles, I had thought, he added, that the sole means of preventing vexations which you would have difficulty bearing was to separate from you everyone who could serve to make known your misfortune and your name. It was with this in mind that I proposed to you that we remain at the Cape; and your refusals having been unable to discourage me, the same

motive led me to renew my efforts here. My intention would be, then, to let Des Ogères leave, on the pretext that the amenities of this remote place are to your liking; and if you did not in fact find what it took to keep you here, it would be a simple matter for us at any time to pick a Portuguese ship in the port which would carry us to Europe. You would follow your penchant in the choice of an abode; and being known to no one but me, you would be free to establish your character and reputation there without fearing lest anyone dare contradict you.

If anything ever made a prompt impression on me, it was such a specious argument. The idea of the shame to which I was going to be exposed by malign interpretations in the first French city I entered with M. des Ogères so seized my mind and imagination that this obstacle seemed invincible. Not a single objection occurred to me against such a powerful fear, and I paced a few times around the garden in a silence that Gelin must have taken as a good omen. The shame of changing my plans so easily was for a few minutes the only thing that held me back. However, once I began to get over that first impulse, and once all the motives I had already put forward for wishing to arrive promptly in Europe recovered the force that a frivolous threat seemed to have neutralized, it did not require great effort for me to find my reply. I said to Gelin, who doubtless had other expectations: I am keeping you waiting too long; but the time I have taken to reflect tells you that my resolution is firm. I wish to leave. I pray that heaven may make me arrive in Europe as soon as my husband. Some day he will learn of my conduct, and from the moment of my arrival I want to be informed of his. The evil that you fear is uncertain, and my duty is not. Speak to me no longer of it, I added, and let us think only of pursuing our journey. I left him and went to rejoin the captain: seeing that he urged me in vain to listen to him, he followed me, uttering many sighs, and told me [404] rather

brusquely that it was most unfortunate for him that his honor and his promises chained him to my steps like a slave.

The presence of M. and Mme des Ogères, who had come to meet me, kept me from replying to him that I in no way pretended to limit his freedom. But a moment's conversation with Mme des Ogères having served to confirm my resolution, it gave me joy to hear her husband who was very satisfied with the wind, and was giving orders to his men to go to the longboat. Nevertheless, I had one last attack to withstand. The young Spanish woman, seeing me heading back toward the shore, began to shed the most moving tears, protesting heaven's cruelty in taking from her the only comfort she had received since her calamity. She addressed now me, whom she accused of deceiving her with a false expectation, now the captain and his wife, whom she reproached for siding against her and luring me away with their counsel. Her tears and cries continued with this violence until we were in the longboat. I was affected by them, and tried to comfort her with some small presents which she accepted ecstatically. Yet we had scarcely left land before these great movements of grief seemed to abate. She watched us with dry eyes, and from afar Mme des Ogères even pointed out to us that she was bursting with laughter as she talked with some women who had followed us down to the sea.⁵¹⁷

Whatever judgment you may make of such a strange adventure, what no doubt surprises you the most is that in all these ruses of Gelin's I never observed anything to make me suspect his true sentiments. Attribute my blindness, if you must, to the simplicity of my character, or to the maliciousness of his; but I attest heaven, whose protection I have such an interest in keeping, that I never had any inkling of the poison he was hiding in his

⁵¹⁷ There will be further information about this woman in book XII.

heart, and attributed its effects to the most virtuous friendship.

Not that as I review in memory the circumstances of my story I do not recall more than one that ought perhaps to have opened my eyes. In the earliest conversations that followed our departure, I remember that, attempting to temper the mortal sorrow which he could see weighing me down, he spoke to me one day of an infallible remedy which love itself, he said, offers to those whom it has made unhappy. It was a new engagement. It is in the nature of pleasure, he added, to make one forget pains; and the taste for the pleasures of love easily reawakens in a tender heart. In mine, I replied gently, and with no thought for what these words might imply, the taste and desire for pleasure were equally extinguished. You do not follow me, he replied. You may be unaware that virtue and even duty can sometimes revive it. Abandoned and betrayed as you are, you will never have a wise and sincere friend but who will advise you to take advantage of the freedom which our religion gives you to dispose of yourself more felicitously. I interrupted him heatedly, but without seeing in these words anything more than advice which he could have given to any woman but me; such also was the gist of my reply: Can you who know me, I said, propose to me consolations as unbearable as my sufferings? What cruelty it is to use such language with me! No, another person's infidelity will never serve as pretext for my own. To me, alas, such cravenness would be impossible even if were craven enough to wish to force my desires to it. I do not weep more over my misfortune and shame than over the character of my own heart, which is incapable of enjoying any consolation. I do not know, I added, what advice a wise friend should give me; but whether it be weakness or virtue, I would consider as my most hateful enemy whoever would repeat to me twice what I have just heard. Maybe he imagined I had understood his purposes, and that this vague reproach was a

way of rejecting them; but until the marriage proposal which he had the effrontery to make to me here a few days ago, he never returned to that subject.

Nevertheless, it is true that his eyes often looked passionate. I sometimes caught him with his eyes fixed on me, with an air of languor and interest that would [405] have been able to caused me surprise, had he not had been shrewd enough immediately to anticipate my suspicions by asking after my health, or some other circumstance of my situation, for which the zeal of friendship obliged him to be concerned. Thus I attributed this ardor to his compassion. Sometimes, coming to after my long fainting spells, I found my hand in his, and my weakness did not keep me from noticing that he was pressing it with a sort of ecstasy; but the presence of Mme des Ogères, who never left me, and the care which everyone was intent on showering on me in those sad moments, led me to regard this liberty as an effect of the common anxiety. I would withdraw my hand without showing that I had noticed anything. One day however, when instead of finding it in his, I felt it being pressed by his lips, I sharply rebuked him as soon as I had recovered my senses, and invited Mme des Ogères to protect me in the future from such indecencies. She told me frankly that she had done what she could to spare me them, and had threatened him several times to tell me about them. This reply giving me to judge that he had frequently fallen into the same offense, I spoke to him in such a firm voice that he was disconcerted by it. He excused himself because of the tenderness of his friendship, which made him suffer mortally at seeing me in such languor. I certainly knew, he would say, whether he had ever failed in the respect and attachment he had sworn to me, and I ought to forgive in favor of the honesty of his sentiments such innocent signs of his concern for my health and of his pity on my sufferings. He promised me to avoid anything that could displease

me, and this promise was faithfully executed; for I can attribute only to chance an episode that covered him with shame.

The captain having only two comfortable beds, I occupied one with his wife, and Gelin the other with him. Although our rooms were separated by a thin partition, it was easy to hear everything that went on in the next one; and when the frequent return of my faints caused the fear that they might come on during the night, Gelin and the captain were obliging enough to get up at the slightest sound to offer me their assistance. It once indeed happened that, after passing several hours reflecting on my pains and weeping over them, I found myself so exhausted by this sad exercise that strength and consciousness abandoned me all of a sudden. I had perhaps been in this state for a long while before Mme des Ogères became aware of it and made it known with a cry.⁵¹⁸ They came at once. I came to with care and assistance; but I remained so weak that, for fear of some new danger, Gelin and the captain remained with me. Gelin took a seat on a chair at the foot of the bed, and with sleep apparently heavy upon him, let his head droop to rest. My feet happened to be right beneath his face, and either because, having perceived this, he took pleasure in remaining in this posture, or because he was unaware of anything in his lethargy, he stayed there almost an hour. I was so overwhelmed with my pains and my weakness that I was incapable of paying any mind to what was taking place about me; or if I thought I felt something heavy on my feet, I was not sufficiently discomforted by it to change position. But little by little it happened that my bedmate, in turning over, exposed them, unless

⁵¹⁸ These night vapors which must present symptoms much resembling sleep are curious at the least; how would one perceive that a person in bed in the middle of the night is “unconscious”?

you thought Gelin could be accused of such a strange indiscretion; and at the same moment I felt two burning lips attached to one of my legs, causing me a genuine fright. I do not know whether it was a piercing cry I let loose that came first, or a flailing kick, that was so unfortunate for Gelin that, pinning his head against the bedpost, a nail that was there gashed his face. He started bleeding abundantly. The captain and his wife, at first surprised at the sound I had made, were even more surprised to see Gelin all bloody, so close by it seemed no one could have wounded him. He himself remained more or less motionless, and said not a word. Finally I explained the subject of this scene, heaping on him the reproaches he deserved, and forbidding him to come near my room without my orders. His justification was taken from chance, which, he said, had presented him this opportunity to show me his respect without having sought it, and I was again indulgent enough to believe he was sincere.

[406] But this detail is taking me away from what you are dying to hear. The wind never again ceasing to be with us, we had soon passed the tip of Spain. M. des Ogères informed me politely that, being in partnership with some individuals in La Coruña, his engagements obligated him to put into the port for several days, offering nevertheless to carry out all my wishes if I had any that were more pressing. Gratitude obliged me to follow his. I asked him not to feel forced; and although ever determined to get to England, I did not regard as delay whatever could free him from his business and put him in a position to render me the services he had promised. Within a few days we were within view of the port. The war was still on between Spain and France,⁵¹⁹ and by special

⁵¹⁹ England declared war on the States of Holland early in 1665, but it was only in January 1666 that France declared war in turn.

favor our ship was supplied with a passport from both crowns.⁵²⁰ Nevertheless, the formalities required to verify it kept us for a rather long time at anchor, and we were exposed during that interval to the curiosity of several Spanish officers who often came to visit us. I spoke their language.⁵²¹ The complaisance I owed to the captain forced me to put up with their conversation, so they would interest them in the success of his business. They acquired some sentiments of esteem for me, and my reputation was established at La Coruña before we had arrived there.

But alas, if that advantage became useful to me, it was through new misfortunes! The part which you had does not permit me to begin this story without renewing my tears; for I do not doubt, my sister, that the feeling of your loss still endures. If one weeps so over a betrayer, can one ever be consoled for the loss of a tender and faithful husband? It is from the torments of my own heart that I have learned too well to judge your own. Maybe you have accused me sometimes in your transports of having been their wretched cause. Oh, would you have insulted me so? Then take it out on me, if you do not believe yourself sufficiently avenged by the tears I have shed. But no: you have not imputed to me the rigors of fate. You must instead have pitied the terrible extremity to which your misfortune and mine have reduced me; and if your compassion is not exhausted, you will have enough left for what it remains for me to tell you.

Far from accepting the pleasures and amusements which were offered me at La Coruña, I closed myself up with M^{me} des

⁵²⁰ This event will be explained later in book IX.

⁵²¹ Angélique Bridge, who lived for several years in Havana with her, could hardly need reminding of this; the author doubtless means to remind the reader in this somewhat awkward way that Fanny's mother was Cuban.

Ogères in an isolated house, where I made her agree to receive no company. My imagination, which had been somewhat dissipated during the voyage by the variety of places and things, pulled itself together in this retreat, and was more or less dedicated to the sad images with which it was filled. With what terrible features my husband and children appeared to me there! Oh God, what was my consternation, when after picturing them at St. Helena in the first surprise at my departure, unable to believe the report of others or even that of their own eyes, the one looking for his wife, the others sadly asking for their mother, in short more prepared to imagine a thousand fantasies with no appearance of substance and reason than to imagine the truth, I then came to turning my eyes on myself, on my flight, on my voyage, to see myself in a Spanish inn, alone, trembling, uncertain, with shame on my face and despair in my heart! For I must, my sister, confess it to you: all those reasons for jealousy and resentment that had caused me such mortal agitations in the islands of Cuba and St. Helena seemed to lose their strength at a distance. I now saw in my husband only the wisest and most amiable of all men. I remembered all the manifestations I had received of his affection, his constancy in our former misfortunes, his invincible attachment in the midst of the most horrible dangers. Had misery and even the presence of death ever been able to cool his devotion? What evidence can one desire of a man's love that I had not received from his? So he loves me, I said; alas, he has always loved me! But if it is true that he loves you, I rejoined, trembling with fear and grief, what terrible sentence are you forced to pronounce against yourself? What have you wrought? You who yielded to detestable suspicions, and who for a long time have known nothing but fury and hatred! You [407] believed yourself betrayed. The pride of your heart could not suffer an unworthy rival. Ah! Did the testimony of your eyes themselves suffice to justify your

wrath? And if it did, I added, trying to put away that fatal thought, did you know your own strength? Did you think yourself capable of an undertaking as horrible as your flight? Will it not cause your death, or plunge you into an eternal misfortune? The memory of my children, which did not fail to join with these baleful meditations, tipped the balance and threw all my senses into inexpressible turmoil. I saw them before me. I heard them weeping. I opened my arms to embrace them; and movements of this violence soon exhausting my spirits, I fell several times a day into longer and more dangerous faints than anything I had experienced on the ship. Gelin's zeal was still the same for offering me aid and comfort; but at the moments when my affection and esteem for my husband thus prevailed over the opinion of his infidelity, I disdained that monster with horror, and my pride alone, which did not allow me to let him sense that I thought I had been deceived, kept me from raining abuse and reproaches down on him. He nevertheless perceived this variation in my sentiments, and his devious mind also allowed him to discover in what way I needed support. He began once more with no affectation to talk to me about Mme Lallin and the pleasures she was enjoying in my absence, while I was wasting away in tears, and was perhaps missing an ingrate who had only begun to feel happy, he said, the day I left. For a while such talk had on me exactly the impression he anticipated; but nature and love constantly weighed in on the other side of the scale, and soon once again became preponderant.

For almost a fortnight I remained in these torments, so determined to suffer the sight of no one that even Gelin who, in the sentiments I attributed to him for me, would not willingly have seen the press of Spaniards coming to my door, advised me several times to receive them more civilly, and to allow myself to be entertained by their conversation. I rejected his advice. If my reason found a few moments to make itself heard, I used them to

seek the means of continuing toward England, and with making a sure and tranquil retreat where my honor would be not only safe, but beyond the reach of suspicions; and especially I searched for a way of being done with Gelin, while expressing to him all the gratitude he could honestly expect for his services. The integrity I had recognized in M. and Mme des Ogères assured me that with the sentiments they had acquired for me, they would never refuse me anything they could grant. The chaplain of their ship had spoken to me of several convents on the English Channel, where there was no reluctance to take in Protestant ladies, and I could see no more convenient place for keeping an eye on my interests, and for preserving for myself an honorable reputation that I wished never to put at risk.

My mind was busying itself sadly with this mixture of thoughts when one day toward evening I heard in the apartment above mine an ominous noise that gave me a great scare, and which my anxiousness made me take as a presage of some new misfortune. I was not mistaken. It was Gelin being brought back after being stabbed several times, and dying from loss of blood and the depth of his wounds. Whatever interest our relationship obliged me to take in this incident, I wanted to be better informed before I saw him and offered him my assistance. I was told that he had been found in the port in this condition, and that two sailors who had fortunately found him had thought him dead; but that a little agitation and the aide he had received from a surgeon nearby having recalled him to consciousness, he at first had made use of it, with what little strength he had left, only to call for a friend whom he accused himself of having brutally murdered, and to beg all those who were assisting him to let him end a life he no longer wished to preserve. They had attributed his moans and laments to the disorder of his mind, and the surgeon had been obliged during the operation to have him held down by several

robust persons, as a madman who was capable of taking his own life. Finally, yielding to the efforts [408] they were making to bind his wounds, he had been content to ask to be carried at once to his lodgings, despite the added danger to which the motion could expose him; and having been obeyed, he had expressed such a pressing desire to see me, that his bearers would have brought him straight to my room had my servants not objected.

At the time they were completing this explanation, though understanding nothing about it, I was seeing in it the subject of an intense anxiety, M. des Ogères entered my room looking down-cast, and asked me whether I would have the indulgence to satisfy Gelin, who ardently wished to speak with me. He anticipated the questions I was going to ask: You know about his accident, he said; but do you know the cause? I urged him to tell me; he answered only with sighs and laments so vague I did not know how to interpret them. No one was witness to his adventure. Some strangers were seen in a longboat that disappeared at almost the same time. The fog made it impossible to discover the ship to which it belongs. But suspicions come to me, he added, which it is important to clarify, and I advise you to see Gelin without delay. I will see him, I replied with mortal terror; I do not mean to differ for a moment: and having myself taken immediately to his room, I found him so pale and weak that the sight of him further increased my terror.

He had hardly seen me when, extending his arms, which he no longer had the strength to raise, toward me, and manifesting his pain by a shudder rather than a sigh, he asked me send away everyone who was with me, not excepting M. and Mme des Ogères. When he saw me seated and prepared to listen to him, I noticed that he seemed to search for words, and that the violence of the movements he was trying to master brought forth tears, though he closed his eyes to stop them. Madame, he said finally

in a deep and forced voice, respect has such sway over me that it makes me overcome before you the transports of the most ravaging pain. I might even have the power to hide it from you, if it were not important for your safety to know its cause. We are pursued; they are doubtless after you for fleeing tyranny, and me for facilitating your flight; they are looking for us. Do not imagine, he continued, that this persecution is coming from your husband. Ah, would it were! But an ill-conceived resentment has led my dear Bridge to take his vengeance. He has come... spare me a detail that is too much for me, he added, after having interrupted himself with a great number of sighs. My friend is dead, and we must attend to our own protection.

He paused. I had listened to him avidly and with bated breath; and though I began to breathe again when he ceased to speak, the obscurity of what he said and the fear of too tragic a clarification prevented me from opening my mouth to answer him. He perceived my anxiety. Perhaps he was hoping he could avoid further explanation. In my present condition, he said, I cannot defend you. Therefore I urge you to flee. But if my zeal and my attachment have not merited your hatred, you cannot possibly think of fleeing without finding some means of assuring my flight with you. You will not leave me alone here, he pursued; and as I cannot hope that my strength will allow me to undertake a voyage right away, I see only one resource, for which you could not feel any repugnance. He went on to tell me that being tied to Spain on my mother's side, I ought to be sure of finding protection there as soon as I chose to make myself known to the governor; that I must entrust this duty to M. des Ogères, and request either guards in my house, to shield me from the attacks to which he feared I would soon be exposed in a place as open as La Coruña, or some other asylum where we could live peacefully until his recovery.

Having had the time to collect myself sufficiently to sort out the full meaning of these words, I did not doubt that my husband's ship was very near the port, that he was there to look for me, that the strangers who were seen in a longboat were my brother and some of his men, and that Gelin's wounds were the result of [409] some imprudence that had caused him to fall into their hands. But he spoke of a dead friend, and I still dared not ask him yet to confirm my sad conjectures, when, failing himself to remember the care he had taken not to name him, he began again his regrets and tears with so little restraint that he left me not the slightest doubt.

I do not expect, my sister, to claim any merit with you for the greatness of my grief. I would fear on the contrary lest such a gloomy description revive yours too vividly. But if you remember the affection and respect I had so long cultivated for that amiable brother, if you simply think of the reasons I had to cherish and respect him, I need no other warrants for the sincerity of my tears. Shall I tell you that losing sight of even the danger that threatened me, and seeing no longer in myself anything but a wretched object of heaven's wrath, to whom there was neither hope nor consolation left on earth, I conceived the horrible thought of ending my woes through death? What was there left for me? Where could I expect refuge, when I could not remain hidden for a fortnight in one of Spain's remotest ports? And for whom did I wish to live, if my husband, my brother, the only men on earth whose affection was capable of touching me, hated me enough to pour out their lives in an attempt apparently to take mine? Since it was not by transports nor by cries that these sad feelings declared themselves, and since my despair kept me on the contrary in an immobility that would have made me appear insensible, Gelin, suspecting what was taking place in my heart, and perhaps drawn by his unworthy passion to sacrifice for me even his suffering and

his friend's honor, begged me hear what, he said, he had explained to me only incompletely. Then, instead of pitying my brother, and beginning anew to lament his fate, he went over the circumstances of their encounter and their quarrel, which was more apt to provoke my resentment than to elicit my affection and regrets. I urged him, he continued, to assume more fraternal sentiments for you and to inspire less feckless ones in his brother; but far from being sensitive to your unhappiness and favorable to your innocence, he spoke of nothing but vengeance and punishment; he treated me with the crudest marks of scorn, and was so carried away that he would have come to find you, apparently not disposed to spare you, had I not drawn my sword, at the risk of dying a hundred deaths to serve you, in such uneven combat that I was one against four. I weep at my victory, he added, and you see me deeply moved; but resistance was necessary to protect our freedom, and perhaps our lives. Thereupon he once again urged me to think of my safety, and not to wait any longer to appeal for the governor for protection.

Forgive my frankness, and do not doubt it either in my protestations of innocence or in my concessions of weakness. The fortunate illumination of that scoundrel's purposes makes me see more and more that I have not taken a step without being the plaything of his malice; but what would you have objected at the testimony of a dying man, and what constancy of resolution do you think a woman is capable of in the painful throes that stirred me? Without renouncing or consenting to anything, and as if impelled by the sound of his voice, rather than by the force of his reasons, I begged M. des Ogères go immediately to the governor, whose name was Don Pedro Taleyra, and explain to him the need I had of his assistance. Gelin advised me to reveal to him that I

was the granddaughter of Don Pedro⁵²² d'Arpez, former governor of the island of Cuba, but to hide from him my husband's name, and the background of my misfortunes. He even asserted that there was no need to mention my marriage, and that his services would be much more enthusiastic for a girl of distinction, recently arrived from America, who was on her own since her grandfather's death, and who did not even yet know her family in Spain. As for the fears that led me to seek asylum, he was of the opinion that I should attribute them the knowledge I had of the intentions of some scorned suitors who had given chase to our ship, and who had designs more on my person than on my fortune.

I took little pause to examine this proposal. M. des Ogères, who had his reasons to avoid running into my husband, needed no urging to follow my wishes. He was soon [410] back with news that ought to have given me joy, if I could for a minute have suspended my sufferings. Don Taleyra had not heard him speak of my grandfather without recognizing a name which he cherished and of which he religiously preserved the memory. Having long commanded a warship, he had made several voyages to the Spanish islands, and on those occasions he had sometimes had to stop off in the island of Cuba, he had made such fast friends with the governor that he had obtained from him testimony and recommendations to which he owed the governorship of La Coruña. His satisfaction was extreme to be able to show some gratitude to his benefactor's daughter. He had been very advantageously predisposed in my favor by the flattering reports of the officers who had seen me on the ship, and curiosity already made him want to

⁵²² The text says *Francisco*, but this only repeats an error made back in book IV.

know me⁵²³; but when, learning who I was, he heard that I felt threatened by some danger, he replied to M. des Ogères that he would be at my lodgings as soon as he, and wanted no interpreter of his sentiments but himself.

Indeed, his carriage could be heard at the same moment. I was not pleased with him for bringing his son along, and a good number of officers who followed him into my room. I was even tempted, when his visit with them was announced, to send word that such numerous company was ill befitting to my situation, and I would have spared myself new griefs if I had followed that instinct. But he had seized the opportunity of the fear I had communicated to him through M. des Ogères to appear with a retinue he thought capable of reassuring me. His first civility made this clear, and it was yet another annoyance to see so many persons informed of my anxieties and my fright. After expressing what he thought he owed to the blood of Don Francisco d'Arpez, and most politely and generously offering me his services, he proposed that I accept lodging in his house, where I would be secure against all sorts of perils, and where the company of his wife and daughters would help me pass the time with less boredom. I made no objection to this other than the pain I would feel at separating from Mme des Ogères and leaving helpless a man to whom I had some obligation. He replied without hesitation by urging me to bring my company with me, and promising to have Gelin watched over.

I was led as if in triumph. But how impatiently I suffered

⁵²³ By having followed all of Gelin's advice, Fanny has acquired in advance a reputation as legendary adventuress, and thus contributed to the complications which her mysterious presence in La Coruña cannot fail to provoke among the Spanish officers.

everything that served only to interrupt my sorrow, and remove me from the isolation in which I would have wished to bury myself! The officers of the governor's retinue and his son at their head formed a circle around the carriage. They seemed to observe affectedly anyone who came near it so as to manifest the ardor with which they meant to protect me. The curious and eager glances they cast my way would have caused me some misgivings, if the paleness of my face and the impression of suffering I bore in my eyes had not persuaded me that pity alone was attracting such attention to me. Don Taleyra discussed with me the subject of my fears, apparently hoping to learn it from me. I more than once opened my mouth to repeat what Gelin had concerted with M. des Ogères; but the truth, more powerful than all the reasons I had to disguise it, constantly seized my imagination, and I could tell that despite all my resistance, it was continually forcing tears from me. This the governor noticed. As he was both very shrewd and experienced in the world, he ceased embarrassing me with importunate questions. Yet he asked me politely as I got out of the carriage whether, before he left me in the company of his wife and daughters, I had any secret orders for him, and he promised me with all the terms of honor his inviolable loyalty. I was struck by these words; but being far from understanding their meaning, I replied only in general, with requests that accorded with those of M. des Ogères.

The governor's wife, who was informed in advance of my arrival, awaited me with her daughters, and would have from the first moment proposed distractions and pleasures to me, had I been disposed to enjoy them. But the weight of my grief having only become heavier under such a long constraint, I fended them off under various pretexts, and begged the favor of [411] being left to myself.. I was led to the apartment that was reserved for me. I liked it right away, because being dark and deep, I found it

suiting to entertaining the sentiments I brought in with me. It was the entire wing of an old building, where everything still echoed the old customs of the nation. The room I was to occupy had only one narrow window with a grill over it, facing the street; but there were others opening into the adjoining rooms, to let light through. Two alcoves, one of which held the bed, and the other a large kneeling stand, were like two chapels, opposite each other, their entrance being protected by a copper grill. The furniture, even the chairs and the alcove curtains, were in black velvet, bordered by a large gold braid, from which the color had been nearly obliterated by age. In the middle of the room hung a chandelier with four branches, corresponding to four girandoles placed in the four corners. With the night coming on increasing the natural darkness of a very wide, high place, it felt like entering a vast tomb, where I would have the time and liberty to weep.

It is not without reason that I have lingered over this description.⁵²⁴ Although what remains for me to tell you provides no illumination to my essential story, and I am myself impatient with my prolixity, I cannot omit one of my life's sadest episodes. What emotion the very memory of it still causes me! I was accompanied by Mme des Ogères and by Rem, the only woman I had brought from St. Helena,⁵²⁵ and who is still faithfully attached to me. They had been assigned rooms adjoining mine, where they went to have a look. I remained alone for a minute, with no other light than that of two torches that were on a table next to me. I had scarcely had the time to recall part of my new woes, and in

⁵²⁴ Passages containing this much descriptive detail are indeed quite rare in this novel.

⁵²⁵ A narrative afterthought: Rem's presence had not heretofore been noted.

particular to reflect on my brother's wretched fate, when happening to raise my eyes toward the alcove opposite the bed, I thought I could see a man's face, which just as quickly disappeared. My imagination, filled with my brother's death, and inclined by gloomy habit to envisage anything that could add something to my fears or my sufferings, I did not doubt that it was his baleful shade, which was itself coming to confirm its calamity, and perhaps to blame me for having been its primary cause. A thought of this nature compounding those that already troubled all my senses, I experienced what I had never yet felt, convulsions and pain that prevented me even from uttering a cry. Fortunately, Rem's anxiety led her to return to my room. She found me unconscious and cold. My frequent faints had accustomed her to seeing me in this state without taking too much alarm; yet the length of this attack, and the mortal chill that had frozen all my limbs, made her fear the most urgent danger. She put me to bed, after doing all she could to no avail.

Finally they managed to make me regain consciousness. But it was to fall back into such a deplorable situation that it was to make me regret having recovered my senses. The object that had struck my eyes could not retreat from my memory. There it was constantly present, with such moving circumstances that I trembled at every moment from horror and pity. At first I had the strength to tell no one about it, but not enough to halt involuntary signs of horror, which I perceived only through the surprise of Mme des Ogères and Rem. They urged me in vain to tell them what was causing me such an acute increase of turmoil and suffering. I did not answer them, or if I spoke at all, it was to complain that they had little understanding of my pains, since they seemed to marvel at their intensity.

Meanwhile, I took a violent fever the same night that seriously alarmed all who took some interest in my health. The gover-

nor's wife, who came to see me the next day with her daughters, suggested I receive medical care. I refused it. My illness, I told her, is beyond the power of art; and immediately regretting having said too much, I spoke to her of my illness as a natural consequence of my [412] voyage, which ought to cause no one any alarm. I likewise rejected all the offers she made to stay along with her daughters at my bedside. I wanted to be alone; and to hide nothing from you, the terrible impression left me by what I thought I had seen did not prevent me from desiring the return of what had frightened me.

Who knows, I said to myself, contemplating this strange event, whether it is not compassion and friendship rather than hatred that bring my brother to return from the sojourn of the dead? He knows now of my unhappiness and innocence. He pities me: for meanness and injustice cannot extend beyond the tomb. He condemned me when he believed in my guilt; alas, how can he have believed it! But he did, since he poured out his life to punish me. And who says it is not a reparation he comes to make for my misfortune and virtue? If he is in the bosom of a God who is justice and goodness itself, who keeps me from hoping that regret for a blind transport, which made him increase my troubles through unjust persecution, is calling him back of his own volition to relieve or end them? Just think, my sister, what must have been the turmoil of my reason to make me find plausibility in such a fantastical hope! Indeed I must confess to you that, reflecting from time to time on what was thus transpiring in my mind and heart, I was sometimes startled by the disarray in which I caught myself. The raging fever no doubt contributed to overheating my imagination. My tears flowed less abundantly; but I noticed that they were burning, and that their trace remained on my face. My lips, my hands, all reflected the same heat. The cruellest of those savages whose cruelty I once feared would not

have seen me without pity.

With this strange notion I awaited night with as much impatience as dread, still persuaded that my brother, unable to hate me now that he knew of my innocence by the insights of a happier life, would reappear at the same hour, to comfort me with his presence, and open to me some means of salvation. I did not fail at the end of daylight to cast a curious glance at the alcove. At first my timidity did not allow me to keep my eyes fixed on it, and the slightest movement of a curtain, or the slightest difference I perceived in the colors, seemed to me to presage what I was awaiting. Finally, my boldness increasing as the delay grew longer, I no longer hesitated to turn my face fully in that direction; and my impatience became so great that I finally went so far as to reproach my brother for taking so long, and to complain to him tenderly.

However, if I lost the hope of being comforted that same evening by that beloved ghost, I remained no less persuaded that I had seen him the night before, and that the favor it refused me that day could be reserved to me for another day. My dejection did not even prevent me from reasoning about the possibility of such sorts of apparition, and fortifying me with various reflections against the first fears which I had been unable to resist; for is not the worst thing that can happen to me, I said to myself, the loss of a life which is abhorrent to me? What does it matter to me whether it be taken all at once by violence, or flicker out little by little through every degree of pain? And when one is reduced to considering death as one's sole good, is the quickest one not the happiest? Therefore let my brother cut short my sad days, if it is hatred and vengeance that bring him here; or let him temper the rigor of my fate, if he seeks to see me from a sentiment of pity: I will receive him with the same satisfaction, when he brings me either of these two remedies. While I was thinking over these

fantastic musings, I was suddenly interrupted by the sound of several instruments that at once struck up a regular serenade.⁵²⁶ They seemed so close to my window that I could not doubt that this fête was intended for me. Alas, I cried, does joy dare break out so near to me? I would have had that unwanted noise immediately suppressed, if I had possessed any authority to make them obey. But being forced to hear it, I determined to make it into a distraction, to relieve my pains through a moment's suspension. Futile hope. I tried in vain to focus my attention, and stimulate my taste for an [413] amusement that I had always liked. My soul rejected as if spontaneously everything that presented itself in the guise of pleasure. My very ears seemed to refuse it; and the force of my sorrow soon reviving fully, sounds that came from so nearby gradually seemed to appear distant. Nevertheless with effort I refocused on it. I changed my position to lend myself to the impression I would have wished to receive. What is happening? I said with a sigh; everything is sensitive to the charms of music; the savage beasts, they say, the stones, the trees allow themselves to be stirred by the sweetness of sounds and harmonies. Alas, am I harder and more insensitive than they? But at the moment I was addressing these laments to Mme des Ogères, a tumult that arose in the street, and made the instruments fall silent, left us no doubt that some quarrel had come up.

I immediately sent Rem to find out whether my ill fate had not once more implicated me in this incident. I learned from cries to be heard inside the house as soon as from her return that something terrible had happened to the governor's family. Rem, hav-

⁵²⁶ The term "regular serenade" (*un concert réglé*) reflects here a cultural cliché: offering a serenade under a lady's window is what Spaniards are expected to do to declare their passion.

ing lost no time coming back, explained to me what they had been unable to hide from anyone. Some of the officers who had seen me on the ship had conceived a mad passion for me, and had even had the impudence to boast of it. The governor's son, who still had, though over thirty, and a widower for several years, all the fire of first youth, had become love-struck and jealous from their account of me. Having seen me the day before, his amorous and jealous fury had so increased that at the first sound of the instruments he had heard under my windows, he had come running in a rage; and taking as his pretext the affront he pretended to have received from a serenade which was given at his house without his father's permission, he had fallen with sword in hand upon the actors and those who were leading them.⁵²⁷ But being up against several stalwart men, he had been dangerously wounded before the guard could come to his rescue. He had been brought in this condition to his father, whom such a sight had been devastated, and who was still uncertain whether he could expect him to live.

Although I could not fairly be blamed for this misfortune, I did not doubt that it was preparing new vexations for me, and expressed my fear in advance to Mme des Ogères. She exhorted me not to worry about anything from a man as generous as the governor; but not being any more tranquil than I with respect to his son, and to officers who had shown such poor discretion, she underscored her fears and mine as a reason for taking better care

⁵²⁷ Romantic impetuosity, like jealousy, is a feature of the Spanish character and will in fact be ineradicable in the governor's son. Fanny also, half Spanish, has a highly jealous temperament. A sort of prototype can be found in Tormez, a character of Marivaux's, a passionate and impetuous suitor who kidnaps an unwilling Parménie in *Les Effets surprenants de la sympathie*, t. III.

of my health, so as to be soon in a condition to leave La Coruña, and no longer be dependent upon anyone. This motivation had more power over me than the desire to live. Having heard nothing for two days about my husband's ship, I supposed, whatever his intentions had been, that he had continued his course toward England, and that we could safely resume ours towards Bayonne. This thought, and my subsequent plans, which occupied me throughout the night, mad me pass it more tranquilly. The next day I saw neither the governor nor his wife; but having received the visit of M. des Ogères, I urged him to finish the business that was still keeping him there, and not to believe that my indisposition was capable of postponing our departure. Indeed, more alarmed than I let on by the sentiments that so many young fools had conceived for me, I would have neglected the protection of my life to be delivered from that anxiety.

M. des Ogères did not leave me without speaking to me about Gelin. The governor had given some orders for his security and the healing of his wounds; but he had done so with so few signs of esteem and consideration that I was surprised at this behavior compared with the way he had behaved with me. Far as I was from discerning the reason for it, I limited myself to commending him to M. des Ogères, from whom I did not conceal, moreover, that I would not be unhappy to depart before his recovery. My intention was to refuse him none of the attentions I thought I owed to gratitude; but I was more disposed than ever to seize this opportunity to separate without telling him, leaving until later to determine whether I would see fit to inform him of the place of my retreat, once I had made a choice in keeping with my inclination.

[414] Part of the day having passed in such an important conversation, I found myself less upset toward evening, and better disposed to sleep, as if the memory of what I owed to my

honor had cooled my blood, and restored a bit of vigor to my spirits. I dismissed early the domestics whom Don Taleyra had designated to serve me. Mme des Ogères, delighted to hear me speak of rest, also withdrew, and I remained alone with Rem, who was to spend the night with me on some cushions, as is the Spanish custom. I myself was beginning to look forward to a few moments of sleep when, the thought of my brother having returned to mind, my first instinct was to cast a glance toward the alcove. Spanish beds have no curtains, and those of the two alcoves being open, the only obstacle to my view was the two copper grills that were unable to hide objects from me completely. Besides, two candles still lit the room, and cast a dim light in that direction which extended to the back of the alcove. What more can I say? I distinctly saw the same figure I had seen there, with the sole difference that it seemed much taller to me, and that instead of ordinary clothing, I thought I could make out that it was covered in the grim covering one takes to the grave. I made these observations at a single glance, for all the strength I had stored up the day before failed me when it was needed. A cold sweat broke out over my whole body, like the first time. I was lying down; I barely dared breathe and move my head. I had not even the courage to open my eyes again, because placed where I was, and not daring to come out, they would necessarily have fallen on the same object. Rem, I said in a low voice to the girl, who was lying beside my bed, lift your head, and see whether you see anything in the other alcove. The tone in which I spoke was trembling so that it instantly communicated to her some of my fright. Oh God, what do I see! she replied with the same tremble. Her reply confirming all my visions: Speak softly, I said, it is my brother, you do not know that he is dead. Alas, it is my unhappy brother. Do you not recognize him?

Rem, more immobile than I after these words, also lost her

strength and her voice. We remained in this state of shock for several minutes, both of us wondering whether we had lost consciousness, and not even daring to ask ourselves. Yet after having the time to recall all the thoughts in which I had got up my courage the day before, and my imagination heating up more and more with new reflections, I resolved to overcome the timidity that was holding me back. The first effect of this new courage was to make me open my eyes. I could see clearly enough the figure of a man to assure me that my senses had not deluded me. It had a large face, pale, hollow and disfigured. The garment was white as I had first observed, and fell to the floor. In truth I did not distinguish my brother's features, but I attributed that alteration to death. I saw moreover two sparkling eyes that were directly fixed on my bed, and I could see that, my alcove being better lighted than the other, because the candles were not so distant, the phantom must perceive my every movement. Its whole bearing seemed to me passionate. This sight, on which I feasted with avid curiosity, stirred me to the quick. My fear still continued to be powerful enough to keep me from speaking, but it was already acting without making itself felt. What do you want from me, dear brother, I was ready to cry out at any moment; what purpose brings you? Speak, what do you want from your poor sister? Do you come to comfort me in my sorrows, or to help me die? It was in one of these transports that, forgetting all my fears, I extended my arms toward the alcove in such an impulsive movement that I thought my soul was about to leave me. Oh, dear ghost, I was about to cry... but the force of my action had already produced strange effects. I heard a muffled sound, like that of a mass falling heavily; Rem, who also heard it, uttered a cry of fright. My own was strong enough to make me manifest it as well. Yet having at once glanced at the alcove, not only did I no longer perceive anything, but I noted that the curtains had been

drawn, and one could not see through them.

[415] Mme des Ogères, awakened by Rem's cry, hastened into my room and asked whether I was feeling worse. Her presence having somewhat reassured us, I did not hesitate to tell her what had happened to me. She replied at first with all the objections that come to the mind of a sensible person against events of this nature; but two testimonies that concurred on the episode of that night, and the relation of the one that had happened to me two days earlier, rightfully made an impression on her. We three spent the rest of the night in my alcove, not feeling bold enough to lift the curtains of the other one and examine whether there remained traces of such an extraordinary scene. The exhaustion of sleep having forced us to succumb to it toward dawn, and spent part of the day sleeping.

When I awoke, the governor sent a request for permission to talk with me for a few minutes. I had not seen him since his son's wound, and regarded this visit as a sequel to his initial civilities. He entered with a distracted demeanor, which I attributed to distress he must have experienced for the misfortune of a son so cherished. Taking a seat after greeting me silently, he remained a while more looking for his words. Finally, greeting me again with extraordinary expressions of respect, he bade me receive what he was about to say without taking offence. You are not unaware, he said, of the fateful accident that is going to take from me an only son who was the sole comfort of my old age. You even know its cause, for I will never believe that after getting himself fatally wounded for you, he could have come to see you last night in the condition to which his wounds reduce him, without being encouraged to do so by your favors. I interrupted him heatedly, as irritated as surprised by what I already thought I understood. Oh, madame, he interrupted in turn, excuse an unhappy father, and do not make it a crime for him to use terms wanting in tact. It is only

too true that my son is dying, and that if I have any hope left for his life, it depends on you, who are exposing him to the danger of losing it. He has only your name on his lips, he wants to live only for you, he begs me to learn from you directly whether he may flatter himself to please you some day and bring you to accept the gift of his heart and his hand, or else he is determined to reject all remedies and think less of living than of hastening his death. Hear me without anger, he continued, and do not interpret ill my liberty; I know the situation of your fortune. You have run away with a lover; but he is not worthy of you. You abandoned a husband, but he is a Protestant. I consider you a free woman, who combines illustrious birth with many natural charms, and who can yet make a gentleman happy by returning to the constraints from which some violent passion perhaps estranged her. I have seen to it that the rumor of your adventures could not cause a scandal here. Here you can find again, all at the same time, a father, a title, a husband, whose name is not unworthy of yours, a fortune well enough established to make up for all your losses; finally you can make yourself happy and with it a man who worships you. What would it take for your heart to yield to these offers? If you find them too hasty, remember that this is the language of honor and good faith. I could not put them off. The danger threatening my son is immediate; and being incapable of making them without being determined to fulfill them, I had to let you know that I am not unaware of your situation, so as to banish all the fears that might give you pause if you supposed I was not well informed of your adventures. At length, realizing that I was stirring impatiently, and doing myself violence to listen to him: You take offense at my supplications, he added, even more sorrowfully, you do not take my entreaties as I mean them, you forgive me nothing; but oh, at least give me back my son! Do not give him a death blow by taking away his hope. I ask you for his

life. The future will offer us other resources; but allow me to take to him a favorable word on your behalf, a sign of kindness and pity. He pressed me for a long while with the same ardor, and I saw tears beginning to trail down his face.

What was I to think of a message in which not only did I understand nothing, but [416] in which found myself insulted at almost every word? I was the only one to hear it. Whether it came from a deliberate intent to malign me, or from some aberration of the mind caused by grief, I feared lest a reply such as I owed to my honor and my righteous indignation provoke renewed abuse. I sent at once for Mme des Ogères. Although her presence made me bolder, I did no more than tell the governor, eyeing him distrustfully, that so many surprising things left me absolutely astonished, and I implored him peremptorily to leave me alone to reflect on it. I rose. He withdrew, begging me not to put off my reply for too long.

To lose any time would have been less bearable to me than to him. Paying no attention to Mme des Ogères's questions, I pressed her to send immediately for her husband. He was quickly found. Oh, come, I said to him with tears in my eyes; you are the only man in the world in whom I can still have some confidence. My misfortunes just keep growing. In the name of heaven, help me! I repeated to him what the governor had said; and not pausing to ask him for explanations of what must have seemed as unclear to him as it was to me, I begged him to go immediately to see either the governor, or his wife, or their son. Find out from them, I said, why they are abusing me. Is it madness or malice? Tell them forthrightly everything you know of my misfortunes. Add that I ask them for nothing; that if I have accepted the asylum they offered me in their home, it was because the opinion I had of their virtue made me see it as a secure refuge for mine; that if they attribute other sentiments to me, I shall leave before day's

end. M. des Ogères, as curious as I was to get to the bottom of this business, told me what he had been able to glean about it in the city. Based on the way in which he had put the matter to the governor when he reveal my name to him, I was believed to be unengaged, and one of the officers who had taken a liking to me on the ship, a rich man of standing, had declared in order to cool his rivals that it was his intention to marry me. It was this man whose serenade was interrupted by the governor's son, but no one knew by what reason he could have been impelled, and everything that had taken place within the house was still unknown to the public. This explanation leaving me with a hundred things to desire, I pressed M. des Ogères to satisfy me. He had great difficulty obtaining a moment's conversation with Don Taleyra, who would not leave his son's bed. Finally I heard him returning, and impatience made me run to meet him.

It is too bad, he said as he rejoined me, that we were not able to anticipate the misfortune we have experienced. I would have advised you not to seek asylum anywhere other than on my ship, where at least I would have been able to defend you. But I tell you that you are a prisoner here, so long as Don Taleyra judges your presence essential to his son's recovery. Do not be alarmed, he continued, they promise to respect you; and coming to the details I was awaiting, he told me that when my husband's ship was coming into port, two Spanish gentlemen had disembarked from it, who had stopped several hours in the city, where they had taken the post-chaise for Madrid. That, he said, is the basis of all the governor's false notions, and all the problems he still can cause you. Indeed these two gentlemen, whose names I cannot easily recall, being obliged present themselves to Don Taleyra, he had not failed to question them about their voyage; and as they had nothing more extraordinary to relate to him than my departure from St. Helena, all the circumstances of which

they had learned by embarking with my husband, they had followed the prejudice that everyone apparently shared about my conduct. In their minds Gelin had passed for my lover, and I for a woman whose affection, as they supposed, for that miscreant had made me forget what I owed to my honor. In truth, having seen me over several days in St. Helena, they had thought they knew me well enough that they ought to praise my character; and in accordance with the principles of Spanish gallantry, they had excused me with more civility than good reason. But Don Taleyra was none the less authorized to consider me as an [417] unfaithful wife, and such was the opinion he had of me when he had come to offer me his house and services.

His surprise had been extreme when he learned that I was in La Coruña; for although he could not fail to know that M. des Ogères had a Spanish woman with him, the two gentlemen's story could not itself make him suspect it was I. But opening his eyes once I had asked for his protection, and comparing the fear I expressed of a foreign ship and Gelin's wounds, with what the two Spaniards had said who had arrived and departed the same day, he had been unable to doubt that everything he had heard a few hours earlier was my story. The novelty of this adventure and my grandfather's name which he had learned from M. des Ogères had perhaps decided him more than esteem to promise me all the zeal that had led me to consider him a friend. He had nevertheless concealed from me the information he had received about the true cause of my fears; and the sole signs that might have prompted misgivings on my part, had I been capable of paying them heed, were the things he had said to me when I arrived at his house and the kind of scorn he had pointedly shown for Gelin.

As he still did not know about his son's passion, he had had no other purpose with his civilities than to render to me what he thought he owed to the granddaughter of Don Pedro d'Arpez.

However, from the first day he had noticed that Don Thadeo (this was his son's name) spoke of me not indifferently; and knowing him to be of ardent character, he had exhorted him not to make himself unhappy with futile desires. His quarrel and his wounds had definitively opened his eyes; but given his present condition, paternal affection had prevented him from delivering at that point reproaches that would have been untimely. Finally, having awakened during the night at the noise of his servants, and his anxiety having led him to rush to his son's apartment, he had found him in the arms of two menservants who were bearing him to his bed unconscious and unresponsive. He wanted to know the cause of this disorder. They had confessed to him that, their master having found a way before he was wounded to gain access to one of my alcoves, where he spent part of the night watching me,⁵²⁸ he had required them to take him there even last night, despite the sorry condition he was in. They had managed pretty well; but either because his weakness did not permit him to hold himself up, or for some reason they did not know, he had suddenly lost what strength he had remaining; and having fallen to the floor, they had had the greatest difficulty bringing him back to his room. Don Taleyra, deeply moved by the extremity in which he saw his cherished son, had not been able, once he had brought him around somewhat, to keep himself from tenderly reproaching him for such a brazen act. But the reply he received from him had forced him to change his language at once. Do not torture me, said Thadeo. I am dying. I have only enough life left to ask of you a

⁵²⁸ Thus is explained by natural means the apparition seen by Fanny. Prévost's fascination with the supernatural (cf. *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, p. 186) never goes so far as to assert its possibility unambiguously; cf. the "charm" used by Gelin in book XI.

favor which I hope yet may heal me, but your refusal or that of Doña d'Arpez will be instantly followed by my death. I ask you for the right to marry her, and I ask her the favor of choosing me over Don Lucascar. M. des Ogères told me that that was his rival's name; as for me, I was known by that of my grandfather.

The governor, although extremely embarrassed by such an unexpected proposition, did not think the circumstances allowed him to oppose it. He promised his son he would spare nothing to satisfy him; and wishing to learn by what degrees his passion had reached this excess, he had asked him whether he knew me well enough to be sure that my heart and hand were free. Thadeo had readily confessed to him that, on the basis of what he had heard about me from various officers who had seen me on the ship, he had first disguised himself in order to satisfy his curiosity, and that having conceived sentiments for me as intense as he might wish to describe them, he had continued to have recourse to disguise to see me several times a day, since I had come to the city; that his passion growing without measure, he had by dint of generosity won over one of M. des Ogères's servants, who he believed well-positioned to provide him some information about my [418] conduct; that he had learned that I was receiveing visits from no one, and consequently that all the hopes of his rivals were as ill-founded as his own; that he had learned in truth from same servant that I had been in the power of a husband, but a Protestant husband, who had given me just causes for hatred; and that having in mind to join the religion of Rome, I acquired the right to break off such an ill-assorted marriage (indeed I have learned that Gelin had taken pains to spread these false notions throughout the ship); that believing me therefore free, he was seriously intending of making proposals to me that could keep me in La Coruña, when the presumptuous claims of Don Lucascar had provoked his jealousy; that his concert had exasperated him

less than his open declaration that he was planning to marry me; that having had the misfortune of falling under the blows of such a vain rival, he was all the more to be pitied because his wounds deprived him of the power to protect himself from his tricks; that the fear of being preceded was a mortal torment for him; that in the violence of his jealousy he had had himself carried to a place from which he could observe me, and that I, having doubtless perceived him, had given some signs of compassion which he thought he could interpret in his favor; that he had not been able to resist the impression of such a flattering hope; that it was time to act before I had time to cool, and that not only his happiness, but his very life depended on what his father was to undertake on his behalf. He had added such pressing things that they had finally brought the kind old man to stifle his own objections, and even to hide the troublesome notions which the two Spaniards had left him of Gelin. You have noticed that in his speech to me, he had thought I should give him some credit for this silence.

After obtaining from him all these explanations, M. des Ogères had tried to disabuse him of some of his notions, and utterly ruin all his hopes without exception. While admitting that I had left my husband, he had justified me heatedly with respect to the accusation concerning Gelin; and in order to leave no doubt about my sentiments, he had declared to him that I felt so offended, both by his propositions and by the abusive terms he had used to express himself, and even more by the audacity of his son, who not only had gained entrance to my room, but who foolishly imagined that I had perceived him without indignation, that I was determined to leave his house that very day, and perhaps La Coruña, where I would leave his son and Lucescar and Gelin and all those whose presence or proximity could cast some doubt on the delicacy of my virtue. This declaration, stated forcefully by a man as firm as M. des Ogères, had at first somewhat discon-

certed the governor. However, after slim excuses, during which he seemed to be contemplating what he should do next, he had come back to begging him to obtain from me some indulgence for his son's sad condition, and asking him whether I would object to his coming back to my room himself, to implore me again to enter into his sentiments. M. des Ogères was a virtuous man. I had repeated to him a hundred times that, having put myself with such confidence in his hands, I entrusted him before heaven and men with the protection of my honor. He did not think that in my present peril there was any compromise that could be decently accepted. Remembering moreover the alarm in which he had just left me, he replied forcefully and perhaps a bit too insolently that not being any more responsible for Don Thadeo's health than for his folly, I should take little interest in his fate, and seek my safety at once, far from a house where virtue was so little respected.

Such a sharp reply had made the governor so resentful that he in turn had overreacted; and accusing me of affecting for his son a virtue that was not always so austere, he had sworn that I would not leave his house until his life was completely out of danger, and that he would force me to be as obliging for him as I had willingly been for another. He had withdrawn so abruptly after this oath that, not knowing him well enough to know whether honor was capable of containing him within certain bounds, M. des Ogères confessed to me that he was not without concern. But [419] unless the decision is made to appoint guards for you, he added, it will be difficult to deprive you of the means of escaping this very night and returning to my ship, which will be ready to leave the port immediately. He urged me, while he was going to give the necessary orders, to allow no sign to show that could cause me to be suspected of such intention, and above all not to embitter the governor's mind by an excess of pride.

Oh, my sister, to what reflections did I remain prey through the rest of the day! It was neither the governor's threat, nor the anxiety of my fate, that tormented my imagination, nor fear of a peril against which I well knew that a woman of honor is always able to defend herself. But what terrible notion were people fashioning of my virtue? So I was suspected of loving Gelin, accused of having fled to follow him, treated like a whore who was being done a favor by throwing a veil over her conduct, and offering her forgiveness for her errors on condition she make herself useful to the happiness of a stranger. Unhappy plaything of my own rage and of others' injustices, to what was I reduced! I left my husband, I said to Mme des Ogères, to spare myself the shame of his neglect; it is the resentment of offended honor as much as the transports of offended love that made me do violence to my character to salvage at least my reputation, the sole good I had left to preserve; and I fall just as quickly back into a consternation more unbearable than the one from which I have striven to deliver myself! What then is a woman's fate? Unfortunate or culpable at the whim of men's caprice, how is she rightly to know her duty, and seek security for her peace of mind?⁵²⁹ Apparently, I continued with a bitter return to the past, I was supposed to bear the rejection of a faithless husband and the scorn of a rival. I was supposed to live with them in despair and in tears, to witness to their happiness, to serve by my presence to revive their affection, perhaps to see to the security of their trysts and the tranquillity of their caresses. Oh God! I cried, feeling my blood boil at that dreadful memory, have earth and sea abysses so deep that I would

⁵²⁹ The subordination of woman is often evoked by Prévost as an illogical consequence of contemporary civilization; the natural equality of women among the Abaquis contrasts with it in book IV.

not rather be prepared to bury myself in them than to suffer such an odious spectacle!... But ought I not to have remained on the island of Madeira, and yielded to the advice of Gelin, who predicted only too correctly the cruel punishment for my obstinacy? Alas, there I would have lived far from men, far from these ungrateful and faithless men whose malice, I foresee, will never cease to pursue me. But then I would have had to find some remote cave, which Gelin, who was with me, would never come near: for the cruel men who insult me would have spared my virtue even less. A cave, yes! I added, the deepest, darkest cave, the one most in keeping with the state of my fortune and the sad sentiments of my soul; that is the only refuge that befits me. And it is also the only one I am determined to seek, I continued, looking fixedly at Mme des Ogères; alas, tell me whether I can find one in the mountains which seemed to me to line this coast.⁵³⁰

I paused for a moment to await her reply. But this virtuous lady who had taken so long to interrupt me only to indulge the feelings of pity which my agitations caused her, seized that instant to calm them with her caresses and counsel. She agreed on the justice of my protests and the misfortune of our sex, which despite all the advantages that men's flattery attributes to it is continually the victim of their injustice and the plaything of their most unbridled passions. But in the situation where I was unfortunately engaged, she assured me that all their malice was incapable of harming my reputation, since she and her husband, who had not lost sight of me since our departure from St. Helena, would always consider it their duty to bear witness to my conduct, and

⁵³⁰ The symbolic value of the cavern is almost explicit with Fanny: she dreams of taking refuge in the security of a maternal cavern like the one where she grew up.

they both flattered themselves they would be listened to by all persons of honor. She took this opportunity to tell me what her modesty had kept from me until then: that she was the daughter of one of the most illustrious gentlemen of his province, and that her husband was not of common birth either; but having suffered considerable losses, which had much compromised their fortune, they had obtained from the court, under pretext of a secret mission, permission to equip a ship; and [420] the better to disguise their enterprise in a province where nobility excludes any kind of commerce,⁵³¹ they had affiliated themselves with several rich individuals in La Coruña, who had seen to load it under their names, and had obtained for their part an advantageous passport from the Spanish court. Her affection for her husband had led her to undertake the voyage with him. They were returning with all the success they had hoped, and could not fail to achieve under the flags of the two crowns. This detail, she continued, is less to raise us up in your eyes than to make you understand what you may expect from our testimony and services. Do not regret, she repeated, having left the island of Madeira behind you. There are dark caves in Spain and France, but honor can be secure without recourse to them; and I who know the generosity of the Spanish nobility am less alarmed than my husband by the governor's threats. Were he to force us to await his son's recovery, do not doubt that he will treat us civilly, and soon get over the indiscrete vehemence with which a little resentment made him speak.

Indeed, her words were interrupted by the arrival of a servant sent to me by the governor, who entreated me on his behalf,

⁵³¹ Commerce, as opposed to lending capital, could entail loss of nobility. Renoncour's father in *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, similarly, had long kept his nobility hidden.

in the most respectful terms, to receive his visit. I was reluctant to see him. Mme des Ogères urged me to consent. He appeared, with as sad a countenance as the one he had two hours earlier. I do not doubt, madame, he said, keeping his eyes lowered, that you have already been given a report that cannot do me any honor. But have you never trembled for the life of someone most dear to you? Have you a son whom you love above all else, and whom you have been in danger of losing through a cruel accident? Ah, if you know how powerfully nature involves us with a son, give not the name of offense to the movement of involuntary vehemence, and forgive the unhappiest of all fathers. He started to go down on one knee as he spoke these last words, and his tears were flowing abundantly. I stopped him.

My son is dying, he continued with the same grief. I do not come to ask you favors for him of which he is no longer capable of appreciating the value. He is at death's edge. However, if it is to the excess of his passion that we must attribute his death; if his wounds at least had no other cause, and if jealousy and the other torments of an unrequited love are the poison that makes them fatal, does your heart not tell you that you owe something to compassion? Alas, signs of it would now come very late. But who knows what a moment might produce? Love has been seen a thousand times to work such miracles. An instant of your presence might do more than all the medications. In the name of heaven, he added, may any resentment you harbor at my indiscretion not impede your generosity; must I embrace your knees?... Again he started to throw himself at my feet. Again I held him back. Despite the subject of my protests, I felt moved by his grief. And while he was expressing himself so forcefully, it occurred to me that if he was himself capable of the generosity he hoped to find in my sentiments, I could not desire a better opportunity to make him adopt the opinion of me that I thought I deserved. I was

pleased with this idea, and interrupting him without further precaution: Yes, I said, I am touched by your family's calamity, and am grieved to be the innocent cause of it. I will forgive your affront to me in favor of your suffering. Come; I do not refuse to give your son all the comfort that honor allows and humanity requires. A heart firm in its duty, I added, is above reckless suspicions, and takes orders only from its own sentiments. I asked for his hand to escort me. He took mine with transport, and did not cease to express his gratitude until we reached his son's apartment.

We found him in a condition as sad as he had depicted it to me. The pallor of death was already visible on his face. His head was drooping and his eyes were closed. His breathing, which could still be heard, was almost his only remaining sign of life, [421] for the doctors could no longer detect a pulse, and he seemed deaf and unaware of everything going on about him. This sight filled me with compassion. You see him, his father said to me sadly; alas, who will restore my dear son to me? He continued to hold my hand, and lowering his head toward the patient, he informed him out loud that Doña d'Arpez was at his side, to express to him her the interest she took in his situation. Call what you will this strange event, my sister; but the governor had scarcely pronounced my name when Don Thadeo uttered a deep sigh: and the doctor who was holding his arm, and was unaware of the purpose of my visit, informed us that he was beginning to feel the movement of the artery. I seized that moment to address myself some polite words to the patient. The sound of my voice fully revived him from his lethargy. He opened his eyes. His first glances appeared to me weak and confused; but once he fixed them on me, I noted that they slowly cleared up, and that soon they even became so animated that they seemed lively and full of fire. The same warmth gradually spread over his face. I marveled

at all these changes, and could not doubt that what was still impeding his tongue was the extremity of his joy. The governor, whom none of these movements had escaped, ordered the doctors to stand back; and approaching my ear, he begged me to be confidant of his respect and allow him to derive all the benefit he could from this happy visit. My son, he said to Thadeo, you refused to believe me when I assured you of Doña d'Arpez's indifference to Don Lucascar, and your worrying has done you as much damage as your wounds. Be reassured, now that you can hear from herself that she knows your enemy by name only, and will never give him any preference that could give you umbrage. Love life, since she takes an interest in your health, and hasten to recover, so you may seek opportunities to merit her esteem. He turned toward me, inviting me confirm the interpretation he was daring to lend to my sentiments. I willingly did as he wished, and expressed myself kindly enough to cure Don Thadeo's jealousy. Dispense me, my sister, from describing to you the degree to which he was overwhelmed with emotion and gratitude.

His father's satisfaction being hardly less than his own, the good old man abandoned himself to it unreservedly as he escorted me back to my room, and the most moderate of his offers was that of all of his influence and all his wealth. I took this opportunity to explain to him my final sentiments. All I ask of you, I said, is your esteem; and in the way that a woman may pretend to it, I like to believe I deserve it. A cruel prejudice led you to make on the most unjust assumptions about my conduct. Get over them, if you can; and without requiring me to justify myself by laying out all my misfortunes, allow yourself to believe of me at least what one can to the advantage of a woman of honor. If you refuse me this justice, I will derive this fruit from your suspicions: that they have made me open my eyes to the present necessity for me of fleeing promptly all intercourse with men, from whom, experi-

ence teaches me, I have neither justice nor favor to expect. So my will departure will be deferred only as long as force and violence persist in delaying it. I intend to make a permanent retreat. I desire it, I pray heaven for it, as the only haven in which I can find one of the two goods to which I can still aspire on earth: that of living in peace, and that of being free to grieve.

He interrupted me to express with new regrets and new excuses the shame he still felt at his previous behavior; and while he did not renounce, he said, the intention of retaining me as long as he could in La Coruña, it was no longer by violence that he meant to detain me, but by all the honors and favors that might make me forget his impetuosity. Such vague compliments would have little satisfied me, had he not added that in the regret he had for his offence he wanted to make an avowal to me that would augment his shame, and consequently his punishment, by making me find him even more guilty. It was, he said, a sort of reparation which he was motivated to make to me voluntarily, or at least a proof that would no longer [422] let me doubt the opinion he truly had of my virtue. I confess, he went on, that the very day you arrived at my house, not only did the two gentlemen I had seen speak to me of you only with extraordinary signs of esteem, and had not mixed up Gelin in your adventure when they told me the story of your flight; but I had other information, after their departure, that was to set my opinion even more. Based on the notice I received of Gelin's accident, I immediately sent my guard to inform themselves about the disorder and arrest the guilty parties. It arrived too late. But the officer, having inquired into the circumstances that could be discovered, learned from some agents who had spent the afternoon in the port that, while Gelin had gone off with a stranger whom he seemed to know quite well, they had had a few minutes' conversation with three men whom they had taken to be, from what they said, servants of the other man.

Having asked them who he was, and whether he indeed knew Gelin, they had not had to be pressed, they said to my officer, to tell them his name and the story of a lady who must not be far away, since Gelin, with whom she had left, was so close by. In discussing your flight, the governor continued, they had spoken of you so respectfully, and had seemed so unable to explain your motives, when you could not reasonably be suspected, they said, of being capable of certain weaknesses, that my officer, who had everything they said repeated to him, and who, having already seen you on your captain's ship, was not unaware that you were at La Coruña with him, was the first to side with your virtue after recounting it to me. It is impossible, he said, for a woman whose decency even gossip respects, to be guilty of a shameful disorder, and I would rather believe that testimony than all the contrary appearances. That would be an unexampled combination of libertinism and virtue.

It is true, the governor added, that this officer, whose name is Don Osorio, was one of those who had conceived an ardent passion for you. But for that reason he had to be even quicker to take alarm at anyone who could rival him for your heart. All those, moreover, who had seen you on the ship as he did bore witness to your modesty; and you must believe that despite the gratitude I maintain for your father, I would not have offered you my house if I had doubted the correctness of your morals. I was further confirmed in the opinion I had of it by the conviction that I myself derived from speaking with you for a few minutes, for the characteristics of rectitude and innocence shine through any veil. However, when I saw my son fatally wounded, and maimed even more by the darts of love than by his rival's sword; when I saw him jealous, furious, desperate, even prepared to rip off the linens that bound his wounds if I refused, he said, to offer you his heart, his hand, and to sound your sentiments with respect to the

pretensions of Don Lucascar, I cannot conceal that, even though I was full of respect for your person and your name, an excess of delicacy plunged me into violent agitations. I did not believe you more guilty, but I felt that it was more important for me to clarify your innocence. Time was short. I chose, which I blush to admit to you, to express myself in terms that could appear offensive to you, in order to bring the truth to light through your replies, or make you aware that I was not yielding without prudence or precautions. Whatever impression your surprise and grief had made on me, I thought I had to maintain the same role with M. des Ogères; and I do not know how it happened that I resented some threats he blurted out enough to make a reply to him which it fills me with embarrassment to remember. There you have, he said, the confession of my crime. It was a burden to me, after a generous remission for my offense and your compassion for my son have shown me too well the nobility of your character and the purity of your sentiments. Remain, if you can, in La Coruña, to hold absolute power here over me, over my son, and over all I have; dispose of our possessions and of a life you have restored to us; or if your duty and [423] inclination call you elsewhere, as M. des Ogères declared to me at your behest, require of me whatever can serve your purposes, and be sure that you shall obtain anything from my respect and obedience.

I do not know, my dear sister, whether it was false glory that made me listen with pleasure to this long discourse, and whether it is for the same reason that it is gratifying to me to repeat it to you; but it made me more tranquil than I had been for a long time. I thought I was seeing honor and sincerity in the governor; and no longer even fearing he would object to the intention I had of departing the following night, I declared to him that such was my resolution. Your son, I said, in the condition in which we left him, seems to me safe from what you had feared for him; and as he

cannot demand that I see him constantly, it will be up to you to maintain or increase his hopes as much as you think necessary for his recovery. That is a care in which it no longer befits me to take part, other than by the liberty of flattering his weakness, which my absence is going to leave to you. I am leaving. However, I added, I ask of you two proofs of that esteem and consideration of which you assure me. Set free Don Lucascar, whom the desire to avenge your son makes you hold in a secure prison; and if you attach some value to my generosity, do not let me go without giving me this token of yours. I had indeed learned from M. des Ogères that that gentleman, having neglected to take flight, had been put in chains, and that his trial was being rigorously prepared. In the second place, I said to him, as I believe I am above all your suspicions, I see no reason not to ask you for all the help you can provide Gelin until he is well again. I will not attempt to see him, since the gratitude I owe him is so ill interpreted; but it would be shameful for me to abandon him here without resource. Such were indeed the attention and care I thought I owed to that monster.

Don Taleyra expressed his wonderment at such disinterested sentiments, and no longer opposing anything to me other than his repeated assurances of friendship and the regrets of esteem and gratitude, he finally consented to my departure. I required of him that he keep my decision so secret that even his household would not be informed of it, and that he take leave to receive my farewell then and there. He offered me considerable presents which I insisted on refusing; but moved nevertheless by his friendship and the memory of my grandfather, whom he recalled to me affectionately as he pressed me to accept a diamond that had belonged to him, I took the jewel, and still have it. Thus, thinking of nothing now but my departure, and recalling all the reasons that obliged me to hasten it, I impatiently awaited the return of M. des Ogères.

What bitterness I again found in my heart at the memory of my brother's death, and how that thought, which had been interrupted by so many other woes, returned to aggrrieve me cruelly! Moreover, if I had been satisfied for a moment by the sort of reparation I had received from the governor, I could not conceal from myself that the unfortunate knowledge which chance had given him about my adventure had naturally given rise to the opinion he had expressed about my conduct. Well, who can assure me, I said to myself, that it is indeed effaced? Who knows whether the confession he made to me of his artifice is not itself just another one which he was obliging enough to think up to relieve my shame? And then, would I expose myself longer to being made the object of the mad passions of a multitude of foolhardy men? Let us go, to flee a land wet with my brother's blood, to deliver me of the governor's eyes, which I can no longer bear without embarrassment, and to combat even in the hearts of others a fatal passion that I no longer wish to inspire or experience.⁵³²

Dear sister, alas! Shall I reveal to you here the secrets of my own? Will you take pity on pains of which this most recent thought re-opened the source, and which have never given me a moment's respite since I began again to feel them: would only that the precious assurances I am receiving from you today could

⁵³² Fanny becomes aware here of an aspect of her problems that distinguishes them from Cleveland's: by reason of her very attractiveness, it is not enough for her to wish to be left alone, and she suspects that she will never again escape from her passive role as object of the desires of others. Rose, in *Le Doyen de Killerine*, will also know this kind of persecution (pp. 96, 150). Marivaux's Parménie in *Les Effets surprenants de la sympathie* (1713) already represented a character with universal attraction, spontaneously adored (and often kidnapped) by a whole series of men.

end them! I have no more extraordinary adventures to tell you about: for terrified by the one I had just undergone in Spain, [424] and repelled from intercourse with the world by the experience of a moment, my only thought was to be where men cannot see me, and I have since that time put all my efforts into hiding. But how many reflections and sentiments I would have to retrace to you, if I had not promised you less that sad portrayal than the story of my conduct and my actions!

You must have understood that the turmoil of jealousy, the shame of believing myself scorned, and the force of despair that had determined me to fly, had hardly disposed me to ponder the joys of love. Being familiar now only with its torments, I was much more inclined to detest it, and was to put all my efforts into being forever free of it. However, my sister, while protesting that I no longer wished either to experience or to inspire it, I perceived that this resolution was powerfully resisted in my heart, or rather disavowed by all my sentiments. And this unforeseen revolt was not the first movement that had alerted me to it. Did I point out to you that when I went to help Don Thadeo, I had marvelled at all the changes which the violence of his passion produced before my eyes? I had not lent myself to this observation without remembering secretly how many times love had made me feel the same power. I had sighed from regret and pain at the very image of a good which I had lost without compensation possible. For why should I not tell you this? Love is for me the supreme good. Either from the character of my heart, or from the disposition of the events of my life, I have never known either the attraction or even the idea of any other happiness; and if I create for myself an exalted notion of the felicity they promise us in a better life, it is because there we must love forever.

Pausing therefore on that reflection, and forced as if despite myself to examine sentiments which I found opposed to all my

present notions, I would have fallen from that very moment into the state to which I soon found myself reduced, and which has lasted until today, had the return of M. des Ogères not forestalled the first crisis by interrupting meditations in which I was already finding it pleasant to bury myself. He brought me out of that reverie to inform me that the orders were given on his ship, and that it would be ready in less than an hour to set sail. Although I had no more need for precautions, with the governor's assent, I persisted in the intention of waiting until further into the night. M. des Ogères asked me whether he should give notice of our departure to Gelin, whom he had seen that very day, he said, and who was not in a condition to tolerate the motion of the sea, but to whom he had not dared communicate my determination to leave. I asked him to leave him in the dark, and simply arrange for some faithful servant to stay with him.

It was a simple matter for us to leave my apartment and reach the port at an hour when darkness covered our movements. Nevertheless, Don Taleyra, who had seen to it that all his servants were withdrawn, with exception of those who had served me and whom he had ordered to escort me to the ship, was himself waiting at the door of his house to renew to me his compliments and farewells. The wind was favorable. We were far from the coast before daybreak. M. des Ogères and his wife, having noticed that I seemed intent on being alone, made a point on the contrary of never leaving my side during the entire journey. Friendship made them fear that my health, which had continually declined with the troubles I had sustained in La Coruña, would not hold up as well as my indifference for life made me believe against the tossing of the ship, and against the sad reflections which they rightly judged I could not fend off being alone. They left me only after making sure that sleep had closed my eyes, and upon awakening I was always surprised to find one or the other at my bedside. I could

not refuse all my confidence to such constant evidence of affection. They knew the reasons for my flight and my plans for retreat, which I had discussed with them a hundred times, consulting them even on the places that were most appropriate to my intentions and my fate; but when I had broached it before, I had always supposed that Gelin would continue to serve as my guide, and the choice I had made to leave him put my situation in an entirely new light.

[425] M. des Ogères did not wait until I had explained my difficulty entirely to him to indicate that he had foreseen it, and that his response was already prepared. If you have the confidence in us, he said affectionately, that you owe to persons of honor, and the friendship that we believe we deserve by the fervor of our own, you will not be troubled as far as Bayonne, and even less so once we have reached our country; there you will be the absolute mistress of your desires and of ours. He added that even with respect to my intention of keeping an eye on my husband's course and actions, I would find in that city a hundred conveniences that commerce would offer me every day; that he was himself connected with several persons who maintained regular correspondence with England, and that he guaranteed me that in less than three weeks' time I would receive the information I desired from London.

I yielded to his urging, but on condition that, leaving me free to live in retirement, he would never propose that I indulge in either dissipation or pleasure. Given the notions I had of the French nation, I feared I would encounter once more in France the same dangers from which I had just left behind in Spain, or if the Spanish character had exposed me to more tragic accidents, I feared no fewer difficulties or importunities from French gallantry. In Bayonne, I said to M. des Ogères, I want it to be as if I were alone on the earth. The esteem I have for you is well proven

by my confidence, and my friendship by my the natural affection of my heart; but to acquire eternal rights to my gratitude, you must make some allowance for my weaknesses, put up with my changes of mood, and indulgently flatter my melancholy and my whims. You know my misfortunes, I continued, but you will never quite realize the impression they make on me. You see only the outside. Even the disturbance that you sometimes observe in my speech, the agitation of my desires, even the inconstancy of my resolutions, are too common signs of grief for you gauge mine well. In sum, I think the sentiment of my pains to be beyond your notions and my expressions. All the ordinary remedies would therefore serve only to make them more acute. Leave me to myself, I added, and may friendship make you simply bear what it would in vain undertake to cure. Treat me like a patient beyond hope, to whom one no longer proposes the succor of art, but whom one sees suffering with compassion, and languishing without impatience, until the force of the illness bears him away, or a miracle from heaven comes to relieve him. He promised to obey all my wishes unconditionally, but this promise was not sincere; and persuaded on the contrary that worldly intercourse and societal amusements were essential to my recovery, he planned to engage me in them despite myself.

Thus I arrived in France with no set plan except for the vague intention of learning more about my husband's conduct, and hiding myself in isolation. We were received in Bayonne with signs of consideration that told me immediately the esteem in which M. and Mme des Ogères were held in their province.⁵³³ They had a fine house in the city, and the apartment they gave me

⁵³³ Gascony, where Bayonne is located (the extreme southwest corner of France).

was rather well disposed for my intentions of retreat and silence. But from the first day it was impossible for me to avoid the visits and civilities of their entire family, which they had no doubt asked, upon our arrival, not to leave me not a minute without company. I was not more free in the days that followed; and under the pretext of satisfying the proprieties and customs of the region, I found myself surrounded from morning to evening by all the most agreeable denizens of both sexes. I complained vociferously about this to M. des Ogères. But while renewing his promises to me, he was thinking only of eluding them with new reasons which he contrived every day. Soon the civilities changed to gallantry. I was subjected in the course of one afternoon to seven declarations of love. I might possibly have had been subjected to them successively from all the young men in town; for my status as foreigner was an attraction for those flippant youths, and I did not perceive that my sorrow affected their aspirations, when, fatigued by such terrible constraint, and despairing of getting M. des [426] Ogères to adopt my views, I made a decision that displeased him, but the only one that my situation would permit me.

From the windows of my apartment I had the view of a garden which with its size and beauty often attracted my gaze. Several avenues, made up of thick trees that seemed to maintain a constant coolness there, had made me wish a hundred times that I could hide from the hounds who were stalking me and go day-dream at my ease in such a lovely, secluded spot. I did not know at the time that it was the garden of a convent, since never being alone, I had never happened to look at it when when the nuns were at liberty to walk there. But having learned this by chance, and remembering everything that the ship's chaplain had told me to the advantage of such societies, I felt a powerful desire arise in me to seek there the peace that others were forever trying to

deprive me of. It was the chaplain himself whom I addressed. My only fear had to do with religion. I did not wish to disturb that of others, but I wished to be left free in mine.⁵³⁴ He had attempted during the voyage to incline me favorably toward the Roman Church, and either because he thought his handiwork had progressed, or because he hoped that staying in a convent would greatly facilitate it, he approved of my intention, and committed himself immediately to removing any obstacles. He even increased my desire by vaunting the amenities of that house, and the merit of several persons of consideration who had retired there.

So I shall find a tranquil retreat! I said to him, relieving myself with a deep sigh. Go tell M. des Ogères that, while taking nothing away from the gratitude and attachment I owe him, I am going to seek a peace that I despair of finding in his house. He went straightaway to notify him of my intentions; and leaving him time to come accept my excuses and farewells, on the other hand he did everything he could to open the doors of the convent to me beginning that very day, with the bishop's permission. M. des Ogères came running to my room, completely upset. But I answered his reproaches, and his wife's, so firmly that, at last marvelling at my determination, they confessed to me themselves

⁵³⁴ Thus Fanny enters the convent, and later the Roman faith, more or less by the rear door, and not as the result of a religious search like that of Cleveland. The convent is the enclosure, the cavern which Fanny seeks to protect her from external distractions and guarantee uninterrupted absorption in her private melancholy. Unlike Cleveland, she absolutely refuses every thought of consolation. One could compare to her Patrice in *Le Doyen de Killerine*, who, desperate at the infidelity and death of his wife, withdraws to contemplate his downfall in a benedictine convent (*Le Doyen de Killerine*, pp. 330–331).

that at least up to such time as, following the measures they had already taken, we should receive confirmations of my husband's new engagement, my decision to withdraw from society ought to meet the approval of all good people. Ah, said I to Mme des Ogères, embracing her, if I am free today to hide myself in a cloister, be sure that after the fatal confirmations that threaten me, I will soon have taken a vow never to leave it.⁵³⁵

Filled with these thoughts as I set out for the convent, I scarcely paused to observe what could be worth my curiosity in a place so new to me. I requested the single favor the right to be left alone, and despite the care they took to recommend to the mother superior that she not grant it even for a minute, I soon obtained it from that good nun, who was not yet familiar enough with me to hold out long against my insistence. This desire to be alone pressed me like a violent passion. The delay and the obstacles had only inflamed it. I did not clearly discern what was happening in my heart, but I had been feeling there since La Coruña agitations that were nothing like any I had experienced. I wanted to sort them out without being interrupted. I carried in my own breast a secret that was as if unknown even to me, and that it seemed to me important to study.

But this undertaking was not difficult, and I am keeping you too much in suspense. What, my sister, do you think I found in this heart so long unconsolable, in the place of jealousy, fury, and all the mortal passions that had torn it? What I found there was love, with all its tenderness and its most ardent transports. You

⁵³⁵ A vow of course, in a convent, usually means entering the order; though as Fanny has as yet received no Catholic instruction, that is perhaps not what she means here. Later, in Chaillot, she will refer to "solemn vows," which is less ambiguous.

look surprised! Alas, would I had gotten by with a sentiment so tranquil! But I very soon fell into a state all the sadder that, taking pleasure in my ills, and not even desiring their remedy, I for so long entertained with indulgence the poison that consumed me.

You would never understand this strange turn of events if I did not first give you the portrait of my heart.

[427] To what I have said about its affectionate nature, add contempt for everything that ordinary people esteem. Contempt for fortune and wealth, contempt for vain amusements and frivolous pleasures; in sum no attraction to anything that flatters men only by their pride, their vanity, and other passions that I have never known. But the place they occupy in other people's hearts is filled in mine by an insatiable desire to love and be loved.⁵³⁶ Everything there springs from this source. Inclinations, pleasures, amusements, disinclinations, aversions: you see, my sister, that all my sentiments have no other measure nor other law than the right of everything to be loved. With such tender inclinations, I required an object to fill them. And I have a hundred times remarked how unhappy I would always have been, if heaven, when it made me with a heart like mine, had not granted me some of those exterior qualities that help to touch other people's hearts,

⁵³⁶ This essential key which Fanny gives to herself can to some degree be applied to all Prévost's protagonists. But whereas in Cleveland's case the accent is on the need to *understand*, in Fanny all the usual motives, as she says, are replaced by another version of the quest for the infinite: for she is not simply an exceedingly loving woman, she is a woman in anguish before the unrealizable, the "insatiable" desire that love represents. The same "desire" will become a "rage" in Fanny's daughter; her object being God himself (see book XV). Like others – notably Des Grieux and Bridge – Fanny sees herself as the victim of fate, attributing her thoughts to her "ascendent".

and inspire what one feels oneself. If I ever delighted in some feeble charms that are attributed to me, this service which they could render me is the sole value I attached to them: for I imagine it is dreadful not to be loveable, and to have an invincible penchant for love. So I required an object. My good fortune had given me one in a husband whose merit and affection were capable of filling me completely. Oh enviable fate, had I been permitted to enjoy it a single moment untroubled! But suspicions older than everything I have told you poisoned my marriage and my tranquillity from the first moment.⁵³⁷

However, if my extreme delicacy led me to entertain cruel suspicions for a long time, I had enough power over myself to sacrifice them at first to other considerations; and the passing years having gradually lessened my alarms, I had nevertheless reached the point of thinking myself happy. My heart abandoned itself in good faith to all the force of its penchant, and was making its own happiness more and more necessary through the power of duty and habit, when... But less us recall only what can help explain my situation. During the transports that caused my ruin, it is certain that the tumult of so many impetuous passions that reigned all at the same time in my soul had more or less suspended my affection, and that though they could not destroy it, they had interrupted sentiments all the sweetness of which they corrupted. Pride, spite, shame, even fury, were so many tyrants that had seized control of my heart, and allowed themselves alone to be heard. But once separation, added to all the reflections which I have retraced to you, had weakened in my own eyes the phantoms that had troubled my imagination, I felt a fire rekin-

⁵³⁷ Cleveland had already noted Fanny's sadness the very day of their marriage (book IV).

dling that they had not had the power to put out. In vain resisting its initial ardor, I censured myself for being so unfaithful to my resentments, and accused myself of cowardice as much as of weakness and inconstancy. An invincible star soon overcame all my efforts. Think what it was like when, seeing the languishing Thadeo, I understood through the effect of a passion just aborning with what power love decides a heart's tranquility! What a subject of regret for my own! What felicity lost! Leaving La Coruña, I took with me that new source of tender meditations and passionate desires. It only grew stronger during the rest of the voyage, as a stream swells with distance from its source; and in the isolation of the convent of Bayonne, it became a sea of torments and worries, in which I took a sinister pleasure in immersing myself.

There, my dear sister, is the faithful image of the life I lived for several months in Bayonne, forever drowned in my tears, and without hope of seeing the end of so many sufferings, when an English woman, the widow of a Catholic squire of King Charles, who had retired to the same convent after the death of her husband, undertook to go to the court to solicit some favors from Madame. I had had little relationship with her. But having offered me her services, I judged the occasion propitious to take a step toward England, and press forward a search the slowness of which was beginning to dishearten me. I shared this thought with M. des Ogères, who having never slackened in his zeal, immediately decided to accompany me with his wife. Unforeseen [428] obstacles subsequently opposed their intention. But mine had not cooled. I entreated them simply obtain for me all the security that could put my mind at ease along the way; and leaving them with a hundred promises never to forget them, I began the journey to Paris in a well-escorted carriage.

I had first envisioned choosing a new retreat in some convent close to England. A trusted friend whom M. des Ogères had

given to me as a guide, had even before our departure taken all the necessary measures to facilitate my entry. However, I allowed myself to be persuaded without difficulty, once we arrived at Paris, that it could be useful to me to be introduced to Madame, and to acquire such a powerful protectrice. Her goodness assured me of a favorable reception; and although I was hardly thinking of confiding in her the secret of my misfortunes, I foresaw a hundred circumstances in which the simple honor of having seen her would be extremely advantageous to me. I sought no other means of access to her than the English lady with whom I had come from Bayonne, and who had long been known at her court.⁵³⁸ We were received with the familiar and gentle manner that you know the excellent princess to possess. But despite my intention to conceal my fate from her, I could not answer various of the questions she asked me about the motives that had brought me to France without betraying myself with my tears. The interest she seemed to take in them increasing them further, she pressed me to declare to her what she could do to help relieve my suffering. Alas, Madame, I said to her with still more tears, I ask the powers of neither heaven nor of earth for miracles that surpass their power. What I seek is a haven and perhaps I can hope for none except the grave. She replied, after reflecting for a few moments, that unless I wished to be far from Paris, I could find a very pleasant retreat at Chaillot, and that it was up to me, when I was ready to explain myself more fully, to put to the test the penchant she had for aiding the unfortunate. She watched me closely while I was silently reflecting on her proposition. Finally, seeing only honor in it for me and some usefulness for my pur-

⁵³⁸ “Her” court and not *the* court: Madame, as we have already seen, maintains at St Cloud a small court of her own.

poses, I gratefully accepted, and the princess ordered one of her officers to present me on her behalf to the mother superior as a person whom she particularly honored with her protection.⁵³⁹

Thus did I enter Chaillot. But if it is less curiosity that makes you attentive to my story than an old sentiment of friendship and the desire to find me again innocent, do not require me to pause over superfluous details. I have told you what I believed necessary to the elucidation of my voyage, and the force of a memory too tender or too sad has sometimes impelled me too far in my reflections. Now that a grill studded with spikes and impenetrable walls answer to you henceforth for my conduct, allow me to pass over whatever is less pressing than my impatience. Anyway, what else would I have to relate to you than my ordinary agitations: grief, tears, just what you are already tired of hearing? I have lived at Chaillot in the same languor as at Bayonne, devoured by the combined poisons of love and sorrow. I have taken a hundred futile pains to find the traces of my husband and children. I have written letter upon letter to London and all the ports of England. I have sent several trusted friends; and, can I tell you this without shame? I even sent Gelin. Such has always been my blindness. That betrayer after long struggling against death had recovered from his wounds; and though he was undoubtedly offended by being abandoned in La Coruña, his first thought had been to follow me. I had already left Bayonne when he arrived there. M. des Ogères gave him a cold reception; and inferring that once I had decided to leave him behind, I was not disposed to see

⁵³⁹ Madame, as Prévost depicts her, is full of compassion, but she also has the mission of favoring the conversion of Protestants. Here we rejoin the moment (in 1668) in Cleveland's narrative when he first met Madame, six weeks after Fanny does, in book VI.

him, he avoided telling him where I was, feigning not to know. However, as he could not conceal from him the fact that I had gone toward Paris, I soon had that pestilence on my tracks. He did not find my retreat right away, and the care I had taken to assume a name different from my own made his search even more difficult. But having finally inquired at St. Cloud, because he imagined that all Englishmen must have some correspondent there, he received information that no longer allowed him to make a mistake.

[429] His visit surprised me all the more that in such complete isolation I thought I could expect none from anyone but M. and Mme des Ogères. I stood dumbstruck when I saw him, and was about to withdraw without answering him. Yet the hope of obtaining some news of my husband or of making use of him sooner or later to acquire some was a strong enough motive to give me pause. After several embarrassed expressions of the attachment he preserved for me, he complained of my hardness of heart in abandoning him in a misfortune which he had incurred in order to serve me. I was persuaded indeed that by following strictly the rule of honor I had offended that of gratitude. This thought also made me bear his conversation less impatiently. It was he who spoke first to me of my husband and children. I do not know what he had in mind, and perhaps his only design was to sound out the disposition of my heart; but having seen me shed some tears which that thought still drew from me, he reproached me with his former vehemence for being too susceptible to the memory of an ingrate who no longer deserved anything but my hatred. Oh, I cried out, if only I could convince myself of that! Why is it not at least possible for me to know all the reasons I may have for hating him? He answered with an air of surprise that it was strange that I could still doubt it; and pressing me further, it was from me he learn of the futile efforts I had made since I had

left La Coruña to ascertain my rival's progress.

He seemed not to hesitate after this confession: You shall be satisfied, he said to me emphatically; I promise you all the enlightenment you desire. Who knows with what hope he flattered himself? But without explaining himself further, he pledged when he left me that I would not see him again unless he had information that would establish my peace of mind, and restore to me the freedom to dispose of myself. The satisfaction it gave me to see him offer himself voluntarily for a mission for which I thought him more capable than anyone prevented me from replying to him.

He showed up again after six weeks with the same fervor. But the joy that shone in his eyes was soon dispelled when he saw mine full of tears after hearing his story. He had traveled to England, where he confessed to me that my husband had not yet been seen; but by dint of seeking and inquiring, he had identified some of the sailors whom my husband had dismissed at Nantes. He had learned from them, not only the circumstances of your departure from St. Helena and of my brother's misfortune, who had died after returning to ship; but also, he said, all the measures that M. Cleveland had taken in Nantes for the conclusion of his marriage with Mme Lallin. He described to me all the preparations for that detestable celebration, where, to broadcast his joy through extraordinary gesture of gallantry, my husband had made a present of his ship to several unhappy residents of Nantes. Although he dared not assure me that those sailors had seen the celebration take place, he cited it to me as of a certain thing when they left, and I remember that he wrapped up the rest of his report so shrewdly that he attracted my attention less to what could encourage my doubts than to everything that seemed capable of confirming my unhappiness. Nevertheless, the penchant of a passionate heart that struggled to humor itself in the midst of

despair made me take even this dreadful detail in the most favorable way. I insisted on rejecting everything that could only tend to kill me. You see, gently replied the unworthy Gelin, that your fate is completely clarified. No, no, I interrupted, my eyes filled with tears, I will not settle for the testimony of a sailor; and for a horrible truth that entails a life or death decision for me, do know that I must have more evidence. This reply made him furious. He accused me unabashedly of what he dared to call willful blindness; and pretending to regret everything he had done for me, he protested that he was determined never to see or to speak to me again.⁵⁴⁰ He stood up with the same transport. I rose also, and the desire I had to weep freely made me reach the door without even turning my eyes on him. Maybe he was expecting me to stop him; and seeing that I continued walking, he called to me several times, begging me to listen to him for a moment; but I went out without answering.

[430] Into what extreme despondency did I not fall all of a sudden, more miserable in an instant than I had believed myself to be in all the time that had passed since my departure! Oh God, visit such vengeance only on those who have deserved it by their crimes! My fainting spells, which the air of France had much diminished, afflicted me again with their original violence. That very evening I had one more dangerous than all those I had ever experienced. Meanwhile Gelin appeared the next day at the grill. I debated for a long time whether I should see him. Finally, still eager at the slightest glimmer of hope, I imagined that he was

⁵⁴⁰ This is the same kind of threat that had failed to work in Madeira. Gelin wants to pass for a guide that Fanny dares not lose; but as she each time shows, she wants nothing more, since she wishes to remain alone.

bringing me some new explanation that he had overlooked the day before. I went down to the parlor. He seemed extremely affected by my palor and the change that a single night had made in my health. The excuses he made for his outburst and his protestations of zeal were interspersed with a few tears. I thought, he said, that to put an end to an uncertainty that produces such dreadful effects, I must undertake the voyage to Nantes. I am ready to leave. I avidly accepted this offer, and urged him in heaven's name to lose no opportunity to inform himself.

Thus I continued to be the plaything of this imposter; for after his return, I cannot doubt that the account he gave me of his voyage was a fable invented at the behest of his desires, and proportionate to the familiarity he had with my credulity. Its gist was to confirm everything he had reported to me from London, but in varying degrees, which seemed to be just so many attenuations he wished to make in consideration of my condition. Every word he spoke was nevertheless a mortal blow; even he could easily see that; and if it were true that he loved me, how could he imaginably have taken pleasure in piercing my heart so cruelly? Ultimately he left me convinced, if not of the conclusion of the marriage, for he had never had the temerity to name for me the place and the witnesses, at least of the truth of all the evidence that could make me regard it as a certain and inalterable resolution; and so it is that the person who came here to ask for my consent must have reported to you that he had found me prepared for it. So I no longer hesitated, after this fatal declaration, to opt for breaking forever with the world by solemn vows. The instruction I had received at various times had led me to embrace the Roman faith. They had enough esteem and friendship for me in this community to consent to receive my commitment. Although health weakened by such long suffering was a was a rather sorry present to offer them, compassion would have made it acceptable,

and I would not have long put off the execution of this intention, had the events which followed it not come so swiftly one after the other.

But you, my sister, who have never hated me, and whom the malignity of my fate alone could have made to persist for so long in such cruel assumptions, were you not moved by the scene you had in the church?⁵⁴¹ Did not your heart side immediately with my innocence? Tell me, did you find in me the appearances of a woman without honor and without faith, or something that no longer resembled what I was when you thought me worthy of your affection? The sad spectacle! How difficult it would be to efface the memory of it! I had scarcely recovered conscience when, no longer seeing around me either you or my children, I called you all back with cries and agitations that reduced to tears the persons who were helping me. I instantly sent someone after you. He found out where you were living. You, my husband, my children, had been living just outside Chaillot for a long while. Oh the betrayal of fortune! Alas, how could I not have known? The very next day I begged the chaplain of this house to see M. Cleveland on my behalf. I instructed him to say a hundred things, and repeated them to him a hundred times. The conflation of so many sentiments made me fear and desire everything at the same time. At certain moments I still flattered myself. He will allow himself to be moved, he will restore his heart to me, he will do justice to mine; I awaited the chaplain's return as the summons to my death. He returned, and his response was a lightning bolt that dashed all my hopes.⁵⁴² Do not ask me for coherence in reporting

⁵⁴¹ The scene is that related by Angélique in book VII.

⁵⁴² The positive affirmation of Cleveland's intention to remarry, heretofore lacking – a marriage which to Fanny can only be with Mme

to you such a terrible message, the impression of which still upsets me. Gelin turned up. He had just learned at Charenton, not only the consummation [431] of my ruin, but also that of my shame. He laid out the baleful circumstances, and as crowning horror he proposed to marry me. I threw him out indignantly. You can judge the state in which he left me; and the next day, a baleful rumor, that could not be prevented from reaching me, informed me that my husband has been assassinated at his hands.

Oh my sister, even at this moment when you have just restored life and hope to me, I feel that my strength fails me at the memory of what I have been able to bear. But would I not have risen from the grave to defend or to avenge my husband? Ah, I would have revived in the very arms of death. I rushed from my room to fly to St. Cloud. I was on my way, on foot and unaccompanied; the chaplain, asking my forgiveness on his knees for the part he had unfortunately played in Gelin's crime, told me that the hateful assassin was under arrest, and that my husband was not dead. He argued at the same time that my presence would be not only unhelpful to him, but that, given the sentiments in which he had left him the day before, it would perhaps be burdensome; finally, that if I was determined to see and talk to him, prudence and affection should lead me to choose more favorable moments. I knew the wisdom of the man who gave me this advice. While deciding to follow it, I immediately adopted another plan of which he approved, and which I hastened to put into practice. I had learned that Madame was expected at Chantilly. I left to go meet her, in the hope of stirring her pity by confiding all my misfortunes in her, and to obtain from her some tokens of the protection of which she had repeatedly assured me.

Lallin – for the first time is confirmed by a witness other than Gelin.

I learned from her today that she took the trouble to relate to you all the circumstances of my visit⁵⁴³; but her generosity might have led her to conceal the kindness and fervor with which she deigned to enter into my sufferings and stoop to looking after my interests. That very day, my sister, the most important and I shall say frankly one of the most tumultuous, if I must no longer say the saddest and dare not yet say the happiest of my life, will you believe that that very day I saw in succession, with her, both the traitor Gelin and my husband? Let me follow the order of events, although I am eager to reach the moment in those two interviews which I have the greatest interest in explaining to you. So I saw Gelin. I saw that monster, sullied by his crimes and all those we are entitled to blame on fortune; I saw him in chains in Madame's own apartment. I cannot tell you yet to what extent the fear of execution made him sincere; for I would have to compare his story with a number of circumstances which I do not know: but assuming I was not close enough to hear him, he confessed to Madame that he had long been possessed by a horrible passion which was the cause of all his crimes and all his madness, and I am the unhappy object he named. I shuddered. In a glance I reviewed every moment of my life since his first arrival in the island of Cuba, to assure myself whether a single one of them bore some stain from that poison. In the persuasion as I always was that Mme Lallin was my rival, nothing I could remember caused me the slightest alarm; for having always contained himself with me within terms of propriety and respect, a passion which I had never suspected changed nothing in the nature of my laments, and communicated nothing criminal to his services nor to my

⁵⁴³ It was in turn related by Angélique to Cleveland (book VIII).

conduct. Indeed the traitor insisted heavily on my husband's infidelity and on the violence of my sufferings, which prompted him as much as love, he said, to favor my escape. He imputed all his crimes to those two causes; and when Madame forced me to appear to confound him by my presence, his shame and remorse did not prevent him from maintaining the same language.⁵⁴⁴ I was therefore none the less convinced of my misfortune, and of the triumph of my rival. In vain did Madame take sides against me to defend and justify my husband. All I was hoping for from her kindness was that she might make him feel some regret. Even the response of the consistory of Charenton, which she took the trouble to ascertain this morning, did not have the effect of giving me further hopes; and when she insisted on driving me herself to my husband's house, where I followed her in trembling, I flattered myself much less that I would find him innocent than that I would move his heart with my tears, and perhaps obtain from his compassion what I no longer dared expect from his love.⁵⁴⁵

[432] And to confess to you the doubts that still torment me, he did not receive me as one receives a woman one has not ceased to love. Alas, must I tell you? He expressed horror at the sight of me. My tears and submission did not mollify him. My presence reopened his wounds, and through an effect that stems only from hatred, I saw his blood flow abundantly. Horrors, that terrible image still disturbs my own! What is worse, I saw my enemy

⁵⁴⁴ What Fanny takes for evidence of Gelin's effrontery is in fact a sign that the explanation is midway between the extremes, and Gelin, thinking he is not lying, is partially sincere.

⁵⁴⁵ Again we see that there is an essential difference in the terms posed by the two spouses for reconciliation: Fanny, who does not demand perfect innocence of Cleveland, requires much less in the way of explanations than does he.

enter with as much confidence and zeal as audacity into a place from which I was as if ejected with scorn. I underwent her disdain and her abuse. My heart was unable to bear them. My strength abandoned me, and Madame herself, shocked at all that happened before her eyes, urged me to leave with her without leaving me a moment to embrace my children.⁵⁴⁶ She said not a word on the way back to St. Cloud, and when she sent me back here in her carriage, she did no more than exhort me to be patient, confessing to me that there remained many things to be clarified. Oh my sister, explain to me then what is the happiness you announce to me; for I am about to fall back into all my symptoms. These last thoughts overwhelm me. Hurry and sustain me. I can well conceive that if my husband is innocent, he may believe me guilty. Who knows what thoughts he formed at my flight? But what must I think too of my rival's insolence? I still call her that; can I forget suspicions I have entertained for fifteen years?⁵⁴⁷ Suppose Gelin is the world's greatest liar: can I fail to acknowledge what I have seen this very day? How can my husband keep her in his house? How has he kept her so constantly with his party? By what right does she assume in his home that air of pride and power? Why does he shower on her favors which he refuses to me? It is much less my innocence that is difficult for me to justify, than his. Nevertheless you assure me that he has always loved me, and that Mme Lallin has never taken my place in his heart; that if he intended to contract a new engagement, it is not

⁵⁴⁶ This scene has already been seen in book VIII. But in fact her children are no longer there, having been taken just the day before to Louis-le-Grand.

⁵⁴⁷ Somewhat inexact: this is June 1670; Cleveland and Fanny were married in 1661; so Mme Lallin's first passion for Cleveland goes back to perhaps 1658.

with her that he intends to be joined; finally do you not assure me that he loves me, and that despair alone leads him to seek consolation in a new love, ever ready to restore his heart to me... Oh, if only I could believe you! But why should I not believe you? Must I be wary of you? Are you not my sister, the one person on earth to whom I owe the most confidence? And if you were capable of deceiving me, am I not reduced to hoping rather to be deceived, rather than spend the rest of my life in unbearable torments?

My wife, as she ended her story, urged Mme Bridge with the same eagerness not to wait another day to deliver her from a new sort of pain, which the anxieties of joy already made as difficult for her to bear as those of grief. She would like to have left Chaillot right then, and come surprise me in my house, at the risk of all the rejections she could still fear before our mutual clarifications. But my sister, seeing she was extremely agitated, and who had only too well noted the deterioration of her temperament, decided most wisely to calm her heart and imagination with all the most hopeful and consoling things she could say to her. Calm yourself, she said to her, and may the the confidence you owe to my friendship allow you spend tranquilly the rest of this night. Catch your breath. Dry your tears. Your misfortunes are about to end, and I foresee that such long trials are going to assure you of an unchanging happiness. She avoided in this way all the details that could have renewed her agitations; and making her consider that it was too late to make any plan before the night was over, she at length prevailed upon her to get some rest, as an interval between her pains and the pleasures she promised her for the morrow.

Instead of seeking in sleep a repose of which she herself had no less need, after the dilemmas of such a vexatious day, my sister sought it only in the reflections of prudence and the attentions of friendship. She understood from the start that in my present lassitude of body and spirit, an excess of joy could be as pernicious as an excess of grief, and consequently I needed to be prepared gradually for this great reversal.⁵⁴⁸ The difficulty was only to moderate my wife's eagerness, but she was confident that the interest of my health would be a sufficiently strong reason to make her overcome her impatience. On the other hand, not being free enough herself to make use of all the means she would have found suitable to prepare my mind, and not seeing who she could rely on for such a delicate mission, she decided to make use only of her pen, feeding me gradually by letter the information she thought I would not be able to bear all at once. She gave this plan a try beginning that very night. As she had agreed with M. de R... not to inform me of her captivity and that of my children until after my recovery, she wrote me an undated letter with no indication of date or place, in which she rejoiced with me for some happy clarifications she feigned to have received along the way; and venting her anger considerably against the treachery of Gelin, whom she blamed for all our misfortunes, she ended by regretting she was not nearer to me, to give me directly the details she would be obliged to write successively in several letters.

⁵⁴⁸ The necessity of waiting until Cleveland is strong enough to bear his joy contributes greatly to the stretching-out of the story at this point: "joy can infuse as much turmoil in the blood as can grief," he will say in book XI. In this context the idea of dying of joy can take on a literal meaning.

Another danger that was no less pressing, and which required precautions at the monastery itself, was that which could arise from an encounter between Fanny and Cécile, whose interests were too different not to make one expect some sharp manifestations of hatred. What hope was there of preserving the peace between two such affectionate and sensitive rivals, when they should come to make acquaintance, and could not avoid seeing each other? In truth my wife had no reason to suspect that it was Cécile who was to take her place; and it was not from the nuns nor even from Madame that she could learn it so soon; but in order to avoid any such opportunity, my sister decided to alert Mme de R... and her daughter, and get them for decency's sake to conceal their ties to me.

She found them agreeable. However, Cécile was extremely impatient to see my wife. The portrait I had painted of her charms excited her curiosity less than what she had heard me say about the change in her character, because with simple and innocent inclinations, she had difficulty conceiving how the taste for virtue can expire in the heart of a woman born with good inclinations, and she wished to know what could remain there after such loss. My sister, who has related all these things to me a hundred times, refrained from giving her different notions right away. The conciliation of so many interests, in which she foresaw that the principal role was to fall to her, required a hundred kinds of precaution. She merely counseled Cécile to be discreet; and after rejoining my wife, who had already sent for her to come to her room right away, all her efforts went into getting her approval of the plan she had already formed to prepare me for her justification.

[434] For her part, Cécile, whose curiosity left her no rest, inquired about the places Fanny frequented during the day, and did not fail to have herself taken there at the moments when she

could hope to see her. They dutifully carefully pointed her out to her in the church, or rather, having gone there as soon as she was informed that Fanny had entered it, she required no sign to recognize her at once. She was in long mourning apparel, as I had seen her the day before, and as M. de R... had described her to us. It was a garment she was nevermore without. It lent such brilliance to the beauty of her countenance that she could have chosen none better suited to please, could she have been suspected of such a frivolous thought. Cécile did not tire of looking at her. She had her eyes continually fixed on her. She could not get enough of that sight. Far from being biased by some sentiment of disdain or loathing, as my sister apprehended, she was deeply moved by the air of anxiety and sorrow that still prevailed on her face. It was a sort of charm that acted on her, and had such force that after seeing her leave the church, she felt impelled without reflection to go toward the place she had just left; and there, as if she had found it comforting to breathe the same air and meditate in the same spot, she seemed to forget herself for over a quarter of an hour.⁵⁴⁹

Coming back, she encountered my sister, who asked her the cause of the distraction she thought she saw in her. Oh, I have seen her, she replied, with no change in the seriousness of her expression: how amiable she is! How touching does she appear! What charms and perfections! If she makes this impression on you at the first glance, replied my sister, what will it be when you speak to her and know her? For you have not seen half of what she is; and if you are so attuned to merit, she added, not only will

⁵⁴⁹ The mysterious attraction of Cécile for Fanny serves not only as a foreshadowing but also to suggest the latent melancholy in Cécile by the way she indulges in that of Fanny.

you admire her, but you will perhaps love her, and you will pity her misfortunes. The tender Cécile could not hear these words without shedding a few tears. She affectionately pleaded with my sister not to oppose the desire she had to make some sort of acquaintance with her, so she might obtain the opportunity to talk with her. As this curiosity and even these tears could come from some movement of jealousy, my sister, who felt her fears redouble, told her to be careful at least with her words, and to remember that misfortune and grief always deserve to be respected.

From that very day, having seen her go down with my sister and her daughter, who had induced her by their urging to take a stroll in the garden, she proposed to her mother that they follow them, and invited two nuns who offered to accompany them without affectation to find some pretext for catching up with them. Fanny was not unaware that along with my sister and her daughter a French lady had been arrested to whom they wanted to give instruction; but having little involvement with other people's business, and did not see just anyone at Chaillot, she had not pushed her curiosity farther. However, having noticed two unknown persons who were entering the garden, she supposed that what she had heard was about them, and my sister hastened to explain their adventure to her in a way that would dispel her suspicions. She was struck by the physiognomy of these two strangers, and Cécile's youth particularly attracting her attention, she considered her with interest, when the two nuns, having turned toward her as they crossed her avenue, brought about politely the opportunity Cécile desired. My sister still had misgivings about the consequences of an interview which she could no longer avoid. After the initial compliments, they finished their turn about the garden; and far from separating, Fanny was the first to propose they go round again. My sister noted that her attachment for this new company increased as Cécile entered into

the conversation, and that walking just ahead of her, she was constantly turning her head to look at her. The two of them seemed equally attentive to the movements of the other, and as if surprised to find such pleasure in seeing and hearing each other. They continued their walk as long [435] as the season allowed⁵⁵⁰; and when on their way back they passed near the wing where Fanny was lodged, my sister was even more surprised that, after the aversion she had expressed for all sorts of amusements and companies, she proposed to the two foreigners to come and refresh themselves in her apartment. Her proposition was joyously accepted. They spent part of the evening conversing with as much familiarity and amenity as if they had long been friends. Fanny had placed Cécile beside her. She showered her with compliments, and when they separated seemed sad to see her go.

It was not surprising that my wife should take a liking to a young person who had a hundred charming qualities, and not knowing her, she had no reason to look at her otherwise than with the admiration and affection that her face alone was able to inspire. But how did Cécile, who still loved me with the same ardor, and should have all the more misgivings about Fanny that she herself was felt the power of her charms, so easily yield to an inclination that seemed to go against her dearest interests? Does the heart ever know the reasons⁵⁵¹ that can justify its penchants? As touched perhaps by the satisfaction she found in my wife's presence as with that she had felt in mine, she yielded to the impression of the present pleasure, and I was forgotten in the

⁵⁵⁰ This is in July or August.

⁵⁵¹ Probable allusion to Pascal's well-known formula, "Le cœur a ses raisons, que la raison ne connaît point" ('The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know').

moments she spent with her. Soon this avidness to see her so increased that she was in her room from morning to evening. My sister and her mother, who foresaw sooner or later a dangerous clarification on Fanny's part, and who considered them destined sooner or later to hate each other, often sent for her in order to interrupt communications that were alarming them. She obeyed without resistance; but as soon as she could slip away from her mother's sight, she quickly returned to the place to which her penchant drew her.

During this time I was languishing in my bed, unable to recover from the emotion that Madame's words and the sight of my wife had caused me. I had received my sister's letter from the hands of M. de R..., who, still concealing from me what had occurred, feigned as he gave it to me having got it from a messenger that the ladies had dispatched to me in the course of their journey. He did not know the principal part of it, and my sister was adroitly making him serve her purposes. I thought I too should keep it secret from him, although the vague and belated hopes that she wanted to inspire did not have the effect on me that she had counted on. My heart was no longer capable of letting itself be tempted by possibilities and likelihoods. Its fate seemed to be decided. Far from seizing on hopeful signs, its very desires were extinguished; or if in its passionate agitations it blindly wished to see Fanny again with her innocence, it was only the more disappointed when it soon reverted to the impression that it had been caught up in an illusion.

Meanwhile, so many activities and attentions leading me to surmise that she was impelled by sincere repentance, I examined whether that sentiment was at least sufficient reparation for the cruel affronts I had received. I weighed the offense and the expia-

tion.⁵⁵² Independently of honor, which was perhaps simple enough to satisfy by choosing to retire to some isolated spot far from men, I wondered whether the return of a heart that had betrayed me could ever compensate for a love as tender and constant as mine; whether I consequently had the slightest hope of recovering my happiness by recovering the object on whom I had made it depend; and whether absolute deprivation was not more bearable than imperfect and troubled possession, which would leave me lamenting as much over what I had recovered as over what I would always be lacking. An awful situation, I said; I am offered everything I desire to be happy, and I feel less eager than reluctant to accept it. Are you then changed, miserable Fanny, I would add with endearment, and have those invincible charms which had given you such sway over all my affections lost their power? Did I not see you on the contrary more beautiful and touching than ever? Then complete your victory. Who is preventing you? I fight for you. What do you lack to make me adore you, if you are such as you ought always to have been, and do still appear? But, you miscreant, I would rejoin, what have you done with your honor and your virtue? It is not you I recover, it is your phantom; for to me [436] your charms consisted in the inestimable qualities of your heart, and I have lost all hope of finding them there.⁵⁵³ At the same time I would picture Cécile,

⁵⁵² Paul Hazard has compared this passage to the pardon granted to his wife by Colonel Jack in Defoe's *History of Colonel Jack* (1722): there too, the protagonist had lived in Cuba, lived apart from his wife, and had indeed divorced her before being reconciled with her (*Études critiques sur "Manon Lescaut"*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929, p. 92).

⁵⁵³ Cleveland demands that the Fanny who is restored to him correspond to her ideal former self. He hesitates at first to accept her

pure, innocent, simple in her conduct and in her desires, making for me her first use of the goodness of her heart and the tenderness of her sentiments: that charming image would utterly silence any movements that arose in favor of Fanny; and if I despaired of being happy without her, I persevered in seeking elsewhere the consolation for a happiness to which I could no longer aspire.

M. de R... did not hesitate to tell me that Madame had sent for Gelin, and had interviewed him privately for over an hour. But he was not better informed than the public on the circumstances of the interview. Moreover, his entire attention was directed toward his wife and daughter, whose liberation did not appear to him to have made much progress as a result of his objections and solicitations. More than a fortnight went by during which he pressed all his friends to no avail, not finding even one who dared solicit openly for him, so greatly was the rigor of the court beginning to be exercised against the Protestants. But at the moment he was least expecting it, he received an order to come to St. Cloud; and his joy was equal to his surprise when Madame, after chiding him for appearing diffident about her protection, presented him with a *lettre de cachet* calling for the release of some English ladies recently locked up at Chaillot.⁵⁵⁴ Their names

even if she has been faithful, since she is still guilty of abandoning him; and even in his more compassionate moments he will never compromise on the one absolute condition which is a guarantee of her virtue: "I only ask to recover her heart and her virtue"; and later: "the repentance of a tarnished woman does not suffice for the satisfaction of an offended husband". Of Prévost's tarnished women, Fanny is moreover the only one who turns out to be wholly innocent.

⁵⁵⁴ A *lettre de cachet* is a peremptory order in the name of the king, often with regard to imprisonment, usually issued by a minister, but in this exceptional case by the king himself.

being specified along with many other circumstances, there could be no mistake about it. This was the best means the excellent princess had thought she could invoke to avoid difficulties and delays. She had made the case to the king that, my sister being en route back to our country with her daughter and two persons who were accompanying them, they had been arrested through a misunderstanding, and against the intentions of His Majesty, who had always treated foreigners with every kind of favor. Her intervention had had all the success that the king could not refuse to her, especially for ladies of her nation,⁵⁵⁵ and at a conjuncture in which the prince was seeking to signify his gratitude to her. But as the consternation of grief had prevented M. de R... from remembering my children when he had come to register his initial complaint with Madame, his transport of joy also prevented him thinking of them when he received such unhoped-for mercy. It would not have been no more difficult to have them included in the king's order, whereas subsequently it was not so simple to obtain that second favor. Madame like myself was unaware that my two sons had been arrested; for her kindness, which went so far as to inquire every day about the state of my wounds, would have made her place some importance on the pleasure of putting a tender father's dearest possessions back in his arms.

It was through actions of this nature, which had constituted the whole course of her life, that this incomparable princess seemed to prepare herself for the terrible blow that was threatening her. The terrible misfortune, over which I would not pass so

⁵⁵⁵ Mme Bridge and her daughter, like Madame herself, are English; in fact Madame has used them to include Mme de R... and Cécile as well, who do not have the same right to consideration as foreigners, in the *lettre de cachet*.

quickly if decency permitted me to rehearse as the subject of my person affliction the object of public tears and bereavement. Yet are there not aberrations that are forgivable to pain? I shall dare to say that being drained of my strength, as I already was, I would not have found enough to withstand the sight I had that same day at St. Cloud, had the princess had not taken it upon herself to moderate a despair which she perceived, by the consolations she knew suited to strengthening me. The strange day, when I found the source of a new happiness in one of the greatest catastrophes of my life!

It was a quarter-hour after communicating the king's order to M. de R... that, having taken some refreshments befitting the season, she suddenly experienced such violent pains that the doctors who noticed the change in her face and the abnormality of her pulse despaired at that very moment of her life.⁵⁵⁶ The news quickly reached me. I did not pause to reflect. Zeal substituted for my strength. Having myself carried in an armchair by my servants' arms, I got to the chateau, which was reverberating with the cries of a crowd of people which the public calamity had already gathered. I was too well known to encounter any difficult getting through. I entered: alas, in what a state did I see Madame! Already [437] pale, disfigured, her lips livid, and her eyes nearly blank. Her convulsions still shook her with the same violence. By intervals she uttered piercing cries that filled those present with horror and compassion. Everything they forced her to take seemed to increase her pain. Heaven, what impression did this spectacle not make on me! I was standing, supported by the arms of two of my servants. More than once I felt my strength about to

⁵⁵⁶ This is 29 June 1670. Prévost largely follows Mme de Lafayette's *Relation de la mort de Madame*.

fail. The princess spotted me. She motioned for me to come closer. The attacks of her illness only continuing to increase, suddenly she could not compose herself sufficiently to explain her wishes to me; so that being with her, for more than a quarter-hour I had the cruel torment of watching her suffer before my eyes, and receiving as many fatal blows as I heard her utter cries and sighs. Finally, her courage making her overcome for a moment the force of her pain: I am dying, she said to me in a low voice. The ways of heaven are unknowable, and I must worship them.⁵⁵⁷ You are losing a friend. I would have reconciled you with your wife. Another will complete my work. I believe her to be innocent, and I would not want to deceive you. Wait for the return of Briand, whom I have sent to Bayonne. As my grief and my gratitude could express themselves only by my sighs and transports: You stir too much, she said again with renewed effort; your own condition does not permit you to be here. Go, and when you are happy, remember that I took an interest in your happiness. I fell to my knees to express to her the violence of my sentiments. She ordered me to return home. I was offered some assistance to help me obey her. I was nevertheless resolved to remain in her chamber, leaning against a window, where my weakness forced me to be led; but having once more spotted me, she motioned to me with a gesture to withdraw.

I went into the antechamber, where I threw myself into the armchair that had served to bring me there; and my face covered

⁵⁵⁷ In Lafayette's narrative, Madame, who was dying in immense pain, showed incomparable courage and exemplary submission to the divine will. Prévost makes no mention of the fact that she thought she had been poisoned. Madame's "I am dying" (*Je meurs*) here inevitably brings to mind Bossuet's famously dramatic formula in his funeral oration: "Madame se meurt, Madame est morte."

by my two hands, as much to hide my tears as to avoid the sight of anything that could interrupt my grief, I addressed heaven with all the laments that my continual misfortunes had made so familiar to me. Alas, were they capable of obtaining from heaven what it refused to greatness, to beauty, to all the charms and all the virtues combined? Madame expired before nightfall, without anything being able to suspend her sufferings even for a moment.⁵⁵⁸ I heard the moaning with which the public affection accompanied her last sigh, and having nothing favorable left to hope for in a place where I was receiving such a dreadful blow, I immediately set out for home.

But this last reflection was verified at the same moment by an encounter with the ... who came to greet me when he saw me leaving the apartment. He assumed a distressed mien: You find me doubly affected at our common loss, he said in an affected voice; for I feel both yours and mine at the same time. In the misfortune that stubbornly pursues you, you cannot too greatly miss a princess who esteemed you, and whose protection was assured to you. However, he added, if you place some confidence in my friendship, be not uneasy for your family and that of M. de R.... We will not be long in finding you other protectors. He no doubt thought me informed of everything I did not know, and the promise he made at that moment to oversee personally the education of my two sons could have made me open my eyes to part of what was being concealed from me, if the letters I was continually receiving from my sister had not reassured me against any kind of misgivings. I therefore took his offers and promises as a continuation of his earlier ruses, and believing my family and that

⁵⁵⁸ According to Mme de Lafayette, it was 2:30 in the morning, nine hours after her pains had begun.

of M. de R... safe, I flattered myself that my innocence would henceforth suffice to defend me. However, wishing to follow the plan I had thought up to rid myself civilly of such a dangerous man, I thanked him for his sentiments, and estranged all the more the insights I might have derived from the rest of his conversation, that I made a point of saying nothing about my family, and always of bringing mine back to the present misfortune that ought to be occupying us. He offered to accompany me as far as my house and spend the night there. I managed to fend off this proposal too, under various pretexts that could not offend him. Finally, as I [438] was about to bid him farewell, he asked me what I had decided to do about my assassin, and whether I did not share Madame's intentions, which had always been to spare his life. My reply was not uncertain. Yes, I said, I forgive him despite all the reasons I have to loath him, and willingly relinquish the right I have to solicit his punishment: but curiosity makes me want to learn from his own mouth why he wanted to kill me. This sincerity was an indiscretion. Madame's conduct had been so prudent that, having communicated the secret of this matter only to a small number of persons whose circumspection was known to her, nothing of it had got out into the public except the circumstances that were of public notoriety, which is to say my wounds and the boldness of a thug who had attempted to assassinate me in broad daylight. The ... himself suspected no mystery in it beyond premeditated vengeance, which he regarded as the sequel of an ordinary dispute. But when he heard me speak of old reasons for loathing, and of my desire to interview the prisoner, he figured that there was something he had not detected, and the curiosity he had to hear him became much more lively than mine. He gave no sign of this; but as no one until then had been granted the liberty to see him, he immediately thought about how to obtain it. Supposing that the officers of justice were disposed to follow Ma-

dame's intentions, it was my will which they ought to consult; this thought led him to another, to persuade me that very evening to send word to the bailiff that I renounced all sorts of prosecution, and bade him only to wait, before releasing Gelin, until I had obtained some clarifications from him in prison. I needed all the less urging to do so, that he made use of the most moving motives of humanity and religion. This was nevertheless to deliver myself to the maliciousness of two enemies, who needed only to be in league to undo me.

But was lack of prudence not forgivable in my dejected state? I arrived at home so pale and so exhausted that my servants were asking each other in tears when I would receive the sad ministry I had just rendered to Madame. M. de R... was absent. I had only Mme Lallin to whom I could speak somewhat openly. I confessed to her that I did not think my death was far off, and that to cap it all, my life, which she saw at its end, was not more in danger than my virtue and my reason: for this obstinacy of fate, I added, that pursues all those I love, and which not content with my ruin, takes pleasure in destroying whoever is able to support or comfort me; this conspiracy of everything that touches or approaches me to trouble my mind and rend my heart, is finally overcoming my patience, and reducing me to utter despair. They had put me to bed; I turned my face into my pillow as I ended these words, and pressing it with all the strength I had left, abandoned myself to the dark sentiments which this thought was capable of provoking in me. Thus, with respect to either the mind or the body, I was as if at the lowest point to which misfortune and grief could reduce me.

It is not without reason that I go over this sad period. I had to make known the measure of my ills to give a clear notion of the change that was about to follow them: for if my despair had climbed to the most terrible heights, it was nearly over, and by

unhoped-for reversals it was in the horrors of such a baleful situation that heaven was going to make the dawn of my finest days to rise. Oh wonder of its power! Oh how sweet is the passage from the abyss of mourning and bitterness to the beginnings of joy and expectation! But how shall I make those who have never experienced it understand this change? Let them not miss a word of my narrative, if they wish soon to be more touched by the extremes of my joy than they have been by all my misfortunes.

Mme Lallin's concern for my life made her put such skill and effort into getting me to accept some relief that she ultimately owed my consent to her importunities rather than her persuasion. I took some strong liquors⁵⁵⁹ which revived my spirits somewhat. My weakness had had almost as much to do as did grief with the sort of distraction into which I had fallen; thus I found myself, if not with fewer torments, at least with more animal vigor to bear them. Mme Lallin, [439] ever mindful that the surgeons were constantly recommending I not be allowed to lose myself in my reflections, believed that precaution to be all the more necessary in my state of redoubled sorrow; and when she had vainly attempted to make my imagination switch objects, she figured that, unable to succeed at that, it was better to talk to me about the very subject of my pains than to leave me alone to bottle them up. With this thought she shrewdly got me to tell her what I had seen at St. Cloud, and what I thought of the tragic accident that had taken Madame from us. I eagerly satisfied her curiosity. I began to detail it in a manner all the more moving that my heart was caught up in every circumstance, and that in depicting the princess's calamity, I was telling the story of my own pains. I omitted not one of Madame's sighs, not one glance, not one movement,

⁵⁵⁹ This term usually designated various brandies.

nor especially a single one of the precious words she had addressed to me, and which were engraved in my heart. I do not know whether it was deliberately that Mme Lallin stopped me in the middle of my story, or whether it was solely the desire to draw my attention more and more outside, by dividing it with vague and often interrupted questions: subsequent events never allowed me to learn this from her directly; but once she had heard me repeat Madame's last farewell, she squirmed in her chair and looked at me in disbelief. Surprised myself at her movement, I waited for her to explain. You do not appear as struck as I, she said, by this strange declaration of Madame's. What, in the last moment of her life, she protested to you that she believed your wife innocent! Mme Lallin said nothing more, and I remained unable to answer her. We continued to look at each other for a long time as if speechless. She seemed to be waiting some clarification that I was not providing. I for my part was waiting for her to make some other remark that might facilitate my reply; or rather, struck all of a sudden with the way this question had presented itself to my mind, I tried to compare a hundred thoughts that collided in their confusion; and trying to take in too much in a single view, I perceived nothing if not through dark shadows.

It is certain that in my fateful prejudices, moreover prepossessed with the disturbance I had experienced at the sight of Madame, I had paid little attention to the testimony she had given about Fanny. Perhaps even with more reflection I would have recognized in it, as in all her previous actions, nothing more than a kindness that was too credulous and too willing not to see. But either because the first reaction of a person as disinterested as Mme Lallin made a less suspect impression on me, or because heaven, moved by my woes, had chosen this moment to end them, I considered what I had just recalled under a completely different angle. The more began to sort out my thoughts, the more

I thought I could clearly see that Fanny's innocence ought no longer to seem impossible. For since Madame could not have deceive me as she lay dying, I could not doubt that she was of the opinion she had expressed to me: now the princess was quite aware that Fanny had left St. Helena with Gelin; whence I concluded that there was some mystery about her flight that could be compatible with her innocence.

I communicated this reasoning to Mme Lallin. It made the same impression on her. Nevertheless, I continued, the only thing which I can reproach her is her flight; for neither in her conduct nor in her inclinations have I ever seen anything that could make me cast doubt on her virtue. Since the moment when chance caused me find her again in Chaillot, I have heard about nothing but her tears: does one shed so many over an intentional crime? And if I accused her of having shown too little impatience to justify herself, since she has known I was so close at hand, or too little eagerness to see me, is it not true that she is gentle and timid, and that, perhaps sensing many appearances are against her, uncertainty and fear hold her back more than her remorse? Moreover, she has had the chaplain speak to me, she put Madame in her interests, she came here with her, and I observed well enough in her eyes and all her movements that she was powerfully troubled. Why seek me out if she detests me? Why so many regrets and tears, if she left me willingly? Why complain of my harshness and even lament even my plans for separation, if it were true that she had betrayed me?

[440] As these reflections extended through my mind, I felt stirrings of the heart that I could scarcely contain; and even as I was resisting them, I felt I would have found enormous pleasure in yielding to them. I questioned Mme Lallin. I interrupted her answers, only to add other questions. I was forever turning in my bed, with the anxiety of a man in a hurry who cannot decide what

to do. At certain moments I would happily have uttered a joyful cry, and the next I fell into a somber contemplation that plunged me back into all my woes. But how can her flight be explained? I said to Mme Lallin. Do you believe that Gelin, agile and bold as you know him to be, had found the means of spiriting her off while both she and I slept?⁵⁶⁰ Or rather did he persuade her in the morning that I had gone to the port, and that I wished she would come join me there? He would have deceived her all the more cruelly that he would have abused the absolute submission he knew she had to my every wish. What would have been her surprise seeing herself in the power of a deceiver! Oh god, would he at least have respected her... But I am yielding to mad fears. The French captain was a man of honor, who would not have abetted the cowardly enterprises of a vile rapist. Him, his wife, you will see that the traitor Gelin seduced all of them with affectations of honor and virtue. Was he not skillful enough to fool my brother, who was the most enlightened and prudent of all men? Alas, how easy it would have been for him to dazzle the eyes of the innocent and credulous Fanny!

The hope that was creeping thus to enter my heart was reviving there sentiments so tender that I needed all my efforts to moderate them. Mme Lallin perceived this, and I must grant her this justice, that she helped increase them through her observa-

⁵⁶⁰ This hypothetical explanation makes one think of Robert Challe's *Illustres Françaises*, in which an adulterous heroine ("Histoire de Monsieur des Frans et de Silvie") is finally exonerated by the revelation of the magic charm which Gallouin had used to seduce her. But there, the adultery is not itself in doubt, since her husband has seen her in bed with the lover. Cf. also the question which Cleveland will address to Gelin further on: "tell me by what spell you were able to make poor Fanny forget her duty" (book XI).

tions, as she had served to bring them into being through her initial surprise. She was so far from attributing to herself a role in our misfortunes that she took that moment to move me even further by confessing what had taken place between her and Fanny the day I had received Madame's visit. I did not know, she said, that she was with the princess, and the danger you were in having brought me running to your apartment, I was as surprised as I could be to find myself face to face with her at the entrance to your antechamber. Some spiteful impulse, which I ought to have excused given her situation, caused her to address me disdainfully, and in a flash of anger I could not help making her a sharp reply. That is a cruelty for which I will reproach myself the rest of my life. I was punished on the spot by the anguish it gave me to see her fall unconscious, and broadcast her despair in a hundred ways as soon as she came to. Oh, I shall never forget that sad spectacle, added Mme Lallin. False pains and false virtues do not have such touching language nor such natural behavior.

I would have told you about this incident that same day, she added, and I would have confessed my regrets to you, but you were not in a condition to hear me. I have always put it off for the same reasons. Now that your own sentiments encourage me, I can freely reveal my own to you; I shall no longer resist telling you... She stopped as she finished these last words, as if she feared she had gone too far. I begged her continue with the same candor, protesting that my heart could not be flattered in by a more pleasing topic. She required much urging to go on. What can I say? she finally began. If you force me to speak, I would also do myself violence to keep silent. I have thought many times that in your new plans for an engagement you could have been accused of some hastiness; that a woman whom you find in a convent, and whom neither violence, nor age, nor the change in her features

have forced to withdraw from the world, deserved to be heard; that her tears were another reason requiring further exploration; that there are events that ought not to be judged by appearances; that moreover one risks much more than one imagines by giving up what has long seemed indispensable to one's happiness, because if the heart can always easily find an entertainment, it does not twice encounter what can make it happy; she added that in truth Cécile was amiable, but that if I wanted her to express herself sincerely, [441] I was accustomed to Fanny, and that in a character such as mine these habits are never broken. She was interrupted in the middle of these words by the arrival of M. de R.... He was bringing me a letter from my sister, which I read eagerly. It was even more promising than the previous ones, and although it told me nothing more clear, the disposition I was in made me take every hint of hope as a new degree of certainty. My blood was boiling in my veins, but it was a delightful warmth, all the movements of which seemed to restore to me so many degrees of strength and life. I nevertheless contained myself in front of M. de R.... After talking briefly with me about the sudden death of Madame, he told me that our two families being left defenseless by such a baleful event, he had planned to go spend a few days in Rouen, to make sure they could stop over there without danger; but that before his departure he wanted to see my wounds dressed and learn from the surgeons what report he should make about them to my sister. I agreed to give him this satisfaction at once. Along with much weakness they found my signs to be so good that they gave the best prognosis ever. I called for paper, and in the fervor of a hundred sentiments it was impossible for me to clarify, I wrote only these few words to my sister: "Unless you take pleasure in deceiving me, do not defer any longer my life or death." But what will seem very strange is that after rereading what I had just written, all the force of the senti-

ments that filled me did not prevent me from remembering Cécile. I added a few lines, in which I protested the silence that my sister seemed to affect regarding that dear person, and invited her in the tenderest terms to lose nothing of the affection she had always shown for her. M. de R... left me that very evening to go make preparations for his journey.

The mixture of so many passions which had stirred me, and the fatigue of joy as well as of grief, made me fall almost instantly into the deepest sleep I had enjoyed in a long time. It was even accompanied by several pleasant dreams, which made me experience interruptedly throughout the night a hundred pleasures to which I would not have dared abandon myself in the daytime. The new apparatus they had put on my wounds no doubt also helped obtain for me such necessary necessary after so much turmoil. It was nearly noon when I awoke. I sent for Mme Lallin, and her last remarks being still present in my memory, I confessed to her that they had made enough impressions on me to make me to follow her advice. I had fallen asleep only after making this resolution. If I had my sister with me, I said, I would not impose on you a task that is not without difficulty, especially after the altercation you had with Fanny. But I have only you to whom I can give my confidence; and were she still to harbor some resentment, she would forget it once she heard you. My impatience does not allow me to put off what can be done today. I would go myself, I added, I would not lose a minute, if I dared rely on my hopes, and were I not even more wary of my desires. Go: bring me back the clarifications which you yourself reproach me for having neglected. Above all, go easy on Fanny; spare her anything that might suggest complaint. Do not demand too much of her. I only ask to recover her heart and her virtue. Mme Lallin eagerly accepted my proposal. But she judged that in order to prepare my wife for a visit which she had so little reason to

expect, I should have it announced to her by one of my servants, with some signs of civility and affection to offset her misgivings. I agreed to everything, and immediately dispatched Drink, the most faithful of my servants.

I passed the time until his return imploring Mme Lallin to be true to my purposes, dictating expressions to her, and especially urging her to use gentleness in her initial terms and even in her eyes, and not to suggest anything frightening to Fanny's imagination. Finally we saw Drink arriving. His face promised me nothing favorable. He intuited what was capable of delighting or grieving me. His mistress, he said to me sadly, had departed that very morning to return to [442] England. Departed! I cried, grasping only too quickly how awful for me was this new betrayal of fortune, alas! What becomes of my hopes! She has departed, I continued with the same transport, because after the death of Madame, whose mind she had skillfully captured, there was no one left on whom she dared attempt to practice her artifices. She has departed, do not doubt it, because being left exposed, she could sense how difficult it would be to fool me in person. In a word, she despaired of deceiving me. Mme Lallin, to whom I addressed these furious words, agreed that I was right to be upset at such a setback. The state of my health alone was enough to detain a woman to whom might be supposed to have the slightest sentiments of esteem and consideration for me. We had Drink repeat several times the response he had brought me. Finally, in the darkness where it left us, Mme Lallin entreated me to suspend my judgment, and approve her intention of going herself to Chailot in search of information. But I made myself worthy of all the new misfortunes I feared by succumbing so easily to my misgivings. All the powers of heaven were attending to my happiness, and at a time when I was still distressed by a few disturbing appearances, I had already for believing myself happy enough

reasons perhaps to die of joy, had my sister's prudence not arranged all this information for me progressively. What flourishes do I not need to explain so many miracles?

Doubtless the reader has not forgotten the affectionate relationship that had been formed between Fanny and Cécile. Far from fading with habit, it had grown stronger by the day to the point of making Mme de R... and my sister consider whether it would not be preferable to break off their intercourse entirely, rather than expose both of them to hating each other sooner or later as much as they seemed to love each other now. It was hard to resort to this remedy; but when, not content with seeing each other continually and showering caresses on each other, they asked Mme de R...'s permission to spend the night as well as the day together, my sister, who felt obligated to spare Cécile distress which she thought inevitable, no longer hesitated to urge her mother to reject this request, and even to bring about some pretext to keep her with her. Mme de R..., espousing this view for entirely different reasons, invited my sister to be a witness to the orders she had decided to give her daughter. Without adopting any other tone than that of friendship, she nevertheless reproached her seriously for the preference she was giving to a stranger over her; and addressing specifically the desire she expressed to take a bed in her apartment, she asked her whether she was not forgetting the engagements she had with me, and whether she did not fear to upset me by associating herself so intimately with a lady with whom, as she well knew, I was hardly pleased.

Cécile seemed most aggrieved by these words. She made no reply; her eyes, which she kept lowered, and some tears she allowed to flow, signified as much embarrassment as sadness. Finally, pressed to speak, she unleashed her tears, and begged her mother to hear her. You are disparaging Mme Cleveland, she

said, but you do not know her. It is surprising that Mme Bridge, who knows her innocence and her misfortunes as much as I do, leaves it to me to justify her. I cannot conceal from you the fact that having adopted as much kindness toward me as I have conceived respect and affection for her, she has confided in me the entire story of her trials.⁵⁶¹ I know enough about them to believe myself obliged, not only by the laws of friendship and gratitude, but also by those of honor and duty, to sacrifice for her sake the penchant I have for her husband, and to spare neither effort nor rest, nor even my life, to bring him to render to her the justice he owes her. It will cost me no efforts, she added; I have not forgotten the sentiments he preserves for her: it is a cruel misunderstanding that has separated two hearts made for each other. I am betraying my friend's secret; but you, she rejoined, addressing my sister affectionately, how can you let innocence and virtue languish for so long? Why not let her husband know that she is worthier than ever of his adoration, and that he has committed against her, in [443] loving me, an infidelity which he should lament as long as he lives? I know your reasons, and the condition he is still in forces me to approve them. But do you not think that ignorance of his good fortune is not more fatal to him than his wounds? Hurry, she further added. I want their reconciliation more than I desired my marriage when I was allowed to follow the penchant of my heart.

Such generous sentiments, expressed in the tender and naive way that characterized everything she said, made such an impres-

⁵⁶¹ The chance encounter and reciprocal confidences of Cécile and Fanny can recall an analogous situation in Marivaux's *Les Effets surprénants de la sympathie* (1713): by chance Clarice and Caliste, rivals for Alorante's love, have both taken refuge in the house of Fétine, who tells the other her long story.

sion on my sister that she rose in rapture to embrace her. She confessed that, having interviewed my wife the very day they had arrived, she had adopted the same thoughts about her innocence, and that she had not lost sight for a single minute of the task of reconciling us. Then making excuses to her mother for having hid from her such an important circumstance, she had no difficulty getting her to agree that, given the terms on which I was with her daughter, decency and even friendship had required of her the precautions which she had observed. But she returned at once to Cécile, whose sentiments she could not admire enough. She congratulated her on being so affectionate, so kind, so generous, and embraced her twenty times over. There was no question any longer of refusing her access to her friend's apartment. Mme de R..., herself soon convinced of my wife's innocence, as she already was of her merit, was not the least eager to make to her all the amends that her virtue called for. Thus Cécile had all the liberty she desired to spend time with her. They ended up having only one room and one bed. Her mother and my sister also began never to leave them even for a moment. All intentions and decisions were made in concert, even including the letters my sister continued to write to me, still in accordance with her original plan, which she got her three friends to approve; each of them contributed something, with the same zeal and the same interest.

M. de R... had not been let in right away on their secret, because only of Cécile's resistance, fearing lest this knowledge cool somewhat his friendship, which she thought necessary to me in the sorry condition to which I was reduced. Only his daughter could be forgiven this injustice. Consequently my sister believed she finally owed, to the attachment he had always shown me, the most unreserved candor and communication. If he did not give up his expectations without regret, he was generous enough not to lessen in any way the affection in which he had always held me

and my family. And even, just as soon as he felt he fully informed, Fanny's interests became as dear to him as mine. He undertook, in consequence of the information he received from my sister, several actions that were to further my own enlightenment. The care he took for my children was yet another merit in their mother's eyes and mine. He obtained for her the satisfaction of embracing them, by taking her twice to the Collège de Louis le Grand. Being Catholic, she was hardly alarmed to see them confined there for their education. It was to several of the priests of this house that she owed the knowledge that attached her to the Roman Church, and the study she had devoted to that learning had given her sentiments for their whole Society quite opposed to the opinion I had formed too lightly, based on the behavior of one individual of ill will towards his order. Her chagrin was nevertheless extreme when, learning about the revocation of the court's order, which M. de R... had obtained through the protection of Madame, she learned that it did not extend to our children, and that new solicitations were required to obtain their freedom.

Bringing this new order, M. de R... very wisely arranged for the ladies' departure and journey, still intending to take them to Rouen to the home of Lord Clarendon. The death of Her Royal Highness only confirmed him in this intention, and even led him to carry it out more diligently. But he had not foreseen that the change that had occurred with respect to my wife was going to give rise to several difficulties. The proposal to separate them was a terrible blow to Fanny and Cécile. My sister herself was consternated by it. To her, the success of her plan seemed to hinge on her presence; and having no less anxiety for her daughter than M. de R... for his, [444] she could not reconcile the desire she had to stay with the necessity of her leaving. Meanwhile, as my condition still did not allow her to undertake at once the illumination she was preparing for me, and since she could not even show

herself in my house without revealing to me part of her adventure, which would still have left me uneasy for my children, it occurred to her that the journey to Rouen would change nothing about her plans, and that the seven or eight days she would pass accompanying her daughter and Cécile to Lord Clarendon's would on the contrary help give me time to recover. She also thought that as Fanny's stay in Chaillot could only serve now to increase her impatience and distress, it would be good for her peace of mind and her health to come out of her isolation for a while and take a sort of ride with her friends. Cécile was delighted with this plan. Fanny had to resist her regret at going further away from me; but when my sister, who was more and more firmly in favor of this new project, reminded her that prejudices such as mine could not be dissipated in a moment; that precipitation could be as pernicious for me as for her; and finally that ardor ought to yield to prudence, she got her to agree to leave with her the very next day. You are worshipped, my sister said to her flatteringly, and certain, despite all past resentments, soon to recover all your sway over your husband's heart; but consider that we have wounds to mend, and that of all the blows he has received from Gelin, the bloodiest are not the hardest to heal.

The visit which I received that very day from M. de R... and the particular care with which he assessed the state of my wounds, were but a mission he was fulfilling on behalf of the ladies. His testimony having completely reassured them, they departed the next day under his escort. My sister has told me that this journey was made so agreeably that she could not help commenting on this new air of joy to her companions, and congratulating them on it as a happy omen. Fanny seemed to have forgotten all her woes. She was charmed to see herself again in some sense as head of the family, and to find herself as if re-established in some of her rights. Cécile maintained her in this levity with a

hundred tender and playful questions. She would call her my first wife; then, affecting to be serious, she would express embarrassment over the role she would have to maintain with me in our first interview. Will he still tell me he loves me? she would ask; and such pleasant banter occupied them throughout the journey. Being near Rouen, Mme de R..., who was a zealous Protestant, proposed that they stop in Quevilly in order to attend service. This town, the only one besides Charenton where the practice of the reformed religion was publicly allowed in the vicinity of the court, is not far from Rouen, and was then inhabited only by Protestant families.⁵⁶² There were schools for children of both sexes. Cécile had been raised there, and Mme de R... never let a year go by without coming to renew her faith with her there. Besides this ordinary motive, since she believed she was on the verge of leaving her homeland to retire to England, she wanted to propose to Cécile's nurse, who had only the modest pension which she gave her to live on at Quevilly, to leave France as well and come with her. It was a Sunday; and the day being not too far advanced, she was counting on, after satisfying her piety and

⁵⁶² They are probably at the beginning of their second day away from Chaillot. Protestant observances for Rouen were established by royal patent of 1599 in Quevilly. A plan and description of its celebrated polygonal church— which was to be destroyed in 1685 — can be found in Philippe Legendre, *Histoire de la persécution faite à l'Église de Rouen sur la fin du dernier siècle* (Rotterdam: Jean Malherbe, 1704), p. 88 and passim. The service usually began about nine in the morning, earlier in the summertime. See also Samuel Mours, *Le Protestantisme en France au XVII^e siècle (1598–1685)* (Paris: Librairie Protestante, 1967), pp. 64 and 88–89. It was also Henri IV who in 1606 granted to Protestants the right to assemble in Charenton (Seine), where three national synods were held between 1623 and 1645.

gratitude, there being enough time remaining to reach Lord Clarendon's before nightfall.

My wife, who had embraced the religion of France, was the only one whom this proposal could displease; but as she was good enough to yield to the others' inclination, she agreed to go with them, with the intention however of remaining in some house in the town while they were at church. The flow of people told them when they got there that it was time for the sermon. Mme de R... 's ardor did not allow her to go stop at the inn. She asked my wife if she was willing to have her stop the carriage at the door of the church, so that she and my sister and the others could go in. Fanny then having herself driven to the designated place to wait for them, the sight of so many people going by on their way to church caused her to pause for a moment and watch them. She had with her only Rem and a few lackeys. Her full attention, which [445] was divided at first by the multitude, focused despite her on a woman who stopped in the middle of the street to look at her. It was not a face she thought she recognized, but she found in it some resemblance to someone she remembered having seen. Moreover, the curiosity of this stranger manifested itself in a most extraordinary way. Besides her gaze, which seemed animated by some pressing interest, she lurched her head and body forward so suddenly that one would have thought she was about to spring. She took two steps to come toward Fanny, and at the same time drew back. She was smiling as if she hoped to be recognized by this sign of understanding and friendship, and just as quickly becoming serious again, she seemed to fear she had made a mistake. Finally, perceiving that her agitation was causing Fanny some discomfort, she came up to her just as she started to leave: Are my eyes deceiving me, she said, and have I not the pleasure of speaking to Mme Cleveland?

That voice was not unknown to my wife. Yet seeing nothing

that corresponded to the initial ideas it made her remember, she hesitated whether she ought to confess her name in a place where she was not without misgivings. But the stranger, already certain of what she was asking, did not wait for her answer. How can this be? she cried, rushing to embrace her, neither you nor Rem whom I see recognizes Mrs Riding?⁵⁶³ Alas, is she then out of your memory and your heart? Fanny, shocked with surprised, allowed her to hug her, lacking the strength to reply, for her eyes did not give her the same confirmation as her ears. While she indeed recognized Mrs Riding by the sound of her voice, none of the rest corresponded to the memory she preserved of that dear friend. In truth she saw a woman of the same stature, but extremely thin; brown or rather black, pallid and worn, her eyes almost lifeless, her hands and arms wiry; and Mrs Riding's girth sometimes obliged her to complain about her stoutness; her skin was of admirable whiteness; there was liveliness in her countenance and eyes; in short, never were two faces so different. In addition to these powerful reasons, Fanny believed Mrs Riding to be long dead: I had assured her of that. So many reasons, if not to resist the present evidence completely, at least to fall back into a sort of uncertainty composed almost as much of fright as of surprise! Meanwhile Mrs Riding, for she it was indeed, it was that generous and faithful companion of our misfortunes, was hanging on her friend's neck, bathing her face in her tears! How happy I am, she repeated twenty times over. What thanks I owe to heaven! Oh, what can I give in return for all it grants me this day! But why do I not see our dear Cleveland? Where is he? I cannot wait to embrace him! Are the two of you not my dearest possessions

⁵⁶³ It has been eight or nine years since they lost all trace of Mrs Riding and their daughter early in book V.

on earth? How I have sighed, she continued, how I have longed for the happiness I now acquire! Heaven is my witness. I have not lived since the cruel disaster that separated us. Her sighs were stifling her voice, and in her transport only her tears could flow unimpeded.

Fanny recovered little by little from her astonishment; and unable to mistake her best friend any longer, despite the change that age, fatigue, and grief had made in her whole figure, she responded to her embraces with the same fervor. Such an emotional sight drew the gaze of all the passers-by. Finally, after going up to a room where they could talk without inhibition, their hearts overflowed with the liveliest sentiments of friendship. Alas, cried Fanny, who had not yet had the strength to open her mouth, is it then true that heaven is preparing to end my travails? After trying me with so many woes and so much bitterness, is it about to bestow on me all its favors at once? Precious omen! Is my heart allowed to believe it? For if you have thought that nothing could exceed your misfortunes, it is because you have not known about mine. Oh how surely will I stir your affections and your pity! You will see Cleveland again. May your return... But, she said after suspending her sentence, I do not wish to trouble so sweet a moment with tears that are not of joy. [446] Tell me quickly to what heavenly intervention I owe the good fortune of seeing you again, you whom I have believed dead, and whose loss I so long mourned along with that of my daughter. Tell me whence the change that did not allow me to recognize you, and this strange veil which my eyes have such difficulty seeing through. Mrs Riding promised to satisfy her; But do not oblige me, she said, to undertake right now a narrative that requires more tranquillity and background. I shall limit myself today to what concerns you, and keep other details for some day when it is

less urgent for me to have the pleasure of listening to you.⁵⁶⁴

I think, she continued, that you no more than I will ever be able to forget the terrible moment of our separation. The succession of the days and years, the vicissitudes of fate, the variety of things and events have no power over impressions of that nature. It takes no more than a word or a sign to lay bare all its traces.⁵⁶⁵ Remember then those awful circumstances, when more moved by your calamity than by my own, and succumbing to grief as much as to fatigue, I was seized by the cruel Rouintons, and dragged with brutal violence into the midst of that band of tigers. I lost sight of you at the same moment; but while they appeared to be holding counsel over my destiny, the mortal fright I was in did not prevent me from perceiving your daughter, whom one of these wild men was holding on the ground next to me. The example of so many poor wretches who had just been devoured before our eyes, and whose execution was still present in my mind, told me what fate I as well must expect along with that innocent creature. In such a terrible pass I nevertheless thought of you and looked for you. My heart, immersed in its own grief, was still attuned to yours. I realized that sooner or later you could not avoid the same treatment; and I would have borne it with less horror, had I been able to fear nothing for you. From the cries, the preparations, a cruel, mocking air which my guards affected when they looked at me, I assumed that my torture was at hand. I saw the bonfire being lit. Trembling, I invoked heaven, and prayed for

⁵⁶⁴ The coming résumé of Mrs Riding's adventures extends almost to the end of this book; the fuller account she promises will later take up all of book XIII and part of book XIV.

⁵⁶⁵ The complete fidelity of memory is one of the conventions of autobiographical narrative; here Prévost tries to anchor it in a theory of associations already distantly suggestive of Proust.

pity in the next life which it seemed to refuse me in the one I was about to depart.

However, as they were stripping me of the furs that served to clothe me, my executioners perceived that I was of a different sex from theirs. The surprise they showed seeing this, and the rapidity with which they also verified your daughter's, gave me some hope that my terror did not prevent me from studying. I watched all their movements very closely. They assembled. I noted that the surprise of those who had recognized my sex spread to their comrades, and that those furthest away came closer to listen to them. After a few moments' deliberation, they came back toward me, and more humanely untying my hands, they led me to the back of their band, where I easily recognized that I was in the midst of their women. They brought your daughter after me, whom they returned rather gently to my arms. I did not doubt that their custom was to spare women in their savage, bloody executions, and I have since learned more certainly that the most inhuman of America's savages show this sort of respect for nature.

Your story has made me tremble, interrupted my wife; but by whatever fears I was agitated then, I learned later from Cleveland that my daughter had been spared by the Rouintons, and had not died by their cruelty.⁵⁶⁶ He never explained so clearly what

⁵⁶⁶ She does not mean that she thinks Cécile survived (as the end of the paragraph shows) but that she died in some other way and not at the hands of cannibals. Cleveland said earlier that he told Fanny about their daughter's death while withholding the details (book V). Indeed the fact that the deaths of Mrs Riding and their daughter were never objectively attested left open the possibility that they might later reappear, though there has been no indication in the text of such intention before this moment. Strictly speaking, the Clevelands' daughter, born perhaps in

had happened to you, she added, and his equivocal replies have always left me some uncertainty. I do not know, replied Mrs Riding, how he could have acquired this knowledge, for I lost all trace of you from that terrible day, and a hundred vain efforts which I made over many years had left me with no hope of finding them; but if you will allow me to abbreviate my story to come straight to what you must wish to hear, today I shall pass today over my long and arduous peregrinations, the terrible sufferings that have changed my face and features enough to prevent you from recognizing me, a hundred marvelous incidents that will elicit your pity at some times and your wonder at others, even the [447] pains, the cares, the anxieties that the custody and education of your daughter cost me... What are you saying about my daughter? interrupted Fanny once more. Was she not already dead before the savages had taken us off in different directions? No, replied Mrs Riding; but pray, suspend your interventions for a moment.

Far from succumbing then to the misery she necessarily shared with me, an invisible assistance seemed to protect her against all sorts of accidents. Moreover, I continually directed all my attention to shielding her, not only from the elements and from whatever could harm her health at such a tender age, but from the slightest movements that could have disturbed her rest. I even had a way of composing for her, from various essences and juices from the most crudely prepared meats, a liquor so healthy and nourishing that she would not have been better off with the most delicate foods of Europe. Thus I was fortunate enough, over the more than two years that I spent in America, to preserve a life that had become much dearer to me than my own. But let us leave

1661, would be only nine years old in 1670.

aside for today the detail of so many extraordinary adventures. The providence of heaven had set a limit to the agitations of my life. Favorable coincidences took me to a French port, where I found a ship about to sail for Europe. Although I could not leave America without regret, uncertain whether I was not leaving you behind me, and still less sure of the fate that awaited me in another country, my powerlessness to take the slightest action to search for you, the difficulty of living, and the hope of meeting up with you sooner or later in our common fatherland, to which I could not doubt that you would someday be returned by your own desires,⁵⁶⁷ decided me to seize an opportunity which I risked never finding again. I left with your daughter, who was my dearest treasure; and following the captain's course, we reached Le Havre de Grâce after two months' voyage. How is that? cried Fanny with intense emotion, my daughter lived until she reached France! Your daughter is not dead, interrupted Mrs Riding. She is full of life and health. She enjoys all the happiness that fortune could not refuse to her charms, and in less than two days I will restore her to your arms; but control yourself enough to hear me out.

Fanny's heart was too restless to be settled down so easily. She would not have been capable of the attention that was asked of her if her curiosity had not been as impetuous as all her other sentiments. After letting pass a moment to compose herself, Mrs Riding picked up her narrative. The joy I felt at being in Europe did not deliver me from a much more acute anxiety, owing to the

⁵⁶⁷ Thus Fanny, Cleveland, and Mrs Riding, each intending to go to England, all turn up in the same region in France: and the entire immediate family of Cleveland has been even more tightly concentrated around St. Cloud.

poor state of my fortune. I had little money. I had scarcely enough left to get me to England; and aside from the unpleasantness of reappearing in my family in the uniform of misfortune and misery, I feared that after so many years of absence, a return so unforeseen would not be agreeable to those whom I had left in control of my inheritance. The captain was an good man. I confided in him a portion of my concerns. He did not hesitate to offer me his assistance, and given what he meant, as he explained right away, I thought it was something I could accept with no shame. You are a Protestant, he said; all of my family is also, and I have a rich, elderly sister whose religious zeal is capable of inspiring affection in her for you. I am sure she will be most eager to help you, when she adds to that motive the merit of raising in our principles the amiable child you will present to her, and I foresee that she will be delighted to be a mother to her. He added that she lived in Quevilly, which was more or less the center of the Protestant religion in Normandy, and that independently of the choice he was proposing, I would find a hundred ways to establish myself properly in a place where generosity and zeal were the virtues of all the inhabitants. This invitation appealed to me, less for the purpose of fixing my home and settling outside my native land, but to relieve me of present need, and acquire the means of rejoining you. To all these civilities the captain added that of taking me in person to his sister's. She received us with all the kindness he had given me to expect. Your daughter won her heart the moment we [448] arrived. Her first care was to have her baptized: for my past obstacles had not yet permitted me to attend to this duty. The ceremony caused a sensation, and all the townspeople joined together to shower us with compliments and blessings.

The use I made of my freedom and tranquillity was to inform myself of anything that might lead me to knowledge of

your fate. I wrote to London and to every port in France. This activity, the only one that has occupied me since I have been living in Quevilly, and the distress I have continually experienced to find it fruitless, are the only bitter elements that have troubled the happiness of my life. Your daughter's education would have caused me some uneasiness, since my benefactors' birth not being equal to their zeal nor to their wealth, I would have been concerned lest the air and commerce of a village should ill serve to form her in a manner worthy of you. But heaven, holding this child dear, had other resources ready for her. A Protestant lady whose religion brought her each year to Quevilly had the misfortune of losing an only daughter here, like yours about three years old. She was terribly bereaved by this loss. It was the child of her prayers and tears. She had obtained it from heaven only after several years of marriage, and her age promised her no others. In her despair, her husband, to comfort her, proposed that they take in your daughter whom they had seen several times in my arms, and who passed in the town as a child of distinction whose family had been buffeted by fortune. To see her was to love her. That disconsolate mother felt she was regaining everything she had lost. I was at once solicited to grant her a satisfaction that lay within my power. Many excellent people with whom I had developed some relationship pointed out to me that I could hope for nothing more timely. Indeed I regarded this coincidence as an intervention from heaven, and had no need, to concede, of the advantageous conditions offered to me personally. Nevertheless, after assuring myself by reliable sources of the honorable rank held by the gentleman and his wife in France, as I was already of the integrity and generosity of their character, I thought there was another precaution for me to take. It was to require a document signed by them, by which they would recognize that the child who was entrusted to them was not born to them, and that having

received her from me, there was no time or circumstances in which I was not entitled to recall her under my tutelage. This detail seemed to me all the more necessary that the gentleman's intention was not only to adopt her, but to conceal in his home region the loss he had sustained, and which was so happily repaired. His usual residence is about thirty leagues away, and the daughter he had just lost having been nursed from her birth at Quevilly, he flattered himself the secret of this substitution would go forever unknown. He hoped for the same reason that I would continue to live in Quevilly. I much protested such a harsh condition; but as I had admitted to him, without naming you and without going into the reasons behind our misfortunes, that I had little hope of ever seeing you again, he took advantage of this avowal to get me to agree that it was to your daughter's greatest advantage to pass indeed as his own, and that consequently we had to take precautions against anything that could give rise to other suspicions. We will see you often, he said; I shall continue to travel every year to Quevilly, and you will sometimes come to enjoy to your heart's content the pleasure of seeing your pupil. He provided me before his departure with a pension of two thousand francs, which has always been faithfully paid out.

It was not without shedding some tears that I separated from my dear daughter: for do not begrudge me the gratification of sharing so tender a name with you. I had the satisfaction at their departure to see them already as passionate for that charming child as you would have been yourself, had you seen all her graces at that age. Today you may well imagine that the passage of time has only increased them. I am not trying to flatter a mother's heart. Oh what a lovely sight I promise you! I see her several times each year, and each time I do myself new violence to leave her. Nothing has been spared for her education, and her natural charms seem to grow by the day. Yet she still does not know

[449] to what mother she belongs, and I have wept a hundred times, embracing her, being obligated for her tranquillity to conceal from her her birth and your misfortunes.

A torrent would have been more easily constrained than Fanny's heart. Ah, cruel friend, she cried, why are you not more careful for the impetuosity of my feelings? I can scarcely breathe. Let us go. Who is keeping us? I will never see my daughter soon enough. I fear I shall die when I embrace her. We shall go right away, if you so command, interrupted Mrs Riding; but take the rest of the day to get some rest. At least, replied Fanny with the same impatience, tell me where she lives, the name of that generous gentleman who has been a father to her, the name of that lady whose happiness I envy for having so long seen and embraced her; tell me everything that can stand in for the pleasure you are deferring. Mrs Riding, to whom it was surprising that the name of M. and Mme de R... had not come out in such a long conversation, named the two of them, and designated their residence as St. Cloud. It only remains to name Cécile, Fanny said to her, looking at her with a timid and uncertain eye. Yes, replied Mrs Riding, failing to notice that she had been anticipated; that is your daughter's name. But how could you know her name? she added with surprise.⁵⁶⁸ Might you have discovered what I have so carefully

⁵⁶⁸ *Cécile* was clearly the name of the R...s' deceased daughter, whose place the Clevelands' has seamlessly filled, the latter's name had never previously been given in the novel. In Mrs Riding's story in books XIII–XIV, on the other hand, she is nevertheless called Cécile from the beginning. In the original edition, this name is written sometimes with an accent and sometimes without; it has the advantage that it can be either French or English, but since the R...s are French I have kept it. It is an old novelistic device, perhaps even more frequent in comedy, for the substitution of one child for another to lead at length to a scene

kept hidden until today? My wife was no longer in a condition to answer. The fullness of a joy so sudden had her heart in a knot. Her eyes clouded over. She leaned on her friend's arm, which she seized with her two hands, like a person out of breath who tries to hold onto something to get her strength back, and who fears she will have none at all if she were not supported. Her breathing was heavy and mixed with a tender and plaintive sound. She had no movement except to squeeze intermittently the arm she was not about to release. Mrs Riding, who had taken her agitation she saw during her narrative for the natural effect of a mother's anxieties, had taken pleasure in leading her gradually to the conclusion,⁵⁶⁹ and was still content to have moved her so. But beginning to fear something from such an intense emotion, although very far from

of *reconnaissance* or discovery of proper attribution, which straightens everything out. Is this identification of Cécile with the Clevelands' lost daughter in accordance with the author's intentions in the first four volumes of 1731–1732? There is no certainty of it. But the daughter's possible return in some other circumstances (for example, in restoration England, the development of which had been announced in the preface) could not be ruled out. Either case would force Prévost to do some violence to the novel's chronology – previously quite coherent – for this daughter could at this point be only be about nine. But Fanny has said (end of book IX) that she has been jealous of Mme Lallin for fifteen years (thus since 1655); and even this rectification does not allow Cécile to be sixteen in 1668 (book VI). Further on, in 1670, she will be given only fourteen (book XI), and Fanny twenty-six, which allows Prévost to glide over the unlikely dates at the expense of inexact information in terms of volumes I–IV, where Fanny was born in 1648 (not 1644) and Cécile in 1661 (and not 1656, at which time her parents had not yet met).

⁵⁶⁹ *Dénouement* in the original, a properly narratological term, and thus an interesting metanarrative remark with respect to the author.

foreseeing its consequences and divining its cause, she exhorted her to compose herself and moderate her feelings. Fanny was unable to recover the use of her voice, and answered only with deep sighs.

While all her senses were in such disorder, M. de R...’s carriage was heard at the door of the inn. Cécile was with him. The unease of an hour’s absence made her seek at once what she could not lose sight of without disquiet. She rushed upstairs impatiently without waiting for Mme de R... and my sister. Fanny easily recognized her by her hurried step; and hearing her two steps from the door, all the strength she had left could not sustain her against the redoubling of her transport. She fell unconscious into Mrs Riding’s arms. At that same moment Cécile opened the door. The sight before acutely alarmed her. She ran to help provide assistance, while Mrs Riding, less upset by an incident that could not be very dangerous than surprised at her pupil’s unexpected arrival, speechless with joy at such a felicitous encounter, and losing, as it were, the use of her reason as Fanny had lost that of her senses, began to cry out with all her strength: It’s your mother. My daughter, it’s your mother. Do you not recognize her? Does nature tell you nothing? This is your mother, she repeated again; and how do you not feel it, without waiting to hear it from my lips?⁵⁷⁰ Whatever stirrings these exclamations might have aroused in Cécile’s heart, the error in which she had been raised, and of which she had never had the least suspicion, hardly permitted her to understand their meaning. Wholly absorbed by my wife’s condition, she continued to minister to her feverishly, when M. de R... appearing at the door of the room

⁵⁷⁰ The assumption is that the interior “voice” of blood should have spoken. Fanny expresses the same thought a few pages later.

with his wife and my sister, that new object redoubled Mrs Riding's consternation. She ran to them: What do I see! What favor of heaven's reunites us! she cried, not leaving them time to look around them. What miracles! Do you know this lady? Do you know that this is Mme Cleveland, the mother of Cécile, that dear friend I believed lost for her daughter and for me, and whom [450] I have so long despaired of ever seeing again? Well, here she is. Give her back her dear daughter. Assure Cécile that you are not her father, for all my words cannot persuade her. Hasten now, do not delay her happiness for a moment. In the eagerness that animated her, she seemed offended by M. de R... 's coolness. Indeed he had stood motionless, but it was because of his extreme astonishment. He first verified that my wife's illness was only a faint caused by joy; and while the other ladies were busy assisting her, he asked Mrs Riding for some less tumultuous illumination.

She satisfied him in few words. Everything inclined him to believe her. He lifted his arms heavenward in surprise and wonderment; and coming over to Cécile, who, understanding nothing of what she had heard, paid no attention to anything but the object of all her ministrations, he took her hands almost in spite of herself: My daughter, he said, for I shall never give up such a dear name, heaven has favored you more than me; it is about to take from me the whole joy of my life in order to grant you a happiness you would never have expected. I am not your father. Let yourself follow all the movements of nature: it is to my dear Cleveland that you owe your birth, and this lady is your mother.

He could not end these words without shedding some tears; but what was that sentiment in comparison with those that arose in the heart of Cécile? It is true she had understood nothing of Mrs Riding's disjointed exclamations, and that all she had felt until then was blind instincts, which even caused her some confusion, and which she sometimes feared to trust; but the smallest

ray of light was instantly for her a conviction, and her heart required no further evidence. M. de R... has told me a hundred times that he seemed to see all her transports painted in her eyes, and that he himself had never been so transported as by this scene. It did not last long: for at that same time she slipped from his hands, pressing them with a great cry; she made her way between the ladies surrounding her mother; she fell upon her without consideration for her unchanged condition. She kissed her a hundred times, drenching her face with a torrent of tears, called her a hundred passionate names, imploring her to open her eyes and recognize her daughter: such were the first outpourings of her affection; and if they are the most easily expressed, they are not the most powerful.

There was no faint so deep that it could make Fanny unresponsive to such ardor. Indeed she immediately came to, but only to fall back into her previous state. They had to force Cécile to remove to an adjacent room. What violence! In her absence they could hear the sound of her sighs and agitations. Meanwhile that way they succeeded in getting my wife's spirits restored, and disposing both of them to get more control over their sentiments. Cécile was brought back by M. de R..., who was exhorting her on the way to moderate her expressions of affection, in the very interests of a mother whom she had such good reasons to love. But although both were bound by their promises, it was very difficult to contain them within the bounds that had been imposed on them. Fanny did not see her daughter reappear without being on the verge of experiencing again all the phases she had just come through. She extended her arms toward her with all her might; the avidness of her soul was so vividly painted in her eyes even in the midst of their languor that they feared lest nature completely collapse under such a violent exertion. What must it have been then when she held her pressed to her breast, and felt

the double charm of receiving her caresses and showering her with her own. Oh joy of so tender a mother! Oh delights that unfeeling hearts will never understand! Alas, where was I during such precious moments! Ought such a moving scene take place in the absence of a father?

Finally words forced their way out, and the very ardor that accompanied them became a relief to those two tender hearts. Fanny's were divided between two objects that seemed to fill her both to the same degree at once. I was as [451] present in her eyes as was her daughter. She addressed to me as to her everything that came confusedly to her tongue. You will restore your heart to me, she said with a sort of indulgence which she was already adopting as our reconciliation approached, you will not resist the tears of your daughter and my own, you will no more be unjust, cruel, mean! Oh, my daughter, it is to you I shall owe your father's heart. I shall find again with you all I had lost. But how did I not sense, she added, never tiring of gazing at her, how could I not have recognized from the first moment that I had my daughter before my eyes? Was the extraordinary inclination I felt for her not the voice of nature? A hundred times, my dear Cécile, I felt all my blood stirring when I held you in my arms. Was yours more tranquil? Oh, what pleasures and comforts lost! You would have shared your mother's sufferings. You would have sweetened the bitterness of her tears. You would have swayed your father with your own tears. Cécile interrupted these tender words at each moment with her embraces and the most passionate caresses. In uttering my name, she scarcely yet dared add to it the word father; but she vouched to her, she said, for my sentiments; she assured her mother that her tribulations were about to end, and equally invested already in my happiness and in her consolation, she put all of her mind to pitying her and justifying me.

No one interrupted them during that initial outpouring of

natural affection, not only because once they had surmounted the first transports there was nothing more to fear for their health, which only became stronger from what at first could have weakened it, but because there was no one in the assembly who did not have her curiosity to satisfy, her doubts to clear up, and who was not ardently preoccupied by that concern. Mrs Riding had gotten over her astonishment only to fall into another, when she understood from some words that escaped Fanny that division had arisen in my family, and had produced effects that made her lament. She got to this calamity explained to her by M. de R... and Mme Bridge, whom she heard being called my sister, without being able to imagine how she came to have that relationship with me. Then, pausing first at what most concerned her friendship, she had scarcely conceived the nature of our misfortunes before she thought she could discern their cause; and having recalled a hundred circumstances which time had not erased from her memory, nothing was more urgent to her than getting to the bottom of this terrible adventure. Heavens, what am I hearing! she said, coming over to Fanny; what mortal poison has destroyed your peace?⁵⁷¹ What, blood...? My poor friend, had you not already shed enough tears? But I do not ask you, she continued, interrupting herself, for a single word that could renew your pains. I leave you in the arms of your friends. Someone tell me where is M. Cleveland. I fly to him at once with his daughter. It is I who shall restore you to each other. He will not resist for a moment my reasons and my tears. Where is he? I go with Cécile. Let us go,

⁵⁷¹ Being Fanny's confidante, Mrs Riding knew of her jealousy for Mme Lallin, and thus intuitively discerns the source of the difficulty. She does not know that Mme Lallin has since joined them, but the letter she had written to Cleveland from Powhatan (book IV) allows her this conjecture.

my dear child, she said, drawing her from her mother's hands to embrace her; it is to us that their happiness is reserved. They do not know all the reasons they have to love each other. She would have climbed at once into M. de R... 's carriage to go to St. Cloud. But my sister, who knew my situation better than she did, and had other fears that could give her pause, entreated her suspend her intention for a moment. I do not doubt, she said, that your ministries would have all the success you hope, and such happy beginnings should cause us to expect nothing more but favors and miracles from heaven's goodness; but you do not know all the dangers from which we have to protect ourselves. Whereupon she explained to her in few words, not only what she apprehended for my health, which was still too frail to sustain the sight of my daughter and the knowledge of my good fortune, but what there was to fear for Cécile's safety, and how imprudent it would be to send her back toward Paris. Let us go together, she added; your presence will suffice. M. de R... will be responsible for conveying Mme Cleveland and her daughter to Lord Clarendon's, where they will await securely the effect of our journey. She added that if one were even to heed certain reasons that time did not permit her [452] to explain, her departure with Mrs Riding should be put off until the next day; and seeing her surprised at the ardor that a person whom she did not know seemed to show for our interests, she promised her explanations that would lessen her surprise, and which already made her think of her friendship as an assured benefit.

Despite all Mrs Riding's urging, exceeded only by that of Fanny and Cécile, M. de R... agreed with my sister, and joined her to persuade them to accept her advice. The intention she had not explained was to write to me that very evening, and prepare me for her arrival, in accordance with the plan she had not yet suspended. This she did, while M. de R... was dispatching one of

his servants to Lord Clarendon to notify him of the visit he was about to receive. Quevilly being in the vicinity of Rouen, he had learned that that gentleman had recently retired to a most commodious house which he had let near the city, and that was another advantage that seemed to him extremely favorable for all our purposes. The courier was back in less than a quarter-hour. He returned charmed by the joy that Lord Clarendon had expressed to him upon learning news of me and about my family's arrival. Solely his desire to avoid publicity had prevented him from coming in person to welcome his guests; but M. de R... understood that he ought to anticipate every gesture of affection and zeal that I had given him to expect from so generous a friend.

Joy seeking only to spread, it would have been difficult for so many satisfied hearts to contain their transports; and could they have succeeded, nothing obliged them to do themselves that violence. The opinion I had passed on to M. de R...⁵⁷² and my sister-in-law of the character of Lord Clarendon caused them to anticipate voluntarily the questions they ought to expect on the status of our affairs and the motives of their journey. That illustrious friend received their confidence with eagerness, which he told them came less from his curiosity than from his friendship and zeal. He did not refuse them his advice. Although a foreigner, he said, my estrangement from the English court, and the conduct I have constantly observed since I have been living in France, shield me here from any kind of suspicion. I can serve you without worrying that I am being observed and my motives suspect. If I have an accurate grasp of your situation, you can have at present only two causes of concern: one regarding the health of M. Cleveland and his reconciliation with his wife; the other on your passage to England, to which your enemies might still create obstacles. The first of these two matters, he continued, addressing my sister, can hardly cause you henceforth as much consternation as pleasure, and I foresee that the same thing that is going to restore M. Cleveland's tranquillity will soon also complete the healing of his wounds. That is your task, he added, and I shall learn from you yourself in what way you think I can contribute to it; but here

⁵⁷² In the original edition of vols. VII and VIII the characters known heretofore by the initial R... are called L***. I have reestablished the same initial as before to avoid needlessly disorienting the reader.

is what I have to propose to you with respect to your other fears. The Duke of Monmouth is in Rouen.⁵⁷³ The terrible death of Madame has forced him to leave Paris, for reasons I need not go into.⁵⁷⁴ He honors me with his friendship, and I know from him that, no longer able to stand France, in his present despair at a misfortune for which in part he blames himself, he is awaiting, in order to return to England, only the arrival of a courier he has dispatched to London. You can cross the waters with him. I will arrange this favor for you. He will have you included in the manifest for his household, and his personage shields you from any inquiries that might cause you problems.

Such openness allowed no other objection than my health, for which M. de R... dared not answer enough to believe it could so be up to a long and arduous journey. But as it was not a matter of leaving at that very moment, and it could be hoped that my strength would increase with every passing day, Lord Clarendon easily got him to agree that in this expectation we should accept the option he was proposing to us. This was an additional motive for Mrs Riding and my sister, who were still determined to set out the next day for Paris. They shared all of their plans with the earl. He had them change only the intention, on which Mrs Riding was still insisting, to take Cécile with them. You do not require her presence, he said, to touch the heart of such a tender father. It is enough for you to announce to him all the good things he does not know about, and which can no longer escape from him. Fanny

⁵⁷³ Bastard son of Charles II and Lucy Walter, Monmouth (1649-1685) was later to pretend to the throne upon the death of his father in 1685, only to be beheaded for treason (15 July 1685) on the orders of his uncle James II.

⁵⁷⁴ This allusion will be explained later in book XI.

like him seemed persuaded it was not necessary to present me with my daughter, especially when she was herself being told she must remain in Rouen; and at that moment, perhaps, she consulted her own interest more than my own.

[454] However that may be, it was among those persons to whom on earth I was dearest that this council was being held, and all these deliberations had been formulated. Who would imagine that prudence and affection had combined all their wisdom only to engage them in the path most contrary to their expectations, and most fatal to all their desires!

Whilst Mrs Riding and my sister were departing, full of hope, and their zeal was being aroused in the arms of Fanny and my daughter, who were accompanying them to their carriage, drenching them in their tears, and commending to them, as to heaven, all they thought they had to desire, the Duke of Monmouth, agitated by his sorrows, was walking on the plain, under the pretext of a hunt, which occupied him less than his musings. He was so close to the chateau, when the ladies were saying their final farewells, that, having identified the Earl of Clarendon, who had given his hand to my sister-in-law, he approached on the gallop to greet him. His arrival did not prevent the two ladies from leaving at that very minute; but the earl, who saw him familiarly every day, urged him to dismount, in order to rest a moment from the fatigue of his exercise, and seeing that he betrayed extraordinary admiration at the sight of my wife and daughter, he thought this encounter propitious for the plan he had conceived. His first compliment was related to his purposes: he introduced M. de R... and the ladies to the duke as persons of distinction who merited his esteem, and who would one day have a favor to ask of him. This was to encourage him to press the conversation further, and provide him with an entertainment more in line with his taste than the hunt. It required no more urging

than that to get him to agree to the earl's proposal. His discourse was a continual exaggeration of his good fortune and of the charms of the mother and the daughter. He yielded easily to the invitation to made to him to dine at the chateau; and the air of satisfaction which did not leave him the rest of the day caused the earl to surmise that his sorrow was not difficult to overcome.

Fanny and her daughter, although absorbed with other cares, thought they owed to our common interests the indulgence they had in bearing with his conversation and flatteries. Lord Clarendon thanked him for the disposition he seemed to adopt to help us, and invited him with that very intention to come back to his house as often as he could hope to spend the day there without boredom. This offer was accepted so eagerly that such enthusiasm became suspect to my wife. As much as she relied on the virtue of the Earl of Clarendon and on the zeal of M. de R..., she hardly knew them, and reason is sometimes less useful than time for building confidence. Everything seemed ominous to her in such a precarious situation; and trembling for Cécile, on whom the duke's eyes had fallen as often as on herself, she deduced that his expressed intention of returning was a new threat of fate against our tranquillity.

It was true that the duke had taken away the seeds of a dangerous passion, and that, giving no thought to resisting it, he had left determined to seek every means of pleasing. But through an extraordinary caprice of love, the true sentiments of his heart were undecided. He hesitated between the charms of the mother and of the daughter, and the experience of a single day not having sufficed to determine his penchant, he had put off thinking

through his own dispositions until the visits he had in mind.⁵⁷⁵ This uncertainty would in anyone else have not supposed much ardor; but the Duke of Monmouth never formed moderate desires: young, presumptuous, ardent to the point of impetuosity, blessed moreover with every gift of nature and fortune, in short just as history depicts him, he never aimed for anything that did not immediately become in his mind an invariable law, and in his heart a violent passion. The stature he enjoyed, at an age on which one does not ordinarily rely for important matters, and the brilliant role he had just played at the French court, further increased his impatience and natural pride.⁵⁷⁶ From that very day he instructed his servants to investigate everything to do with the situation and plans of the two ladies. Having quickly uncovered part of our difficulties made him bolder in his hopes, and the very usefulness we could [455] obtain from his protection in order to return to our country made him believe that his favors would be counted and serve to make his person appreciated.

⁵⁷⁵ It is chance that will ultimately decide: Monmouth's reaction echoes that of Cleveland himself, who also at one point (in book VII) could not decide between them. Now it is clearer why the two women are equally attractive.

⁵⁷⁶ In *Le Pour et Contre* (XVII, 13), Prévost cites a passage from Burnet (*History*, t. III, p. 52) about Monmouth: "He had several good qualities in him, and some that were as bad. He was soft and gentle even to excess, and too easy to those who had credit with him. [...] But he was too much given to pleasure and to favourites." He further adds the narrative of Monmouth's death also drawn from Burnet (III, 49–52). Prévost may also have borrowed certain traits of his Monmouth, and especially his amorous inclinations, from a fictionalized biography which had appeared in 1686 with the title *Le Duc de Monmouth, nouvelle historique* (Liège: G. Kalcoven).

He noticed from the very next day, however, that he was not offered all the access he was expecting. Fanny's reflections having only increased her alarms, she chose to feign an indisposition that prevented her from appearing; and propriety requiring her daughter not to leave her side, it was impossible for the duke to obtain the opportunity to see them. They continued to decline his visits, under the same pretext; his presumption did not allow him to suspect there was ruse involved. He did not cease to come regularly to Lord Clarendon's, and keeping his sentiments to himself, he fell back onto having the ladies assured that they could rely completely on his services.

Their need they had of them was not their most lively worry. They spent every moment discussing my sister's journey, and all their strength hoping for her return. The difficulties of her undertaking did not cause them more displeasure than its duration, and a hundred times, in their impatience, these two passionate hearts wished they could follow in her path to hasten their happiness and mine. Heaven, with what severity you were still deferring it! Should unworthy obstacles hold for a minute against all the favors you had determined to shower on us? Did I require rigorous preparations to enjoy your benefits; or did you want to warn me again that if happiness is so close to pain, one must always think that suffering is not farther from pleasure?

Mrs Riding, having passed all her time on the road listening to my sister-in-law relate that long part of my adventures that had occurred since our separation, judged, based on the information she received about my dispositions and the state of my strength, that there were precautions to take before she came to me. She proposed to Mme Bridge that they go stay at the chateau of M. de R..., which was not far from St. Cloud; her previous relationship with him had made her familiar with its avenues. Her intention was to be preceded by my sister, who would have come to prepare

me to see her by telling me she was coming; in addition, the knowledge she hoped to glean so near my house could make her mission much easier even to my sister. That is what they did, and what they learned upon arrival made them thank heaven for that inspiration.

One of their servants, whom my sister dispatched immediately to Drink, reported back to them, on behalf of that faithful Englishman, that despite my weakness, from which I had not recovered sufficiently for to reassure him, I had wanted to see Gelin who had appeared at my door, and that I had been listening and talking to him for a long time. Drink, having no doubt that my sister would be as alarmed as he at the very name of Gelin, sent her word at the same time that though he had not been able to oppose my orders, he at least had taken the precautions he thought necessary for my safety. He had allowed my enemy into the room only after proposing that his hands be tied; and as humiliating as this proposal was for Gelin, he had agreed to it. Moreover, my domestics were standing guard at my door, determined to punish him on the spot with their own hands if he allowed himself the slightest aggression. They had indeed taken all these measures before introducing him, and their principal attention had been to conceal them from me. Gelin, for it was true that he had been closeted with me for two hours, had allowed his hands to be tied by Drink, without any other precaution except to spare some of his shame by holding them under the sleeves of his clothing, which were long enough to cover them. I did not notice the constraint he was under, and this interesting interview, about which the reader is rightly impatient to hear, ended without my having given it the slightest notice.

It is to espouse my sister's thinking that I attribute to heaven the decision she had made to stop at M. de R... 's with Mrs Riding; for she has protested to me a hundred times that she would

not have been able to control her reason at the sight of my assassin and her husband's murderer. Who knows indeed what her initial transports would have rendered her capable of? [456] But being reassured by Drink's testimony, she sent him orders to have her notified the minute I was free, or give her news even more promptly if something happened that called for greater diligence.

But I needed no one's help, and the pains that remained for me to suffer came less from my fears or dangers than from the compounding of my sentiments and the impetuosity of my desires. I had received the day before, that is to say the day that my sister left Rouen, the last letter she had written me from Quevilly. It was no longer conjectures or doubts. In the first fervor of her joy, she had so little measured her expressions, that caught up myself in the force of her terms as much as by the reflections I have already described, I had yielded unreservedly to the extremity of a transport that I could no longer moderate.

Oh God, the happy moments! My sister's letter had fallen from my hands. A thousand delicious sensations, a renewal of life and warmth, raptures of joy, a taste of virtue and love, all the sweet feelings the loss of which had so long been my despair, had filled my heart at the same instant. I had remained as if immobilized in the sensation of my happiness; and too weak for so much pleasure, I had long feared I might succumb to it, and that a surfeit of joy might do in an instant what suffering had not been able to do in the course of so many unhappy years.

My sister nevertheless did not go into a detail that left nothing to be explained. She assured me of my wife's innocence. She depicted her as virtuous, faithful, more affectionate and amiable than ever; transported with desire to see me again, and paying with her tears for every moment of a cruel delay that was killing her with impatience. She promised me more than I could ever hope: miracles, she said, favors from heaven which she

herself had difficulty believing, although she already possessed what she was announcing to me, and the treasures in store for me were really in her hands. She asked me for only one day to make me the happiest of all husbands and of all fathers; finally, as she was to arrive at my house when I least expected her, she told me to take care of my health, and put my philosophy to use to sustain excesses of blessings of which what everything she was writing to me was but a feeble image. Sure as I was of her wisdom and friendship, I could not refuse my confidence to such high promises; and without trying to see beyond Fanny's return, I saw in it enough to justify her strongest expressions; but while lending myself eagerly to such flattering appearances, obscurities remained which returned to torment me despite myself, and still left a few clouds in my imagination.

Mme Lallin had gone to Chaillot: she had not been content to question the servants; but although she had spoken with the mother superior, whom she supposed better informed, she had been disappointed to obtain no information from her beyond what I had learned from Drink. My sister had most prudently judged that she should not let anyone in on the secret of her journey; and having spoken only of her intention which she had with Fanny of going promptly to England, she had left all the nuns thinking that she had taken the road directly for London. This reply, which was confirmed to Mme Lallin, without the least explanation, would have augmented the distress which Drink's first report had caused me, had I not considered that my sister seeming to follow Fanny's every movement, it was equally impossible that she should not know about her departure, and that after learning of it she would continue to encourage me more and more in her letters. Each day I received a new one, with explanations that seemed to be the continual effect of her inquiries, and always supposed that she was not losing sight of my wife's conduct. In truth, I had diffi-

culty understanding where she got the information she passed on to me; but most of her letters being brought to me by one of my servants pretending to have just arrived from Rouen, I figured she was using the same opportunity to write regularly to Chaillot. [457] Since I received few that did not contain some details of Gelin's passion and ruses, I determined to satisfy the curiosity I had always had to speak with him; and once my sister's last letter had dispelled all that remained of my suspicions, I was only the more eager to discover their malefic source.

I sent for Mme Lallin. Look at this letter, I said, and congratulate me on my change of fate; for I know the confidence I owe to my sister, and wherever Fanny may be, I expect nothing but happy days from now on. Yes, I went on, seeing that she was looking at me dumbfounded, Fanny is innocent, I doubted her virtue unjustly, I restore to her my esteem and affection. I will be happy, I continued with a sigh half held back, if only I can make her forget sufferings of which I still do not know the causes! But I want to know them, and it is not enough to do her justice today if I do not know to what demon I must attribute her misfortunes and mine. Gelin is being blamed for them, I added, looking straight at her. He has proven by signs too dreadful that it is he alone I must accuse. Nevertheless, I will not be content if I do not obtain the confession from his mouth, and it is not treating my assassin too harshly to predicate his remission on that price. I was going to invite Mme Lallin to search with me what measures I needed to take to obtain the satisfaction I desired; but after some moments' agitation, which I first attributed to the interest she took in my good fortune, I saw her faint dead away.

I must protest, for my honor and hers, that I had not the slightest inkling of what was causing her disarray. If my words had sounded somewhat stern, it was perhaps an effect of the advice of my sister, who exhorted me in her letter to recall my

principles of philosophy, to taste my joy without indecency or transports. I had reflected on this before I called in Mme Lallin, and I had all the more willingly espoused my sister's thinking, that applying her advice seemed to me much simpler in the favors of fortune than in its setbacks. Thus I had attempted to repress even my sighs. But the upheaval in Mme Lallin came from a source which she had concealed from me, and of which I could not have the slightest suspicion. My sister had written to her by the same courier who had brought me her last letter, and not concealing from her that she was forced by invincible reasons to attribute all of my family's calamities to her, she exhorted her to repair mistakes which she imputed less to her than to fate, and in any case to do everything possible to favor the restoration of our peace. Opening her eyes onto the past, Mme Lallin had not doubted that I had received the same impressions from my sister. She had come in trembling when I had sent for her, and with her mind already too troubled to sustain for long a conversation of which her advance notice caused her to take every word as a reproach, she had finally succumbed to the agitations of grief and fear. As I had not yet the same knowledge, and my sister's prudence had turned all my resentment against Gelin, I regarded what had just occurred in front of me as a passing accident, and had it addressed without being alarmed by it.

My only regret was to see deferred by this complication the measures which I wished to take to arrange a clarification with my enemy. I learned that Mme Lallin had taken to her bed, and did not expect to be in a condition to leave it before the day's end. My sense of urgency only increased. The most timely visit which I received from M. Audiger, that same canon who had opened the entry to my house to Gelin, gave rise to the desire to employ him for this mission. He anticipated my desires by politely offering me his services; I accepted. What I have to request of you, I said,

benefits no less your profession than the zeal you declare for my interests. You know Gelin, the source of all my woes. Madame's incomparable goodness has made me master of his fate. I forgive him, and am thinking of granting him his freedom. He shall receive it at this moment from your hands, if you are willing to assume the execution of my wishes. But reasons to which the happiness of my life is attached make me wish to talk with him without [458] witnesses. Thereupon I asked M. Audiger to see the chiefs of justice, who had received Madame's instructions, and agree with them in what manner I could be satisfied. He went directly to St. Cloud. A few necessary formalities which all my impatience could not abridge put off until the next day the success of his efforts. I was feeling uneasy about it when Drink came, visibly disconcerted, to announce that Gelin was asking to speak with me, and was remaining obstinately at my door.

I ought to have been prepared for this strange visit, and indeed I desired it as something as important to my life as to my honor. Nevertheless, the name of such a cruel enemy, perhaps as much as the importance of the enlightenment I was expecting from his mouth, caused me an emotion from which all my resistance was unable to defend me. Drink, who saw this, advised me to have shamefully driven away the impudent fellow from whom I could expect nothing but abuse and lies. No, I said. It was I myself who wished to see him, and although I have difficulty understanding why he comes alone to my door, I want him to be let in. My servants dared not contradict me, but their attention to my safety led them to take precautions which I confess I in no way noticed.

My enemy entered confidently, but more modestly than I expected. His face was pale, his cheeks hollow; and though he made a point of lowering his eyes, I could see that they lacked their usual petulance. I had a chair brought up for him. He refused

it, and as he seemed to be waiting for my servants to leave, I motioned to them to withdraw. I was about to open my mouth, and having no intention of humiliating him with too bitter reproaches, I was seeking expressions firm enough to contain him within proper bounds, when he, coming closer to my bed, and putting one knee to the ground, anticipated me with words that astonished me as much as his action. Oh Cleveland, he cried in a feeble and affectionate voice, oh the best and most unhappy of all men, what do you ask of me that is not inferior to my regret, and a hundred times too gentle for my punishment! Speak up, spell it out, for the life you grant me is no longer my own; and if I thank you for having saved it from the shame of the scaffold, it is not to preserve it without your orders, or to make use of it for anything other than to serve you. He paused, glancing at me timidly, as if he were searching in my eyes in what way I was receiving this confession of his remorse. I even saw some tears running slowly down his cheeks. You must not be leery of me, he added, lowering his head with an air of humiliation, and when I obtained from your friends the liberty of coming here alone and unguarded, you may be sure they believed they could rely on the proofs they required of the change in me. Oh, how sweet it is to confess my crimes to you! What a terrible weight I have come to lay down! But you do not know all of them. I am ready to declare to you the most odious of them all, if you wish to hear it.

He paused again, to be sure I was agreeing to hear him. I was in a turmoil that I shall never describe just as I was capable of experiencing it. Whatever gentleness heaven may have put into my character, and even whatever penchant my enemy's voluntary humiliation made me feel for pity, I was held back, as if despite myself, by the image of all my sufferings, which his presence seemed to conflate before my eyes. The more I was beginning to flatter myself they were nearly ended, the more indignation I felt

at the sight of the one who had made them so long and so unbearable. I should listen without horror to a traitor who has seen me in misery without pity? Should my heart be stirred for its executioner? Shall I care for remorse that arises after consummation of the crime? And am I even sure, I said, that he who has betrayed my confidence a hundred times to plunge all the more easily and more certainly a dagger into my breast, is not here again to deceive me by some new imposture? Who will tell me all of a sudden how to identify the heart of a traitor through so many clouds in which it can wrap itself? These jumbled thoughts, further augmented by my jumbled sentiments, gave me an air so somber and distracted that Gelin, uncertain of his situation, [459] fell into the same silence, and one would not easily have discerned for which of the two this constraint was the most draining. Finally, the reasons that had made me wish to see him were strong enough to overcome all my repugnance. I replied to him that if he was capable of the repentance he pretended, it was a kind of virtue, which he should preserve more constantly than the one he had sullied by so many crimes. I do not ask, I said, to learn of the ones I of which I am unaware. May they remain forever unknown; and for your own relief, may the memory of them perish even in your own heart! But if among your regrets there enters some shadow of justice and pity, tell me by what spell you were able to make poor Fanny forget her duty. Tell me what poison corrupted her innocence. He interrupted me heatedly: Of what are you accusing her, he cried, and will you make me count also destroying her virtue among my crimes? Ah, if the blackest of those for which I must reproach myself is to have had the design and the hope of seducing her, it has always been the least fruitful, and this was the shameful confession for which I was preparing. Do not impute to me the crimes of others. Whatever they be, heaven knows that if they have in any way tainted your

wife's character, they were more fortunate than mine. But do not let yourself be deceived by impostures, and will you ever persuade me that a woman so far above all the weaknesses of her sex has been capable of forgetting her duty?

This misunderstanding, in which I had not intended to make him fall, seemed to me so natural and in such good faith that it had more power than his protestations and oaths to dispose me to believe his confession was sincere. I did not even want to leave him in the error into which my expressions had plunged him. It is you alone, I said, whom I have a right to blame for my wife's transgressions, as it is from you that I can learn their full extent. I impute to her none but the ones you have made her commit. Your blackest offenses are those to which you have made her an accomplice: with this difference between you, that the repentance of a tarnished woman does not suffice for the satisfaction of an offended husband. That was explaining myself clearly enough to make him understand what I suspected him of. He rose, as if pressed by an inner movement that manifested itself in the contortions of his face, and placing himself in the armchair I had had brought up for him, he implored me to listen to him.

In the horrible abyss I am in, he said, guilty and dishonored in my own eyes, how sweet it is to be able still to bear witness that my heart at least yearns for virtue! I did not abandoned it wilfully: it has always made me feel that I was born for virtue; and believe me when I confess to my shame that I have never once offended virtue but that it has been promptly avenged by my remorse. But such is my unhappy nature that a passion once kindled in my veins acts on me with the same force, and that being unable to resist either impression, it is always the more intense and more present one that prevails and makes me follow it.

He seemed about to give me the complete history of his

passion; but being impatient to hear only the circumstances that might concern me, I urged him to limit himself to the story of his flight with my wife. After reflecting for a moment, he lifted his eyes toward heaven. I can readily see, he said,⁵⁷⁷ the reason that is pressing you, and indeed when I remember our departure from St. Helena I can understand that I was not the only miserable one. But you were filled with a passion, he added, that made you less sensitive to your loss; and I who could only lament the present, and could see in the future only faint cause for hope, was in stealing from you the object of all my desires taking with me only the subject of my pains, and the cause that was only perpetually to increase them. What are you saying about my passion, I interrupted, and what do you imagine that I could find to alleviate my misfortune? This question embarrassed him. But, he replied, lowering his eyes, you seemed to be in love with Mme Lallin; and I might never have had such indulgence for my own weaknesses, if I had not believed that your wife had become quite indifferent to you.⁵⁷⁸

[460] Halt there, I interrupted, as shocked as astonished by this audacious reproach; is this the repentance and sincerity you have promised me? You try to cover your treachery with a pretext, and you impute betrayals to me in order to excuse your own?

⁵⁷⁷ This narrative, partly in indirect discourse and often interrupted by Cleveland, corresponds roughly to Gelin's confession in "book VIII" of the apocryphal volume V.

⁵⁷⁸ Although it does not exonerate Gelin, this disposition of his with respect to Cleveland attenuates his guilt somewhat and implicitly imputes part of the blame to Cleveland himself. Cleveland is so unconscious of the deeper causes of this whole drama that he learns here for the first time – in terms of the diegetic chronology – about his wife's long suffering.

I, I loved Mme Lallin! I had lost something of my affection for Fanny! Oh the craven imposture! But I want to know whether you had the cruel deftness to get Fanny to adopt these false impressions. Alas, I added, suddenly perceiving what had never occurred to my imagination, I am beginning to discover the dark tangle of my misfortune. I see everything my sister suggests with such obscurity in her letters. You deceived my wife. You made a vicious game of her goodness and innocence. You persuaded her that I had ceased to love her. Oh, I know the delicacy of her heart! She was unable to bear the thought of a rival. She suffered a hundred mortal torments without the boldness to relieve herself with a sigh; and in her extreme despair, she decided to come hide her suffering in the convent of Chaillot.

I was still basing my reasoning only on my sister's letters, which did not speak to me openly of Mme Lallin, and on my knowledge of Fanny's character. But that dear wife's innocence being decided in my heart, everything that could relate to it assumed for me the force of a proof, and I was already on the point of wishing for enlightenment much less to satisfy my affection than for the honor of my reason. Go on, cruel Gelin! I said, melting into tears. And whether blindness or maliciousness led you to conceive such loathsome designs, tell me what awful fruits you have reaped from them.

Into what redoubled horror are you plunging me, he began, looking at me with consternation, and how can I bear for a moment the sight of heaven and of you, if I lose the only pretext that still had the power to relieve my remorse? Call me cruel and treacherous, I recognize that I have deserved those two names: but I always thought I was safe from the reproach of having troubled the peace of your marriage, and I will confess to you boldly that in delving blindly into a hundred sorts of crimes, I sometimes assuaged my own horror with the thought that you had

opened the way for me. I would attest heaven, if I dared pronounce its name. Thereupon he began to explain to me in what way, and at what time, his passion had taken shape. It was at my return from Powhatan, and when my attentions for Mme Lallin had made him believe that I had given to that lady the affection I owed to my wife. Had he still had some doubts, Fanny's sadness would have been enough to put them to flight. A woman's eye being scarcely subject to error on such an important observation, he had believed my inconstancy confirmed by her laments and her tears. It was seeing her constantly discouraged and languishing that had served as much as her charms to melt his heart; and when he had resolved to render her the attentions of love, he could not imagine any law that forbade him to aspire to the possession of a good that I was relinquishing. Did he not know that my marriage was a bond I was at liberty to break, so long as it had not been sealed by protestant ceremonies? Ought he to fear much to offend me, when supposing I had a new inclination that ought to make me desire such a separation in my heart, he contributed to facilitating the means for me? Had he dared, he would have told me of his enterprise and his intentions. He would have believed me capable of acting in concert with him, to bring about some decent pretext, which I would have seized upon avidly, and which would not have better founded his happiness than my own.

In any case, if he had ventured on this supposition to sound out Fanny's sentiments, he had soon discovered how greatly he must lower his expectations. Along with the shame and spite of believing herself scorned, he had found in her heart the roots of such a strong passion that he had trembled at the magnitude and the difficulties of his undertaking. As he could succeed only by destroying this obstacle, he confessed to me that, thinking of nothing else, he had bent all his efforts in that direction. Perhaps [461] he had allowed himself to go much too far. He remembered

having sometime exaggerated appearances, and even having used various ruses which he did not pretend to justify; but they all had come from the same source, which is to say, from the opinion of my unfaithfulness almost as much as from the violence of his love.

I could not listen to him any longer without interrupting him. In ignorance as I was of all the details that are to be found in various points of my narration, I asked him with an anxiety from which all my sister's promises could not shield me whether he had often noted the success of his ruses, and to what point his cruel slyness had persuaded the credulous Fanny. He noticed my agitation. Oh, he said, since I am here only to repair my crimes, why did I not begin with the sorry fruits I have gleaned from them? I owed that courtesy to your rest. Depend, alas, upon the avowal that truth forces from me: I have not let escape a word for many years, not an intention nor a thought that has not carried with it my torture and its punishment. You would abuse my humiliation too cruelly today if you forced me to recall all my torments for you. But you can imagine what they must have been like, with the terrible passion I had in my heart, when instead of deriving some satisfaction from my efforts, I constantly had the mortal torment of seeing them produce the two most dreadful effects I had to fear: the unhappiness of the one whom alone I loved; and an augmentation of those very sentiments which I was seeking to destroy. Oh Cleveland, he cried, with an impetuosity of the heart he which could not restrain; oh, too happy object of a constancy so unshakable and an affection so pure, what have you done, if you have ever offended by your suspicions the most amiable and virtuous of all women? But if it is true that you have always loved her, he continued in the same transport, then where is she, and how are you not at her feet, there to die of joy and love? Or you are held back by some mistrust of her virtue or

affection? Man too favored by heaven! Oh, do you know the pains and the tears that you have cost her? he continued, sending at me glances where envy seemed to be depicted with astonishment. Do you know that she has breathed only for you? That she wanted to die a thousand times to end a life that she cannot bear without you? That her heart is filled with only your image? Then you do not know that the most precious of all treasures is yours, and that the combined power of earth and heaven would not be able to take it from you for a minute? Oh, what unbelievable reserve! Oh, the slowness of a man who seems not to feel or know the price of the inestimable good that is in his hands! He paused as he settled down, and although he had at once lowered his eyes, as if he felt some shame for giving way to the force of his imagination or of his sentiments, I saw tears flow down his cheeks, unnoticed by him.

The ardor of his exclamations could not fail to warm my blood, and inflame my desires more than ever. Nevertheless, a remnant of the impression his presence had made on me, and the renewal of so many old traces that could not be effaced in so short a time, kept my sentiments from rising to a certain degree of force that I might have been unable to moderate. I told him to go on with his story, recalling him to it with a question that seemed for a moment to embarrass him. With the opinion which you say you held of my unfaithfulness, I said, how can it be that you said nothing about it to my brother, who loved you enough to receive this confidence, and who was too virtuous not to censure my conduct? He replied, after a moment's pause, that he had thought to do so several times; but that along with the fear of distressing my brother, he had been held back by his own designs, about which he would have been apprehensive of giving him any inkling.

This sincerity having once more disposed me to hear him,

he took up his story again with the same signs of consternation. Various circumstances which he added to the detail which the reader has already read of his deceits will add nothing to the idea that Fanny's story has given of it, but [462] they provide the explanation of some events that might have seemed obscure. The dreadful plan he had fashioned of destroying me in my wife's esteem gave way to one of persuading her to flee. Having perceived that her rival's supposed triumph wounded her pride almost as much as her affection, he had undertaken to give this motive its full force; and it was indeed of all his ruses the one that most completely succeeded. Fanny, in her agitations, spoke of nothing but leaving the society of men, and seeking an asylum for her innocence, far from thanklessness and perfidy; he maintained her so skillfully in these thoughts that her deliberations never had any other object; and once she was reduced to the ultimate despair through all the stages that were powerful enough to lead her to that point, the only resource she could find in her imagination was to choose retreat and solitude, which she dwelt upon perpetually. It was indeed imprudent, and the effect of that simplicity of heart in which she had always lived, to conclude on the basis of vague notions, of which a little more experience of the world would have made her understand the danger; but in such great sorrow, nothing appears to the mind under such specious features as the sweetness of being all alone in the bottom of a wilderness or an abyss, and reason little pauses to consider obstacles to what flatters grief so agreeably. Gelin could hope for nothing more favorable to his plan. Whatever the limits within which my wife's virtue would always have forced him to contain himself, he did not doubt that if he persuaded her once to deliver herself to his guidance, he would soon see the end of such constraint. Under the pretext of seeking for her the haven she desired, he wanted to take her far from anything that could cast light on their movements.

Their intimacy, which could not fail to grow daily from the continual habit of being together, seemed to promise him, sooner or later, an easy victory; and the skill with which he was able to arrange opportunities could some day give rise to the absolute necessity for his unhappy slave to accept his hand, and perhaps ask him for it as a favor.

The horrible image of the precipice into which honor and virtue can be drawn! Gelin confessed to me that despite the underlying respect which he had still not dared violate, and which went so far as to make him tremble in his most intimate conversations with my wife, he had no sooner wrested her from my room, at the moment of their flight, than he fancied himself the absolute master of everything that he had scarcely ever had the audacity to hope for. However, finding that on board ship her sadness only continued to grow, and finding himself constrained by the probity of the French captain and his wife, who were less suited to favoring crime than to rendering service to virtue, he had begun once more to lose confidence in his endeavor. It was then that, summoning all the resources of his mind, he figured that solitude was indeed alone capable of assuring him absolute power over his prey, and that he would have risks to take as long as she could receive help from anyone but him. The first places they encountered along their route, Cape Verde and the island of Madeira, any wild or uninhabited island that seemed to him well-suited to the execution of his design, gave him a strong desire to halt there. He tried to make Fanny like the proposal, and persuade her of its necessity. But finding her on the contrary in thoughts that made him worry about all his expectations, he had become so enraged that he would twenty times have set fire to the ship, had he seen the least likelihood that he could save himself along with her, while making the captain and entire crew perish.

He gave me a narrative that made me shudder about the ruse

that had failed him in Madeira. Fanny, in relating the same events to my sister-in-law, was still unaware of the means by which he had been able to arrange for collaborators in a place where she thought he had arrived no earlier than she. But he told me that after a storm which had exposed their ship to some danger, the captain having dropped anchor in the dark to await for daylight to help him scout his course, and everyone having succumbed all the more willingly to sleep that the violence of the sea had not allowed anyone to sleep for two days and two nights, he alone, whose troubled mind left him not a minute's rest, had remained [463] on the deck pacing in the dark. The first rays of daylight allowed him to see, not far off, a pleasant-looking coast, and that sight renewed all of his eagerness to abandon the ship with Fanny. However, his proposals having been rejected at Cape Verde, he figured they would not have much more success in another place, unless he clothed them in some more enticing pretext. He took advantage of the time when all the crew were still asleep to take the longboat with two sailors to whom he offered some recompense, and after he reached the shore he lost not a minute in recognizing with his usual acumen the opportunity that could be found in the circumstances. It was by chance that he encountered on the strand a young woman and a man older than she, who were taking the cool morning air during the end of a lovely night, to prepare them for bearing the heat of the day. He did not lose the chance he was looking for to inform himself, and finding in the young person he addressed more vivacity and cleverness than he might have expected, he thought fortune had performed a miracle in his favor, to provide him some assistance the usefulness of which he could immediately sense. But what were his hopes when, after just broaching his subject, and trying to lend an honest turn to his designs, he understood from the manner in which his hint was received that the woman who was offering her

services was the one person on earth who could aid him most skillfully. To elicit his confidence, she did not conceal that she was a Spanish actress, and notorious for adventures of which she boasted. Her name, she said, was Doña Cortona. Her passion had never been for riches; but by a caprice rather common to beautiful women, she had combined all her desires into distinguishing herself by the number and brilliance of her conquests, to the point of often sacrificing all of her easy life to seduce a heart whose capitulation would enhance her reputation. She had exposed herself through such conduct to a hundred sordid adventures, and the one that had brought her to Madeira was not the least troublesome of them. She had come, as she secretly confessed to Gelin, with an inquisitor of the Holy Office, who had conceived a violent passion for her in Madrid, and she had made it a point of honor to make him abandon his function and profession to follow her. Although her lover thought he was safe on the island of Madeira, because the Portuguese court was not on good terms with the Spanish court, he had decided to withdraw into the countryside, to a house remote enough to conceal his adventure from the island's inhabitants. She had been living there with him for six months; and as she was kept there less by her affection than by the fanciful notion of the reputation she had made for herself in Spain, this motive was not powerful enough to keep her from living there in great boredom.

Gelin was quite aware that to confide so freely in him could only be a sign of the poor opinion she had of him, and perhaps of the resemblance she assumed between his adventure and the one she had told him about; but being little inclined to take offense at anything that could abet his plans, he encouraged the zeal she expressed for helping him with a number of specious reasons, to which he added the offer of a considerable sum. The role which the actress was to play was contrived between them, and the good

inquisitor, whom they had managed to keep at bay during much of this conversation, was recalled to the council to assist in the execution of an enterprise of which he was to share the benefits. He lent himself to it all the more willingly that he hoped to derive some contentment from it in his isolation. Finally, the only difficulty being to get my wife to agree to come take some refreshments on the shore, Gelin hastened to return to the ship to induce her to this move in some unassuming way, and heaven, which wished to put the virtuous Fanny to the test, allowed him to find everyone there still deep in sleep.

The reader who recalls all the circumstances of this dangerous adventure will be persuaded, as am I, that my wife needed all the strength of her virtue to defend herself. Gelin knew her through and through. His canny cruelty had made him understand everything that was capable of frightening or moving that constant, but sensitive and timid soul, and all the ruses of malice and artifice were brought to bear [464] against simplicity and innocence. Fanny emerged victorious. Oh the triumph of virtue and love! I shall pass over easier victories, and being less intent on enumerating Gelin's crimes than on justifying my dear wife, I shall leave aside, among the things which the traitor confessed, everything that can only serve to cover him with shame.

What did he not tell me to make me see his passion as one of those calamities of fate, against which neither reason, nor justice, nor honor, furnish aide powerful enough to defend virtue, and which lead all the more necessarily to the ultimate horrors of crime, in that every transport that violates duty can only be excused by its excesses? I listened calmly to the story of his furies. But when he mixed in circumstances in which his ruses had included my wife, there rose in my heart doubts and anxieties so dreadful that all my blood could feel their effect like that of a poison; I scarce had enough power over myself to suspend my

skepticism and judgment until the end of his story. I felt I was about to cry out, and more than once I would have found it sweet to pierce a hundred times the breast of the cruel enemy who so vividly retraced for me the subject of my sufferings.

I could not, however, mistake his signs of repentance; and this thought, which his humiliation kept ever before me, occasionally moderated the bitterness and resentments of my heart. I was even more moved by the witness he bore almost at every word to Fanny's sentiments and conduct. I could not suspect him of dissimulation when he described his own consternation and his own fears to me, and when, constantly blaming the harshness of his fate, he accused himself with a stream of tears of having committed a multitude of crimes from which he had never derived the slightest benefit. The force he gave to his terms to express the opinion he had always had of my wife's character and virtue helped me understand how he had always contained himself within the deep respect from which, he was forever repeating, he had never strayed. I was consumed by my adoration of her, he would say, and am myself astonished that such a perfect love could have become the source of so many transgressions and crimes.

Finally, having protested to me, after a long narrative, that he had concealed nothing from me, and having taken no question from me to which he had not quickly responded, he left me in a state which I could not call uncertain if the sole testimony of an enemy were capable of dissipating doubts. In truth, that of my sister-in-law reinforced it; and had I believed each of them separately too weak, I at least had to recognize that they provided each other mutual confirmation. Nevertheless, some remaining lassitude that still gave me pause, prevented my sentiments from taking their course with all the ardor which had begun to excite them. Fanny's flight, my brother's murder, my own wounds, were

sufficiently explained by the details I had just heard, and even my jealousy did not suggest to me further objections; but was it enough that my honor had been spared up to a point, and can a wife's duty be tainted only by crimes? Where was the esteem I was entitled to expect from mine, when she so easily believed me capable of forgetting my principles, and violating all the vows that bound me to her? And if a fatal error had blinded her to the point of making her imagine me even more criminal, where was the confidence she owed to my brother and my sister-in-law, when she had chosen Gelin as confidant of her woes, a foreigner who had no other tie to us than that of a quite recent friendship? Imprudence is the ordinary fruit of great passions; but does it go so far as to renounce all decency? Does even fury, if this supposition is necessary to excuse a part of her conduct, respect no rule, and does it allow itself to violate all sorts of laws when it needs no such misguided actions to satisfy itself?

The effect of these reflections, which took shape in a moment in my mind, was not to bring back to life suspicions the bases of which were happily dispelled. But considering that Fanny had yielded to her presuppositions without taking a single one of [465] the ways she ought naturally to have chosen to shed light on them, or even solely to justify them, I felt inclined to believe that, her heart having cooled for me, she had perhaps been less aggrieved than offended by the betrayal she imputed to me, and that, thinking her virtue and honor sufficiently safeguarded by the innocence of her sentiments, she had decided to abandon me without regrets save for those of shame and spite. A long absence, I further said to myself, cannot have failed to extinguish the last remnants of her affection. I shall find her virtuous, but insensitive to my affection, and satisfied that she is doing enough if she agrees to be reconciled with me, and resumes her management of my household. In short, I have lost her heart; and what do

I get in return for all the effort I am making to assure myself of her virtue, if that treasure which she has preserved is not accompanied by those that lent it such charms!

I so confirmed myself in these thoughts that even the memories that had the most moved me, such as the visit she had paid me with Madame, and the tears I had seen her shed when upon hearing my accusations, no longer looked the same to me. Recalling her posture and her laments, I saw in them more an appearance of pride than of affection and grief. A new dismay arose in my soul after this reflection, and looking at Gelin, whom I had treated until then with less resentment than disdain, I could not overcome the impulse that stirred me: Her honor has escaped your ruses, I said, sharply and bitterly, but you have nonetheless robbed me of her affection. What does it matter to me that you did not obtain it, I added, raising my voice ever more heatedly, if it is no less certain that you have made me lose it?

He received this reproach with extraordinary signs of surprise, and seeing I was about to continue with the same agitation, he implored me, submissively but urgently, to allow him to answer me. Alas, he said, what cause are you choosing for your protests? I would have believed that of all the circumstances of my story, the one that should have been the most flattering to your heart was the care I have taken to repeat to you a hundred times with what constancy and fervor you are loved. A feeble expression, he continued, dropping his head onto his breast, for depicting all the power you have preserved over the most tender and faithful of all women! Have I not told you that my despair, at a time of madness and fury, has always been not to be able to turn her aside for a moment from the thought of you, nor weaken in any way the just sentiments she had for you? Ah, he cried, glancing at me enviously, how happy you are if your happiness depends upon love! He went on to say that, having confessed to me

undisguisedly all that he had thought necessary to put me at ease as well as remedy his crimes, the feeling of just consternation had prevented him from going on about what would have served only to humiliate him, without enlightening me further; but seeing me still in a doubt which he felt himself obliged to eliminate, he wished to treat himself with utter rigor, completing his confession with no self-indulgence.

With much study and knowledge of the human heart, he had always conceived, he went on, that nature has infallible mechanisms for arousing and inflaming the passions. It was with this notion that, not put off by the indifference Fanny had always shown for his attentions, he had figured that she would not resist them once he was on terms with her where he was free enough to exercise all his knowledge. He hoped that having no further obstacle to combat once he had got her away from me, he would deal with her in accordance with the rules of his art, and that no reason nor purity would be able to defend her against his ruses. Indeed, he said, I am persuaded that on an ordinary soul, assuming it is in a well-configured body, the victory of a man who knows how to attack is never in doubt. Impressions of pleasure are always dominant; and he who knows the character and temperament of a woman well enough to keep continually before her whatever is capable of pleasing her, has found the infallible path to her heart. But I am speaking of ordinary souls, he added, and I still placed your wife above them solely with respect to [466] the exterior qualities that have no effect on the fundamental sentiments.⁵⁷⁹ With the fire that shone in her eyes, and the sweet

⁵⁷⁹ Since he cannot enter into Fanny's particular world, dominated by pervasive and absolute love, Gelin undertakes a "normal" seduction which by definition is doomed to fail. He conceives it as the application

warmth that seemed to power all her movements, I thought she was more disposed than any other to receive the impressions I was preparing for her. She had no sooner resolved to leave St. Helena than I began to put all my skill to work. I first observed to which things she was sensitive; and though she never allowed me to be alone with her, the presence of the captain and his wife did not prevent me from putting her tastes and inclinations continually to the test. I was not deterred by her sorrow and her tears, which long delayed my enterprise. There were always intervals I know how to seize, and if they were not long enough to give me the hope of advancing my project by much, they at least allowed me to calculate more at ease the angle from which angle I should press the attack. Would you believe, he added, that for several months, which was a much longer time than I had thought necessary, I derived not the slightest benefit from my attentions and ruses? She saw nothing but you. She was full of the thought of you. In whatever form you were present to her mind, inconstant, deceitful, madly in love with someone else, you alone occupied her, and I could not discern, even in her agitations, whether it was with loathing or love that she came away from so many sad meditations of which you were the subject.

Thus, this art on which I had so counted became useless for

of a technique, like playing an instrument: to suppose “a well-configured body” is to say that the premises are rooted in material philosophy. The relationship between Gelin and Crébillon’s Versac is clear: it can be noted that book XI of *Cleveland* is not published until 1739, whereas the first two parts of *Les Égarements du cœur et de l’esprit* appeared in 1738, and that Versac had already been introduced towards the end of part I in 1736. By this intellectual grounding as well as by his technique of seduction, Gelin like Versac prefigures Valmont in Laclos’s *Les Liaisons dangereuses*.

my purposes, and the cruel circumstances in which I found myself at La Coruña forced me in any case to abandon it. Nevertheless I still had some hope that our separation could serve me in another way. As I was far from fearing that she would utterly abandon me in the condition to which my wounds had reduced me, I flattered myself that, after not seeing me for several weeks, my absence would make her feel the need of my services, and that, coming round on her own to wish I were back with her, that desire would become the source of some favorable sentiment. But when I learned the news of her departure, and that she was even so unkind as not to transmit her farewells through the servant who remained behind to serve me on her behalf, I fell into throes of fury that were long my habitual disposition. Betrayed so cruelly by love, I renounced, if I dare so confess, all the pleasures with which it had flattered me, and thus, condemning myself to experience only its horrors and torments, I adopted the shameful resolution henceforth to follow only its most furious transports. Such was my purpose when I left La Coruña after my wounds had healed. I set off after the one who had manifested such scorn for my person and indifference for my life. I finally located them, despite the captain's insistence on hiding them from me. The care she had taken to avoid me seemed to me a new offense, which made my resentment grow further. I found the object of so many mortal agitations at the convent of Chaillot. I did not lack inventions to induce her despite herself to receive my visit. My only thought was to heap reproaches on her, and shower her with names that seemed to me not offensive enough for the ingratitude and cowardice which I thought I had the right to accuse her of. But her presence dissipated all these wild resolutions. I found myself able only to love her, and to shed tears instead of uttering abuses.

Even the way she turned her answers gave rise in me to a

new hope, which for a while helped further to moderate my rage. The doubt she was in as to whether you had married Mme Lallin, and the eagerness she expressed to be informed of that matter, made me think that, if indeed you had, I might need no assistance beyond her own resentment to bring her to approve my attentions. That reflection led me to offer to do everything in my power to satisfy her. She accepted my offer, with signs of gratitude which I again took as a favorable omen. I traveled in turn to England and Brittany. Although I could draw no conclusion from the little information I gathered about your route and where you had settled, I made up for what I did not know with suppositions from which I anticipated the same effect [467] as from truth; and if the fear of being contradicted by your presence at the moment I might least expect it kept me from confirming your marriage explicitly, I expressed myself so deftly that I managed to foment all the notions I dared not supply directly. At first the effect which they produced sustained my hopes quite well, and for a while I thought I was on the verge of obtaining from spite what I had given up ever owing to love. But what was my amazement, after hearing her speak of vengeance, to see that she was only thinking of turning it against herself, and that she had resolved, she said, to bury her shame and misfortune forever in a cloister!

The eagerness to commit crime never wants for opportunities. As the turmoil into which I fell made everything seem legitimate to my transports, and I left her only with the clear intention of using violence to abduct her, my ill star made me, on my way out of the convent, run into two persons who were talking without any precautions, and who, expressing themselves heatedly over the unhappiness of their fate, seemed ready to undertake anything to deliver themselves from the misery that was weighing on them. After observing them for a moment, I thought they could help me, in a place where I had no acquaintances. I accosted them, and

indicating to them that I could see their situation, I offered liberal rewards if they had wit and courage enough to carry out an enterprise that required those two qualities. The alacrity with which they accepted my proposition guaranteed me that they were the kind of men I was hoping for. I withdrew with them into a place better suited to our deliberations, and after hearing them tell me more about their station, I learned that as they were reformed officers,⁵⁸⁰ utterly without resources, I could depend on their steadfastness and conduct.

They eagerly asked me about the service I was expecting of them. I opened my heart to them, and not disguising the fact that my enterprise was the last resource of a desperate man, I promised them ten thousand francs if they made it succeed. The measures were taken at the same time. Without ever entering the convent, I had spent enough time observing its layout to know it perfectly. In the conversations I had had with your wife, I had learned from her, without affectation, that her apartment faced out on the garden, and my foolish passion had led me to seek a spot some distance away from which I had a hundred times enjoyed watching her windows. All we had to do was to scale by night the wall that runs along the main road. The rest did represent much danger to three armed men, who had little resistance to fear in a convent of nuns. The execution of our plan was delayed only until the first night dark enough to favor it. I offered my accomplices some money in advance, and after agreeing upon the place where I could meet them again, I went to see to make ready a post-chaise and everything else required for my flight.

It was not to be feared that such precise measures could fail;

⁵⁸⁰ That is, they are Protestant (“reformed”) military officers, presumably divested of their commissions.

but we were in a period of full moon, and the great numbers of passers-by who are day and night on the main road forced us to wait until darkness could hide us from everyone's sight. I saw the two officers every day, and finding them clever and well-mannered, I formed a close enough association with them to inform them what I intended, holding back less than the first time. One of them, a man of rather advanced age, and who had hardly been less tried than I by fortune, learning that I had a heart filled with a fatal but unrequited passion, promised to render me a double service, and not only to abduct her so as to put her in my arms, but to assure me, if I so desired, that I should possess her heart. I embraced him in a transport of joy, but with less hope than pleasure at imagining an impossible happiness. Yet he renewed his offer so seriously, and replied so forcefully to my objections, that he disposed me at least to try what he was so boldly promising me.

This is where shame compounds my remorse. That secret which was so sure to overcome a heart's resistance was a bit of sorcery that required much art and care in its [468] composition. I had first to obtain a bit of your wife's hair and a few drops of her blood.⁵⁸¹ The difficulty of these two conditions could alone have dissuaded me; but the officer, who seemed to flinch at nothing, told me how to go about it, and indeed made it seem easy to succeed in doing, if I still had some access to the grill at Chaillot.

⁵⁸¹ In *Les Illustres Françaises* Gallouin, who had tried everything to seduce Silvie, similarly has recourse to a "secret" for which "absolutely required some of her blood drawn expressly for that, and something that was in contact with her naked flesh"; she consumes the potion and thus Gallouin achieves his aims (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1959, II, 512 and sq.). Here, however, the charm is supposed to operate at a distance, and Prévost does not go so far as to make it actually work.

I followed his advice the very next day. I send word to your wife asking permission to see her, under pretexts that kept her from even thinking of refusing. I had composed a letter which I claimed I had received from London, in which I told her she would find some important enlightenment. But drawing my scissors to cut from it a few lines, which I asked her to allow me to conceal from her, I then presented it to her respectfully through the grill. She stepped forward to take it; and at the moment she was taking hold of it, feigning that I remembered something further I wished to conceal from her, I advanced my two hands so suddenly to stop her from taking it that with the point of my scissors I made a rather deep gash in one of her hands. The blood that immediately flowed from it moistened the outside of the letter, and while she was absorbed by the pain this accident caused her, I cut off the bloodied paper, under pretext of preventing the writing from being smeared.

Whatever precautions I attempted to take, I had been unable to control the movement of my hand well enough to avoid driving the point of my scissors too deep. My heart bled as much as her wound, and while I was very pleased with the success of my ruse, I would have given my life to spare her the pain which I had intentionally caused her. Incapable of any suspicion, she uttered no complaint, and the kindness with which she accepted my apologies facilitated as well the second part of my plan. Her pain gave me the boldness to tell her that I had an infallible secret for this sort of accidents, and that a few hairs wrapped around the finger closest to the wound never failed to prevent inflammation. Thereupon I offered to cut a curl of my own hair. She refused to allow that, but in no way doubting my sincerity, she took my scissors to cut some of hers. I persuaded her to let me arrange them for the purpose I was suggesting, and took care without her noticing to withhold part of them.

The rest does not require more detail. I went to the officer with the two treasures I had stolen from innocence, and left them with him for horrible crafts. He made me take part in all his crimes. It would be hard for me to remember all the profanations and impieties that accompanied that black ritual. Without being really persuaded of the force of his magical operations, I could hardly refuse a sort of confidence in promises which were supported by a hundred oaths, and by experience which he said had never failed him. He wanted me to present myself the very next day at Chaillot to begin picking the fruit of his art. I had the temerity to go, but the shame of returning without even having received permission to see the person I was flattered already to have moved.

Who knows with what horrors two such strange doings might have ended, had the hand of heaven not put a halt to them? Are we not speaking of philters and poisons which, lacking perhaps the power to act on the heart, have sometimes had enough only to derange one's reason? To what did my audacious fury not expose your wife?⁵⁸² I would have been the first punished by my despair, but would it have repaired the most fatal of all calamities? However that may be, be apprised from what peril heaven delivered her. Despite her refusal to see me, the officer urged me to return to Chaillot, still assuring me of the success he had promised me, and even portraying her reluctance to see me as the effect of the new perplexity of her heart in its changing situation. I went several times to the grill, without finding it any easier

⁵⁸² Even supposing that the charm had some effect, Gelin proposes a psychological explanation for it: there is always a natural way to understand what for some would seem to be a supernatural event. But it seems that here the philter's efficaciousness must apply more to him than to her.

to get her to agree to my visit. I was only too aware of the reason for this. I had no more insight nor aide to give with regard to interests that occupied her much more than mine. She [469] had only suffered me until then in the hope of getting me to assist in searches which had not succeeded, and I was detested once there was no more help to be obtained from me.

The officer, as if irritated to see me doubting his promises, did indeed confess to me that your wife's heart must have been strangely prepossessed to hold out so long against the power of the charm; but not yet yielding to appearances, he undertook to add to his previous operations something so potent that she would no longer hesitate, he said, to decide. He composed a liquor which he gave me in a vial. Your fate, he said, is henceforth in your hands. Find a way to make the person you love swallow this elixir. He consigned himself to the most terrible torments if she did not soon feel its virtue. But even if you do not have the opportunity, he added, you are sure at least that once we have abducted her, we will be able to force her to take it, and it will matter little that the success of your desires is postponed for a few days, when I guarantee you it is certain. All the strength of a blind transport did not prevent me from shuddering at those horrid words. But finally, tormented by love even more than by my conscience, I smothered all thoughts that did not point to my satisfaction.

The time of night having become as favorable as I wished it, I abandoned every other hope to concentrate on the resolution of implementing the abduction. It was the next day that all the preparations were to be completed. My only concern now was to revive my accomplices' courage and the loyalty they had promised me. We had agreed on the hour and the moment, when chance having led me to Charenton to calm my anxiety, I learned there not only that you were in the vicinity of Paris, but that you were soliciting the Consistory for your divorce, and were on the

point of contracting another marriage. Such unforeseen news immediately changed all my resolutions. Whatever your wife's sentiments might be towards me, I did not doubt that the certainty of your marriage would extinguish at once those she had preserved for you. Hope regained strength in my heart. I flew immediately to Chaillot, and foreseeing the same difficulties in being admitted, I chose to write a note, which I entrusted to the chaplain, to make her curious to see me for the great discoveries which I announced but did not explain.

But with what fantasies had I flattered myself! If indeed she did receive me, it was to indulge in all the excesses of grief as soon as she had heard the news I was bringing, and to treat me with utter scorn when I was bold enough to speak of my desires. What an effect of the officer's wild-eyed promises! I was instructed to go away forever, and never show myself again to eyes that could not see me without horror. The effect followed immediately upon this cruel declaration. I was left alone with my transports. They were furious. Having chanced to meet the chaplain, who confirmed me in my despair with another reason drawn from the laws of his Church, which did not even allow your wife to dispose of her hand in your lifetime, I became capable of all the furors to which I abandoned myself, and which there is no need to repeat to you, since they fell upon you.

I had listened to this last part of his story with such a terrible renewal of anxiety and fear that I found myself covered with a cold sweat at the end. However, the joy of seeing Fanny as if saved from the most dreadful of all dangers made me fall just as soon into another transport where I could maintain no greater moderation. Come closer, I said to Gelin, who himself seemed astonished at the air of satisfaction that suddenly spread across my face; listen to me without fear. You have caused me calamities and pains never previously known; but you also make me so

happy today that I feel motivated to forgive you. I believe your repentance and your amends to be sincere. Live in peace, if the promise I am making to forget all your crimes can help give to you the tranquillity they have cost you.

I understand, I began again more calmly, how violent passions can make an honest man stray from his duty. If something surprises me, supposing you are drawn to virtue, it is that you have waited so long to recognize yourself, and that you have had [470] to fall to the bottom of the abyss to open your eyes. A repentance that was not forced by fear would appear much more sure to me; but whatever the nature of yours, you must understand that you have nothing more to expect from my friendship. Nonetheless, I wish for you to take with you some marks of our reconciliation. At that point I asked him what he planned to do, and whether he had any hopes of keeping himself free from misery. He made no reply. Tears were flowing quickly down his face. It appeared from the immobility with which he kept his eyes lowered that I should expect some new revelation which fear and consternation had the strength to hold back. It is my despair, he said finally, that my crimes are such that they cannot be expiated by repentance. I would protest in vain that being delivered of the fatal passion that had deranged my mind, I no longer feel anything but the shame of having abandoned myself to it. Thus my purpose in desiring to see you was not to justify myself; and you have not recognized in the avowals I have made the language of a man attempting to appear innocent. But I am satisfied, he added as he rose, if you forgive me; and without further explanation now, I am going to prove to you at the peril of my life that I am neither ungrateful nor perfidious, when my heart is sufficiently master of itself to follow its own principles.

Although the vagueness of these words, and the agitation that showed in his movements, made me assume that he was

contemplating some extraordinary undertaking, I did not stop him to question him. He left my room. I at once called Drink, whom I ordered to count out to him fifty écus. He accepted them, asking Drink to come assure me that he accepted them only to serve me.

I was going to immerse myself in the meditations which such numerous extraordinary thoughts that filled me were bound naturally to provoke, when Drink, to whom I had not allowed time to speak with me when I gave him my orders, returned to my room with a great sense of urgency. He informed me that my sister-in-law was at the home of M. de R... and that, having sent one of his servants to ask after my health, she was impatiently waiting for Gelin to leave so she could come see me. Her presence being the most agreeable thing I could desire, I sent my carriage for her right away, and attributing her decision to stop at M. de R...’s solely to her desire to avoid the sight of Gelin, I sent her word, to reassure her in advance, that the interview I had had with him had greatly comforted me. Drink had not been able to conceal within my house that Mme Bridge was to arrive that evening; and could he have done so, nothing would have obliged him to. This news, which reached Mme Lallin, had an effect on her that I was far from anticipating.

I had scarcely had a single moment alone since the departure of Drink, who had gone to fetch my sister, when a sealed letter was brought to me, with the message that it was from Mme Lallin. As she had withdrawn to her apartment after her indisposition, I supposed that not yet being sufficiently recovered to come to mine, she wished to send me in writing some reflections on the circumstances that occupied me. But the man who gave me her letter added that, after calling for one of those public conveyances that are always to be found in St. Cloud, she had left with no baggage besides a trunk into which she had put her clothes. I hastened to read the explanation she sent me. It was expressed in

such a touching way that one of my regrets, as I write these memoirs, is not to have been able to preserve a letter that would have been one of their finest ornaments.

It began by imploring heaven's assistance, of which, she said, she had never so felt the need as in the sad and unfortunate situation into which her ill fortune had made her fall. Next, attesting heaven as witness to all that she wished to write for the satisfaction of her own heart, she begged me to have for her the feelings of compassion which she believed she merited. She reminded me of the time when we were first acquainted, and confessing that she had had an lively affection for me, which had lasted with the same fervor until she first came to know of my marriage to [471] Fanny, she asked me whether, even at the very time she had given in to that innocent inclination, I had ever observed that she was capable of putting it before her duty. She had left her country, in truth, to undertake with me a voyage that ill became her sex; but the calamities she had undergone in Rouen, and the dangers to which she was continually exposed by her brother's resentment had more or less forced her to it. She recalled to me the manner in which she had explained this to me before our departure, and asked me again whether I had ever perceived that she had for a minute failed to observe the rules of honor and propriety which she had imposed on herself. She had followed me to Havana, but it was I who had gone to fetch her in Powhatan. Touched by my friendship, she had regarded my thoughtfulness in attaching her to my wife as her life's greatest happiness, and looking no further than the establishment I had given her in my household, she had limited all her fortune and desires to that. Even the opportunity that had presented itself to enrich herself through an honorable marriage had little tempted her. With the attraction I had inspired in her for books, and the abundance she had found in my house, even independently of the

pleasure of gratitude which attached her to my family, and that of one of the most agreeable companies in the world which she found there at every hour of the day, she had believed that her happiness was wanting in nothing. How could she have imagined that a wife as young and amiable as mine, to whom I had given every token of faithfulness and affection that can be expected of a husband, should suspected her of having made some impression on my heart, she who had neither youth nor beauty, and who even in all of her conduct affected an air of withdrawal and austerity little associated with love? She admitted that with such safeguards she had perhaps yielded a bit too freely to the pleasures of friendship, and in the studies I had allowed her to share with me, she had often thought how happy heaven would have made her by giving her a husband whose inclinations accorded so perfectly with her own. That was the sole offence she had ever given to anyone else's happiness. Neither the kindnesses I had had for her, nor her easy access to me, nor the chagrin of chastity in which she had been living for so long, nor even her penchant, and the pleasure she found in our familiarity, had never allowed the slightest sentiment that offended her duty to enter her heart. With a conduct so able to justify her, how great was her pain upon learning that she was being accused of all my family's misfortunes, and that so many dreadful adventures, of which friendship had led her to share the despair with me, were viewed as her own doing! That thought had pierced her heart. It was a mortal blow, of which the swoon into which I saw her fall could be only the least fatal effect, and which condemned her to spend the rest of her life in sorrow and tears. What she added with regard to her intentions was unclear; but the sentiment that had dictated her expressions was so bitter that in the very midst of the transports of joy that were seeking to arise everywhere in my heart, I could not refuse my pity to the manifestations of such acute affliction.

Indeed I recalled nothing that could make me doubt her good faith and innocence. Even looking back over the past, I was forced to recognize that if men can be accused of the rigors of fate, it was on me that the blame for all our misfortunes ought to fall. For if I went back to the beginning, I had brought Mme Lallin into my household. She was living tranquilly in Powhatan. So was I, in the island of Cuba, with Fanny's affection and confidence. What evil power had led me to open willingly the precipice over which I had plunged? But was I to blame myself also for events I had not been able to foresee? Was I not sure of my own heart? Was it other views than those of honor and gratitude that had engaged me in these ominous acts? Of so many tragic consequences, could one be named which they were naturally bound to produce, and which prudence obliged me to forestall? Even supposing it had never occurred to me to open the door of my house to Mme Lallin, would Gelin's passion have any less taken root; and if he had not had that pretext, would he not have found a hundred others to assuage his guilt?

[472] No, I said to heaven, lifting my eyes toward it, I have never allowed anything in my heart that deserved to be punished as a crime; and if I do not accuse your justice in the harsh judgments you have seen fit to impose on me, neither do I know anything that could have brought your vengeance upon me. But your wisdom has depths it is not for me to sound. I impute nothing to your wrath, since I am beginning once more to experience your goodness. Do but confirm your portents; and if it is without exception that you are preparing favors for me, do not refuse to extend them to Mme Lallin, whose heart is, I believe, as righteous as mine.

This last thought, which took on enormous strength with the disposition of the circumstances, helped sustain my spirit in the situation where she had put it, and the hope that heaven would not

grant me imperfect favors reassured me against all the fears that could still trouble me. I awaited my sister's arrival as the last moment of their tyranny, and whatever turn my fortune might henceforth take, I could see nothing more that could seriously alarm me. The doubts that come from awaiting a happy fate do not put the heart in a disagreeable situation. It is a suspension of pleasure, which causes less pain than eagerness and impatience. However, the esteem I owed to Mme Lallin not allowing me to have a certain indifference for her fate, I made a renewed attempt to learn the circumstances of her departure, and the direction she had taken. Her chambermaid, whom she had even refused to take with her, told me that after recovering from her swoon, she had abandoned herself for a long while into tears, not uttering a single word that could allow one to judge the cause of her grief. Then she busied herself writing a letter which she left for me, pausing from time to time, as if she were oppressed by some painful illness. Finally, opening her mouth with difficulty, she had asked this girl various questions about the road to several villages which she had named, without indicating however which of them she meant to take; and when she had climbed into the conveyance which she had ordered from St. Cloud, she had told the driver to take her to Paris.

As it was scarcely an hour since she had left, I was not without hope that by sending one of my men after her with all the speed of a very light English horse, I might still learn what her intention was in leaving my house, and perhaps persuade her to come back. I gave the order at once. It was carried out with such diligence that the courier caught up with her before Chaillot. Her consternation was extreme when she heard someone calling her name, and when, recognizing my servant, she learned that I had sent him after her. She listened to what he had to say, which was nothing more than a declaration of the surprise her departure had

caused me, and emphatic urging to make her consent to return with him at once. But after leaving him for several moments with no other response than an abundance of sighs and tears, she asked him return alone, and to report faithfully to me the last words I would ever hear from her lips. The wrath of heaven, she said for me, had pursued her with more rigor than it had me, since I was finally nearing the end of my misfortunes, and hers, which had continued since her birth, were resuming a course that could no longer end. But having learned from my example and my lessons to bear the disfavours of fate, and to have regard for nothing but virtue, she regretted nothing in her unhappiness except the loss of my friendship. She flattered herself nonetheless that I would not give a bad interpretation to her departure; but given the state of her affairs and of mine, there was no other choice for her than an utter retreat, in which she was going to bury herself until the last moment of her life. She continued on her way, allowing my servant to make no reply. My sister had arrived at my house when he came to give me an account of his mission, and a hundred more pressing interests that occupied me did not permit me to be as attentive to his report as I might have been in other circumstances. But I owe this justice to Mme Lallin, [473] that she was not assuming a false grief, nor a false virtue, and that the rightness of her heart made her perhaps as worthy of pity as those whose ordeals she had caused.⁵⁸³

⁵⁸³ Mme Lallin has doubtless contributed to this ordeal by her lack of subtlety and perhaps by a bit of coquetry (remembering that she was a “tall, handsome brunette” (book II), but no one in the novel can ever say that she deserved her downfall, and the discreet nobility of this retreat will in the long run redeem her even in Fanny’s eyes. Her departure is perhaps inspired by “book VIII” of the spurious sequel, in which she declares her intention of retiring but allows Cleveland to

What a scene have I already intimated, and should I not have led my readers into it with longer preparations? My sister had arrived. But that affectionate and virtuous sister, who still had as proof of Fanny's innocence nothing more than the assertions she had received from Fanny herself at Chaillot, had not come without garnering everything she thought might help to confirm them. The necessity she felt of waiting for Gelin's departure had given her the time to seek some information at St. Cloud, and there her assiduity had found some reasons for satisfaction. At the moment when she had gone there herself, so as to undertake nothing imprudently, M. Briand, that same officer whom Madame had sent to Bayonne,⁵⁸⁴ was just arriving at the chateau with M. and Mme des Ogères. She recognized the captain who had taken part in Fanny's abduction more easily than Madame's officer, with whom she had never had any dealings; but being not unaware that the princess had dispatched someone to Bayonne for the clarification of my interests, and having had no other reason for going to St. Cloud than the hope of obtaining some news, she could not doubt, when she saw M. des Ogères and his wife, that heaven was would have her find what she was after.

Her impatience made her neglect all sorts of measures. She came to greet them as they got out of the carriage; and introducing herself as my sister, she proposed to them that they accompany her to the house of M. de R..., where she had left Mrs Riding, and where she thought it important to sort out with her all the things she was hoping soon to hear from the captain's mouth. The death of Madame dispensed M. Briand from stopping at St. Cloud; and deeming it his duty to fulfill her last wishes reli-

dissuade her.

⁵⁸⁴ In book VIII.

giously, he agreed to go with my sister, whose advice, he could not doubt, was solely for my advantage. There were four of them in their carriage. M. de R... 's house was so close at hand that all these acts delayed them very little.

My sister's eagerness to have M. des Ogères begin his explanations can be compared only to the joy she felt when she heard them. That excellent man, who had developed for my wife all the sentiments he thought owed to her charms and her virtue, never tired of marvelling at a succession of events he had never understood. Having no real information except that which he had received from M. Briand, he had not wished to entrust to anyone else the part that he could play in it with his testimony. His wife had felt the same way; and combining the hope of seeing their dear friend again with the desire to contribute to her happiness, they had hastened to come to Paris with Madame's officer. The unknown person accompanying them was Don Thadeo, son of the governor of La Coruña. It was not by chance that M. des Ogères had consented to accept him as his travelling companion. After recovering from his wounds, the young Spaniard had had only one thought, which was to follow the my wife's traces, and realizing that it was in Bayonne that he would find M. des Ogères, he had gone to ask him for news of the person he had not ceased to love exclusively. Fanny had already left that city to go to Paris. In Chaillot she was safe from all the audacities of love. However, in the interests of her tranquillity as much as from esteem for a young man who had always manifested great nobility in his sentiments, M. des Ogères had decided to provide Don Thadeo with some clarifications which had finally served to cure him of his passion. He had declared to him that Fanny was married, and if she had appeared under different qualifications in La Coruña it was to conceal some misfortunes from which she was not yet delivered. Duty was sufficiently forceful to extinguish love in the

young Spaniard's heart; but gainsaying in no way his original lofty sentiments, he had changed that passion into zeal for the happiness of the person he had loved. Based on the explanations he had received from M. des Ogères, he had taken all sorts of measures to discover the place to which I had retired; and having remained for a long time in Bayonne in order to go about that task more freely, he seemed to stake his entire [474] tranquillity on the end of my misfortunes and those of my wife. He was still there, and still burning with the same desire, when M. Briand had arrived there on Madame's orders. M. des Ogères having not concealed from him the secret of this mission, he had shown as much eagerness as he to go to Paris; and since his testimony could only be glorious and useful to Fanny, M. Briand had himself judged that Madame would be pleased by additional information concerning a matter in which she seemed to take such considerable interest.

Don Thadeo had no sooner learned that he was speaking to Fanny's sister-in-law than, calling on all of Spanish courtesy, he spoke to her ecstatically about my family, and the interest he took in our happiness. The time they had for explanations was quite short; but the confirmations which my sister was anticipating required little detail, and Drink, when he arrived, found her ready to leave.

She entered with an air so satisfied that, abandoning myself unreservedly to the full extent of my expectations, I experienced in a moment that joy can infuse as much turmoil in the blood as can grief. It nevertheless did not deprive me of the strength to forestall the congratulations I could see her preparing to deliver. Go easy on me, I said, holding out my hand to her; and if you bring me all the good things that your countenance declares, do not overwhelm me with a torrent of pleasure that exceeds my strength; or rather, I said, tenderly kissing her hand, which I

already was holding in mine, let me not languish for a moment: tell me all of heaven's favors at once, and do not fear to cause me transports which from now on can kill me only with joy. A less prudent woman would have taken few precautions after that invitation; but my sister, content enough to find me in the situation which she still attributed only to her letters, continued to follow the plan she had created for the success of her enterprise. You are right, she said tranquilly to take my arrival as a happy omen. I am much less doubtful about the return of all our happiness than uncertain how to go about explaining to you a hundred circumstances that require of you as much calm as attention. You already seem to me too agitated, she continued, and I would want a man who has so long borne grief with constancy to be able to moderate himself also in joy. She kept silent for a few moments, to allow me time to enter into her intentions, and I was quite taken aback, looking at her, to find her appearing as serious as if she had nothing but indifferent things to tell me about. You put me in a situation that confuses me, I said. I added, looking up again at her, Am I less fortunate than you have led me to believe? And seeing her no in no more of a hurry to explain, I gazed at her with astonishment in order to discover in her eyes what might be holding her back. Finally she smiled at my consternation. No, she replied, I could not to greatly flatter you, and there is nothing you have desired that heaven does not grant you in generous profusion: but I ask of you, as the recompense for my zeal and services, two indulgences that will serve my own purposes: first, to demonstrate to me through your example what is the method great souls have for moderating their transports; and the other, to alert me sincerely if you find in doing so some difficulty which you cannot overcome. Your instructions, she added, affecting an easy demeanor, have given me a taste for philosophy, and I might never have such a good opportunity to make the experiment I

desire. I promised I would neglect nothing to satisfy her.

She knew me enough to be sure I would be faithful to my promise, and her intention was not only to divide my attention by the effort to which she wished to commit me, but to know at each circumstance of her discourse what was taking place in my heart, so as to regulate her revelations by that awareness. I am no longer hesitant, she said, to declare to you that everything heaven can do for a man's happiness, it has done in your favor in a few days' time. I am no longer advancing conjectures or expectations. You are happy. It is to being never unhappy again that you must now direct all your attention.

Despite the commitment I had just made and the violence I was doing myself to [475] apply it, I could not repress all the movements that arose simultaneously in my heart. At the first words of such a categorical declaration, I had felt as if the flow of my blood was suspended. I uttered a deep sigh to help myself out of a situation that appeared to me to be life-threatening; but swinging suddenly to the opposite extreme, it seemed to me that the movement that for a moment was not present in my veins became so rapid and tumultuous that I had never experienced any of such nature. It was indeed a torrent that brought turmoil in its course, and communicated it to all my senses. My tongue loosened, if I dare put it thus, without my order, was about to utter everything that might issue from my troubled imagination, when my sister reminded me of my promises by reproaching me for being overwrought as she saw I was.

I confessed to the justice of her complaints. But I have only promised you sincere efforts, I said, and all you can reproach me for is having made futile ones. Do you want me then to remain insensitive to the happiest of all events, or run the risk of expiring suddenly before your eyes for bottling up all my sentiments in my heart? What I want, she replied, is for you to restrain yourself;

and without forbidding you to be human, I ask you, for my own instruction, for a true philosophical example.⁵⁸⁵ After the exhaustion that had just taken place in my spirits, I flattered myself they would be easier to regulate, and renewed my promise to her.

She resumed her story; but rightly fearing I would be no stronger if she began by talking about Fanny's fidelity and affection, she put my thoughts off the track, by asking me what I thought of the fate of Mrs Riding, that old friend whose memory, as she knew, was still so dear to me. What a past are you resuscitating, I said, and why talk to me about something that is unrelated to my joy? Did you believe yourself quite certain of her death, she continued without answering me, and have you never had some hope of seeing her again? I turned with sharp surprise: Could it be possible that heaven has preserved her? I interrupted, already suspecting something of the truth. Well, explain yourself. Oh God, might I see Mrs Riding again! Speak. Do not cruelly amuse yourself keeping me in suspense. Could she be with Fanny? Oh heaven, if you have worked this miracle for me, I shall eternally worship your goodness and power! She is alive, replied my sister; she was yesterday with your wife, who was no less moved than you by the pleasure of seeing her restored to your desires. You shall see her today, if you think her presence and friendship can contribute to your satisfaction. I wish to see her at this moment, I cried, sitting up half-way; where is she? Bring her here. May I expire with joy embracing her! Although the tender-

⁵⁸⁵ Since book VII, sentiment has replaced "philosophy" as the narrative's central idea; it is Angélique Bridge who reintroduces here the theme of Cleveland the philosopher, doubtless to distract his overexcited sensibility, and she pushes him in this direction. The philosophy to which she alludes here is ancient philosophy, specifically that of the Stoics.

ness of friendship made me experience the most intense movements, my sister saw quite well that they held less danger for my life than those of love, and quite pleased with herself for having thus detoured transports which she feared much more, she decided to suspend the rest of her explanations, to provide me at once the pleasure of embracing Mrs Riding. She even foresaw that the assistance of that faithful friend would help me to receive the full knowledge of my happiness with greater moderation. I did not object to her proposal that she herself go to fetch her at M. de R...’s, where she admitted that she had left her, and I only entreated her to return with the greatest dispatch.

It might be ridiculously pretentious thus to detail each step in my enlightenment and felicity, if I did not owe this sort of contrast to my readers, after laying out to them so faithfully all those of my misfortunes and my pains. Moreover, professing to have received from nature an extraordinary mind and heart, I have more or less committed myself to justifying them by describing all my sentiments, and I am entitled to return progressively to the aspects that can do honor to my character, just as I have not shrunk from exposing myself undisguisedly those that could make known [476] all my weaknesses. It is perhaps another to have shed tears of joy when I found myself alone during my sister’s absence, and to have sent heavenward a hundred interrupted exclamations that betrayed as little tranquillity in my reason as in all my senses. This passionate delirium lasted several minutes, uncontrolled except by the impulses of love and friendship, which acted on me in all their force. Nevertheless the precaution my sister had taken of reviving my principles of wisdom and constancy quietly produced the effect she had anticipated. Little by little I became filled with that thought, and understanding that indeed reason needed to be no less on guard against exceeding joy than against exceeding pain, I resolved to test at

least whether it would have greater success in this new exercise than in the efforts it had already futilely made against its first enemy.

My sister surprised me in the midst of these reflections, and I noticed that the tranquillity she discovered on my face gave her more confidence as she approach me. She had left Mrs Riding in my antechamber, on pretext of allowing her a moment to adjust her hairdo and clothing, but really in order to observe my situation before presenting her to me. My insistence made her return immediately to urge her to come in. That dear friend indeed appeared before my eyes, and although enough changed to make them for a moment uncertain, I took her into my arms with the much more infallible confirmation that I drew from the tenderness of my heart. What did I not allow my tongue in that first moment, and in what terms did I not express the ecstasy of my surprise and joy! She responded to my transports only with her tears. But my sister, who never ceased to keep an eye on my every movement, invited her to put an end to a silence that could only augment their ardor and turmoil. She even tore her from my arms, in which I continued embracing her, and exhorted us both to attend seriously to our common business. And what have I now to fear for mine? cried my tender, faithful friend. It is settled by wonders that heaven can no longer gainsay without offending its justice. But, she continued, look at me with compassion, what a state I find you in! And how can Providence abandon goodness and innocence to the rigors of fate, or to the malice of man? I would find it difficult to repress my murmurs, she added, if I did not consider all your travails as a preparation for excessive pleasures that you have not yet tasted. Let us leave aside all that is less pressing than your happiness. I am assured that your health, though yet weak, is completely out of danger. Past pains are no longer anything to those about to claim their felicity.

She paused to leave me free to respond. All the curiosity I had to learn by what miracle heaven had watched over her life did not prevent me from yielding to my heart's dominant sentiment. Have you seen Fanny? I said, with a sigh that still came from the impression of my misfortunes. Did she greet you with the affection she owes you? Oh, if she acted cool at the sight of a mother she has such just reasons to love, how ill would I augur for the return of her affection which I have been promised! But if you have seen her, I continued, why is she not here with you? What is keeping her, if she is such as they flatter me I will still find her? Did she at least ask you to speak of her to me? Did she tell you that her heart is mine, that she does mine justice, that she feels some regret for the woes she has caused me; alas, that she feels the price of my love, and all it has made me suffer for her!

My sister interrupted me. We have both been charged, she said, with telling you of her terrible impatience to rejoin you, and we fear we cannot describe it adequately. It is despite herself, and out of the only deference she could not refuse to our advice, that she has remained in Rouen with Lord Clarendon. We shall restore her sooner than you think to your embrace: but in the interest of her tranquillity, as of yours, we want nothing to be wanting in the proof of her virtue, and will leave it to her to prove her love. This very day, at this moment if you so [477] desire, we are prepared to produce for you the witnesses Madame wished to hear. They have come with us, and you have only yourself to blame now if you lack clarification.

I expressed impatience to see them, and my sister, who had indeed asked them to accompany her, herself went to bring them in. I saw four persons enter, among whom I recognized M. Briand. The others were M. des Ogères and his wife, with Don Thadeo. Their presence giving me more strength, I anticipated their first compliments with keen expressions of the gratitude I

owed to their zeal. M. Briand replied politely that he held himself too happy that Madame had chosen him to render me service, and expressing satisfaction with the success of his efforts, he regretted only, he said, that death had deprived that excellent princess of the pleasure she would have obtained from his mission. Then, introducing M. and Mme des Ogères, he urged each of them to repeat what he had heard several times from them directly.

If ever anything has flattered my heart, it was the eagerness and joy with which Mme des Ogères began to recount all the circumstances of the time she had spent with my wife. She never uttered her name without transport. Her charms and her virtue were for her a nearly inexhaustible subject, to which she return incessantly with new turns, and which she presented to us in a hundred forms. But what did she not tell me about her sorrow, and the perpetual despair to which she condemned herself by leaving St. Helena? She depicted it so vividly to me that, compassion getting the upper hand over all my feelings, I found my face moist with tears which I did not feel flowing; and far from hearing such a tender story as the justification of a person whom I had accused, I thought I was myself in the place of a criminal whose sees his sentence is in every word he hears, and who recognizes his own guilt, in his heart, for all the woes being retraced for him. Finally, when after describing Fanny as still uncertain about my marriage with Mme Lallin, and seeking in every possible way to find out, she added that it was her determination not to survive news of it, or to sacrifice herself through another sort of death by burying herself forever in the horrors of solitude, I stopped her, as if seized by a new kind of alarm: Please allow me time to breathe, I said, and I will dispense you from a detail I no longer feel the courage to bear. You must look on me as a monster, I added, my voice as drained as my strength, if you suspect me of having willingly caused such woes. Oh, I cried, reviving my dejected

spirits, I would not wait for someone else to punish me, and my despair would have anticipated my hand. But there have always been obscurities and caprices in the disposition of my fate that I must attribute to I know not what power. Is it heaven's wrath, I again cried, which doggedly pursued an unfortunate, and took pleasure in striking in the same blow everyone who is dear to his heart?

Nevertheless, I went on more tranquilly, I must confess that after unprecedented torments, I could not receive sweeter consolation. I see my peace about to be reestablished. May it be as durable as I am beginning to believe it real and full of charms! Part of my happiness will be to owe its confirmation to such fine people, and I shall feel it increase at each opportunity I have to express to them my undying gratitude.

Mme des Ogères, who was of tender and devoted character, answered me impatiently that she did not think her work was finished, and that as long as she did not see Fanny in my arms again, she would consider it imperfect. She had learned from my sister that my wife was in Rouen. Your health, she said, does not allow you to undertake a journey. It is incumbent on my husband and me to bring back to you what we unfortunately took from you. We shall set off this very day. I entreated her in vain to take the remainder of the day to rest. Don Thadeo, whose [478] purpose and even whose name were still unknown to me, entered into my interests with the same ardor, and seemed also to be readying himself to leave for Rouen; but I heard M. des Ogères point out forthrightly to him that there was no need for him to undertake that journey, and that propriety forbade him even to think of it. Without grasping the meaning of these words, I took from them an even better opinion of the wisdom and honor of a man capable of such thoughtfulness, and did not hesitate to entrust his wife and him to conduct my wife.

I could easily detect, from my sister's and Mrs Riding's demeanor, that there was still some secret between them which they still hesitated to tell me about. They looked at each other jauntily, with signs of connivance that other glances, which were then directed at me, caused me to interpret as the prelude to some new revelation about which they seemed to be consulting each other. Their doubt was indeed about whether they should use this moment to tell me about Cécile. Finally they walked away from my bed, and I heard them utter her name several times. A tender friendship, which was the only sentiment I thought myself allowed henceforth for that dear person, made me still take enough interest in her to hope to learn whatever had to do with her. I invited the two ladies come closer. My curiosity created an opportunity for them which they could have seized upon, if the resolutions they had just arrived at had not been quite opposed to that. But weighing the circumstances, they had judged that an explanation of that nature, where the singularity of events made them think that I would experience a hundred agitations and a hundred doubts before arriving at the truth, ought to be postponed to more tranquil times; they disposed of my questions by replying quite unaffectedly that Cécile was secure in Rouen at Lord Clarendon's house, along with M. de R... and her mother.⁵⁸⁶

They were not mistaken about where she was staying, which had not changed since their departure; but Cécile and her mother were not as secure in Rouen as one ought to have been able to expect from the sanctity of their refuge and the generous friend-

⁵⁸⁶ This very full day has seen the visit of Gelin, the departure of Mme Lallin, the arrival of Mme Bridge who leaves again and returns with Mme de R..., the Ogères and Don Thadeo, and the departure of them all for Rouen.

ship of their protector. The Duke of Monmouth, incapable of doing himself violence for long, had resorted to ruse to obtain the satisfaction which was pointedly refused him. His liberalities won over several servants in the earl's house, who introduced him into Fanny's apartment, during the daytime it is true, but at a time when she was far from expecting such an extraordinary caller. Chance had it that Rem alone was with her. Cécile had gone into a closet, and it was apparently this sole reason that suddenly determined the duke's penchant for the mother, after hesitating until then between her and her daughter. He approached her respectfully enough not to alarm her more than just by surprise, and protesting most tenderly her obvious intention of fleeing him, he declared his passion so openly that it would have been futile to feign she did not understand him.

Fanny's fear was not for herself. A declaration that seemed to make her daughter safe delivered her from her most acute anxiety. She assumed an expression less of anger and resentment than of honor and virtue, and letting the duke know by a simple and modest reply that he was adopting futile hopes, she asked him interrupt a discourse that placed her in the necessity of avoiding him perpetually, and even refusing his services. This manner of responding would perhaps have made the impression she desired on a man with more virtue and good sense; but the duke, judging it only by his experience with women's usual character, and by an opinion of himself that made him the presumptuous of all men, augured well of it for his passion,⁵⁸⁷ and believed he was sure of a victory that was not being resisted with more noise and vehemence. If he had the politeness to withdraw, it was with an arro-

⁵⁸⁷ Avoidance or "fleeing" would be, in the libertine jargon of the time, a sign (perhaps willful) that she fears her own inclination for him.

gant confidence, thinking his purposes well advanced after he has made them known, and wishing to allow his merit time to act on a heart, in order at length to reap fruits more rewarding to his vanity.

Reflecting nonetheless on his conduct, Fanny, always prone to take alarm, [479] gave an entirely different explanation to the willingness he had shown to leave her. She imagined that the sentiments he exhibited for her were merely a veil under which he wished to cover his passion for Cécile, and that not having found her in her apartment, he had seized upon the first pretext to disguise his true intentions. This thought put her in such a mistrustful frame of mind that, thinking only of averting dangers which she already believed certain, she confided in Mme de R... and asked for her advice. To communicate her fears to a lady as timid as she, and as anxious for Cécile's safety, was to confirm them. Together they persuaded themselves that she could not too quickly take measures to avert the peril threatening them. Their anxiety further increasing through of the silence of my sister, who had let four days go by without writing to them, they decided to go secretly to Quevilly, pretexting a drive in the country, and to leave Cécile there in Mrs Riding's house until the news arrived which they were expecting from me or my sister. The only objection that might have deterred Fanny was her displeasure at separating from her daughter; all the more that, unable to introduce herself decorously in Quevilly since she had embraced the Roman religion, she must even renounce the pleasure of returning there each day to see her. But Mme de R... diminished this difficulty by deciding to remain herself in Quevilly with Cécile. Fanny thought she could bear a few days' separation, when the displeasure of absence was accompanied by no anxiety.

Having once decided on this plan, their next thought was to get M. de R... and even Lord Clarendon, to whom decency and

gratitude obliged them to show some deference, to agree to it. It was easy for them to get M. de R..., who though not yielding to the same fears was good enough to approve of whatever could abet their tranquillity, to go along. With respect to Lord Clarendon, they used more indirect pretexts; and without mentioning the reasons that led Mme de R... and Cécile to absent themselves, they were shrewd enough to make him infer that some important ones had come up, but of short duration.

These last circumstances were occurring at the time when M. and Mme des Ogères were on their way to Rouen, and even near the end of their journey; for they arrived in that city that very evening, and had they chosen to go lodge with Lord Clarendon, they would have found my wife upon her return from Quevilly. But for fear of inconveniencing the earl, despite the letters of recommendation they had received from my sister, they had decided to spend the night in the city, and put off their visit until the morrow. Don Thadeo had left them in St. Cloud, and pretending he was going to await them in Paris, he had agreed with them on the means of meeting them there. Meanwhile his ardor to see my wife again as soon as they did had led him to form another design. Not proposing to appear to them nor to Fanny before she arrived at my house, he had imagined that by making secretly the same journey, he could procure the opportunity to see her without being seen, and return early enough to give no suspicion of what he was doing. He had indeed departed two hours after them, and after following the same road for a long time, he had left it only at some distance from Rouen, to take the road to the earl's house. His intention was not to be seen there; but in the hope which he still maintained of finding the means of seeing Fanny, he had thought he would lodge in the nearest village to his home, and there collect all the information that could facilitate attaining the

pleasure he desired.⁵⁸⁸

There was nothing near the earl's house in the plain, and the nearest town was Quevilly. So that was where Don Thadeo's plans led him, with the intention of spending the night there. It was so late when he arrived that, unable to undertake anything before the next day, his only thought was to learn something of the disposition of the earl's house, and gather the information he would use the next day. A place inhabited by Protestants was something very new for a Spaniard. His curiosity led him to ask all [480] the questions it could suggest, and seeing from the gathering of people that they were assembling for evening prayers, he followed the inclination that made him wish to attend this spectacle.

Mme de R..., a long-term and zealous Protestant, had not failed to come there with Cécile. They had both been long regarded as two persons who were precious to that little society, and because of their ties to the town's principal inhabitants, they lived there with the familiarity that prevails in a single family. They had a distinguished place in the church. Cécile's dazzling appearance serving even better to attract attention to her, Don Thadeo did not cast his eyes in the direction where she was seated without being at once drawn to study her at closer range. He approached her, and as if arrested by her first glance, he immediately lost all attention for the new persons all about him. The same charm that had acted so powerfully on his heart through Fanny's eyes seemed to renew itself and make him feel all the same impressions. Although the resemblance between mother and

⁵⁸⁸ There is no way to know how Cleveland could have learned all these details, unless it was Don Thadeo himself who later related them to him.

daughter was not perfect, he thought he could see in the face of this young stranger features that resonated in his memory. He attempted to remember when and where he might have seen her. Was it in France or in Spain? If he had seen such a charming face somewhere, how had time caused him to lose the thought of it to the point of having doubts? And if he was seeing her for the first time, why did she awaken in his heart impressions he thought he had already felt?⁵⁸⁹

His surprise increased much more when, looking her over from so close that he could observe everything, he thought he recognized the diamond she was wearing, one he knew well enough not to mistake it. It was indeed the one his father had forced Fanny to take. She had given it to her daughter. Don Thadeo was aware of what his father had done with it, and his eyes were suddenly opened to what at first had seemed to him obscure. He imagined that it was Fanny herself he was seeing. He found her only a stone's throw from the Earl of Clarendon's house, where he was sure she was living. He found her in a Protestant church, and he had learned in Spain that she was a Protestant. If he did not clearly recognize all her features, could not absence and the illness he had suffered have made some change in his own eyes? The only thing that still gave him pause was Cécile's extreme youth. From her face she was only about sixteen, and that was for those who judged by the mature and composed demeanor that characterized her whole person; for in observing more carefully her tender, budding charms, it was easy

⁵⁸⁹ Unlike Cleveland (who seems never to have noticed their resemblance) and Monmouth, Don Thadeo loves Cécile *because* she resembles Fanny, who thus answers perfectly to the image that his fiery imagination had created of his eternal love.

to see that she could not be over fourteen. Fanny, who had been a mother at twelve, was then twenty-six.⁵⁹⁰ Although the look of blossom and youth and are not wanting at that age, it is difficult not to recognize that it is further removed from childhood.

Don Thadeo had a quick means of ending his uncertainty. He took it, by asking some of the inhabitants who were about him the name of the young person he was admiring. As they were still unaware of the changes that had occurred in her status, they answered naturally, in keeping with their former lights, that she was the daughter of Mme de R..., with whom he saw her; and going on about her mind and her charms, they added several things that could increase his admiration, but utterly destroyed all his conjectures.

Far from grieving over it, he regarded this explanation as a favor of fortune, which presented him with the opportunity of indulging an innocent passion; and assuming henceforth that Cécile was but a young French woman whose birth and fortune did not surpass his own, he thanked heaven all the more for this happy encounter that, being on the eve of seeing Fanny, whose presence he still feared, he regarded his new sentiments as a protection against her charms. All these thoughts arousing his natural boldness, his only thought was to find the means of making the acquaintance of Mme de R...; and seizing upon the occasion that arose at the close of the assembly, he offered her his hand to escort her home.

[481] For Mme de R... there was nothing suspect in this

⁵⁹⁰ Thus Fanny is still young enough, or almost so, to look like a girl; Cécile for her part must be about sixteen. Both are too old in terms of the novel's early books, where it seems that Fanny was born around 1647 and Cécile in 1661 or 1662, in which case she could be only about eight or nine now.

civility, in a place where she was without fear, and coming from a man of fine appearance, whom she at first took to be some foreign Protestant whose religious zeal brought him to Quevilly. She accepted his hand. He spoke to her politely of his satisfaction at being of some service to her; and understanding that she would be inclined to suffer him more gladly if he gave her to assume that he was not without acquaintances and relations in the area, he told her how nightfall had obliged him to stop in the town, despite the hope he had entertained of arriving at Lord Clarendon's before nightfall. You know him, then? said Mme de R... with surprise. He confessed that he knew the earl only by name, but he spoke of some ladies who were presently at his house; and naming my wife as an old friend whom he was most eager to see again, he added that he had learned where she was staying from me in St. Cloud. With Mme de R...'s astonishment only increasing, she asked him various questions, to which he replied so plausibly that she did not hesitate, upon reaching her home, to afford him access to her house, and even offer him supper.

Nothing could have pleased him more than this offer. He accepted it ecstatically. Although neither Mme de R... nor Cécile had yet revealed to him what their connection was to Fanny, and he could understand their civilities only as the kindness shown to foreigners in France, he judged from their questions and from the interest they seemed to take in his replies that my wife was known in Quevilly. He could have even less doubt of it when, without advancing anything further, the two ladies asked him more specifically during the supper all the circumstances of the relationship he had had with her. As this episode constituted an intriguing part of his own story, he entered into details which they did not as yet know, and which riveted Cécile's attention. He did not disguise the violent passion that had long disturbed his peace, and placed his life in extreme peril. The miracle to which he

attributed his recovery, Fanny's secret departure, the despair it had caused him, and which had renewed all his ills, the pains he had taken to find her again, the explanation he had received from M. des Ogères, and the violence he had done his heart to stifle a futile affection; finally, the abiding esteem and devotion into which he had changed it, and which had led him to undertake the voyage to France to contribute to the happiness of the woman he had loved, made for a long narrative, which the nature of the subject and Don Thadeo's natural fervor rendered quite tender and animated. Cécile, deeply moved by all that reminded her of her mother's unhappy adventures and sufferings, never ceased riveting her eyes on him; and perhaps, not knowing what reasons she had to be interested in his story, anyone else would, like him, have taken these signs of attention as that of a nascent inclination, which owed less to his discourse than with his person.

Don Thadeo had a good enough opinion of himself to take them in this sense, and was so persuaded of it that he betrayed himself in M^{me} de R... 's eyes by expressions of joy of which she easily understood the cause. That was the only thing that kept her from further divulgations, and made her quietly enjoin Cécile not to let him know whose daughter she was until he had seen her mother. She even reproached herself for having invited him in so readily; and politely getting rid of him after supper, she merely told him that he would indeed find M^{me} Cleveland at Lord Clarendon's, and that all good people would appreciate what he had undertaken in the service of such an amiable lady.

With what the reader has seen of Don Thadeo's character, it is easy to understand that a passion born all of a sudden with this force quickly reached in his heart the point of extravagance. He did not have in mind leaving Quevilly the next day; and his intention being only to find a way to see my wife in secret, he had expected to find the opportunity of doing so by circulating about

the vicinity of her lodging, whence he could easily to return in the evening, and even at mealtimes, to the place where he had spent the night. But [482] deciding abruptly to remain there much longer, and knowing no other lodging place that he would so cherish, he sought that very evening a pretext for remaining there. The one he declared quite naturally to his hosts was to inquire into the fate of a Spanish prelate who had some time past left Madrid with a woman he loved, and who was indeed thought to have passed into the Protestant communion in order to obtain the freedom to marry her.⁵⁹¹ He was careful to suggest no motive beyond friendship, and to assume several other views that could not make him suspect to Protestants. This news was spread the very next day throughout the town, not to mention that the curiosity that had led him on his arrival to attend the service had already disposed the inhabitants to view him quite favorably.

Yet he did not relinquish the purpose that had brought him; and not yet daring to presume he would be received at Mme de R...’s house at all hours of the day, he spent part of the next day flitting about the earl’s chateau. He did not manage to see Fanny, but he himself was perceived by the Duke of Monmouth, who had just dined at the earl’s house at the hour which was becoming customary to him. The appearance of a handsome horseman who was casting curious glances at the chateau, and who paused long enough for one to surmise that he was not there without some purpose, would at once have given the duke some misgivings, if the isolation in which he saw that Fanny was living had not

⁵⁹¹ Could it be the same one who had retired to Madeira with Doña Cortona? We shall see that Don Thadeo knew her; moreover she is on her way to England, a Protestant land; but her formerly ecclesiastical companion will never turn up again.

suppressed his initial suspicions. What he retained of them was nevertheless strong enough for him to approach Don Thadeo, of whom he haughtily asked why he evinced such curiosity. The Spaniard replied no less arrogantly, and from that first moment these two proud and impetuous spirits would have come to blows, if the shame of attacking a totally accompanied man with such a numerous retinue had not led the duke to adopt a more moderate tone.

Don Thadeo attended to his inquiry only as long as he thought himself obliged by decency to put off the visit he was contemplating to Mme de R... He turned up with the confidence he was bound to expect from the reception he had received the day before, and the flattering thoughts with which he had left. Mme de R... had gone too far to refuse to see him, but she advised Cécile not to appear, yet without explaining the reasons to her, which she was persuaded that Cécile had not noticed; and once having dismissed Don Thadeo, she remained convinced, from the very conversation she had just had with him, that he was passionately in love, she decided to write to my wife to inform her of this new incident.

Her letter did not come as much of a surprise to Fanny. She already knew from M. and Mme des Ogères that Don Thadeo had come to France with them, and that he had confined himself for her to sentiments which obliged her to some gratitude. Though she was astonished to learn that he was in Quevilly, she could not have imagined that he was brought there by some design relative to her daughter, since he could not have foreseen that he would find her there; and failing to share Mme de R...’s alarms, she pointed out to her that Don Thadeo was a man of distinction and honor, to whom she owed some gratitude, and for whom she requested consideration and friendship. It is true that lest her tranquillity be troubled, Mme de R... had not informed her of the

Spaniard's passion, and that she appeared only to be consulting her about the conduct she should adopt with him.

The unexpected arrival of M. and Mme des Ogères had given the tender Fanny too much satisfaction to leave room in her heart for unfounded anxieties. She had abandoned herself to the embrace of those two faithful friends, and sensing, even before they had explained anything, how their testimony could help prove her innocence, she had interspersed with her first expressions of joy some terms of gratitude that were related to that thought. M. des Ogères had augmented her transports by informing her that the very service she thought she could expect of him was the sole reason for his journey, and that having seen me in St. Cloud, whence he had left [483] with my consent to come get her and bring her to me, he had already had the satisfaction of obtaining all the fruit he had hoped for from his effort. What expressions and what thoughts will ever match the feelings that arose in Fanny's soul! She had called those two fine persons by all the names the heart uses to express its most intense affection: the protectors of her honor and innocence, her guides, her dear liberators, those who were the most precious and respectable to her after me. A hundred times she had embraced them anew, giving as many tears to her joy as she had ever shed in her sufferings.

She would not have delayed her departure for a minute, had she been free to follow her impatience. But the happy news that was brought to her being immediately communicated to Lord Clarendon, he took such an affectionate and zealous part in it that he himself offered to make the journey to Paris to escort her. Such generous tokens of friendship could not be received with indifference. She was obliged to allow him two days to settle his domestic business, and M. des Ogères agreed to write to me with the reasons for the delay. The Duke of Monmouth was the only one from whom she requested that the earl conceal the route she

was to take. She could no longer doubt that it was upon her that he intended to urge his attentions. The absence of Cécile had seemed to affect him very little, and having only multiplied the signs of his passion since she was in Quevilly, everyone had become aware of his true sentiments. Although by this time she felt herself above all sorts of fears, she wanted to conceal her activity from him, so as to be forever delivered from his importunities.

But since nothing prevented her from recalling Cécile to her side until the time of a departure for which they needed to prepare together, she allowed herself this satisfaction that very day. M. and Mme des Ogères, to whom she could not wait to introduce her daughter, accompanied her to Quevilly. Don Thadeo was at Mme de R... 's when they arrived; and though somewhat confounded to encounter M. des Ogères, whom he did not think so nearby, he lacked neither fervor nor eloquence to express the joy he had at seeing Fanny, and the interest he took in her happiness. His compliment being followed by some explanations regarding Cécile, which at first seemed murky to him, since it was to M. and Mme des Ogères that Fanny addressed them in introducing him to her daughter, they were extremely surprised to see him progressively change color as this matter seemed more clear to him. He looked by turns at mother and daughter, with an agitation and signs of turmoil that caused everyone to worry, and which Mme de R... thought she alone divined. Finally the cause of these movements was suddenly revealed by an even stranger transport. Don Thadeo threw himself at the feet of Fanny and Cécile, who were still standing, side by side, and grasping the hem of their dresses, which he kissed passionately for a long while, he made the observers fear lest such a violent emotion cause him on the spot to lose consciousness, or even his life.

They insisted he rise; but it was not to return to a more

tranquil disposition. He joined his hands heavenward, uttering a hundred touching things about his extreme happiness. They were fragmented exclamations, seeming to come from a heart about to suffocate, and no one yet grasped their meaning. There was no difficulty judging that the principal sentiment agitating him was joy; but in the jumble of so many interrupted words it brought forth from his mouth, they waited with a sort of fear for his mind and tongue to recover the freedom of explaining themselves.

Finally, turning to Fanny, before whom he again bent the knee, but with a much more calm appearance: Oh glory of your sex! he said to her with Spanish pomp. Oh woman whose charms and virtue I would have thought incomparable, had I not before my eyes so like an image; I worshiped you religiously when I thought it was no crime to do so. But if duty has made me overcome a passion which in its fervor should have been immortal, that very duty engages me today in other bonds, which all the power of heaven and earth cannot break. As his manner of speaking these words was [484] completely gentle and courteous, Fanny, who immediately perceived his intentions, and found in them nothing offensive for her daughter, merely interrupted him with a smile: You are freer than are we are, she said, if nothing prevents you from thinking about love. We have other preoccupations which today are more important, and require our attention elsewhere. He replied only with a deep bow; but everything in his movements spoke, and taking advantage of a declaration that had been received without anger, he continued to adopt with Cécile the behavior of a passionate suitor.

That virtuous but too proud and too affectionate Spaniard, was destined to dig another's grave, through excesses of daring and love for which only his misfortune can be blamed, since they caused his own demise. The very next evening, he as if willfully plunged himself into a dilemma from which his status as for-

eigner would not have saved him without the help of Lord Clarendon and Fanny. Having remained at Quevilly after the ladies returned, his passion did not allow him to spend the night there peacefully. He came and paraded his anxieties about the earl's house, and thinking he had little need of precautions in a landscape where he was not known, he neglected to pay attention to keeping out of sight of passers-by, not imagining in any case that he might be observed. Some of Monmouth's men, who had seen him that morning with their master, and had impatiently borne the arrogance with which he had replied to him, encountered him not far from the house; and taking this opportunity to humiliate him, they asked him the same question as the duke, but in a more insulting tone, which was consequently much less appropriate for them. Don Thadeo, who thought he recognized them as domestics, treated them with all the haughtiness of a man of distinction who thinks he has been offended by scum. They in turn got on their high horse, and preparing to arrest him, they approached with numerous insults and threats. His only resource was to arm himself with two pistols which he had taken the precaution of bringing with him, and his two shots were so accurate that he was delivered of two of his enemies. There was one remaining for whom his sword would have sufficed, but who fled quickly and escaped. Anyone else would have had no thought but to be off after an event of this nature; but Don Thadeo, sustained by the testimony of a heart above reproach, continued circulating tranquilly about the plain, until the time when the duke's remaining servants and those of Lord Clarendon, alerted by the one who had fled, appeared armed with all sorts of weapons. Resistance was futile against such numbers: the brave Spaniard was rudely arrested, and taken to mylord's, where the entire assembly, which was still at table, was extremely surprised to recognize him.

He evinced less unease than joy, at the sight of so many

persons looking at him in astonishment. But the duke, who added to his resentment at what had just occurred the memory of what had happened that morning, could not place his face without giving vent to some indications of intense indignation. The firmness with which Don Thadeo replied to him would have produced an even more terrible scene, if Lord Clarendon, informed in a few words from M. des Ogères of the Spaniard's birth and of his ties to my family, had not checked the initial heat of his outburst. He politely invited Don Thadeo to explain his adventure himself, and seeing in it indeed no more than the behavior of a gallant man, he begged the duke to adopt more temperate sentiments. Fanny helped with her own appeal, and taking fright especially at some intimations of chains and prison which she had heard the duke utter, she urged him to be less severe with a man who deserved more consideration. This was to serve him ill. Jealousy, stronger than the dismay of having lost two of his men, provoked the Englishman to the point of turning his resentment against my wife. He publicly reproached her for scorning his attentions, and for the interest she was taking in the fate of a murderer for whom she did not seem to feel the same indifference. Lord Clarendon, keenly affected by the dismay which this reproach could cause Fanny, declared seriously to the duke that such acerbic language was not customary in his house, and forcefully calling his attention to his obligations to [485] honor and civility, he made clear that he must graciously consent to what he would not have the power to prevent. Fanny, moreover, less irritated than amused by the duke's reproaches, made a playful reply to him, with that superiority which virtue gives over all that is powerless to offend it, and far from relenting in her entreaties, she renewed them with such insistence that he had no choice but to yield.

The first effect of this incident, for which I would not have had to interrupt my narrative were it not for its subsequent con-

nection with it, was to move up by one day the departure of Fanny and those who had promised to escort her. This was another sign of gratitude and friendship which she willingly granted to Don Thadeo; for despite the duke's agreement to let him go free, it was not certain that his adventure would remain hidden to justice, and his courage not allowing him to follow the advice which everyone was giving him to disappear, he insisted on remaining until the ladies' departure, since he too wanted to escort them.

Thus, that day so long awaited, desired with such impatience and ardor, hastened perhaps by the sighs of so many innocent hearts, finally dawned to shine on the happiest of all journeys and the most memorable of all events. I was still confined to my bed, but much more by the alarms of my sister and Mrs Riding than by the weakness of my health or the danger of my wounds. The joy and expectation, which were the only passions that occupied me, had brought more change in my strength than all the remedies of art, and at certain moments I thought I could undertake the journey to Rouen to anticipate Fanny or meet her on the road. My sister, who relied less on my ardor than on what the surgeons said, objected to all proposals that could agitate me too much. She had made me promise not to leave my bed without her permission; and in concert with Mrs Riding, not only had she avoided speaking to me about Cécile, but she had suspended under various pretexts the enlightenment for which I had a hundred times asked that lady concerning the fate of my daughter and the happy event that had reunited us. I was not so blinded by my old prejudices as not to sense some secret behind so much disguise; but the more I strove to get at it, the more my sister yielded to alarms that led her to redouble precautions.

The deference I owed to her care made me finally choose to bottle up my most ardent transports in my heart; as they no longer

bore the character of sorrow and fear, I had no do myself no violence to make myself assume a tranquil countenance, nor to lend myself to all the attentions being devoted to my health. If anything had been capable of renewing my agitations, however, it could have been the first circumstances of a visit which I received from the rector of the Jesuits. He was announced to me under that name. My sister and Mrs Riding, whose notions of that order were no less horrendous than mine, but who feared because of our status as foreigners and Protestants to lack respect for such a powerful society, had been the first to announce the rector to me, that is to say a man whom they thought I had every interest in humoring. It was thus on their advice that I decided to receive him.

His physiognomy was serious, but gentle and prepossessing. He began by apologizing for taking so long to render to me what he thought he owed me since he had learned my name through the relations he had had with my wife, and especially since the king had honored his Society by entrusting to it the education of my children. My eyes, which I had tried to moderate when I greeted him, changed at these two declarations. Happily, my sister had not left the room, and perceiving what was going on in my mind, she anticipated my response quickly enough to dampen the indignation which I was about to unleash. We have not told you, she said to me, of some changes which are of no importance, and which I was waiting to tell you until your recovery. Your children are at the Collège de Louis le Grand, where we have taken care to verify [486] that they are being treated with great respect, and to which even your wife was not distressed that the king had had them taken. It is doubtless in order to give you the same reassurance that those Fathers are paying you a visit, and I know, she added, that they indeed have excellent methods for educating the young.

The rector thanked her in very polite terms for this compliment, while the uneasiness I still felt made me lend my ear to every word to learn more. He again turned towards me: The motive to which Madame attributes my visit, he said, was doubtless sufficient to make it my duty to come, and I cannot too strongly confirm the opinion she has of our Fathers' zeal for the instruction of the children who are entrusted to their care; but with so powerful a reason, I have two others that are much more pressing. Thereupon he asked me to confess candidly whether I had had some relationship with a particular member of his company, who had had some influence with Madame, and naming without further ado the zealous director whose character has been seen in this history, he urged me to tell him what I thought of him.

The fear of betraying myself by some imprudently plain speaking made me take a few moments to reflect on this question. Vexed even at passing so quickly over what concerned my children, I would willingly have left this new point unanswered, to require explanations which were much more important to me. But being unable to doubt, after various reflections, that all these enigmas were connected by some common thread, and having nothing to fear from confessing the truth, I explained plainly the just reasons which that director had given me for considering him a most dangerous scoundrel. I even added, in the bitterness of my heart, that having no submission to render either to the court or to the Church of France, it was most grievous to me, whether the order came from the court or the Church, to see my children in the power of such an evil man, or even in the power of a society of which I could not adopt a very favorable opinion, since he was tolerated in it. Your presumption is not unfair, interrupted the rector, if you have never had any other measure to judge us by. I do not even ask you to change your impressions, he added, on the

sole basis of my apologies. Today I needed only the explanation you have just granted me, and I leave satisfied now that I have obtained it. Having then arisen to go, he bade me kindly to allow him to see me again in a few days, and in the meantime to be without anxiety for my children.

I would have pressed him to explain himself further, if the hope of being more freely informed by my sister had not on the contrary made me wish to see him promptly out of my room. I looked at her in dismay as soon as he had left. What confidence, I said, can I have in a stranger, who may be my enemy, when I find so little sincerity in those who profess to love me? Am I then subject to some new misfortune of which I do not know, and have I no one who has taken enough interest in it to tell me? She seemed less embarrassed than hurt by this reproach. You take so intensely, she replied, everything that relates to your desires and fears, that in your continuing state of weakness, one fears at every moment harming your health with any change. What happy news would I not have to communicate to you, if I were not continually held back by so strong a reason! But with respect to your children, she added, you should be as much at ease on my word as on that of the rector, and if you required a more forceful reason, I would tell you that your wife has seen them several times at the school, and that she is herself content with their situation. She refused to satisfy my curiosity further. Every time I attempted to extract further information from her, she replied banteringly that if I had some fortitude remaining, I must summon it to prepare myself for Fanny's arrival, which could not be far off; and that she would judge by the moderation of my sentiments whether I was capable of bearing a happiness of which I yet knew no more than the prelude.

I took in as by deep draughts such sweet expectations, and although in comparing [487] all my thoughts to the present, I

discovered nothing that could help me understand better, I knew enough along with the promises of such a wise sister to abandon every bit of my heart to joy. It swam already in a river of pleasure, the bounds of which neither misgivings nor suspicion could any longer make it feel; and what it was being promised beyond that formed what was like an infinite space, where it lost itself in delights.⁵⁹² I began again to feel such lightness and vigor that, wishing to make those who still were anxious for my health aware that it would henceforth be their least concern, I absolutely insisted that someone help me get up, and indeed found myself able to walk without support. Even my pallor was gradually disappearing. The effect of any food I took was almost immediately visible from the change in my face, and the noticeable increase in my strength. My sister received that very afternoon the letter from M. de R... in which he told her with what joy Fanny welcomed M. and Mme des Ogères. She felt sure that with their help, he said, she could overcome all the difficulties that remained for her to combat in my heart. How little he knew me! She already reigned there with absolute sway.

As he informed us at the same time that Lord Clarendon wished to join the party, and as the deference he was owed would delay the departure by two days, I did not despair of finding myself strong enough by the next day to meet them en route, and travel at least part of the distance. This intention, which I communicated to Mrs Riding and my sister, elicited the desire to test my strength by taking the air outside the house towards evening. The weather was so mild, and all the appearances of my recuperation so favorable, that even the surgeons gave their approval. I got into

⁵⁹² After boundless suffering, Cleveland now experiences boundless joy, but this time it is sensual immersion and not the anguish of nothingness.

a light carriage with the two ladies, and we had the driver take us some distance from my park, toward a most agreeable alley that ends at the highway. Feeling better than ever once this drive was under way, I proposed to my company that we get out onto the grass to breathe the air more freely, and we seated ourselves together, with some precautions to prevent the coolness of the grass from inconveniencing me.

My sister, who related all her thoughts to her continuing fear lest I fall the next day into the transports of which she knew me capable upon receiving Fanny, was continually attempting to anticipate them with reflections she thought helpful for moderating them. How glorious it would be for you, she said at the conclusion of a most affectionate conversation, and what a high opinion I would have of that firmness of courage which I have seen you manifest so often in misfortune, if you could draw enough strength from the same principles to protect you from the excesses of joy! It seems to me, she added, that if there is some soundness in the maxims of philosophy, they ought to do double duty; and virtue consisting, as they say, of the midpoint between vices,⁵⁹³ I do not know if that name should be given to a virtue that would avoid one extremity only to plunge into the other one. Nevertheless, she continued, trying to guess my dispositions by my eyes, I doubt whether the natural power of the mind extends so far, and incline at least towards the opinion of those who believe fortune's great favors to be much more difficult to bear up under than her most dreadful disgraces. She then asked me, with all the more tact that she seemed to betray less affectation, what I thought of this problem, and what light I had drawn respecting it

⁵⁹³ According to an ancient schema, the vices consisting in too much or too little of something and virtue being moderation.

from my experience and study.

I answered her, unwary of her purpose, that of the two sources she named to me, and from which she believed I could have obtained some enlightenment, experience seemed to me the only one on which a reasonable judgment could be based.⁵⁹⁴ I rely, I said to her, on mine. With the practice of continual study, I long believed that my heart had no need of any other assistance to protect itself against all the passions that could disrupt its tranquility; and you know how many opportunities fortune has given me [488] to apply principles which I had drawn from my books. They served me passably in my earlier trials, that is, as long as there remained in some part of my soul into which grief had not yet reached, and from which they still freely controlled the ones it had mastered. But their strength gradually diminished, as the sentiment of my pains attained the spot they occupied; and as two powers cannot reign with equal sway, the weakest necessarily yielded the rank it could not maintain.

I speak to you only about pain, I continued, because in the course of my life I have known few joys without some admixture of affliction. However, if I may take some confidence today in the new situation of my fortune, I augur well of my strength to moderate the sentiments it evokes, and I imagine that the practice of philosophy is much easier in happiness than in calamity. What

⁵⁹⁴ An important evolution in the “philosopher’s” thought. Up until his suicide attempt, his moral had been an abstract wisdom nourished by study: since Fanny’s flight, experience had reduced it to dust. Since then, he has only felt rather than reasoned. Now a new kind of wisdom begins to be put in place, which can make room for culture even if there is nothing very bookish about it. Nevertheless, he will say in the philosophical discussions several months later that he has always been faithful to his mother’s principles.

would I have to combat? The excess of pleasure? But do I not know that there are only too many remedies for that gentle intemperance; and for a heart as tried as mine, is the very fear of losing what it has never tranquilly possessed not restraint enough to check its transports?

I was going to add other reflections to these, and despite the conflation of all the movements of joy that were arising in my heart, I was indeed persuaded that my sister's doubt could not be a subject of serious question, when I spied a large carriage drawn by six powerful horses, advancing rapidly toward my house; and recognizing the livery of M. de R..., I could not doubt that it was he himself who was bringing me my wife. I extended my hand toward my sister. My tongue, which I had just been using so freely, was of no use. I scarcely had the strength to utter these few words: Oh god, it's Fanny! The two ladies immediately rose to assure themselves of what they too were beginning to think. But far from being able to do as they did, I found myself so weak from the sudden exhaustion of all my spirits,⁵⁹⁵ that I could not make the slightest motion forward. Meanwhile, the carriage was coming toward us so swiftly that it was almost at once across the driveway. We were recognized by those who were inside. It was not Fanny; but does the reader not guess who it must have been, if it was not she? What could inspire this eagerness to see me, if it is not love or nature? It was Cécile, who uttered cries of joy when

⁵⁹⁵ "Spirits, in the plural, in terms of medicine, is said of the most volatile parts of the body, which serve to perform all its operations. Two sorts of *spirits* are distinguished, *vital spirits* and *animal spirits*. The *vital spirits* are nothing other than the most subtle and agitated part of the blood, on which depend its movement and its heat. The *animal spirits* are those very subtle bodies contained in the brain and the nerves" (*Dictionnaire de Trévoux*, 1743).

she spied me. M. de R... had come with her and M. and Mme des Ogères, while Mme de R... and Fanny were coming in Lord Clarendon's carriage, with him and Don Thadeo.

One must remember that the initial order of their journey had been changed by the Don Thadeo episode, and that instead of the two days Lord Clarendon had asked of my wife, she had got him to agree to take only the following night to prepare for his departure. His willingness to yield to her wishes had been all the more agreeable to her because, by rendering a service to Don Thadeo despite himself, she also was delivering herself from the embarrassment of listening any longer to passionate talk from the Duke of Monmouth. The young nobleman had unleashed too much fury in the circumstances which I have related not to cause the timid Fanny some fear. She rightly judged that all passions are roughly of the same force in the same character, and that from a man who is capable of forgetting himself in anger one must not expect more moderation in his transports of love. The duke had even begun already to invoke the sacrifice he had made to her of his resentment, and making clear his expectations with very little restraint, he had been brash enough to declare to her that after the effort he had made on himself in her favor, he had some right to expect of her a little more indulgence for sentiments which he thought quite well proven by a submission of that nature. The proper response she had made to such temerity had not prevented him, when leaving her that evening, from hazarding offers that evinced even more presumption. The knowledge he had obtained of my situation had led him to believe that a natural son of Cromwell, who had spent part of his life outside England, [489] could not be on very good terms either with his native land or with fortune; and being not unaware either that a person of Fanny's birth might wish to appear in London in some splendor, he had thought that the desire she manifested of returning there was a

favorable opening for him to entice her with propositions that ought to flatter the vanity of an ordinary woman. In a word, he had offered her an immense sum, and the use of his most handsome house in London, upon the sole condition that she accept his pursuits, and not refuse him the hope of finding grace with her.

He had taken precautions to make this offer to her secretly. His surprise was extreme when he heard Fanny raise her voice, not only to thank him for his generosity, but make everyone aware of the gratitude she thought she owed him. This ironical manner of defending herself had offended him more than a show of anger. He had withdrawn in such visible spite that, hoping never to be forced to see him again, nor consequently exposed to fearing him, Fanny had pressed Lord Clarendon to leave at day-break, and to conceal even from his domestics the road she was to take.

She had been obliged, out of civility to Mme de R..., to do without the pleasure of having her daughter with her; but M. de R...'s attentions sufficing to put her at ease, she had not made the journey with any less joy. The two carriages had stayed together all day long, when upon approaching my house, Cécile had the idea of cleverly getting there ahead of her mother and stealing my first caresses from her. She communicated this intention to M. de R..., who willingly agreed to procure her that satisfaction. He did not imagine that my sister, who had been at my house for three days, had carried precaution to the point of concealing from me what to him she could not have told me soon enough. In yielding to his daughter's desires (this was still his term for her) he thought he would be procuring for me as well a satisfaction for which my heart would be indebted to his friendship. It was easy to find pretexts for having his carriage overtake that of Lord Clarendon. He had no sooner passed him than, urging his horses on at top speed, he very covered the rest of the ground in very

little time.

Although the sight of Cécile and her transports revived most tender sentiments in my heart, I breathed when I saw she was alone with Mme des Ogères. Alarmed, however, at not seeing Fanny appear, I was going to ask my sister what I was to think of this; but her embarrassment exceeded my own. She thought she was just reaching, despite herself, the decisive moment; and far from leaving her fears behind, she could not see the eagerness with which Cécile leapt from the carriage without hurriedly preparing me with a short exhortation. Summon all your strength, she said to me, and prepare yourself for the most agreeable of all events. Cécile was in my arms before I could reply to these words. She was hugging with such a passionate movement, calling me a hundred times her father, that I could not help some perplexity. Nevertheless I accepted her caresses, and let her know that they moved me; but surprised to see them continue with the same ardor, and being somewhat embarrassed by the presence of M. de R..., I disengaged myself from her embrace to tell him that I accepted joyfully the name she was giving me, and would hold it dear my whole life long. She began anew to caress me without restraint. Seated as I still was, she had been obliged to kneel in order to embrace me. She did not move from that posture. She pressed my hands, she kissed them a hundred times, and I could feel they were all damp with her tears.

M. de R... helped her to her feet. Give us the time, he said to her, to express to M. Cleveland the part we take in his happiness. I imagined he was beginning to find the caresses I was receiving from his daughter somewhat excessive, and I looked at him with a blush. You will no longer complain of heaven's cruelty, he continued, addressing me; and if you are not the happiest of all men, it is not on earth that you must hope for what you lack. We restore to you a wife who combines every virtue with every

charm, and I present to you a daughter worthy of her mother and of you. I am too happy myself, he added, embracing me, to have preserved for you [490] such a precious charge, and as the compensation for my services ask of you only the permission to share the name of father with you.

This language will appear clear to those who have knowledge here that I did not yet possess. But if they put themselves into the profound ignorance I was in over the fate of my daughter, convinced by such long habit that M. de R... was her father, and having never had reasons for conceiving the slightest doubt about it, they will realize that my blindness was unavoidable, and that far from being enlightened by the movements of nature, I had to be wary of the inclination I still found in my heart for a charming girl who had long made me experience all the transports of love. My sister easily understood M. de R...’s error and my own. He was acting under the persuasion that I was informed of the good fortune for which he hastened to congratulate me; and I, who saw in his words and Cécile’s affection only evidence of the keen interest they were taking in my wife’s return, I imagined at the very most, hearing them make such liberal use of the word father, that as a gesture of kindness toward Fanny, who had no daughter, M. de R... had conferred upon her his rights to his own, and that he admitted me for the same reason to a share in the name he owed to nature. My reply was in keeping with that notion: You grant me, I said, much more than I would have dared desire. The happiness of being rich enough to offer an inestimable gift is yet surpassed by that of receiving it. I accept your offers; and you know, I added, that if there is something to be changed in my heart to make it assume the sentiments of a father, it is not affection or devotion.

Cécile sat down beside me, and seeming to be charmed by my slightest attentions, she returned with interest everything

affectionate and obliging that I said to her. I could see embarrassment in my sister's face; she said a few words to Mrs Riding which I could not hear. It was to ask her once more to leave the explanation of the mystery to chance or to nature, persuaded that what would develop almost imperceptibly in this way would expose me to much less agitation. But I was so far from the danger she feared for me that, yielding to the mortal impatience I had for Fanny's arrival, I even interrupted Cécile to learn from her where she had left her. M. de R... assured me that it could not take her more than a quarter-hour. Oh God, I cried; and making immense efforts to restrain a hundred exclamations I was going to blurt out with the same impetuosity, I remained for a few moments as if deaf and impervious to what was being said around, from the violence of the sentiments I was bottling up. I began from that moment to recognize myself that I would not have all the control I had expected over my senses. I confessed this to my sister, who had been alarmed by the movements she had just witnessed. It is true, I said, that I do not feel as strong as I had flattered myself to be; and if you ask me what I think of myself at this moment, I fear I will be unable to embrace her without dying. It is for her, I added, that I want to preserve myself; for I know her heart: if she is such as you have persuaded me, if all her misfortunes and mine have not changed her, she would not survive me either. That moving thought being reinforced by the memory of the happiest years of our love, I preferred exposing myself once more to the torment of a few days' privation, to the danger of losing my life from the present excess of my joy. This is the point where I fear I will give a strange notion of the character of my heart, at least to those who have neither enough strength nor enough breadth of sentiment to imagine what must have been going on there during these reflections.

But I was also relying too little on myself, and was not thinking that this very activity of the heart that made me believe the danger so pressing was capable of resisting more violent attacks. Moreover, M. de R..., without divining my fears, and with no other intention than to inform me about what he thought might interest me, gave my sentiments an unforeseen diversion by the narrative of Fanny's persecutions at the hands of the Duke of Monmouth. An incident so unexpected in those circumstances at once suspended my agitations. Although I did not know the duke, and had even avoided [491] the opportunity of seeing him at Madame's, where he was continually, I had heard a hundred times about his character, and praise of his excellent qualities, which would have made him one the greatest men of his century, if presumption and temerity had not tarnished their brilliance. Everything was to be feared from a man such as I imagined him, and I could not hear that he had conceived particular sentiments for my wife without feeling almost as much alarm as curiosity.

My wariness greatly increased when, after relating to me how importunate his love had made him to Fanny, M. de R... repeated to me what Lord Clarendon had told him of his early adventures, and the situation he was in at the English court.⁵⁹⁶ The Duke of Monmouth was scarcely sixteen when, already indulging the initial movements of a temperament that was ambitious and indisposed to dependence, he had preferred to give up living in

⁵⁹⁶ Prévost makes the reader "wait," like Cleveland; this narrative will go on almost to the end of book XI. In principle, Clarendon is the source of this fanciful story. It has two functions here: diegetically, it fills the time until the arrival of the carriage that is bringing Fanny, and narratologically it slows down and stretches out the climax, while enhancing it by the contrast between the threat that Monmouth represents and the joy of the reunion with Fanny.

London, and the favors he could have expected there from his father the king, rather than live there in the necessity of appearing at the court with the status of subject. His estate was considerable enough to make easy for him the plan he conceived. It was to retire there, under pretext of love of solitude, and to require of his vassals obedience and such extraordinary signs of respect that they differed little from the submission of slaves. His ambition long fed on that vain shadow of power and grandeur. He had put together a quite numerous household, the principal officers of which bore the same titles as those of the crown. He had guards, a sovereign tribunal of justice, which he was bold enough to constitute without the court's authorization, and the decisions of which he carried out several times in very important matters. In all, with exception of the scepter, he denied himself no mark of royalty.

The king had been duly informed of this behavior; but he regarded it first as a youthful caprice for which he had such indulgence that he sometimes took pleasure in humoring it, by treating the duke as a sovereign prince. He even conferred that title on him in a few letters, mixing in, with pleasant banter, terms like state, court, parliament, and everything that could give satisfaction to the ambitious young man by actualizing his fantasy up to a point. However, the duration of this comedy finally caused it to be viewed more seriously. The duke's age was beginning to call for other occupations than childish games. He received the order to come to the court, and the king's intention was to put him to work in the war he was about to declare against Holland. An illness served him as pretext to avoid obedience. In vain did his council, which was fortunately made up of wise men, although they had the indulgence to lend themselves to all his imaginations, point out to him that by refusing the proper deference he owed to a power superior to his own, he was going to call down some storm on his domains. As he saw it, he had condescended a

great deal by feigning an illness, because having recourse to dissimulation was to admit his weakness; and in the displeasure he felt as a result, he long examined whether by combining all of his forces he could not put himself in a position to reply to his neighbor the king with threat for threat, or anticipate his by declaring war on him.

These extravagances remained secret, and the supposition of his illness caused the king to abandon the thought of calling him to his side. But his ideas of independence being only expanded and confirmed by this lenience of the court, he soon delved into such a foolish undertaking that he himself caused the ruin of all his projects. Love became his guide: this was to choose an even more brazen and imprudent one than ambition. He had in his domains a very wealthy gentleman, who, to get along peacefully with him, had not refused to give in to his whimsies, especially since his father the king had appeared to find them amusing. Nothing perhaps had contributed as much to sustaining the duke's fantasies as the name and wealth of a subject of such prominence. He had entrusted to him the principal positions at his court; and treating him with a familiarity which he did not have for the rest of his subjects, it seemed that the sovereign dignity was all that put some distance between them. It was not for nothing that he saw fit to elevate him thus. He knew he had an amiable daughter, who would one day, by inheritance, be one of the [492] richest matches in the province. He secretly planned to marry her, to consolidate his power by the increase in his revenues, and to make himself more beloved to his subjects by making an alliance in their midst. This project caused no turmoil, as long as it was inspired solely by ambition; but love is less serene. By chance the duke happened to lay eyes on this one whom he still knew only by name; he conceived an intense passion for her; and regarding this event as an admirable disposition of heaven, which was

joining the interests of his grandeur with those of his love, he openly asked her father for her hand. A proposal of this nature, made with the tone of a sovereign who intended to be obeyed, so changed the scene in everyone's eyes, that fear cooled not only the father, but all the duke's counselors and courtiers. The indignation of the court, which was to be expected, could not have failed to punish such temerity. The father chose to flee with his daughter; and the state from which he was trying to escape being not very extensive, he had reached the border in little time, when he found himself arrested by the duke himself, who had pursued him with as much anger as celerity. A fugitive subject, who was abducting the one who was dearest to him, seemed to him worthy of every kind of torture. In the ardor of his initial transport, he would have punished him on the spot with his own hand, had he not allowed himself to be placated by his mistress's tears. But taking advantage of the consternation in which he saw her, he put her father's clemency at a price that cost her honor. She yielded to his insistence that he accept her hand, and this audacious marriage was celebrated in the same place, with as much irregularity of ceremony as in the other circumstances.⁵⁹⁷

All the sensible persons who surrounded the duke shuddered at his audacity, and under a less indulgent king, the punishment might have fallen on them. The duke, delighted at his victory, for a while abandoned all his ambitious thoughts to revel in the pleasures of love, while his mistress's father, fearing lest along with the mortification of seeing his daughter dishonored, he also have the misfortune of drawing on himself the king's resentment, set out for London to justify his conduct to the court. His pleas

⁵⁹⁷ In other words, it was irregular and therefore invalid – which is why her honor was lost.

were heard. The duke's violence was regarded differently from the puerile games of his ambition. The king had two officers of his guard carry to him orders to take himself immediately to London.

It was all the more essential that he obey because even illnesses were not exempted; and to obviate any kind of pretext, the officers were accompanied by several guards, and one of the king's carriages. This ostentation provoked the duke's pride to the point of making him think of resisting; but not having found among his servants the zeal to serve him which he hoped, he chose to yield to force. His mistress, who no longer had any choice but to follow him, agreed to make the journey with him. He was received by the king with more kindness than had been expected. That prince laughed heartily at his attempts at governing, not suspecting he had other views than to amuse himself in solitude. He was less indulgent with him over the violence he had done to a noble maid whose heart at the least deserved to be attacked by gentler methods. But upon learning that she had no regret at belonging to him, and that she even counted it a blessing to be loved by him, his reproaches were not too harsh, and the only punishment he imposed was that he remain at court.

However, it seemed so unbearable to him that, given his repugnance to find himself lost in a crowd of courtiers, he claimed various infirmities to obtain the right not to leave his home. There he lived a delightful existence; for he had no less weakness for pleasure than for ambition; but his idol being grandeur and independence, he found the means, thanks to a generous use of his riches, to attract some of the court to his house, and create for himself a multitude of new slaves who hung on his every whim. His birth and his liberalities seeming to justify their attachment, they took pride in their assiduity and submission, although he sometimes amused himself by putting their zeal to

the toughest tests. The respect and obedience which he required of them for his mistress was another form of slavery, to which they would [493] have found it more difficult to submit, had she herself not been able to disguise it with the sweetest and most blandishing manners. She was naturally sensuous; and counting grandeur as nothing if it was not accompanied by pleasure, she had the skill to inspire tender enough sentiments in those who paid her homage that they were motivated to do it as much out of inclination for her as deference and submission to the duke. It was to satisfy at the same time her dominant passion and that of her lover. But there was some cost to her fidelity, and what had at first succeeded for her became the cause of her downfall.

The duke, although too proud to be capable of ordinary suspicions of jealousy, could not disguise to himself some liberties he chanced to notice. They were slight, and perhaps forgivable in the eyes of a less impetuous lover; but making no distinction between crimes that offended his pride, he immediately punished his mistress with a sword thrust that took her life. This tragic extravagance passed in the king's mind for an excess of jealousy, which he felt he should forgive in favor of youth and love. He even hoped that being detached from the ties to which his fondness for retreat had been attributed, he would of his own accord cede to the duties of his birth, which called him naturally to the court. But if his humor changed, it was to become more melancholic and antisocial. The rage that had caused him to dip his hands in the blood of someone he adored changed into profound sadness. For a long time he lost sleep and appetite. He even turned away from everything that had previously flattered his ambition; and spending over a year deploring his misfortune, he kept even his dearest confidants out of his inclinations and projects. The Earl of Clarendon was then governing England with the

confidence and esteem of his master the king.⁵⁹⁸ Thanks to his experience and the continual attention he brought to the state's interests he had long since detected, in the duke's character as well as in his conduct, the seeds of all the projects which have become notorious in his subsequent life. He advised the king to keep him occupied, and it was through his persuasion that he was named to the French embassy to strengthen the bonds that had just been formed between the two crowns.⁵⁹⁹ His vanity made him appreciative of this choice. Besides the importance of a mission which, as he was told, would have consequences, he found himself delivered, by his absence, from the necessity from humiliating himself at court, and as if elevated to independence in a foreign country by the prerogatives of a dignity that subordinated him to no one. He appeared in Versailles and in Paris with a splendor of which England has given few examples; and his figure upholding his name and his spending, he made himself no less reputation with his gallantries.

It is rare for an ambitious man to be struck twice by the darts of love. If he yields once to that passion, he can soon tell that it is contrary to his dominant purposes, and whatever he subsequently concedes to the weaknesses of nature deserves less the name of heartfelt affection than of amusement. But the Duke of Monmouth's character made him capable of several great passions all at once; and by a whim that was even more specific to him, he willingly sought the opportunity to provide continual

⁵⁹⁸ Clarendon was chancellor from the time of the Restoration in 1661 to 1667.

⁵⁹⁹ Allusion not to the marriage of Henriette Anne, sister of Charles II, to Philippe d'Orléans, brother of Louis XIV, in 1661 – at which time the future Monmouth was only twelve – but to Charles II's meeting with his sister at Dover in 1670, when Monmouth was indeed present.

exercise to his heart's every penchant. Madame was then the grandest and most amiable lady at the French court. He was dazzled by her charms, and ambition again helped to fire up his affection.⁶⁰⁰ The blood tie was a pretext that soon gave rise to familiarity. Moreover, the princess's kindness made her so accessible that hope could easily arise in the heart of a presumptuous man.

Lord Clarendon was not better informed than the public about the duke's intrigue and its advances; but he had learned from some Englishmen who were attached to St. Cloud that his frequent visits had made him suspect to Monsieur, and that the quarrels that had broken out several times had no other origin.⁶⁰¹ It is certain that the duke had long been observed by that prince, and that, often spending the night in the park, he had been exposed to some affronts that had not cooled his passion. It was a misfortune for Madame to have no one with her bold enough to inform her of these circumstances. She was all the more pitiable that, bearing daily the reproaches [494] and sometimes the offenses of jealousy, she could not deliver herself from an evil of which she did not know the cause. Her consolation on the contrary was to discuss her pains with the duke and some other Englishmen, whom she had reason to believe that the bond of country and friendship ought to take a greater interest in it, and what she thus regarded as a soothing of her misfortune became its perpetual source, through the new suspicions to which she unin-

⁶⁰⁰ It is Mme de Lafayette who attests the love of Monmouth for Madame – who was his aunt.

⁶⁰¹ Monsieur's jealousy was well known and was the subject of countless stories, of which Monmouth was indeed one of the subjects, after Louis XIV, the Conte de Guiche, Marcillas, the Chevalier de Lorraine; but Clarendon seems to exaggerate its role here.

tionally gave rise. Finally the duke brought things to a head through an imprudence which cannot be forgiven even to love. Despondent to learn one day that Madame had spent the whole night in tears, after a long visit she had received from Monsieur, he thought himself authorized by his title of ambassador to request a private audience of the prince, during which he complained to him bitterly in the name of his master the king, of the conduct he maintained with a princess who deserved the admiration of the whole world. Monsieur recognized in this language a heart excited by the ardor of passion. He managed to control himself; but if there was ever any basis in fact for the baleful rumors that malice took pleasure in spreading after Madame's death, it was to this unhappy action that one must attribute all the excesses to which, it was averred, Monsieur's jealousy had impelled him.⁶⁰²

Whatever ardor there was in the duke's sentiments, they had not had time to grow long for a long enough time to be very difficult for him to surmount. Moreover ambition having had almost as much to do with it as love, he no sooner saw Madame in the grave than he lost the memory of her charms, and having withdrawn to Rouen, for the reasons I have related, there he found in Fanny's the means of healing a wound which had already mended on its own. Lord Clarendon, in recounting all this to M. de R..., had not disguised the fact that it was the interest he took in my tranquillity that made him go into such detail; he foresaw that the duke's new passion could become an annoyance for me,

⁶⁰² Sole allusion to the rumored poisoning of Madame, for which Monmouth was suspected of being partly responsible. Though this version of the events was bruited about, but there is no proof either of the poison or of Monmouth's love for Madame.

and because of his friendship he wanted me to know what enemy I must beware. It was not even without cause that he was already calling him that. He declared to M. de R... that I should not view otherwise a man who had so crudely spoken of my birth, and who, apparently to justify the offenses he had in store for me, had spoken to him of me only with the greatest arrogance. But I could have done without this explanation, added in conclusion M. de R..., since, when I received it from the earl, it did not assume he was to make the journey with us. He only spoke to me so confidently in order enable me to inform you, and that is a duty which he will now himself perform.

Although I saw in this message only causes for future concern, and nothing that could upset the sweetness of my present situation, I could not hear that a happiness I had not yet begun to enjoy was already threatened by some cloud without falling back into some protestations of heaven's harshness and the strangeness of my fate. Though this thought did not introduce too much bitterness into my sentiments, it brought to mind a hundred reflections that greatly dampened the transports that alarmed my sister and had seemed worrisome even to me. I contemplated everything I had just heard, and although my intention was not fixated on any particular circumstance of my fears, I surveyed them all in a vague way, with an appearance of distraction and deep reverie. My sister said a few words to me to which I made no reply. Cécile showered me with caresses, which I scarcely noticed.

Meanwhile the sound of a fast-moving carriage made us think it must be Lord Clarendon's. Our eyes soon recognized it more certainly. I made an effort to get up; it would have succeeded, and my strength was sufficient to support me unaided; but the ladies and M. de R... absolutely forced me to remain seated. The carriage pulled up during this contestation. I felt

sounder than I had expected, and either because the melancholic reflections which had just preceded had calmed the tumult of my spirits, or because heaven wished to spare me needless agitations, I saw the carriage door open without the excess emotion which I myself had anticipated. M. de R... and Cécile had hurried over to offer Fanny a hand. What was my surprise to [495] see them seem stop motionless at the door, and perceive only Lord Clarendon descending, supported by M. de R... 's arm! Nothing in his expression seemed to herald misfortune for me, but I thought I noticed something uneasy when he had recognized me. Instead of replying to the questions of Cécile, who was asking him sadly where her mother had gone, he was content to greet her with a smile, and hurrying toward me, he deigned to lower himself to the ground, so as to embrace me where I was, not wishing to allow me to move.

My impatience to hear him did not prevent me from being deeply moved by these marks of kindness and friendship. I responded with all my heart, and embracing him with all my strength, with those of my gratitude and attachment. But, I said just as quickly, why are you alone? They told me to expect her with you; where have you left her? He understood from the mein with which I asked that question that he could not answer too promptly. Do not worry, he said, and be assured at once on my word that you no longer have any obstacles to fear but from yourself for the perfection of your happiness. Your wife is safe at the chateau of St. Germain. She would be here if I had been willing to take any chances, and if she had not herself agreed to defer her arrival by a few hours. Her reasons and mine are not the same, and I do not mean to put off telling you what they are.

It is heaven's doing, he continued, after taking a seat beside me, that the day when all your desires are going to be satisfied should be at the same time the day that avenges you on your

enemies. My carriage had passed St. Germain, when M. de R... decided to accelerate his, with a rapidity that quickly put him out of sight. I imagined that he wanted the credit for presenting your dear Cécile to you. The same thought occurred to your wife, and we praised this gallantry. My horses were continuing on, when in the middle of the highway and in a place where I could not expect the slightest surprise, four men on horseback, to whom I had paid little attention although they had been following us since St. Germain, asked my coachman to stop. I had a big enough retinue not to fear anything, and moreover the tone in which I heard the request made was not such as to alarm me. I put my head to the window, and seeing all my servants on horseback about me, I myself ordered my coachman to halt for a moment. One of the four strangers alighted, and coming up to me, he whispered in my ear, taking pains to hide his face, that the interest of one of the two ladies I had in my carriage caused him great concern; that he had no less concern for the one who preceded us driven by M. de R..., and that, unable to divide up so as to escort both carriages, he advised me, for the safety of two persons who were dear to me, to return to St. Germain, while he would follow Cécile with a diligence and zeal that should leave me with no worry for her. He left me abruptly after these words, and remounting without answering my questions, he pressed his comrades to follow him as fast as their horses could go.

Had I had only my own person to defend, the earl went on, it is not uncertain what I would have decided; but finding myself anxious for your wife, I hesitated for a few moments over what I should do. Finally, whatever weakness there may perhaps have been in relying on the warnings of a stranger, I took his advice as the surer choice; and having my horses turn around to go back, I dispatched just three of my men, whose courage and loyalty are known to me, with the order to follow the carriage of M. de R...

at full gallop. The Spanish gentleman who came with us could not observe this move without pressing me to tell him the reason. I made no mystery of it, but seeing he was intending to take the horse of the only man I had left to join those I had sent off, I pointed out to him that having perhaps some risk to run for our own carriage, prudence did not allow us to leave your wife defenseless.

With whatever precautions I avoided explicit explanations in her presence, it [496] was impossible for me to speak quietly enough to Don Thadeo without her understanding part of my dilemma. Her alarms were another one, from which I could deliver myself only by feigning an adventure that had no connection with us, and about which I assured her that I had long known the principal circumstances. The care that the stranger had taken to hide his face was a great help in persuading her that I was sincere. She agreed to return to St. Germain, where I left her, with Mme de R..., at the home of a lady of my acquaintance who occupies an apartment in the chateau. She yielded all the more easily to my insistence, that being still unsure whether you approve of her return, she felt some uneasiness about that as we were nearing St. Cloud; and the hope of receiving some assurance of that before her arrival led her to bear less impatiently that I should leave her, with Don Thadeo, who insisted on wanting to accompany me.

The earl, looking at me at this point in his narrative, asked me whether I knew a young man who called himself Gelin. Yes, I replied with a movement of fearfulness. Is he, alas, again trying to cause me new torments? He is incapable of that, interrupted the earl, and on the contrary you have few more faithful friends. Picking up again on his story, he told me how after leaving Saint Germain with Don Thadeo, both preoccupied by such a strange adventure, and with great concern for Cécile, they had set with all

the diligence of six powerful horses. As it was upon entering the forest of Chatou that they had received the warning which had frightened them, they did not pass through it without seeking information from everyone they met. All they had learned was that several extraordinarily manhandled horsemen had been seen there, and that they were persuaded in Chatou that there had been a bloody fight between them in the forest. The victors had passed through the village with those they had disarmed. Some of them were thought to have appeared fatally wounded; but as no one had been bold enough to resist their passage, the subject of their quarrel was unknown, as well as what road the combatants had taken. The earl's dilemma would have still worse, had he not spied his men returning at full gallop towards St. Germain, and who were very happy to run into him. The clarifications were rapid. You are fortunate, said one of them to his master, to have followed the advice you received. Your life and that of Mme Cleveland were in danger. He told how, after catching up with his two comrades to the four strangers who had advised the earl to return to St. Germain, they had been greeted with much joy, and that before they had time to enter into the slightest explanation, they had spotted five other horsemen who were waiting behind the trees that line the road, and seemed to be observing the passers-by. The four strangers had become very exercised at this sight, and declaring to the earl's men that their master's interests were at stake, they had proudly advanced towards the others, whom they ordered to withdraw, with some reproach respect their intentions. This greeting had been received with the same pride. The quarrel mounted with several insults, and the fighting broke out so suddenly that the first shots had been fatal to some of the combatants. One of the earl's men was slightly wounded; but the opposing party having been less fortunate, two of them had fallen nearly lifeless, and the three others had taken flight. The strangers

who were so zealously serving us spoke of abandoning those two wretches to their fate, and letting them die on the spot where they had drawn such just retribution upon themselves, when one of the two had raised his voice to implore them not to treat them so inhumanely; he added that, sensing he was near his last hour, and wishing to be reconciled with those he had mortally offended, he asked them in heaven's name to take the trouble to transport him to St. Cloud, only too happy if, for the interest of my tranquillity and his eternal salvation, he could communicate to me some important secrets before he expired. This declaration had revived the strangers' zeal. Despite the encumbrance and even the danger to which they could be exposing themselves by undertaking to take for more than a league two persons who were dying at their hands, they had attempted to grant them a satisfaction that could turn to my advantage. Happily, one of the two wounded men died before they had begun to prepare themselves for the journey. The other one was so weak that they feared [497] the same fate for him; but after binding his wound they managed to get him onto the horse's rump behind one of their comrades, and to get him through Chatou in that state. They reached Rueil without much difficulty, but the movement having greatly increased his fatigue, he himself confessed that he did not have the strength to go further. He was placed in the hands of a surgeon, whose was of the same opinion, and despaired for his life if his wounds were not dressed at once. As Rueil is off the beaten path, the strangers flattered themselves that if the news of their combat should get abroad, it would not be in a place so unfrequented that justice would begin its search. Their leader noted also that since the wounded man could not be carried as far as St. Cloud, and my own situation did not allow me to come hear in person the things he wanted to confide in me, he might induce him to speak with Lord Clarendon. It was with this hope that after having first asked

the earl's three domestics to stay with him, he changed his mind and sent them to their master, to inform him from their mouths that he could now set forth without danger, and that he even implored him to go promptly to Rueil, where his presence was essential to my interests.

In vain would the earl have asked further explanation from his men. Nothing had escaped the four strangers that could help ascertain their intentions, nor reveal their name. The wounded man had also kept utterly silent about his enterprise, and the initial accusations that had triggered the skirmish had been so vague that they could only gather was a plan for violence and abduction. The earl nevertheless did not hesitate to continue on his way toward Rueil. It was the natural road to St. Cloud. He was taken by his men to the place where the strangers were awaiting him. The first who came into view was the one he remembered seeing at his coach door two hours earlier. He treated him kindly, and telling him to join him in his carriage, he pressed him to explain events which to him were so many mysteries. The stranger's replied that he was no less impatient to tell him about them.

It is unlikely, he said, that having such a close relationship with M. Cleveland and his family, you should not know the name of Gelin. The earl had never had sufficiently detailed knowledge of my story to recognize in this name the author of all my woes. Confessing candidly that he was hearing it for the first time, he noticed that this avowal dissipated a certain constraint which he had at first noted on the face of the man speaking to him. It was indeed Gelin, and what he is going to relate would appear incredible, if I did not add that the sequel is able to justify it.

If you do not know my name, he began again with more assurance, I must tell you that I have old obligations to M. Cleveland, which make it requisite for me to show him considerable gratitude. My unhappy fate, or, if you wish, the power of an

uncontrolled passion, made me long forget such a proper duty; but it is from my very errors and from the goodness he had to forgive me that my zeal now draws its principal strength; and when my friend, he added, not fearing to profane that name, requires my blood to uphold his interests, I will not think my debts well paid if I have a drop remaining that is not shed for him. Being a prisoner, he continued, through a series of adversities which I will never find it agreeable to remember, I received in my prison the visit of a man of the Church who identified himself to me only by the name of the order to which he belonged.⁶⁰³ His demeanor was grave, and his speech ingratiating. He had pity on my misfortune. This false compassion led me to trust him. In my consternation, I would have refused to confide my pains to no one. But I soon perceived, from the means he employed to comfort me, that he was less concerned with my misfortune than with his own resentments, and that he affected signs of inclination towards me only with the intent of getting me to serve some plan of vengeance. I confess to the honor of heaven, which was beginning to make me aware of its assistance, that the unhappy outcome of my desires and the humiliation into which I had fallen, combined with the remorse that had accompanied all my errors, already disposed me to resume [498] the practice and appreciation of virtue. The new example of malice that I thought I detected in someone else opened my eyes even further to my own deplorable situation, and far from following this new path that

⁶⁰³ In the spurious sequel, the Jesuit of St. Cloud is poisoned while in prison upon advice given by Cleveland to the English king; as for Gelin, he too becomes a Jesuit, goes to England where he turns into the Blood mentioned in Prévost's preface and kills himself in prison. Though Prévost does not follow the sequel, he appropriates a few of its elements as if to neutralize them.

was being opened to me towards the abyss of vice, I praised heaven for the opportunity it presented me to make a courageous effort to be free of it. Yet realizing that I was up against the most vindictive and cunning man in the world, it seemed necessary to me to use some ruse to get him to reveal his intentions. At least I managed to get him to explain quite clearly the hatred he bore M. Cleveland. He confessed to me that he had never felt a stronger passion, and assuming I was shared those sentiments, he proposed that we join forces to ruin a man he was not ashamed to call our common enemy. He put off explaining his plan until I was free. The only pain which I took away from this conversation was to have revealed too much with some imprudence in the sincere account I had given of the circumstances of my misfortune, to a man whose maliciousness I should have recognized from the start. I sensed before he left that if he put off explaining himself, it was because he wanted to take advantage of the information he had just received. I had spoken to him of Mme Cleveland, who was then at the convent at Chaillot. He knew moreover of other events which I did not, and which the ones he learned from me caused him to view in a different light. Unable to get to the bottom of his thoughts, I noted from a few words he let drop that upon all this knowledge he was already basing a project which he wished to contemplate more at leisure.

He paid me several visits before I was released, but without revealing anything more, and all his attentions were about assuring him of the willingness I had to assist him. Finally, the generosity of the best of all men caused the doors of my prison to be opened. My repentance of my errors increasing with my gratitude, I hastened to my liberator's house, to acquit myself of the first of my duties. I left his house resolved to fulfill all the others faithfully; and without having sought praise for my zeal by telling him about his enemy, I simply tried to deliver him of him by

secret actions of which I wanted heaven alone to be my witness.

The first was to pay a visit to the superior of the c...⁶⁰⁴ and to inform him of all the horrors I had been able to garner from our conversations while I was in prison. He shuddered at my report, and when after questioning me about some words I had let drop, he learned from me that I was a Protestant, he seemed humiliated by the right of which he imagined I would avail myself to cast aspersions on his order, and even on his religion. But I cured him of that fear by informing him that I was one of the sensible judges who do not impute to a congregation the errors of an individual, and even have no biases regarding differences between religions, since of all the ones known to us, none is so depraved as to authorize violations of the natural principals of morality. I am not very familiar with your order, I said, but in general I am persuaded that those who govern the state would grant you neither their protection nor their esteem if they knew you to be what your enemies describe; and were you devious enough to be evil and to disguise it, I am further persuaded that the sole interest of your reputation would never allow you to suffer anything in one of your members that would unfailingly bring discredit upon the congregation. Such temperate words disposed the superior to give me his confidence. He confessed that for some time he had had suspicions which he had not been able to clear up, and that a hundred circumstances that now came to mind inclined him to think ill of the man I was accusing. As I had been unable to avoid, in my account, naming M. and Mme Cleveland, he seemed satisfied with a report that enabled him to inform himself further. He spoke to me of both of them with a hundred marks of esteem; and their interest was another motive for which he seemed to me as sensitive as he

⁶⁰⁴ *Canon*: the canon of St. Cloud was a Jesuite.

was for the honor of his order. In all, he said, I take your alert as the service of an upstanding man, and do not ask much time for the use to which I intend to put it.

I do not know, continued Gelin, what use he actually made of it; but M. Cleveland's enemy having caused me to anticipate some temerarious enterprise for which he was impatiently awaiting [499] my liberation, I could not wait to meet with him, in the hope that, seeing I was free, he would no longer withhold anything from me. I called on him in vain at the same house where I had talked with his superior. He had gone out that morning, and I awaited his return until nightfall to no avail. However, as I had reason to fear, based on my recollection of his last words, lest he do something drastic without my being involved, the next day I hastened to the door of his house, and was there early enough so that, though custom could not well let me ask to see him right away, I thought at least that I was sure he would not go out without my seeing him. The door opened, and the first face I saw was his. He was going out alone, but in a disguise that would have prevented me from recognizing him had I not looked at him very closely. Instead of the usual vestment of his order, he was wearing the short robe of secular priests, with the wig and all the finery of that sort of churchmen who go by the name of *abbé*.⁶⁰⁵ His eyes were gleaming, his pace resolute, and his whole face bore the marks of a violent agitation.

He nevertheless recognized me as soon as I introduced myself. His joy was great. He let it show by embracing me exu-

⁶⁰⁵ A wink, perhaps, to the knowing reader: the true author, Antoine François Prévost, is himself an *abbé*, a term that has numerous possible meanings but usually designates a priest without pastoral assignment, in other words without responsibilities for any particular parish.

berantly. Who, he said, expected to see you again so opportunely? But let us get away from here. They are offending me, he continued, pressing me to follow him without looking back, and will not be long regretting it. My superiors are expelling me ignominiously.⁶⁰⁶ Some day they will bear the punishment. But it is only the insult that bothers me; for I was determined to leave them, and nothing could have been more favorable to my designs. He continued by asking me, without leaving me time to reply, whether I knew some safe place where we could talk without witnesses. I offered to take him to the apartment which I had rented when I arrived in Paris. He agreed to this. Our conversation on the way there was all about his joy at finding me a free man.

He was no sooner in my room than, assuming a more composed manner, he asked me just how far my courage and discretion could be relied upon. Make no exceptions, I replied, and be sure that after all the trials I have been through, there are few undertakings from which I would shrink out of fear. It is not only a matter of humiliating our enemy, he said. I have bigger plans; and if I have well gauged your sentiments by the things you have admitted to me, I can offer you everything your happiness lacks. The attention with which I made a point of listening to him inspiring in him more and more confidence, and he told me that despite the intention he had always had of associating me with his project, he had found it difficult to tell me all about it while I was a prisoner, because I could do nothing to contribute to my own interests; that now that he was about to carry out his plans, he had regretted that I could not assist him, and that he had nevertheless intended to allow me to share in their benefits; that his desires

⁶⁰⁶ This expulsion obviously redeems the Jesuits' name; we shall see at the end of book XI how it happened.

would perhaps have been ill fulfilled if my captivity had lasted longer; but that being free, I was going to hear his plan, and confess that it was in my power to make it succeed in every respect.

I am informed as of yesterday evening, he continued, by the arrival of a trusty who followed Mme Cleveland to Normandy, and has observed her every action, that she is to return any time now to St. Cloud. If I judge by her impatience, since she believes herself reconciled with her husband, and has recognized as her daughter a young person who passed as another's, her journey will not be delayed later than today or tomorrow. We can easily abduct both of them on the road. And to reveal to you my full intentions, before we work out their execution, I am resolved to take our prey with me to some Protestant country, where necessity will force Cécile to accept my hand,⁶⁰⁷ while you will be free to satisfy your inclination for her mother.

I do not pretend to make a show of my virtue here. I admit, on the contrary, that after the excesses to which I have allowed myself to be carried by a mad passion, I required, at this point, [500], assistance which I could not expect from my own strength. Gratitude and honor, the laws of which I had promised heaven to follow the rest of my life, would perhaps have but feebly resisted what remained of my fatal affection, had the horror I could not help feeling at this dreadful proposition not sustained me even against the weakness of my heart. Fortunately the heat with which the rascal spoke to me prevented him from noticing my discomfort. He went on depicting to me the pleasures that we could

⁶⁰⁷ In "book IX" of the false sequel, the Jesuit confesses that his goal in abducting Cécile had been to marry her, and that he had finally forced her virtue at knife point, subsequently stabbing her.

expect from vengeance and love. Next, coming to the means, he confessed that with the news he had received of the two ladies' departure coming sooner than he had been able to foresee, time was of the essence. In reality it is an advantage for me, he said, that a change took place in my situation today. I now have less fear of being noticed. But not having wished to show his hand too incautiously, he added, he yet had but four men whose he was sure of; and as he had learned that the ladies were to be accompanied by Lord Clarendon and two other gentlemen, who would doubtless have several servants along with them, he judged that victory would be doubtful if we did not see to it that we were the stronger in number.

I interrupted him to turn aside all the propositions he would have thought more plausible than the idea that came to me. Do not concern yourself with an unnecessary task, I said, and be sure that I will find you right away the number you require. There are five of you. I have three trusties who will hold their own with yours in courage and loyalty. Thus there will be nine of us, capable, I dare say, even of a more difficult enterprise. I was indeed sure I could easily find three officers of whose services I had already made some use, and whom I had liberally enough rewarded to expect more. My intention was to get them to help, not to facilitate a cowardly attack, but to ruin him forever, and cover in shame a rascal whose punishment heaven seemed to be reserving to me. The inequality of four against five caused me little worry, because aside from my confidence in the three officers, I was sure that Lord Clarendon would have enough men accompanying him to support us. I took inexpressible pleasure in advance at the thought that Mme Cleveland would see me, at the risk of my life, coming to the defense of herself and her daughter, and that M. Cleveland would soon be informed of what I had attempted for his family's honor. This thought made me totally

reject the one that had first occurred to me to make use of the guards of the constabulary. That would have been the quickest way; but it would have less flattered the desire I had of signaling my repentance and zeal.

My offers were accepted so eagerly that I thought my plan could not fail. I further encouraged error by letting my accomplice know that I had a considerable sum to sacrifice to his designs. He showed me a sum that exceeded mine. Our enterprise being supported by such a solid foundation, he proposed that we see his associates, to take our measures together. I found four men whose looks and character were not the kind that could discourage me. They were delighted to hear us speak of an increase in numbers which greatly reduced the danger. The one who had returned from Rouen the previous day answered, to the questions I put to him, that having made the journey to oblige our chief, he had worked his way in among Lord Clarendon's servants, under the pretext he was seeking employment, and had skillfully uncovered everything that was happening in the house. He was not sure which day the ladies had chosen for their departure, but he judged from their impatience that they were perhaps already on the road, and he knew that their train would be made up of just two carriages, with a few mounted servants.

Our measures were simple. We decided, being uncertain, to go that very day to the forest of Chatou, which seemed the most favorable place, and the one where the arrangements we had yet to make would not prevent us from assembling in the afternoon. However rapidly the two carriages were being driven, it was unlikely they could pass through before four o'clock. That was the time I set for our meeting. I asked for the liberty to withdraw, to get things ready on my part to carry out my promises; and in order to avoid any [501] sorts of misgivings, I distributed a few gold louis to the associates, with exhortations to help spur their

courage.

It was no more difficult than I had expected to locate the three officers on whose assistance I was relying. I knew where they lived; and although they were forced by their ill fortune to lend themselves to acts unworthy of their character, I was persuaded that I could depend more on their stoutheartedness than on that of four wretches who scarcely knew the name of honor. I gauged it even better from the avidness with which they espoused my intentions, when they understood that the enterprise was a virtuous one, and that the motive of self-interest was supported here by that of generosity and justice. I had enough money to procure arms and horses for us on the spot. Our preparations were so quick that we arrived in the forest before noon. That is when, contemplating with my comrades about the most useful service we could render you, I decided to head toward you as far as St. Germain, to serve you as escort against any kind of danger. Although I met you there without difficulty, it seemed to me all the less necessary for me to inform you of my intentions that, it being still early in the afternoon, and your two carriages travelling with considerable speed, I still flattered myself that you could be through the forest before your enemies had reached the meeting place. I contented myself with following you at some distance, and had you indeed reached the end of the forest without encountering them, my idea was to leave you above Reuil, and return to them to confront them in a way very unlike their expectations. But after seeing one of your two carriages rapidly take off, and seemingly not about to stop, I began to fear that, since my band could not follow the one without leaving the other behind, the danger would become unavoidable, either for your carriage, or for the one that went on ahead. That is what forced me to break the silence, and urge you to turn back. The men you dispatched to follow me caught up with me almost at once. I

continued on with the sad expectation of finding the crime in progress, and already having my comrades get their weapons ready to punish it; but the tranquillity in which I found the five abductors made me assume that their courage had failed, or that the first carriage had escaped them. Nevertheless, my natural ardor, provoked by the race, and, if I dare name another cause, by the sight of an object still too dear, which I had spotted in your carriage, made me approach your enemies with as much arrogance and fury as if they had already consummated their enterprise. My accusations, and the surprise of seeing me arrive from the direction of St. Germain, caused them to guess part of the truth. I thought I heard their leader utter the words cowardly and liar, which was one provocation too many. The one difference between your lies and mine, I replied with rage, is that I can take pride in fooling a traitor, and that you would deserve to receive here at my hand the punishment that you cannot fail to receive at the hands of justice. Arrest him, I cried out with equal anger. His associates, fearing that this threat could include them as well as him, and imagining my order more serious than it was, brandished their pistols to defend themselves. Their insolence made me lose all restraint. Shall we be defied by rascals? said I to my band. And charging them without precaution, I drew their fire, which unfortunately wounded one of your men slightly. But the villain was shot down by a better shot. Another fell near him, and lived only a moment after his fall. The others took flight, and I did not mind seeing them escape.

Gelin added the tone with which my enemy implored heaven's mercy as he died, and the terms in which he had asked to be taken to St. Cloud. When you know me better, he then said to the earl, maybe you will think that the words evil and liar which irritated me in his mouth apply as well to me as to him; but I have this advantage over him, that it is not necessity that forced me to

repent. If M. Cleveland, he added, deigns to hear my name, and the story of what I have achieved for his service, I flatter myself he will recognize in it the zeal and attachment I promised him.

[502] He proposed to Lord Clarendon to descend, to receive important revelations from my enemy's mouth, which his current weakness did not permit him to bring to me in person in St. Cloud. Lord needed no urging. He indeed found him a condition that hardly differed from that of a dying man: which had not prevented him, in the difficulty of finding a confessor quickly, from requesting a pen, to write for me what he did not want to communicate to Gelin. A name as respectable as that of the earl, and his lordship's offer to carry out his last wishes, seemed to inspire more confidence in him. He asked if he could remain alone with him. I am too fortunate, he said with the languor of death, that the opportunity presents itself to entrust what I would perhaps vainly attempt to write to the bosom of a man of honor. Tell M. Cleveland that if his heart is disposed to forgive, never will that noble sentiment, which I implore him to adopt in my favor, find a better subject on which to practice. You are looking at the most wicked of men at his last breath, and the one who looked forward to the most satisfaction in causing another person's misfortune. The ardor for base vengeance made me desire to plunge my enemy into an abyss of woes. Those from which heaven's justice has today preserved him were but their prelude; and for fear lest I have insufficient strength remaining to tell you what must instantly be prevented, I shall begin by confessing to you that unless someone hastily prevents it, the two young Cleavelands who are being raised at the College⁶⁰⁸ are to be poisoned there at my orders. In this intention I left behind me there a knave

⁶⁰⁸ The Collège de Louis le Grand, mentioned earlier.

who is loyal to me, and whom the desire of gain makes capable of any kind of daring. I have promised him a hundred pistoles at the first news he brings me of their death.⁶⁰⁹

Lord Clarendon was not unaware that my children were at the College. He was frightened at such an urgent danger, and counting as nothing whatever was less so, he immediately seized some paper lying nearby to alert in a word the superior of the house to the horrors to which he was exposed within its walls. He passed this note to the most faithful of his men, ordering him to take it immediately to its address, and to stay by my sons, not losing for a moment sight of them, until we were able to take other measures. He rightly assumed that a name like his would produce the effect he expected from this attention, and that lending plausibility at least to a warning of this nature, he would shield my sons from a danger that could not be very threatening once it was discovered. The sense of urgency in which he wrote his letter seemed to plunge the criminal into some consternation. The nearness of death did not free him from fear of being turned over to justice, and a few words which he blurted out revealed his anxiety. But the earl, seeing no interest in terrifying a wretch in his last hour, and whom the sole power of his remorse made sincere despite himself, reassured him against that thought, by protesting that he received his confessions in complete confidentiality. He had not even named him in his letter, nor did he find it necessary to ask him for the name of his accomplice.

This promise having reassured him, he continued to make the confession of his crimes, the most odious of which, next to the

⁶⁰⁹ Cleveland will know nothing, for the moment, of this event which Clarendon in fact suppresses in his own narrative: see the last page of book XI.

one he had just revealed, was the plan he had made to abduct my wife and daughter. He was not seeking to kill me, because death extinguishes the sentiments, and knowing how sensitive I was, he was thinking of avenging himself only by multiplying my sufferings.

The earl, surprised at such vicious loathing, and finding nothing in his memory that could help explain it, expressed some desire to learn what its source was. In this fatal moment, he replied, I have nothing to conceal from you. Vanity and weakness have caused all my misdeeds. I have been raised in a congregation of which the foundation was virtue, and those who comprise it would be too superior to other men if they always put into practice all the perfection which their founder's wisdom and piety combined in his principles. But after the happiest beginnings, it happens to some that intercourse with the world, which they propose to reform, serves to corrupt their own [503] hearts, and being forced by the dignity of their station to maintain appearances, they become all the more evil that their habit of controlling their demeanor is an almost certain means of deceiving the superiors who observe them. You never see them given over to scandalous vices; but in losing the virtue that gives life to the congregation, they acquire favorite vices, to which they find a hundred ways to abandon themselves in secret in the path that suits their talents. The one I was assigned is one of the most dangerous. I was made a director.⁶¹⁰ I took a liking to it that carried me farther than my superiors' intentions. From the common walks of life to which their orders had limited me, the desire of distinguishing myself led me to extend my progress among the famous and

⁶¹⁰ That is, a *directeur de conscience*, a pastor-confessor who provides individuals with spiritual counsel related to their souls and actions.

mighty. It is vanity that inspired this desire in me; it was progressively reinforced as it fed on success; and what at first merely flattered my vanity became a habit, which made it for me an all but invincible passion.

I thus managed over time to be invited into the most illustrious houses of the realm, and to attract their unreserved confidence. The favors that accompanied it soon led me into another disorder than that of vanity. By dint of seeing my desires anticipated and my tastes satisfied, I became accustomed to a life of comfort, and to pursuing everything that was capable of satisfying my senses. The slightest inconveniences that could detract from them became unbearable to me. I found delightful sustenance for this new passion in the indulgence and the zeal of countless ladies to whom my health was as precious as it was to me; and in order to assure myself of a resource against all the uncertainties of the future, I was shrewd enough to obtain, under various pious pretexts, considerable sums, which I amassed with all the voraciousness of avarice. Thus my happiness was complete, for it consisted solely for me in the two things which I enjoyed and which every day I only made to grow. Such was my situation when I first became acquainted with M. Cleveland. Shortly before, Madame did me the honor of admitting me to St. Cloud, and though I did not yet have as large a share in her esteem as I planned to obtain, I could see from the attraction she was gradually developing for me that she would not long resist the ascendant I had over her sex. I envisioned that conquest as the acme of my fortune. She told me to see M. Cleveland, and to cure him of the woes which she said he was overwhelmed by. The interest she seemed to take in it made me see this mission as the most felicitous opportunity fortune could offer me to valorize my talents. I used them with all the skill that experience and eagerness for success could inspire in me; but I was lacking in prudence in judging M. Cleveland too

much by to my usual rules. Anyone who depicted to me a character such as his would have seemed to me to be describing a being of fantasy. Yet to my ruin he existed. My art, my attentions, my precautions could give me no access to that singular mind. All the resources which my imagination supplied me for gaining his confidence accomplished nothing but to make him spurn my counsel; and what precipitated my downfall was that by seeking too eagerly to discover his weak points, I imprudently revealed all of mine to him.

My vanity, mortally wounded by this resistance, would alone have sufficed to make him odious to me. But he stirred the fire himself, by mocking my method and attentions. He told humorous stories about them at St. Cloud, and with the judgment of a man whom Madame had come to esteem soon setting a pattern for all those assiduous at that court, if I did not see my favor suddenly decline, I could at least tell that I owed it now only to the ridiculous figure I cut, in other words, to something more mortifying to me than disdain. What would I not have done at that very time to destroy such a dangerous an enemy! My hatred was further provoked by his indifference. I was furious to see him working for my downfall with seeming unconcern for the harm he was causing me, and too little esteem for me enough to notice whether I was offended by his mockery. With the protection of Madame who declared for him on all sorts of occasions, it was difficult for me to attack him overtly; but I undertook to cause him, by secret means, all the mortifications to which I had recognized some vulnerability in him, reserving to myself the pleasure of revealing to him, [504] sooner or later, that it was from my hand that he had received the blow. Shall I confess this to you? I had the cruel humiliation of seeing my every one of my projects rebound to my shame. I did not make a single move for which I could for a moment claim success. It seemed that by

unforeseen revelations fortune always held ready for him some means for upsetting my plans; and to make things worse, I was only too painfully aware that those fatal reasons that had kindled my hatred always played a part in the difficulties I was having in succeeding; the opinion one once had of me had changed, and even on those occasions when I clothed myself in the pretext of religion, I could easily see that those I had so long fooled in that guise suspected me of acting out of other motives.

Finally, the death of Madame made me so acutely aware of my fall, through the utter iciness of those were still kept up to a point in my interests by the appearance I had been able to maintain of some remaining favor with her, that I lost any hope of ever being restored to the consideration from which I had fallen. I perceived at the same time that even my superiors had caught the disease, and several general warnings which I received from them with respect to my conduct made it clear to me that they did not think well of me. The anxiety into which this discovery plunged me, combined with my desires for vengeance, which it further served to amplify, led me to a resolution so frightful that I cannot tell you about it without embarrassment. It took shape by stages. I thought first about piercing my enemy's heart in its most sensitive spot by abducting a young person he thought he was about to marry, and going with my prey to some free country. I had always had sentiments for that amiable girl which the propriety of my profession had forced me to check: thus I would satisfy both my hatred and my inclination at the same time. But new information, which I too imprudently trusted, made me compound horror upon horror. I learned that M. Cleveland had for a long time been engaged in another marriage, and that after being separated from his wife, he was prepared to be reconciled with her. For me it was enough that such an event would make him happy, to make me eager to foil him. I determined to abduct this wife herself, whom I

did not know, and deliver her to the one man on earth whom he had the most reasons to detest. Heaven would have it that the man I had in mind for her was a much greater enemy of mine than of his, since it is through his betrayal that I lose my life, along with the fruit of all my designs. But possessed with that crazy plan, I took measures that ought to have made it infallible, going even so far as to dispatch a man to Rouen to verify all the circumstances. Yesterday, at this very hour, I believed my victory certain, thanks to the favorable disposition of events, when upon returning to the College, my superiors declared to me, along with a hundred humiliating reproaches that they were banishing me from the order, and that if I did myself justice in my heart, I should find this punishment too mild. I trembled for my most important secrets, which I thought had been discovered. However, a few words of explanation having made it clear to me that they had not been found out, I took consolation for my shame in the very utility it might hold for my vengeance. They made no attempt to conceal from me to whom it was I was being sacrificed. My rage so redoubled that I wished I could strangle my enemy's two children with my own hands, to turn to his ruin the small advantage he held over me; but as this transport soon gave way to concern for my safety, I made the horrible decision which I have declared to you, and went out this morning with the cruel satisfaction of hoping for its success.

His narrative was interrupted by the arrival of the priest who had been called to confess him; and sensing himself that he no longer had a moment to lose: Dispense me, he added, leaning toward the earl's ear, from relating to you what is superfluous to the reparation of my errors, and which you can learn from the man heaven used to punish them; it remains for me to throw myself in spirit at the feet of M. Cleveland, and of all those I have offended. Wretched crime, the only fruit of which is such terrible

and prompt retribution! The remorse that was beginning to press him on would have made him more eloquent about his repentance, if Lord Clarendon had not advised him to reserve all [505] those exclamations for his confessor.⁶¹¹ The fate of such an evil man moving him little to compassion, he did not condescend to make any other reply. But having found Gelin awaiting him at the door, he believed, without knowing him other than from this story, that a service as important as the one he had rendered me deserved the thanks he gave him on my behalf. He even proposed that he come and receive them from my own mouth, and surprised at the air of embarrassment with which he declined to do so, he would have been curious to learn what reasons he might have for this fear of seeing me, after serving me with such zeal, had he not been much more pressed by the desire to bring me such important news.

The care he had taken, when he began his account, to declare that the incidents he had to relate to me had come out well, caused me to hear it with less anxiety than surprise and wonderment. Moreover, out of prudence he had suppressed the part about my children, and relying on the zeal and conduct of the servant he had sent to the College, he had put off until the next day making the trip to Paris, to learn with his own eyes whether there was anything more to fear for them: so after thanking heaven for the protection it had afforded me, I had no turmoil remaining except that which I could still feel because of Fanny's delay.

⁶¹¹ Cleveland will indeed receive a report from the confessor in book XII.

It was beginning to grow dark, and whatever effort I needed to moderate my impatience until the next day, I easily accepted the fact that my wife ought not to be exposed in the dark to the sequels of an episode that was not yet fully illuminated. Three of our enemies had escaped. Even their chief was still to be feared; and my sister, who was reluctant to credit what she was told about Gelin's repentance and generosity, was inclined at the least to fear that such a recent conversion could not entirely be trusted. Fanny's was in an inviolable asylum, where the earl's protection and the company of Mme de R... provided another kind of security. I agreed that until the next day it was enough to dispatch one of my men, to deliver her from the uneasiness with which the earl's departure must have left her, and to dispel all the misgivings she still had about the renewal of my esteem and affection. Meanwhile I declared in turn that, my strength having so happily begun to serve me again, the first use I wanted to make of it was to anticipate her arrival, and that I was determined to ride in the carriage that would go to St. Germain to fetch her. This proposal was agreed to. It even helped revive the joy in our assembly, and everyone eagerly offered to accompany me.

It was so late that, as the cool of the night could be inconvenient for me, they urged me to leave a place where I was exposed. In consenting, I proposed to the Earl of Clarendon that he take me into his carriage, and let the company walk go before us in the other coaches. I could hardly wait to pour the sentiments of my heart into the bosom of that virtuous friend. In vain did Cécile, renewing her caresses and pressing my hands with transport, wish to take no other coach than mine. I wondered at her continuing to appear so passionate, and attributed this liberty of sentiments to a

sort of affectation, which could come from the very effort she made on herself to suppress them. But although I still felt a tender inclination for her, the difficulty of sorting out right away whether it could be reconciled with another passion which had resumed its former ascendancy, and which even my will made a rule as powerful as duty, made me less indulgent than I would have been just a few days earlier on the same occasion. I asked her allow me to remain alone with the earl, to whom I had more than one matter to communicate. He himself was in agreement with me, and taking me into his carriage, he ordered his coachman to drive us slowly.

How many important things I had indeed to say to him! Dear friend, I said immediately with a movement of affection that could only be equaled by my respect, your generous kindness leaves me nothing to offer you freely, and when I profess to be attached to you for the rest of my life, I sense that that is not to render to you all that I owe you. But I am thinking less of counting the duties of my gratitude than of increasing them. I need, not only your assistance without, in a country where the death of Madame leaves me without protection, but also all the counsel of your prudence, and all the attentions of your friendship, to re-establish order and peace in the movements of my heart. I hope from you this double favor, and on both cases my [508] confidence is equal. Then, without allowing him time to reply, I began by listing briefly for him the anxieties I retained from so many extraordinary events, some of which he had himself related to me, and how little security I saw for my family in the midst of these new alarms.

But I had delivered my prelude on this matter only to pass quickly over the subject that occupied me the least. I certainly understand, I added, once more anticipating his reply, that if heaven's justice has delivered me from my most dangerous

enemy, I should worry little about those who would not use ruse or betrayal to destroy me. But supposing I have only to defend myself against common perils, where shall I find enough liberty of mind to foresee and avoid them? For I confess that in the tumult of all my heart's affections, I can no longer rely much on my prudence. By taking the opportunity of this avowal to enter into a description of all the movements that were agitating me, I began a portrait that riveted the earl's attention by its novelty. Never, I said, have I enjoyed a happiness pure enough to make my heart tested by joy. Thus I find myself as if at the entrance to an unknown land, and have difficulty finding my terms to express to you what I have never felt.⁶¹² Moreover, the situation from I am coming from increases my surprise and disturbance, by the extreme opposition of the state I am in with that from which heaven has delivered me, but of which the memory is still present. Imagine a man who, at the very instant he is relieved of a terrible oppression, suddenly passes into a state so free that, no longer feeling anything resistance, he fears on the contrary that, for want of being contained or supported, each step he is going to take into the void may expose him to some dangerous fall. He walks with a lightness that makes him tremble, and the movement that carries him along is so rapid that he scarce recognizes what occurs around him. Or if I can make myself understood by an even more pertinent image, think of someone who, falling all of a sudden into the bottom of a river, tries to hold on despite the force of the water that pitches him every way, and who, constantly losing his footing, would fear lest all his efforts be unable to protect him

⁶¹² There is a parallel analogy in *Manon Lescaut*: "I trembled, as when one is in a remote countryside at night: one feels transported into a new order of things" (p. 378).

from the current that is on the point of sweeping him away. He resists with all his strength; but if he finally yields, it is to tumble randomly in a torrent which engulfs him, as his reason clouds and his strength is exhausted.

Combine all the features of these two descriptions. That is what I have been feeling since evidence and information I could not reject have made me change my disposition with respect to my wife. All my movements are transports. They carry me along with inexpressible violence and conflation. I pass so rapidly from the one to the other that they all seem present at once to my soul, although it can make out nothing in the delirium they communicate to it. I am scarcely able to pay attention to what occurs before my eyes. In short, I must be frightened at my situation, if what I am experiencing is not the sign of a happiness so new to me that it is beyond my expressions and conceptions.

But why should it be, I continued, that what should only help me obtain an agreeable tranquillity, after the long trials to which heaven has subjected my fortitude, should still be accompanied by such turmoil and agitation? Teach me, my lord, what I am to think of myself, and of the state I am in. And it is not enough to enlighten me on my situation, if you do not at the same time show me some light to guide me, or rather if you do not take the trouble to guide me yourself, with the kindness I know you to possess, and the lights of a philosophy more successful than mine.

I paused to allow him the liberty to reply. He was looking at me, making as much use as he could of a few faint rays of moonlight, and with the agitated tone of my voice helping him even more than the movements of my eyes and face to help him understand what I had attempted to explain to him, he appeared all the more surprised at such a strange confidence that he still understood my character only imperfectly. Yet after confessing to me that, given the manner in which fortune had conducted the events

[509] in his life, he had had few opportunities to know the joy by its excesses, he added that, based only on how he thought of it, he easily conceived a part of what he had just heard. That dissipation which I called lightness, and which, he said, I could as well call disarray of mind or forgetfulness of self, seemed to him to fit rather well with the nature of that passion. For just as grief seems to weigh upon the soul, and incline it to withdraw into itself from fear of what harms it, joy, on the contrary, which supposes absence of pain and danger, inclines it to expand with a certain confidence, and even makes it to find it all the more agreeable to move away from its center, in that each movement it makes outside is a new confirmation of its security. But were it true than while going about so incautiously, it had nothing to risk for the happiness it enjoys, it in any case loses some of its strength, which consists in the power of knowing and constantly controlling itself: and that is doubtless, the earl added, the source of this lightness, or rather this feebleness, that your two comparisons have fairly well explained.

You find, he went on, that your situation causes you consternation, and you ask me for remedies against an illness that seems urgent to you. Ah, dear Cleveland, I have discovered one that would soon be as beneficial to you as it was to me, if its application were as prompt as its virtue is infallible. What cured me of ambition would cure you of a thousand other sicknesses of the soul that cannot be more violent. But it is not the work of a moment. My example will teach you some day that for those who sincerely desire peace of mind and heart, which is my definition of a healthy soul, there are resources within ourselves the success of which is never uncertain.

Do you mean, I interrupted with surprise, that you have found in philosophy more powerful weapons than those I have made such poor use of until today? Well, in what darkness does it

keep them hidden, to have concealed them so cruelly from me? What keeps you at least from revealing them to me today? Do you think that after such long exercise of its principles, I can lack the insight to understand them, or the skill to begin putting them to use? No, he replied distractedly; but if I well remember what you must recall confiding to me in Orleans,⁶¹³ nothing in your principles resembles those which I intend some day to propose to you; and being unable to hope for the slightest fruit from them so quickly, my thought was to find some present help for you today against the your present complaint. It seems to me, he continued, that your outbursts of joy, and the resultant confusion of thoughts and sentiments, can receive a remedy that is not far from you. If you are more sensitive than another to happiness, consider that you have been no less sensitive to misfortune. The memory of the state from which you have barely emerged seems to me a more than adequate counterweight for all the satisfactions of which the present assures you, and which the future can promise you. Is it possible to abandon oneself so freely to the transports of joy, when they follow so closely on suffering? But what am I saying? Are you certain, he added, that one step which you have taken towards felicity assures you absolutely of its possession? Gauge that by the new dangers from which heaven is protecting you this day. An instant could have plunged you back into all the calamities from which you believed you were delivered.

I do not mean to dissimulate it. This sort of threat, which was only too plausible after the peril I had run that same day, and when Fanny's absence exposed me again to a thousand kinds of alarm that surfaced at once in my imagination; that obscure prediction of the loss of a possession, the very magnitude of

⁶¹³ A few months earlier, in book VI.

which was like the measure of the despair which I must fear from its loss, mixed more bitterness with my sentiments than was required to deflate the excesses of my joy. I was going to thank my lord Clarendon for help that perhaps surpassed his expectations; but taking advantage of my silence to continue what he was saying: You do not answer me, he continued, and if it is your security that makes you inaccessible to all sorts of fears, I confess that you must thank heaven for it as a supplementary blessing. Moreover, you [510] are enjoying a part of your desires; that I concede, he added, and the fortunate coincidence that restores to you a daughter as amiable as Cécile is like a token of fortune that will no longer allow its favor to you to fail. But I suppose your happiness to be complete, with everything that can flatter the heart of a father and husband: do you then believe that the only ills you have left to fear are those you have experienced? The infirmities of nature, which so far have spared your wife and daughter, death itself which must sooner or later separate you from them: are these misfortunes against which you can perfectly insure yourself? Though not as ardent as you in my transports, divided by a passion that had acquired much more ascendancy over me than affection, I have felt what it is like to lose a wife and fear for a daughter one has just reasons for loving.⁶¹⁴

This language was too clear, especially from a man who had as much ease and precision of expression as the earl, not to cause me a just surprise. As far as I was from grasping its true meaning, I felt all the more inclined to ask him for an explanation, that after my former intention of marrying Cécile, it seemed to me impor-

⁶¹⁴ Clarendon's wife was mentioned early in book VIII; the daughter of whom he speaks is the Duchess of York, who will be named again further on.

tant to ascertain what kind of sentiment I was thought still to harbor for her. The earl readily perceived, from the form of my question, that I had not been told she was my daughter; and though hard-pressed to divine the cause of such a reservation, the fear of having committed himself with some imprudence caused him to give such an equivocal turn to his reply that I took it in the sense that confirmed my presuppositions. Thus, the vague intuitions that had perhaps begun to form in my mind vanished without a trace. Lord Clarendon deftly brought my thoughts back to the initial subject that had occupied us; and if he did not succeed through the wisdom of his counsel in inspiring in me all the strength I needed, he at least made me a sort of rampart for me out of propriety, which no longer permitted me, after so much reasoning and exhortation, to allow him to see all of my weakness.

This assistance, feeble as it was also, was the only one to which I owed, not only appearances of moderation of which I no longer thought myself capable, but enough freedom in the functions of my organs to control outwardly what I owed to love and to nature, without appearing too cold by a vain affectation of fortitude, nor too impetuous in the expression of my transports. I am correcting with this confession the imposture of my senses, which then falsely honored my reason; for to what turmoil was it not given over while it seemed to govern them with such authority! The scene I am coming to has not been foreshadowed. I would have caused my readers to lose part of its charm, if I had not reserved for them the pleasure of a surprise that will perhaps more than all my terms help give them some idea of my own.

I arrived with the earl at the door of my house, and noticed that the apartments were illuminated by an extraordinary number of torches. The large number of foreigners I had in my house was one reason that would have kept me from conjecturing further, if

M. de R..., who had slipped from the company to await me in the court, had not abruptly appeared at the carriage door. He grabbed my hand. Come, he said, and come at once the impatience of a tender and faithful wife. Mme Cleveland is counting every minute that separates her from you. She has been here for an hour with my wife; and taking advantage of the silence to which my astonishment reduced me, he told me that toward day's end Fanny had grown weary of waiting for Lord Clarendon at St. Germain. Her eagerness to be back in my house, combined with her worry for her daughter, had led her to take a post-chaise, which she had boarded with Mme de R...; and as they suspected that the earl's delay was not without some kind of reason, instead of following the main road, which could expose them to some dreadful encounter, they had come via the heights of Marly.⁶¹⁵ Mme de R... knew all the roads in the area surrounding her home. Finally they safely reached my own, almost at the same time as the company that had preceded me.

[511] Such an agreeable encounter had so disposed all minds to joy that, in order to give a festive appearance to the rest of this happy day, my sister had searched her imagination for whatever she thought suitable for rejoicing the assembly. She had ordered that the entire house be illuminated before my return; and enlisting the participation of Fanny and Cécile, she had induced them to heighten their natural charms with all the ornaments which the time and place were able to furnish them. With the intention of celebrating our common happiness with this pomp, she had the hope that a bit of commotion and dissipation would help moderate my initial transports. Fanny herself, although

⁶¹⁵ Marly-le-Roi, on the Seine, between St Germain en Laye and Versailles.

above all the affectations of finery on which feminine vanity feeds, had easily let herself be persuaded that I would value her special attention to pleasing me; and the tender passion she had for her daughter making her wish to have her appear to the eyes of the assembly in all her brilliance, she had indulgently adorned her with her own hands, while the other ladies had rendered her the same service.

Don Thadeo, witness to these preparations, had attempted to abet my sister's intentions by various gallantries that were perhaps copied from some novel of his nation; he had donned his most magnificent costume, which he had heightened with several extraordinary accouterments; and having coiffed himself even more elegantly, he pretended to represent the god of marriage, who had brought his court with him, to shine in my house in all his glory. My sister's daughter had been changed into Cupid; he held her bound by several ribbons, with an air of gentle authority, which indicated, along with such mild bonds, to what sort of power he had been subjected. He had assigned to all of my servants a role, and they had donned strange clothing of his invention. One represented fidelity, another constancy: in other words, all the attributes of virtue and felicity. Fanny had been placed in the midst of this court with her daughter, and the god had his place below her, to show that he himself was submissive to her whose happiness was his handiwork.

Only music was wanting for the celebration; but through a precaution that would be implausible in any voyager but a Spanish gentleman, Don Thadeo had a lute in his trunk, and played it rather nicely. They took advantage of the time that M. de R... was using to go over a part of this narrative with me to retrieve it from the back of the earl's carriage, and M. de R..., who had not been informed in advance of this circumstance, seemed as surprised as I was to hear its first chords before he had finished his

account. There, he said to me with a smile, you see some new effects of your friends' zeal. We first thought of surprising you with the sight of this whole spectacle, which you were doubtless far from expecting. But upon reflection, he added, I thought it would be doing you a favor if I slipped of to forewarn you.

The directness of this discourse had so struck me as to suspend all at once the use of my senses, and I was perhaps very close to that at that moment to all the extremes I was apprehending for my health and for my reason. However, either because my attention then became divided, as my sister had foreseen, by the variety and pleasantness of the images that were offered to me, or because with respect to sentiments as well as ideas, the soul is sometimes able to bottle up its action within itself without any communication to the bodily organs, it is certain that, far from finding myself weakened by the excess of my joy, I felt in myself a liveliness and intensity that denoted an increase in my strength. The anxiousness I still had in that state in no way felt like constraint. Let us go, my lord, said I to the earl, pressing him to exit from the carriage, you shall be witness to my happiness, and the pleasures that friendship will have you share with me will be all the more dear to me. I noticed his surprise at seeing me so controlled, which was so different from everything had made him fear, and I myself marvelled that heaven had so happily dissipated all my fears.

Who, seeing me cross the court so lithely, would have taken me for the same man who [512] four days earlier thought he was at last hour, and hoped for nothing further from nature nor from fortune and love! The wonder of joy, surpassing all those I have recounted of suffering! Is this when I shall begin to thank heaven, and abandon my heart to all the impulses of its gratitude? But I yet knew but a part of its blessings; and what would I have left to express my transports, if I employed all the force of my senti-

ments before explaining the full extent of my happiness?⁶¹⁶

I reached the door of that happy room in which was contained my heart's delight. Lord Clarendon, who had unnecessarily offered me his arm to enter the house, again urged me to accept it as we approached the company which had risen to receive us. No, dear friend, I said to him with a tone of passion, I have too much mistrusted love, and I have underestimated my own strength. Oh, if Fanny's heart is mine, I added, continuing to walk toward her, and loud enough for her to hear me, I am as unconcerned for my health as for my happiness. She started to take a few steps toward me, and although I made a point of measuring mine, the first movement she made was about to make me forget all propriety to rush into her arms, when, after pausing with an appearance of feebleness, she sat back down on her chair. My sister, who supposed she must have felt weak, cut across my path to rush to her aid, inviting me restrain my impatience for a moment. I remained in the middle of the room, that is, four paces from her, my eyes fixed on her face where I saw her tears following each other rapidly, and almost not daring to breathe in my uncertainty whether she had not lost consciousness.

She came to right away; but after uttering several sighs, which seemed to relieve her some, she turned her head toward her daughter, who was beside her, and began to embrace her, covering her in tears. My sister exhorted her to think rather of her joy, while Lord Clarendon, who was not much more confident of my fortitude, urged me to sit down with him. I took his advice, but for a very different reason from his. Those tears which I saw

⁶¹⁶ This passage opens an era – the first in the novel – in which happiness will dominate; in book XII he will call it “this golden age of our fortune and our love”.

Fanny shedding, and that affectation of embracing Cécile, were to me a secret language of which I thought I understood the meaning; I took it as a reproach for the kind of infidelity to her which I had committed against her in favor of that amiable girl, and as a residual fear with respect to a rival with whose charms she was familiar. I ought to have thought on the contrary that it is not with such tender caresses that one expresses one's anxieties to a worrisome rival; but my heart, itself inclined to self-accusation, and too convinced from fatal experiences of my wife's delicacy, offered me nothing that could reassure me against that thought.

Meanwhile, Don Thadeo took this moment to come toward me; and surrounding me with his actors, he added to the celebration an ornament which no one expected. With much natural facility of expression, he had composed, almost on the spot, a most ingenious speech, in which by means of an agreeable allusion to his role he recalled all my adventures, making them appear as so many trials to which he had wished to subject my faithfulness and affection. At first I listened to him with little attention; and full of the thought that had occurred to me, I kept my eyes constantly turned toward my wife to observe the sequel of the sentiment I was still attributing to her. She too was looking at me, with a tender languor; and surprised at the choice I had made to be seated before going far enough to reach her, her face bore some signs of fear and uncertainty. She held her daughter's hand in hers. She pressed it from time to time; and turning towards her, she said a few words to her, which Cécile seemed to hear with surprise. My ongoing prepossession did not keep me from avidly studying all her features. Her beauty had a gleam with which nothing can be compared, and heightened as it was by dazzling attire and the light of an infinite number of torches, it would have made the whole world confess that the divinities have never been depicted with more perfections and graces. Even the

proximity of Cécile took nothing from her: if there was some [513] difference of shape between them, which in my wife was a bit thicker and higher, there was the same proportion and the same nobility. You would have taken them for two sisters, between whom a few years more or less did not yet amount to inequality.

Despite the indulgence I owed to Don Thadeo's civility, how many times was I about to interrupt him to yield to all the transports of my heart! For the stolidness I had up to then maintained beyond my own expectations was beginning once more to fail me, and I was obliged to recognize again that it was not from the strength of my mind that I had drawn assistance against my sentiments, since a slight fear the cause of which subsisted only in my imagination made me fall back into all the agitations I thought I had escaped. It was that very instability and variety of movements and situations which I offer here as witness and confession to my frailty. Nevertheless I was still holding out; and constrained by a sort of shame, which came from the reflections by which I supposed my wife occupied, as much as by propriety, which was another restraint for me in such a numerous assembly, I might perhaps have salvaged appearances until the end, if in attempting from time to time to pay some attention to Don Thadeo's speech, I had not been struck by a number of details which he particularly emphasized. Full as he himself was of his passion for Cécile, he could get to that part of my story without underscoring my happiness with splendid images. The marvelous favor from heaven which had preserved for me such an amiable daughter amidst so many dangers, which had brought her so happily to France with Mrs Riding, which after providing her with a haven and the noblest education in the home of M. de R..., had so long granted me the satisfaction of seeing her and the pleasure of admiring her without knowing her, to lead me, little by little as it were, to the

inestimable happiness of rediscovering my own blood, and the object of the most founded affection, in a person who deserved to be worshipped by the whole: in short, her joy, mine, that of my wife and my friends, the triumph of so many sentiments that came from the same cause, and the glory that redounded to Don Thadeo in speaking for them, were so many points on which he continued to exercise his eloquence.

The first terms that could give me some notion of my happiness had awakened me as if from lethargy, and lending my ear with an avidity the cause of which was not yet well understood, I had gradually pieced together what was the hope with which they seemed to be taking pleasure in flattering me. The orator's expressions subsequently becoming so clear that it was no longer possible for me to find them the least bit ambiguous, I had shuddered at a thought that transported me into a new order of things, and seemed to change everything around me. Not daring, nevertheless, to trust implicitly either what I had just heard, nor the impression I felt, I tried to remember everything that could have some relation to the subject of my agitation, and I fell into a certain fright as I opened my eyes in turn to various circumstances which came together to make it all seem plausible: the arrival of Mrs Riding, M. de R... 's initial compliments and those of the Earl of Clarendon, Cécile's passionate caresses, the ones I saw her constantly receiving from Fanny, and more than all this outward evidence, the movements of affection for her which I had not been able to resist: in a word, the voice of nature, which had disguised itself in so many forms, and now became more powerful than ever by acquiring the freedom to burst forth; all these circumstances assembled and compared together placed me in a light that no longer allowed any room for the slightest obscurities. I was dazzled by this mass of light, and the conclusion of such a delightful truth was to make me rise with a rapidity that would be

feebly compared to that of a thunderbolt, and throw myself at the feet of Fanny and Cécile. The actors surrounding me were roughly jostled as I went by, and Don Thadeo, frightened by my outburst, stood open-mouthed in the middle of his speech.

Do not ask me to depict the affection or astonishment of [514] the others, when I lack here the strength and insight to describe my own sentiments. Cécile was seated beside her mother. I opened my arms to embrace them together, and hugging them with an ardor that cannot be expressed, I passionately lowered my head onto their knees, to stifle a thousand tumultuous exclamations that would not have failed to accompany my transports. I heard them utter a cry, which apparently came from the impetuosity of their joy. That was the last observation of which I found myself capable, for I at once lost consciousness, in a faint that would doubtless have been fatal, had heaven not performed a miracle for my preservation. My sister, who was the first to notice it, ran to me in alarm. She could gauge better than anyone else an accident of which she particularly knew the cause. Her first precaution was to free me from the arms of my wife and daughter, who were embracing me with a passionate mixture of anxiety and tenderness; and asking them to consider what was to be feared from such a sudden revolution of spirits, after the exhaustion which my griefs and wounds had caused me, she got them to agree that they should begin by carrying me to my bed. But the aid I there received was long futile. I remained there for over an hour, in an immobility that made them unsure for my life. It took time to call my surgeons. Several messages at once were sent off to various places nearby, and until the return of the most rapid of them, the disorder in my house was inexpressible.

The surgeons themselves employed futilely the first aids of their art, and although they tried to reassure the assembly with reasons they could draw from the excellence of my temperament,

they confessed to me after my recovery that they had been alarmed to find me in an insensibility that scarcely differed from death. Yet taking care to inspect my wounds, they were no less surprised to find them so fresh and flush that the flesh needed nothing more than the help of time to heal over. Excessive joy can dangerously exhaust the spirits; but far from communicating to the blood some noxious heat, it is a precious balm, that spreads only a gentle and salutary coolness.⁶¹⁷ Nature, abetted by the surgeons, brought me back from this extremity. I opened my eyes, and judging from the tears I saw being shed around me that I was emerging from some danger that had caused alarm, I extended my arms toward my wife and my daughter, with a feeling of gratitude that seemed to add something still more tender to my love. As my voice, however, did not immediately return, and the surgeons' opinion was that the restoration of my strength could only be achieved by rest, they required that after taking some medications I remain in bed and tranquilly await sleep. I posed only one condition to this harsh command. If I lacked strength enough to speak freely, I could at least make use of my eyes. Have love and nature a more tender language? I motioned to Fanny and Cécile to come closer for a moment, and having contemplated them with a sweet indulgence that supplied me more strength from that sight than from all the medications, I agreed to remain in the situation which my surgeons prescribed. Their advice had all the success they anticipated from it. Indeed I fell almost immediately into a deep sleep.

If in the transports of my pleasures or pains I have labelled

⁶¹⁷ Much of the diagnostic terminology of the time revolves around the distribution of heat in the body, just as it does around humours and "temperament."

one of my sentiments intimate or absolute over my soul, I have deceived my readers or deceived myself. It was owed only to those that filled me as I emerged from this happy sleep. This is the era of the perfection of my joy, as I have taken care to designate that of my most terrible sufferings. But having first assured myself that all the goods which I enjoyed were not an illusion, and finding in them indeed as much substance as charms, my situation became so delightful that I did not hesitate to regard it as supreme happiness. Nothing akin to anxiety or perturbation any longer came to my mind: its full extent was too occupied by the sweetness of joy. Nor did I retain the slightest trace of weakness, nor the slightest awareness of my wounds; the deep rest I had enjoyed had marvelously [515] accelerated my recovery. Thus finding within and about me only reasons for contentment and causes for security, I no longer felt any agitation except that of an agreeable impatience, that made me wish to see as soon as possible all those I loved.

I asked some servants who were in my room for news of their mistresses; for attaching pleasure to even the smallest circumstances, I made me happy to give that title already to Fanny and Cécile. I was told that after spending part of the night at my side, they had withdrawn once they thought I was absolutely out of danger. My impatience did not allow me to wait their awakening. It was not unreasonable to test my strength. I got up to go to their apartment.

They were both in the same bed. I approached it as I would a temple. They were lost in a deep sleep that afforded me the leisure to contemplate them in a position they could only have assumed by choice before falling asleep. They were holding each other in a tight embrace, and Fanny had her mouth on her daughter's breast. The art of painters expresses nothing so naive and moving. That incomparable mother seemed to concentrate all the

sentiments of her soul in the place she was touching with her lips. The relaxation of sleep did not prevent a sense of animation in her face. It was the expression of a tenderness at fever pitch, but one not yet satisfied, its desires increasing as it obtains and enjoys. What must have been the transports of which I depict but the image? Cécile's position was not less moving! Oh happy father, happy husband! For it was I whom those two passionate hearts were seeking in each other! I was the object of their tender caresses. Nature inspired in them no sentiment but that served to the benefit of love.

I would never have tired of that sight. To enjoy it more at leisure I sat down opposite them, unable to take my eyes away from them even for a minute. The intensity of the pleasure at first hardly left me any inclination for reflection. Yet after abandoning myself for a long time to such charming impressions, I gradually came round to thinking about what there remained for me to do for the happiness of two persons to whom I was to owe all of mine.

This moment was decisive for a part of my life which I do not announce as the most glorious, but which must enter into the composition of a history in which I have promised not to disguise my failings, no more than I will be found to underrate my virtues. In the excesses of my joy, it was perhaps forgivable to a heart that had known so few of them, and which felt delivered for the first time from that grim sadness which by which it had been too long possessed, to regard pleasure as its only remedy, or to forget at least whether there was any other pleasure to seek, while it held one with which it was so satisfied. Philosophy was no longer, in my eyes, anything but than a fantom; and had the reasons that had forced me to give it up no longer been present, such a long period which I had spent persuaded of its powerlessness would have accustomed me to neglecting it as a ineffective standard. I wanted

to be happy and to share my happiness with two persons whom I cherished. Why expect from so far away what the present seemed to offer me; is true wisdom not that which leads to the goal by the shortest paths? Thus, as if carried along by the ascendancy of the pleasure that reigned in my heart, I concluded that there was nothing more important for me than to assure its continuation, and nothing seemed so likely to do that as to draw from the circumstances of my fortune whatever could serve to compose for me a life full of charms. The riches that had come to me from the legacy of my grandfather were inestimable.⁶¹⁸ Three million in liquid cash was the smallest part of it. What I possessed in gold bullion, in diamonds, and in other precious goods could not be evaluated. I had left in Nantes what I was unable easily [516] to take with me, and this was the only reason that had for some time countered the inclination that made me desire to return to England. But the times had changed. The fears that had disenchanted me with France no longer prevailed. Cécile was safe as my daughter. My sons ran no risk in a school known to their mother, and where she had relations of her own. What had I to fear for myself, since I was a foreigner? All the efforts which my enemies had made in vain to harm me became a cause of security because of their powerlessness. With such reasoning I flattered the desire I had suddenly conceived of trying out the amenities of Paris. Strange weakness of the heart, once it lets itself go! The peace and prosperity which I was barely beginning to enjoy made a thousand vain passions suddenly bloom before me. I thought of acquiring a magnificent house, a team and carriage and a retinue worthy of my wealth, in short to spare nothing to make my wife

⁶¹⁸ More exactly, from Fanny's grandfather, Don Pedro d'Arpez (book III).

and daughter forget all their woes in the lap of abundance and pleasures.

The interests of M. de R... were the only obstacle that could give me pause. But though he could not remain in France without exposing himself to some danger, after the measures he had taken for his departure and which could not long remain secret, I could easily assure him of a perfectly agreeable situation in London, by entrusting to him the oversight and use of my wife's holdings, which were in the hands of Lord Terwill. I settled on this idea. His friendship, and the gratitude I owed to his services, no longer permitted me to place any difference between his fortune and my own. I felt only too happy to have such a natural opportunity to provide him with more tranquillity and comforts than he expected in changing countries; and as I did not intend to stay in France forever, I was firmly determined some day to add to this benefit everything that could help him pass an agreeable old age.

These projects having absorbed me until Fanny awoke, how could I have returned to simpler and more moderate reflections, when seeing her open her eyes, the disposition of my heart only warmed with redoubled pleasure? The surprise to her of finding me so close to her was soon dispelled by the tender and delighted expression she saw on my face. Every charm and grace as quickly filled spread across hers, and the precipitous movement she made to turn toward me having awakened Cécile at the same moment, I had the inexpressible pleasure of seeing both of them extend their arms to me, with the vivacity and the ardor that belong only to nature and to love. It was much harder on me than on them not to yield to the same transport; but modesty obliging me to some limits in the presence of my daughter, I grabbed their hands and pressed my lips to them a hundred times, and the impetuosity of my sentiments for a while bound my tongue so that I was unable to accompany my caresses with a single word.

To what a torrent of passionate expressions did my silence at once give way! Spilling from my tongue without order and without coherence, it must not be expected that they could have preserved any in my memory. They were, moreover, interrupted by the sighs and tender murmurs of two dear creatures who shared the movements of my heart, and this disarray lasted until the arrival of Lord Clarendon and my sister, who were soon followed by the rest of my guests. Their first priority upon awakening was to inquire after my health, and surprised to learn that, against all hope, I had felt strong enough to go my wife's apartment, they had hastened to come and express to me their amazement and their joy. The presence of so many persons who were so entitled by their service and friendship to share our intimacy changed our situation but little; but the very interest which they took in our happiness and their tender felicitations returned us gradually to more tranquil conversation. Without going into details that did not yet suit the circumstances, we marvelled at the series of wonders by which it had pleased heaven to direct our fate. How dim is the understanding of men! How presumptuous in their judgments! What injustice [517] in their mistrust and their protests! Applying these reflections to my own conduct, what reproach did my former murmurs not deserve, my revolts against the dispositions of Providence, and all the extremes to which I had allowed myself to be impelled by grief and despair? The force of that thought making me link in a moment all my misfortunes with their sources, I understood for the first time that if my heart had never had any cause to blame itself, the appearances of my behavior could sometimes have distressed a woman as delicate as Fanny, and that by a fatal imprudence I too had opened the abyss into which I had fallen. In the ardor of my affection, and inclined by circumstances to whatever could flatter my dear wife's heart and imagination, I did not hesitate to admit this to her

openly. But it was without abandoning the interests of my innocence; and turning towards her: Now confess as well, I said, that you have offended justice and love by yielding too easily to your biases, and that a bit more openness at least with a husband whose righteousness and honor you ought never to have doubted would have preserved us from many misfortunes.⁶¹⁹ However gently I had couched this reproach, she appeared to be struck by it, and her attention having suddenly drawn inward upon itself, I saw that the memory of the past stirred her enough to draw some tears from her eyes. But I hastened to interrupt their flow: Let us not judge ourselves too severely, I said, and let us not have for ourselves more severity than heaven, which is finally doing justice to the innocence of our intentions and sentiments. It is easy, when light returns, to recognize the vanity of the phantoms that frightened us in the dark. But it is no less sweet, I added, to recover one's former happiness, even if the reasons we had to mourn its loss were so many unfortunate illusions. And seizing upon this thought to address Mrs Riding, I asked her eagerly to what other favor from heaven I owed a miracle as amazing as the preservation of my daughter, and what moment she would elect to tell me so many wonders.

She would not have refused to satisfy me on the spot if Lord Clarendon, who still had some anxiety for my two sons, and did not wish to lose time going in person to the College, had not asked her to put off until his return a narrative which he was no less curious to hear. To this I consented all the more willingly

⁶¹⁹ Like Des Grieux, and like Bridge, Cleveland avoids trying to understand the past and assuming completely his share of responsibility; he recognizes some mistakes but insists in the end on the psychological guilt of his wife.

that, the tender movements of my heart being not yet allayed, nothing could seem sweeter to me in those first moments than to abandon myself to the innocent caresses that they could not tire of showering upon me. Fanny and Cécile had themselves dressed. I continued to watch them as avidly as if I had at each instant begun to see them. The sound of their voice, their carriage, their face, their slightest movements and words, aroused some new sentiment in my soul. I was fixated on them, as if I no longer had any other occupation than to serve them, any other care than to please them, or any other desire than to see and love them. Each manifestation of attachment was returned by an air of satisfaction and affection with which it appeared to be accepted. There was no father and daughter, husband and wife: there were lovers, enthralled with each other, who were speaking to each other, if you wish, for the first time, after long adoring each other; who were finding each other again after believing themselves separated by death, or believed themselves certain, after long and cruel hardships, of being forever reunited and at peace.

Meanwhile, our spectators also getting into the conversation, I spoke to them of the plan I had, in order to declare my fortune to my friends as much as to give to my happiness all the extension it could receive from my wealth, to leave St. Cloud forthwith and set up a splendid household in Paris. My intention, I told them, is not to live indefinitely in France; but aside from the fact that I would find it hard so soon to leave dear friends, to whom gratitude henceforth attaches me by such sacred bonds, I consider that I have no better choice to make for my children's education than the schools of Paris; and if their mother is satisfied with the one that has been chosen for them, [518] I ask only to know better the principles in which they are being raised in order to give them my approval. Thus, I continued, addressing Fanny, we shall enjoy here for a few years the possessions that heaven

grants us, and you yourself will be charmed to have had the opportunity to know France before going on to England. I noted that M. and Mme de R... were the only ones to receive this revelation coolly; but I knew their reasons, and made them change their expressions by explaining the project I had conceived for their satisfaction. M. Briand, who arrived at my house at that same time, took it upon himself to let a house for me in Paris, and I instructed him to make it a magnificent one, and worthy of all the plans I had in mind.

Lord Clarendon had left; but as the desire to recognize his kindnesses with a more intimate relationship had a large share in my resolution, I was sure that the very inclination with which he was prepossessed towards me would make him approve of it. We passed the time until his return in that sweet intoxication that happiness and joy confer. I noticed before anyone took the trouble to point it out to me that Don Thadeo was attracted by Cécile's charms. His ardor was evident even in a certain constraint which he could not resist in seeing me embrace her, and which seemed to me a rather strange effect of jealousy. But although I had not yet questioned anyone about the nature of his pretensions, I found this passion too respectful and too recent to be alarmed by it.

In the joy and the confidence of her heart, Fanny did not fail to remember Mme Lallin; and expressing surprise at not seeing her appear, she secretly inquired what had become of her. She was told what everyone in my house knew: that the distress of being regarded as the cause of all our misfortunes had caused her to depart without informing me of her intentions; that she had taken with her scarcely enough to cover herself; and that we had no information with respect to the direction she had taken. Fanny's affectionate temperament caused her to take considerable interest in this news. Although her heart's wounds were still so

recent, she no longer saw anything more in Mme Lallin than an unfortunate woman who deserved her compassion, and whom the future would make all the more miserable by the fact that, leaving the opulence in which she had lived in my house, the change in her situation would be hard for her to bear. Filled with this sentiment, she ordered Drink, to whom she had addressed her inquiry, to spare nothing to discover the place where she had retired, with the sole intent of providing her a pleasant life through her liberalities. Drink reported this conversation to me, underscoring with admiration the kindness of his mistress. This new evidence was superfluous to me, who knew her so well, but I admired it all the same, in the circumstances where we still were; and in order to leave to Fanny all the pleasure and merit of her generosity, I forbade Drink to reveal to her that he had told me about it.

I was unaware what business had taken the Earl of Clarendon so early in the morning to Paris; and having no anxiety for my children since I knew from their mother's own testimony that they might be very well off at the College, I would have had no suspicion of the reason that had caused him to leave so hurriedly. He returned in the afternoon, and with him was announced the rector whose visit I had received two days earlier. The just punishment of my enemy, all the circumstances of which had been related to me the day before, combined with the interest in my children, and even the consideration of the earl, who was taking the trouble to bring the Father to me, disposed me to receive him with as much satisfaction as courtesy. It was clear from his greeting that he was informed of my wife's happy return. He shared my happiness; and passing lightly over the unhappy episode of the wretch that heaven, he said, had itself undertaken to punish, he came right away to my children, about whom he explained himself in the terms which he had concerted with the earl. The generous lord had entreated him to let nothing escape that could

make me aware of the peril to which they had been exposed; and charmed himself at the order he had seen prevail at the College, he spoke up to testify to the care there being taken for their education. He had agreeably observed it for part of the day, and entered into details [519] that made me curious to procure some day the same amusement for myself. I am a protestant, he added, addressing the rector, and you do not expect me to praise your religious principles; but at a age when children's minds are not capable of deciding things for themselves, I attach little importance to what speculations are presented to them, and examine instead the practices that are instilled in them. You scarcely keep them beyond their fifteenth year; that is barely the time at which the exercise of reason begins: that is when they become capable of discerning truth; and were one to suppose that they had been receiving it since childhood, it is no less necessary then to recall to them all the principles, to afford them the merit of embracing it freely. But I see differently what depends upon the sensible faculties, such as the heart, the memory, and in general all the bodily organs. The initial methods usually determine what one can expect from a child for his entire life, because the habits they serve to form rarely change once they have acquired a certain degree of strength, and are perhaps properly what should bear the name of nature.⁶²⁰ Lord Clarendon concluded, based on the obser-

⁶²⁰ Clarendon subscribes in advance to the epistemology of Locke, whose *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* was not published until 1690, but the idea was already nascent in Pascal: "I do quite fear that this nature is but an primary custom, just as custom is a second nature" (*Pensées*, Lafuma edition, 126). If Clarendon does not fear the religious instruction the boys will receive, it is because he thinks, more or less as will Rousseau, that small children understand nothing about God.

vations he had made at the College, that there are few of these establishments where a father, desirous of seeing his children imbued with honor, polish, graceful movement, with the qualities, in a word, that help make one better or more amiable, and even with the sciences that enter into the character of the consummate man of merit, could place them so advantageously as in the Collège de Louis-le-Grand.⁶²¹

In thanking the earl for this compliment, the rector did not concede that his first remark was entirely right. But he otherwise found it too favorable to his views to refute it, and I observed that while regarding it as an error, he was gratified by the facility it afforded him of inculcating in my two sons religious principles from which he expected more fruit than did the earl. As for me, as yet possessing no extensive insight on this subject, and disposed to think well of a religion in which justice and goodness were reputed to be requisite virtues, I remained satisfied with my friend's testimony; and far from ill interpreting ill the secret views I attributed to the rector, I judged not only his personal uprightness, but even the truth of his religion, by his zeal.

The inclination that this thought gave me for him increased further when, after Fanny had come to join the assembly, I understood from the joy she expressed at seeing him, and from the gratitude she professed for being indebted to his attentions, that he had helped to comfort her in her sufferings. She confessed to me that after receiving quite long and intensive lessons from him, she had decided under his guidance to follow the Roman religion. Lord Clarendon, who still did not know it, was more surprised than I by this declaration. He interrupted her. Oh, Mme, he cried,

⁶²¹ This rather fulsome praise had been announced in the notice at the beginning of volume VI.

how I envy you if you have found some ray of light in the midst of that darkness, and what consolation I expect from your assistance! The religion you have embraced is doubtless for you the only one you to chose, since with such intelligence and uprightness you could hardly be suspected of having taken that step haphazardly. Your sincerity obliged you to do it, and I understand that this disposition is of great price in the eyes of him who knows understands the heart. But I share that disposition; how can it be that after so much study and searching, I should not yet have attained the point which you perhaps have attained by shorter paths?⁶²²

This exclamation, accompanied by many regrets that are not equivocal in an honest man, produced an surprising effect on the rector's mind. He lifted his eyes toward heaven; and anticipating my wife's reply: I regard this day, he told us ecstatically, as the happiest of my life. I have the satisfaction of finding myself among righteous hearts who want only light, but who seek it; and I promise them, in the name of heaven, that it will not be denied them. My lord, he continued, addressing the earl, look no further for what is offered you. I shall embrace your religion, if I fail to make [520] you know the excellence of mine. That is a great commitment, replied the earl softly; but I do not refuse your lights if you can detach them from that mass of futile questions that seem to me so many obstacles to the triumph of truth. This promise delighted the rector. He thanked heaven for it; and having had him repeat it with the same joy, he was the first to change the subject, to avoid fruitless discussions that could not lead him to

⁶²² A remarkable concession on the part of the staunch Protestant that the real Clarendon was. The emphasis is put for the first time not on doctrines but on faith, simple and free from paradoxes.

his goal within the ordinary limits of a conversation.

I was confirmed in the opinion I had of his sincerity and zeal, but did not foresee the success that heaven would one day confer on these happy predictions.⁶²³ I was so far from expecting some benefit for myself that when the earl, to whom I would not be doing justice if I failed to point out that from that moment he had laid the foundations of a philosophy far superior to that of ordinary men, asked me, following that good man's departure, what I thought of his commitments, I asked him not to have me enter into a project that befitted neither my present needs nor my former resolutions. Such was the force of the memory I still retained of Saumur, and such was the confidence I imprudently had in the new disposition of my heart.

It was indeed so delightful that, continuing to spread to all my senses, I soon found myself recovered to a degree of strength that restored to me the most brilliant advantages of youth. Could my remaining languor and weakness long prevail against the care that Fanny herself took to change the dressings on my wounds; and did not her every caress restore more warmth to my blood than it had lost during such a long denaturation? Her continual presence, that of Cécile, their words, their care, the simple amusements they created for themselves around me, into which I saw my sister, Mrs Riding, and all my guests enter with the same willingness, even that dear Earl of Clarendon who was not above taking part in our simple banterings; in short, the air of joy that all

⁶²³ Cleveland seems to want to wipe out all the study he did in book VI, and prepares himself anew to discuss religion. What he still lacks, in theological terms, is grace: with this announcement, Prévost prepares the idea of the conversion which was virtually promised in the preface of t. I and in the notice of t. VI.

my family seemed to breathe, everything conspired to maintain me in a enviable situation.

Nor did I put off the execution of my plan; and M. Briand having given me an account of the preparations he had made in Paris, I invited all the outsiders in my house to come share with me the pleasures of that famous city. The earl promised me not to be long in joining me there. Some letters which he had received that same day obliged him to return to Rouen; and without trying to learn more of his business, I had noticed in him signs of uneasiness which he tried in vain to disguise. Attached for the rest of my life to his interests, I could not get over the passion I felt for helping out in some way; and seeing him ready to leave without a word to me about it, I stopped him at the moment he was climbing into his carriage. I have too much flattered myself, I said to him, in thinking I had your esteem and your confidence. You have concerns of which you are telling me nothing. He looked at me for a moment with some surprise, and taking me by the hand, he led me aside to speak to me as follows.

I did not wish to trouble the peace in your heart with confidences to which I feared friendship could make you too sensitive; but since it leads you to reproach me for it, blame only yourself for the compassion I am going to cause you. You know what rank I have lost along with the king's favor. The malice of my enemies prevailed over the goodness of my master, and as recompense for thirty years of services, I am despoiled of my functions, and forced to seek asylum outside my country.⁶²⁴ My life would not

⁶²⁴ Guardian of Prince Charles, Clarendon had followed him during the whole period of his exile, and became chancellor at the Restoration; after many complex struggles, he was sacrificed in 1677 by Charles II, who allowed him to escape the hangman's ax by going into exile.

have been spared if my loyalty and devotion had not been proof against the blackest accusations. After abandoning me out of weakness, the king sends me away out of consternation. I know him. The remorse he has for having sacrificed me may expose me forever to his hatred, as if exacerbating my downfall could cover its injustice.

Before they had taken away the seals, the earl went on, and at a time when I thought my fortune well assured, I do not disguise the fact that ambition led me to conceive high hopes. I saw the king without offspring, and my daughter the Duchess of York [521] within inches of the throne.⁶²⁵ I was not offending my duty in flattering myself she might some day ascend to it; and if I took some actions with that in mind, my justification is that they accorded with my master's honor, and the rights of religion. But you would not have a proper understanding of my dilemma if I did not explain its cause to you more particularly.

The king's passion for pleasures having induced the same taste in the entire court, it has long been a merit in England to invent new fêtes, and to be useful in the maintenance of luxury and debauchery. During the winter he declared for dancing, and the furor for balls had so spread in London that it had even conquered the bourgeoisie. There were no nights when people did not assemble in innumerable places to dance until daybreak. Under the mask the court there mixed with the town; and to favor this disguise, they had themselves carried in sedan chairs, often without retinue or torches. These tumultuous entertainments always brought in their wake many disorders, but that was their principal attraction for the youth of the court. The pleasure of rushing from

⁶²⁵ In 1660 Anne Hyde had secretly married the Duke of York, second son of Charles I and future king James II.

house to house, and each time to see some new scene, the actors of which avoided being recognized, was found to be so titillating by the queen herself that she sought it out each night with as little precaution as the least of her subjects.

Once, being alone, by dint of an excess of licence one would hardly find credible, she lost sight of her porters, and her consternation was extreme after she had vainly attempted to find them. The Duke of Buckingham had recognized her despite her disguise. For a while he amused himself observing her distress, and seeing that the crowd did not allow him to exit quickly, he conceived on the spot a plan worthy of him.⁶²⁶ Leaving one of his men to follow her, he hurried to Saint James, where I was with the king, whom he bade to withdraw into his chamber with him: Sire, he said, I have come to offer you an opportunity to be rid of the queen, which you will perhaps never again find. He told him of the situation in which he had left her, and raising his voice with enough heat to forget that I could hear him: Say the word, Sire, he continued, and I shall abduct her. I shall send her off this very night to some island in America, and you will be free to make a new marriage that will provide heirs to your crown.⁶²⁷

As horrible as this counsel was, it was not greeted with

⁶²⁶ George Villiers (1628–1687), 2nd duke of Buckingham, was counselor to Charles II and the principal author of Clarendon's downfall.

⁶²⁷ As the Duke of York was a Catholic, the Protestant camp desired an heir at all costs so as to keep him from the throne; it was indeed because Charles II had no legitimate heirs that his brother was to succeed him in 1685. He had rejected the idea of declaring himself married to Lucy Walter in order to legitimate Monmouth. The queen, Catherine of Braganza, was reputed to be sterile, and various solutions were thought of, among them those cited here.

sufficient indignation to persuade me it would be rejected. As what I had heard was rightly capable of causing me alarm, I took advantage of the time it took the king to reply to make use of a pen I found at hand, and indicating to my daughter the danger to which the queen was exposed, I urged her, in her own interest, to find some means of turning it aside. I would in vain have lent an ear to the king's response, who lowered his voice with more prudence than Buckingham. But as even this precaution, and the length of his deliberations, making me believe the peril even more urgent, I hastened to send off my note to the Duchess of York. Buckingham left without my being able to learn what orders he bore with him. With my anxiety only growing, I left the king under some pretext, and followed his confidant swiftly and successfully enough to see him get into his chair without his seeing me. Mine was at the bottom of the staircase. I had my porters follow him to the house where I surmised he had left the queen. At the door he again donned his costume for the ball, while I remained at some distance to observe him. In those days you could find the means of masking yourself on the spot in every street in London. I lost not a minute, and after disguising myself in a bizarre manner, I entered an assembly so crowded and tumultuous that however carefully I had observed Buckingham's outfit, I had great difficulty recognizing him.

But I found him in the crowd. He seemed to be giving some orders to another mask who was listening very carefully, and who left the room when they separated. I had no doubt that it was some minion to whom he had entrusted the execution of his plan. Whatever means he might employ, I was determined to follow his every move, and if I was not fortunate enough to locate the queen, I had decided to [522] broadcast my fears rather than to leave her exposed to such base betrayal. But I finally thought I spotted her, and Buckingham's eyes, which often turned towards her, were not

more help to me than her consternation, the signs of which she could not hide. She had withdrawn to a corner, from which she seemed to observe everyone who approached her, doubtless so as to recognize someone in whom she could confide her plight. I put an end to her pain by telling her straightforwardly that I had come to help her, and although I took care to disguise my voice, I spoke to her with such respect and zeal that she could not take me for a stranger. She agreed to follow me. I preceded her by several paces, to foil Buckingham's vigilance. He realized in that she was escaping him. His men were not yet gathered, and as my porters were waiting some distance away, I urged her to get into my chair, and I followed her on foot to the back door of Whitehall. She begged me to inform her whom she had to thank. My only reply was to advise her, for the security of her life and honor, never to expose herself to that same adventure.

While I was so assisting her so fortunately, my note had been delivered to my daughter, who had immediately sent passed it to the Duke of York. Their apartment being not far from the king's, this prince had thought there was no remedy more prompt against the evil with which I was threatening him than to make it clear immediately to his brother know that his plan was not unknown. This revelation was received with manifestations of surprise and anger which were the effect of deep dissimulation. The king wanted to know the source of a warning which he called fraudulent, and pretending to scorn it, he nevertheless passed the time in great trepidation until Buckingham's return. Although the duke had refused to betray me, and I had conducted myself so cautiously that I was sure of secrecy, the king's suspicions and those of his confidant could only fall on me. I learned that they inquired diligently whether I had not entered my daughter's apartment upon leaving the king's, and that nothing had been spared to bribe my porters. But the court usage being to employ

men of confidence for that purpose, mine were attached to the point of risking their lives for me, as did indeed occur at the time of my fall, rather than to betray the loyalty they owed to me.⁶²⁸

Such is the source of the distress which as you see is consuming me. Buckingham, the slyest and most fervent of my enemies, did not let this opportunity escape to make me suspect in the king's eyes, by putting him in mind that it was ambition that had led me to counter him.⁶²⁹

The resentment he had from it becoming all the more acute because my conduct gave him no pretext for making a sensation of it, there were no deliberations into which he did not enter with my enemies to keep my daughter and grandchildren forever from the throne.⁶³⁰ He considered repudiating the queen on grounds of sterility; but all England knowing that she had had a miscarriage, he was forced to renounce that plan.⁶³¹ His flatterers proposed that he take two wives, and carried despicableness to the point of presenting him with a collection of authorities and proofs in

⁶²⁸ Prévost draws this whole episode from a page of Burnet that sketches the plot in much less detail, without attributing any role at all to Clarendon (*Bishop Burnet's History of His Own Time*, t. I, pp. 455–456). It is also Burnet whom he cites (without naming him) in *Le Pour et Contre* (t. XVII, pp. 11–13) to defend himself against accusations of implausibility.

⁶²⁹ *I.e.*, the ambition of seeing his daughter become queen of England.

⁶³⁰ Though Anne Hyde (1637–1671) died too young to be James II's queen, two of her daughters, Mary II and Anne, did ascend to that rank.

⁶³¹ Burnet is once more the source: "Others pretended she was barren from a natural cause, and that seemed equivalent to impotence in men. But the king often said, he was sure she had once miscarried" (*History*, p. 453). Rapin de Thoyras situates this miscarriage in January 1666.

support of polygamy.⁶³² At first he embraced this shameful promise, but the objections of Coventry⁶³³ and of a small number of men of honor recalled him to less licentious principles. To provoke his suspicions even further, over his objections the Duke of Richmond married Miss Stewart,⁶³⁴ who had been suggested to him as a replacement for the queen, and Conbury, my eldest son, was accused as accessory to this marriage through his counsel. My favor did nothing but decline after these two events, and the hatred of Buckingham, who had been trying for fifteen years to undo me, would have succeeded in leading me to the scaffold, had my innocence not been well enough recognized to overcome all the horrible impressions with which he had filled my master's mind.

It was as a favor to the Duke of York and to my daughter that I decided to retire to France; for with a heart above reproach,

⁶³² Burnet also mentions the idea of polygamy (p. 454). The "authorities" allude principally, no doubt, to Luther, who had given his permission for the second marriage of the Langrave of Hesse, who pretended to refuse all carnal contact with his wife (see Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, article "Luther," remarque Q).

⁶³³ Sir William Coventry (1628–1686), member of the king's council.

⁶³⁴ "Over his objections" refers to the king, whose mistress "la belle Stewart" (Frances Thérèse) was. Her marriage to Charles Stuart, duke of Richmond, took place in March 1667, two months after the death of his second wife; the affair is related in chapter XI of Hamilton's *Mémoires du comte de Gramont*. According to Burnet, the king was persuaded that Clarendon and his eldest son, Lord Cornbury, had played a role in the abduction of Stewart, who was celebrated for her grace and beauty and had inspired great passions (t. I, pp. 436–437). Burnet and Rapin de Thoyras (t. IX, p. 262) cite the affair as one of the causes of Clarendon's fall.

I would have affronted every danger, and no concession would have satisfied me for my honor and innocence. But I considered that if I insisted on resisting, I was increasing the king's aversion, and his jealousy for the [523] duke, which has already become only too well known. Thus I consoled myself for my fall with the comfort of thinking it was helpful to my daughter, and that the obscurity to which I am condemned for the rest of my life could some day turn to the advantage of the most precious part of my blood. But terrible news which I have received from a courier of the duchess undermines my courage by renewing all my fears. She writes that because of an indiscretion she committed by speaking to some friends of a history of the lives of the Duke of York and myself, on which she has been working for some time, the king, or one of his emissaries, had all the memoirs she had collected for that undertaking secretly stolen. And among them, she confesses that she had all the letters she received from me since her marriage, not excepting the note by which I alerted her to the queen's peril. How many times have I reminded her to burn them! The letters contain nothing that violates my duty; but a father expresses himself so naturally with his daughter, and I have sometimes suggested that the duchess adopt behavior and sentiments that accorded with my hopes. In the disposition which I have depicted to you, the king found in them only too many causes for redoubling his suspicions. His resentment against the duke and my daughter became so open that he has refused to see them. There is word of the design he is contemplating with his confidants to legitimize the Duke of Monmouth by declaring that he had contracted a secret marriage with his mother. He is recall-

ing him to England with that intention.⁶³⁵ My daughter's fears make her uncertain whether her safety might not require her to leave the court and come to live in France with me. She is worried about me as well since the king has named Buckingham to the embassy at this court. My enemies regret having allowed me to escape, and the duchess imagines that it is not without some secret design that the most ardent of them was chosen to be sent to France.⁶³⁶

There was no need, the earl added, to inflict on you a narrative in which you could take no interest if not that of friendship. But if this reason led me to conceal my woes from you, I could not refuse to open my heart to you when you object to my silence. His words and the downcast spirits which all his courage did not prevent me from seeing in his eyes, moved me so deeply that I would have resolved to leave immediately for England, could he have derived the least benefit from my services. But after so offering, it occurred to me that if the duchess of York were forced to come over to France, there was no one who could help her more than M. et Mme de R. . . , who were still determined to go imminently to London. The status of French refugees assured them of a freedom which they put to many uses; and were this undertaking to have deprived them of the hope of returning to

⁶³⁵ In 1670 Monmouth was already a general, and his father's partiality to him was evident. The king had recognized him, but nevertheless held to the legitimacy of the royal line and refused to the end to approve the plan described here.

⁶³⁶ After the fall of Clarendon, George Villiers (1628–1687), duke of Buckingham, was considered the most powerful advisor at court. He was, however, not apprized of the secret treaty of Dover, and was sent to Versailles in July 1670 to negotiate with Louis XIV another war treaty against Holland, omitting any mention of religion.

England, I was persuaded that since they could find the same asylum in some other Protestant country, they would willingly sacrifice their first intentions to the friendship they had developed for with the earl. I expressed this thought to him. He found it so welcome that, espousing it at once, he left it to me to bring it to fruition. M. de R..., to whom I broached it immediately, received it as the most precious opportunity he could hope for to render service to innocence and virtue. He did not even wish his departure to be delayed until the earl had left. As all his preparations having been completed during the first trip, he required only a few hours to make his farewells tranquilly, and relying on the earl for all other matters, toward evening he set out again with his wife for Rouen.

The satisfaction I had in having restored a bit of tranquillity to the Earl of Clarendon, along with the certainty that I would see two such dear friends again, and the measures I had already taken to obtain for them a more agreeable situation in London, dispelled some sentiments of sadness which the anxiety of the one and the departure of the others had mingled with my joy. My only thought was to get to Paris, and painting in advance for Fanny and Cécile a delightful picture of the life I was going to have them lead there, we entered that great city as if in triumph. The inclination which Don Thadeo continued to manifest for my daughter perhaps imposed some precautions on me; but I had no worry about love in the heart [524] of a man of honor, and the gratitude I owed to his zeal did not permit me to let him take a separate lodging, while I was hosting M. et Mme des Ogères on the same footing.

We were charmed by the magnificence and the comforts of our new abode. M. Briand, accustomed to the luxury of the court and well informed of my wealth, had in a few days' time collected all the richest and most agreeable things he could find in

Paris. I thanked him for understanding my intentions so perfectly; and still intent on the plan I had made, I exhorted my family and all my companions of fortune to enjoy with me the good things which heaven had bestowed on me. The heart requires no effort to open itself to joy and to appreciate the first delights of prosperity. I myself marvelled how easily I immersed myself in all the amusements set before me. M. Briand, whom I had chosen as guide in my pleasures, proposed beginning that very evening those that are continually on offer in Paris continually: theater, gaming, concerts. I accepted the comedy,⁶³⁷ which as yet I knew only by name. I appeared there in the grandest style with all my family. Fanny confessed that she had liked it very much, and we came home most satisfied with this try at entertainment.

Still, even my dissipation being unable to make me give up that former predilection for order and method which had been so long my custom, I turned my thoughts that very evening to introducing some order into my pleasures, and judging that it was not a science of which I could find the principles within myself, I called M. Briand and all my family to this deliberation. The idea, I told them, is to work toward our common felicity, and to establish it on foundations that are unshakable. I have more wealth than people usually require to be happy, and I devote it to this purpose. But knowing this city only by its reputation as the center of all pleasures, I would like to know them well enough to choose those that suit us. I want them to be honest and refined, but vivid, leaving nothing for the heart to desire; in sum, I added, address-

⁶³⁷ The term *comédie* could refer to any of the theaters then current, the Hôtel de Bourgogne, also called *les grands comédiens*, to Molière's troupe (officially styled *les comédiens du roi*) – or the *comédie italienne* at the Palais Royal.

ing M. Briand, I want to get out of worldly intercourse all that is most delightful and most able to satisfy honorable people. These things are familiar to you; I am consulting you.

He replied that having never been rich enough to procure for himself all the pleasures on offer in Paris, he could give me no insight of the kind one draws from experience; but that if he were to judge by his own desires, and by the taste of those who had a bigger share than he in the goods of fortune, he would easily name for me the principal sources of happiness; that after beginning so well by seeing that I had a magnificent house and a brilliant team and carriage, I must afford a table where abundance and delicacy were combined, and never be there without a certain number of amiable guests; that music, games and performances would share the intervals in the meals; that excursions and hunting would have their assigned days, as would exercises necessary for the maintenance of health, which is the foundation of all pleasures; that even reading, conversation and visits were so many supplements that had some role in the plan of a happy life, and could contribute to it at least by way of variety; that if I were attracted by the amenity of being flattered politely, listened to indulgently, served with zeal, I could open the door of my house to all, and be assured that I would soon be surrounded by a crown of courtiers who would take great care to anticipate my every desire; that I would learn every day from them the new diversions appearing in the court or the city, and that my wealth putting me constantly in the position of denying myself nothing, I could add this additional pleasure to those that occupied me on a regular basis.

He ceased speaking, to ascertain from my reply whether he had properly understood my intentions. During that time, I was watching Fanny and Cécile; and indeed flattered by all the charming images he had rather happily combined, I did not doubt that

they would be at least as attracted by them as I. Do you find, I said to Fanny, anything lacking in this picture? [525] She replied that, without examining it, she gave in advance the name of pleasure to all the occupations that I would share with her. Cécile showed even less enthusiasm, and I took her silence as a way of conforming to her mother's sentiment. What they had heard seemed to me too capable of pleasing them to have misgivings about their taste; and mine becoming keener only by the desire and hope of satisfying all their inclinations, I came back to my intention of instilling order in a career that promised so many attractions. M. Briand was further consulted on what ranking I should give to all the pleasures he had named. I found him more enlightened than he claimed to be in his recommendations; and myself recalling the principle of an ancient philosopher on the use of pleasures, I sought to arrange them with such exact proportion that those which were destined to follow could suffer no diminution from the nature of those that had preceded them.⁶³⁸

Of all M. Briand's proposals, the only one I could not accept was to open my house indifferently to anyone whose name was known, so as to lend myself an air of grandeur by the multitude of people who would come to make up a sort of court for me. That vain affectation, which would expose me to seeing new faces every day, and would constantly deprive me of the gratifications of intimacy, struck me as less a pleasure than a torture. But I firmly instructed him to find me friends whom it would be a

⁶³⁸ It is a radical change for Cleveland, who has never thought much about pleasure, to believe, in this new era of his life, that he can season his happiness with pleasures. But it is hardly a matter of hedonism: these well-ordered, systematic pleasures are part of a philosophical program.

pleasure for me to see more than once, and who were even sufficiently distinguished in mind and manners to make me find in my Paris sojourn one of the principle amenities I had come there for. Fanny was even more particular in the choice of ladies who were suggested for her association. She wanted them to be chaste, gentle, modest; and at a time when all these virtues were not much in honor at the French court, it was not easy to find her friends of such fine character. However I recalled to mind the Comtesse de ***, whom I had often seen at the court of Madame, and whose merit I had just as often admired. She had treated me with such kindness and distinction that I felt sure she would receive me agreeably when I introduced my wife to her; and friendship supposing some similarity of inclinations, I expected that we would find in this lady's friends all the qualities that she herself possessed and Fanny desired.

These plans not being executable in a day, the next day I satisfied my impatience to see my two sons. Their mother having given herself that satisfaction from the moment of our arrival, as much to answer to the eagerness of Cécile, who could not wait to embrace her brothers, as to attend to many details of care she had not yet been able to address. I had learned from her that, at the rector's sole solicitation, the court had lifted the order that made the College their prison. He had pointed to their mother's conversion; and the minister, informed at the same time that they were not subjects of the king, had expressed much regret at having allowed himself to consent to this violence. Such an honest action having finally dissipated all my fears, I did not regard as a constraining duty the visit which I could not avoid to the rector.

Nevertheless, I did not enter the College without a certain shudder that was like a remnant of my earlier prejudices. It even increased when, being introduced into the courtyard, I found myself in the midst of a large number of Fathers who were walk-

ing there, and who turned curious eyes on me. They had an intelligent enough look about them, further heightened by the unadorned appearance of their persons, through which a man who is not yet accustomed to seeing them in groups together is surprised to see the glint of discerning eyes, and to remark an imposing countenance. Does the robe of this Society, I said to myself, lend an appearance of merit to those who wear it; or is it indeed composed only of men who do such honor to their robe? I understood all at once that men of such character, who live under the same rule, and conduct themselves by the same principles, could not be moderately good or bad; and whichever they were, those who were less so could only constitute a very slight exception in the overall [526] number.⁶³⁹ This thought was not one to reassure me: did I know them well enough to know into whose hands I had just put myself? I was crossing the courtyard with renewed misgivings, and the greetings I received on every side did not dispel them, when at the sound of a bell I saw droves of young men emerge from various doors, providing me a spectacle as new as it was agreeable. I paused in the midst of my servants so as to miss nothing of this sight. I could not get enough of admiring such impressive youths; and although I could easily judge that they were the pupils of the College, among whom I expected to see my children appear, my amazement grew and grew as the number of them, their neatness, and their fine deportment. It was interrupted by the arrival of the rector, who had been informed of my visit. My first salutation had to do with the subject which was preoccupying me; and while I was vividly expressing to him my admira-

⁶³⁹ Thus the evil Jesuit, like the one at St. Cloud, is a most exceptional being who contrasts with the general rule in the Society of Jesus, as the notice of vol. VI had affirmed.

tion, asking him the names of those whose physiognomy was the most striking, I was occupied by a thought that would have delighted him had he been able to divine it. But he himself gave me the opportunity to develop it through his replies. Surprised at hearing him name the principal nobility of the realm, the list going on and on: And how long then have you been so well regarded in the public mind as to be entrusted with that precious charge with such widespread confidence? He found this question strange. This College, he replied, has been established in France for over a century, and we have always had the satisfaction of seeing here about the same number of children, without the confidence of the public ever having abated. And what you are seeing here, he added, you would see in every city in the realm where we have establishments. Do you mean, I replied with genuine surprise, that even when you have been persecuted, decried, subjected to a thousand hateful accusations, and when the public has avidly received so many writings in which you are cruelly flayed, it never ceased to place its most precious possessions in your hands, and to entrust to you the greatest treasure of the state? No, he said modestly; and if you had had a look in our churches, you would always have seen that same public there, which has never flagged in another sort of confidence in interests yet more delicate⁶⁴⁰; you will also see that it has not failed with respect to innumerable other services to which our profession obliges us. But I will explain to you, he added, a mystery that seems to surprise you. And taking me by the hand, he led me into a room where he continued to speak in this fashion.

Let us leave aside, he said, all the difficulties that can give a

⁶⁴⁰ The direction of consciences, and thereby responsibility for the soul's salvation, already mentioned in book XI.

Protestant pause. The particular aim of our society is to assure the defense and support of a religion that teaches us that this zeal to sustain and extend it is what is most agreeable and most heroic in the eyes of God who created it. Thus, we are engaged, by a double duty, in preserving it pure amongst us, and inspiring it in others. We required means which could guide us to that end. The wisdom of our founder⁶⁴¹ chose the most natural ones, by attaching us to public service of the in all the ways that can relate to our destination. To the ordinary ministry of the Church, he had us add the exercise of the talents of the mind, even the taste for polish, and all that is estimable in the world in the midst of its corruption. To us nothing is profane, if we have some hope of making a use of it that can sanctify it. We devote ourselves to the study of the sciences, and we profess to teach them: we would be soldiers and sailors if we could anticipate the same fruit from them. School-masters in France, mandarins in China.⁶⁴²

It is not difficult to see the connections that can relate all these occupations to our purpose, but they have made us several kinds of enemies. First of all, those who are enemies of religion, and seek to destroy it or weaken it by innovations. Our resistance riles them. They turn on us weapons against which we try to protect it. Secondly, the libertines, who by derangement of mind which has its source in the corruption of their hearts, make a point of deriding everything that is opposed to their maxims. Finally, our rivals, those who walk the same path without always working

⁶⁴¹ Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) was the principal founder of the Society of Jesus, commissioned by Pope Paul III in 1540.

⁶⁴² An allusion to the assimilationist approach of the Jesuit missions in China, widely described and debated at the time, and particularly defended in the eighteenth century in a series of volumes entitled *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses de Chine par des missionnaires jésuites*.

toward the same end, are pained to see our most brilliant achievements. They [527] do not consider that this difference comes from that of our motives. Civil institutions, which are sustained only by human purposes, do not presuppose the kind of selflessness and ardor as the zeal for religion inspires; not to mention the assistance of heaven, which never fails enterprises created for its glory. If our works are sometimes more successful, it is because difficulties scare us less, and because with the incentive that impels us, they are never able to dispirit us. Yet hatred, malignity and envy, which are, respectively, the habitual dispositions of the three kinds of enemies I have named, never cease to bite and malign us. They try to pass off the movements of our zeal as intrigues of ambition, our restraint as hypocrisy, our gentleness and indulgence as political cowardice; in short, the greatest effects of our ardor for religion, the painful functions of our ministry, the voyages that entail deprivation of all comforts and often even the loss of life, are painted as avidness for gold, and passion for all the objects of greed. Thus, our usual fate is to suffer obstacles and abuse, which faith fortunately makes us consider as part of our reward. But in the midst of this onslaught, which will doubtless continue as long as we preserve some virtue, the public declares itself for us despite itself; in other words, despite the evil penchant that causes people to be amused by satire, not recognizing as ambitious men who willingly sacrifice honors, or gold-lovers in those who live content with the necessities, nor men of politics in a society of disinterested men who do not hesitate to mount a scaffold when that is the surest and shortest way to attain their goal, it grants us a confidence which we doubtless owe to their esteem, and which avenges us well for the

ephemeral applause it sometimes gives to our enemies.⁶⁴³

I was so struck by this eloquent apology, and the impression it made was so strong that, interrupting the rector, I confessed to him that I knew of nothing so grand and so respectable as his order. This confidence, as if forced from me, about which I could not gainsay my eyes, had for me the strength of an invincible proof, which disposed me to believe everything he had added to its advantage. I even insisted on this observation to confirm it. Yes, I said, in the persecutions to which you are exposed I recognize men's true character, which is to denigrate what they admire, and look for flaws in what they esteem. They detest what they cannot scorn, and the strength of virtue and merit nevertheless brings them back to confidence, which is a forced confession of their injustice. I do not know, I added, what is this religion for which you are prepared to make such sacrifices, and when you called me a Protestant you were giving me credit for knowledge with which I have never had the privilege of acquiring. But I am inclined to judge well of what inspires such zeal in you, and I praise your attachment to a choice where you believe you recognize truth. This was to offer him the opportunity to launch into the clarifications he had already promised me. I would not have been able to avoid hearing him out, had my desire to see my children not served as pretext to end this conversation. He granted me what I was requesting, promising me in advance that I would be content with the sight he was about to offer me.

He led me through several courtyards, stopping to look at various buildings which I found very orderly and well laid-out. I

⁶⁴³ Prévost reverses the method of Pascal's *Lettres provinciales* – the one he had used in book VI – to put here in the Jesuit's own mouth the noble pronouncements that make Cleveland admire his order.

was surprised at the silence that reigned there, after witnessing the levity and outbursts of joy of the crowd of youths when had school let out. He told me about the division of exercises, and the exactness with which the most inattentive among them went back to work at the sound of a bell or the voice of a proctor. The rules they observed in their games and in their studies, their docility, their emulation, the attention given to shaping their hearts and their manners by the same stages as the mind, even the modes of their interaction, and the continual effort they made to put before them the noblest examples of civility and good taste, in short all the methods employed for their education, comprised a narrative so curious and [528] so interesting that I could not tire of listening. We reached the rooms of my two sons, which I found comfortable enough to flatter myself they had been treated with distinction. They seemed to me most satisfied with their exercises, and with the kindness of their masters. The rector, who had been informed of my opulence, proposed that I give them a governor, and praised to me a young man who was available for that function. I joyfully consented, and left the execution to his good judgment.

Continuing to show me everything that merits a foreigner's curiosity at the Collège de Louis le Grand, he did not miss a single opportunity to remind me of the explanation he had given me in support of his company. The cleverness with which he mixed in a few observations on the state of religion in England left me no doubt that he was looking beyond the present, and that his hope was to derive some day some usefulness from my services. I did not hold this design against him, which corresponded

quite well with the impression he had given me of his zeal.⁶⁴⁴ In short, I left him with esteem enough to remain undisturbed about my children's situation, and to plan on maintaining some communication with him.

He had avoided speaking to me of the miscreant whom his company had purged, and I certainly abstained from reminding him of such a disagreeable memory. But, as if that day had been designated by heaven to efface in my mind all traces of the past, at the very moment when he was escorting me to my carriage, an ecclesiastic who was waiting for him, and who had inquired who I was when he saw me with him, approached us with distinct signs of surprise and joy. We awaited the explanation he seemed prepared to give us. First he said that the most fortunate thing that could happen to him was to meet me, in circumstances where the mission with which he was entrusted concerned me as much as it did the rector; and identifying himself as the curate of Reuil, he told us that two days previous he had attended the last moments of a man who had taken a great deal of remorse with him to the grave. I had been called, he continued, to hear his confession, and in the state to which he was reduced by a deep wound, I scarcely hoped he could live until I had completed my ministrations. However, the strength of his temperament sustained him for a few days, and I had the consolation of seeing him spend them in the sentiments of acute penitence. Among all the disorders which he

⁶⁴⁴ The spurious "vol. V" had much insisted on Jesuit conspiracies in England, in which Gelin and the Jesuit of St. Cloud were mixed up; and Cleveland there becomes, like Clarendon before him, the king's anti-Catholic counselor. Prévost here lends a less underhanded impression to such ambitions, widespread in France at the time of Louvois and Bossuet, of bringing about a restoration of the Church in England, as had been done under Mary Tudor.

had to reproach himself, he seemed concerned by nothing so much as the misfortune he had had of dishonoring by his conduct the company he had left. The justice of heaven having anticipated the effect of his other designs, he flattered himself that a sincere repentance could expiate his intentions; but the wrong he had done to his order is a consummate crime for which he greatly feared that even his punishment was not sufficient reparation. It was in that fear, added the curate, that he instructed me, as he lay dying, to bear witness to you of his regrets, and to declare to you that he regarded himself as the most culpable of all men.⁶⁴⁵

The rector was looking at me timidly during this declaration, and I understood what impression he was hoping it would make on me; I was already feeling it, and was simply following it in saying to him that a reparation of that nature, in the mouth of a dying man, seemed to me the most glorious apology he could desire for his order. A guilty man, I added, who takes the wrong he did you as the measure of his most bitter remorse, must give me a high opinion of your innocence and virtue. I departed in those sentiments, and have never had occasion to change them.

As I was returning home, I marvelled how everything seemed so be coming together so happily for my tranquility. But I found new reasons to think it unshakeable in the story I was told on my arrival. The Duke of Monmouth was in Paris, and his passion for Fanny having not permitted him to return to London without seeing her, he had asked her permission through a gentleman of his retinue. She had at first rejected this proposal with

⁶⁴⁵ It is notable that while emphasizing guilt, Prévost studiously avoids the corresponding theological word *sin*. This is certainly quite deliberate; indeed nowhere in the entire novel does one find specifically biblical terms valorized.

justified anger, and out of indignation at seeing that he still remained hopeful, she had sharply turned her back on his confidant. But the testimony of her heart and that very pride of her sentiments having soon made her overcome that initial ire, it seemed to her [529] that if a woman sometimes has the right to take some advantage of the weakness of men, it was when the opportunity arose naturally. She knew of Lord Clarendon's distress, and knew how great a part the Duke of Monmouth, whom the king was not recalling without some purpose, would have in court intrigues. The idea came to her of make use of the power she had over him to get make him useful to the earl's interests. The only concern that could give her pause was my absence; but as she could not doubt that the interests of the dear earl were as sacred to me as my own, she flattered herself not only that she would get me to approve of her conduct, but that she would merit my praise, by succeeding with no help from me in a project into which I could not properly enter. Indeed she had the duke's messenger recalled, and treating his mission as a bagatelle, she declared to him more seriously that she might expect a very important service from his master.

The duke was at my house almost immediately. The respectful manner in which he presented himself encouraged Fanny's boldness. She spoke of love as a passion that could enter only into hearts that were free: And yours, she said to him jocularly, being as occupied by ambition as mine is by the attachment I owe to my husband, we cannot expect anything more of each other than esteem and services. She promised to allow his attentions on that basis, and flattering him to the point of allowing him to imagine he could acquire inviolable rights to her gratitude, she asked him whether he was prepared to contain himself within those limits. Perhaps the gentleness and grace which she was never without restored more hope to the duke than her words had taken away;

but the sequel having proved too well that he was incapable of the moderation being asked of him, it was not possible for him to be sincere when he promised Fanny to be content with her esteem. The very joy he expressed at this understanding would have seemed suspect to a woman more versed in gallantry. However, persuaded by his protestations, and listening only to her desire to render service to the Earl of Clarendon and his family, she was satisfied with the disinterested offer he made, and when she related all this to me I was myself deceived by the appearances.

Therefore she told him a part of the earl's anxieties, and the good reasons he had for worrying about the king's intentions. As it was difficult not let anything indiscreet escape while going into details involving the duke himself, she avoided everything related to Charles's jealousy, and attributing his enmity just to old reasons that had never come to light, she expressed herself forcefully about the peril which threatened the earl in France, and his daughter the duchess in England. Lord Clarendon has showered me with kindnesses, she added; I owe him more than I can repay, and I promise everlasting friendship to those who will secure his tranquility and that of his family. The duke's response was not uncertain. Either because he did not know the motives for his recall by the king, or because the force of his passion made him sacrifice his own interests, he committed himself by a hundred oaths to make the earl's cause his own, and left extremely satisfied at the opportunity he had to please Fanny.

I was not less satisfied by his resolution. Without examining where it was coming from, and too much above certain fears to take alarm at his sentiments, I considered only the interests of the earl, to which Fanny had so happily attended. Monmouth, with the temerity and presumption that were the vices of his character, had so much generosity and grandeur of soul that I thought an undertaking well off in his hands, when he was committed to

making it succeed. My peace of heart being thus confirmed by all sorts of prosperities and advantages, I gave free rein with my dear wife to admiration of heaven's favors, and I invited her to enjoy a happiness that nothing seemed capable of clouding.

I have never doubted that in those initial circumstances of our changed fate, in that golden age of our fortune and our love, Fanny was as attuned as I was to anticipation of the pleasures that were set to gather about us, and [530] that at least the novelty of a situation that promised us such delights made quite an impression on her. In the tender conversations for which we found time several times each day, I observed that her soul was as full of joy as mine, and that if she had to do herself any violence, it was to moderate its transports. This sight redoubled my own. I exhorted her not to fear being too happy, and to remember that hearts that had succumbed entirely to sorrow, ought to feel no compunction at opening themselves unreservedly to pleasure. I thus succeeded with my caresses as much as with my words in getting her to develop all the treasures of love and joy that seemed to be trying still to hide themselves deep in hers; and these delightful moments always ended with our falling into each other's arms, so unaware of what existed outside us that the universe could have crumbled without distracting us from the slightest of our sentiments.

Nevertheless, at the end of these transports she always found in her memory some cause for apprehension and anxiety which brought her back to more serious reflections than the circumstances appeared to call for. It seemed that after raising herself above the limits of nature by the force of pleasure, she no longer could find enough flow in her thoughts to return immediately to her point of departure; and that a remnant of that sad habit in which she had so long lived of entertaining a thousand vague and ill-defined fears naturally determined her soul's attention towards

some trace that again renewed them. As she had nothing more present or dear to her after me than her daughter, it was upon her that she usually focused these agitations. She took alarm at the merest cloud she had observed in her eyes, or the slightest change she feared for her health. The passion of Don Thadeo, which initially distressed her no more than it did me, subsequently seemed to her capable of causing Cécile some grief sooner or later. She spoke to me about it seriously. Whatever silence and respect he had always observed, she feared that such passionate attentions might be importunate to her daughter, and even told me that her constant efforts to divine her sentiments had located seeds of distress and sorrow that she could attribute to no other causes.

I smiled at this discovery, and interpreting it differently, I asked her whether Cécile's melancholy⁶⁴⁶ was a very certain sign that she felt importuned by her suitor's attentions. I posed her this question in complete tranquility, because having already reflected on the consequences of a passion the daily progress of which I was continually observing, I had been so little alarmed by it that on the contrary I wished Don Thadeo might have some success in winning my daughter's esteem. Looking toward the future, I did not think I was sure of obtaining in England that degree of consideration that leads to grand marriages. My wealth did not remove the stain of my origin, especially at a time when the memory of Cromwell was execrated. It seemed to me that Cécile's marriage to a foreigner would shield me from that criticism, and knowing Don Thadeo's birth and rank from certain evidence, I

⁶⁴⁶ Cécile, who had always seemed rather characterized by a playful and happy temperament, begins to manifest the darker one she inherited from both her father and mother.

moreover saw nothing in his character that could give me any repugnance for his person. The gratitude I owed him was yet another pretext. To all these reasons I added a stronger one, which came from my infinite affection for Cécile. She had experienced the joys of love: her heart was perhaps suffering from the loss of such delightful sentiments; and at an age when nature makes the need of them keenly felt, I would have wished she had no reason to regret their deprivation.

Fanny easily espoused all these thoughts. She also agreed with my idea that the appearances of sadness which she was noticing in her daughter could come from some change in her heart, and she determined she would soon sort out the truth. But we were both far from the truth when we suspected her of having thoughts of love, and all our conjectures would never have permitted us access to the cause of her woes.

Tranquil, nevertheless, so long as we were unaware of them, we joyfully received [531] M. Briand, who brought us new information on the plan for our pleasures. He came accompanied by two French gentlemen, to whom he had praised my family, and revealed the purpose I had of leading a delectable life in Paris. These were, he said to me as he introduced them to us, the two noblemen of the court who knew of all its amenities best, and who had the most refined taste for pleasures. Their first offerings perfectly confirmed that description. They proposed to me a choice of what was most in honor in Paris: Lully for music, with the best instruments of the Opéra⁶⁴⁷; five or six men of letters

⁶⁴⁷ The association of Lully with the Opera is a slight anachronism if we are here, as it seems, in 1670, as the new charter for the Académie Royale de Musique under Lully's direction was not issued until 1672. Prévost had evoked the same Paris, that of 1673 and its literary milieu,

reputed to be congenial guests, and several persons celebrated for their entertaining wit and manners. A few suppers, they said, given graciously for the company they proposed to bring to me, were sufficient to make me an instantly famous, and soon attract court and town to my house.⁶⁴⁸

I gathered from this explanation that a reputation for liberality and splendor was regarded as a part of happiness, and determined to add this advantage also to the list of my pleasures. A supper party was set up for that same day; and thanks to the zeal of my three guides, all the guests whom they had mentioned to me were present. We were wanting French ladies; but the eagerness that filled me did not prevent me from thinking that my wife's honor required more care in that selection, and not having put off for long the plan I had conceived for procuring friends for her, I had along with her, at that first fête, only the ladies who lived in my house. They were amiable enough to make one forget they were foreigners. The civility of my guests did not permit them to judge otherwise. After a concert, worthy indeed of the most brilliant assembly, we sat down to table under the auspices of magnificence and joy. If everything that was offered elicited continual praise, the eagerness with which everything was accepted necessarily persuaded me that it was sincere. The conversation gradually came to life. Soon agreeable stories, good tales,

in the history of Rosambert and its sequel in book II of *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*.

⁶⁴⁸ We see here that Cleveland's experiment consists not just in lending himself to pleasures, but in provisionally adopting the world's criteria as his own. It is abstract, in a way, insofar as the condition of its realization is to be immune to any considerations of cost: Voltaire's wealthy Pocourante in *Candide* will be, perhaps, distant echo of this Cleveland.

clever and satirical witticisms followed one after the other. A hundred sorts of exquisite wines sustained that amiable warmth, and the excellence combined with the profusion of the courses and dishes was at every moment another spur to joy as well as to appetite. Although there was nothing in my basic character of the gaiety that inclines one to laughter and frolic, I felt more or less carried along by the power of example; and if I had to believe the applause I received more than once, my thoughts were not the least delightful, nor my witticisms the least apt. I was enchanted with the satisfaction I saw Fanny taking, and the sole desire of inspiring her to joy would have sufficed to elevate my wit and imagination. The night seemed too short to us, amidst the pleasures in which day snuck up on us. We parted company so satisfied with each other that, the entire assembly being eager to renew this trial, there was not a single one of my guests who did not promise to occupy constantly his place at my table.

Once the way was opened so successfully, all of M. Briand's projects seemed to line up by themselves, and each day brought me, as he had planned, new tastes and new awareness. Having gathered from experience, as much on from his principles, that good food is the true basis of all the other pleasures, I made it my rule to spare neither effort nor expense for my table, and with that in mind I took measures that were not yet terribly common in Paris. At great expense I established purveyors, not only in the French provinces where nature excels in some fine product, but in foreign countries whence I could regularly receive some rare dish, or some prized liqueur. Thus, whereas the north supplied me with the most exquisite fish, I got my game from the south, and my wines from the east. I would not have tolerated being served a platter or a flask which did not bear extraordinary character, and which my maître d'hôtel had not recommended with praise.

Experience served to convince me that I had not been mistaken in the opinion [532] I had of the pleasures of the table, and the merit as much as the number of the guests which the reputation of mine attracted every day left me no doubt that everyone was of the same mind about that. It was from there that the rest of my pleasures took their course, as from a live and fertile spring where joy was constantly renewed with the taste for all sorts of entertainments. Games and strolls, dances, concerts, plays followed upon these delicious feasts. Their order was set only by the desires which the present generated, or by information I received of new entertainments of the court and the town. Soon the ladies who made friends with Fanny made up a court as numerous as mine. I had happily succeeded in obtaining for her the friendship and esteem of Madame the Countess of ***. This lady priding herself on bringing her most amiable acquaintances of her sex, in just a few days my house was as brilliant as Versailles. My apartments were vast, and furnished with royal splendor. The multitude of beauties who were eager to cajole my wife, and formed a sort of circle around her, were a charming sight for me as well. I did not take as flattering language their confession that their charms yielded to hers. Fanny appeared in the middle of this lovely assembly as a queen as amiable as she was rich and powerful, who owes the respects rendered her more to her person than to her station, and attracts neither censure nor envy, because everyone is led to confess that she deserves the adoration she receives.

Cécile shared in the praise lavished on her mother. It was an extra measure of satisfaction for me, for it was as if those two dear objects were joined as one in my heart, and I did not distinguish on which of the two I wished the most pleasure and glory.

I do not mind confessing that in that initial intoxication where I spent over three months, it never occurred to me that I

had anything happier to desire! The charm of so many frivolous amusements had immediately seduced me by its novelty, and perhaps without even once deeply stirring my heart, it had kept my mind sufficiently occupied to persuade me that it left no void there still to be filled. If it sometimes happened that I slackened in the search or the taste for my pleasures, it had not taken long for my ardor to be revived by the thought that the happiness of others depended no less than my own on my attention and steadfastness; and this motive, which a passion incapable of slackening kept ever before me, had no doubt always had much more force than my own inclination to incline me toward the kind of life which I had embraced. This is not an excuse which I am preparing in advance for the strange delusion which I have begun to describe. I owe myself this testimony, that having thought I detected quite often traces of tedium or lassitude in the eyes of Fanny and Cécile, I had never had such zeal to revive their enthusiasm as in those moments when I feared their weariness was caused by an abatement of my attentions. I had pushed the desire to make them happy to the point of then losing any consideration at all for my health; and a hundred times I had sacrificed my own taste to them, so as to offer them entertainments I thought more in line with their inclination than with mine.

These signs of weariness and languor that often escaped them had sometimes so struck me as to make me want to ask them their cause; but seeing subsequently that their participation revived, and being unable to worry about their health, which was in its fullest flush, I concluded for the time being that these alternations were but the effect of that gentle fatigue that ordinarily follows on pleasures. Then my joy grew all the more that it was a proof of the happiness they found in indulging in them; and without plunging into other reflections, I began to invite them again to take part with renewed zest. Fanny, always more than

willing to please, thanked me for the efforts I was making to entertain her, and limited herself to asking me sometimes what I thought of certain events that had cost me considerable expense and trouble. I, who considered much less what they were in themselves than the pleasure they might have given her, never failed to take this question as a sign they had pleased her [533], and thought to flatter her greatly by enhancing them with much praise.

But after long doing herself violence, she slowly came to manifest a more open reluctance, especially for the evening meals, which usually lasted well into the night. She seized on the smallest discomforts to withdraw with her daughter; and once she managed to steal off in this way under some pretext, no one would have obtained entrance to her apartment. She did not for that go to sleep any earlier. I was surprised, upon leaving the table in the smallest hours of the night, to find her busy reading, or meditating alone, whereas she had forced Cécile to go to bed for her health's sake. Whatever had been on her mind at that time, she assumed a happy mien when I returned; and appearing persuaded that I had just enjoyed much pleasure, she asked me so readily the circumstances I had found most entertaining, that I was still for a long time fooled by this false tranquillity. I would indeed tell her what I had found most agreeable in the manners and conversation of my guests. I would depict for her the new faces and striking characters. I would be the first to laugh, to incite her to laugh; and filled as I was with a thousand amusing things I had heard, my narratives were neither heavy nor boring. They seemed to please her, and apparently only the fear of diminishing the pleasure I affected to take in them prevented her from allowing me to perceive how tedious she found them.

An incident occurred concerning her during this time which further served to sustain my illusion in that regard, but which

provided me insight on another interest to which I was beginning to pay quite serious attention. One day Don Thadeo, ever as attentive to winning my esteem with his courteous manners as to finding his way into Cécile's heart with his respect and attentions, brought to my house a Spanish lady accompanied by a man of the same nation; and after leaving them in a room to allow herself time to tell me what they wanted from me, he came to relate their adventure to me briefly. They were, he said, two persons whom he had known personally in Madrid, and whom he had encountered by chance a few days earlier. Their purpose was to get to England, to enjoy there a liberty which they could not hope for in their country. They needed a recommendation, and his desire to oblige them had led him to offer them mine. He added that having thought to introduce them first to my wife, to whom it was a pleasure to speak their language occasionally, and would doubtless have had the kindness to solicit me on their behalf, he had been prevented by contestations of which he wished to make me the judge before carrying out his project. The lady, he continued, is not of a station that exactly allows for a woman of a certain rank to have close ties to her, and yet I know her to be so winsome that Mme Cleveland, tender and sensitive as she is, will find it difficult not to like her. I am persuaded, he added, that she will find satisfaction in her conversation, and that is a distraction I would like to offer her; but I feel myself obliged to warn you that it would not be appropriate for her to see her too with too much familiarity.

The better to judge, I replied, I must first see her myself; and going with him into the room where he had left her, I found indeed a woman whose face was as appealing as her manners and language. She explained to me with less indirectness than Don Thadeo the reasons that were taking her to England. It is love, she said with a smile; such a good cause assures me of the protection

of all tender hearts. I love this man, she added, pointing to her lover; he is persecuted in Spain; I am leaving my country to follow him. These words, spoken with admirable grace, and a hundred details that made me judge her character as advantageously as her mind, disposed me to render her whatever services I could. I did not even think that the objection of birth was a strong enough reason to deprive Fanny of the pleasure of seeing such an amiable Spanish woman. Merit compensates for birth. I shared that reflection with Don Thadeo; and anticipating the stranger myself, I proposed to come with me to the apartment of my wife, who would happily hear her speak in a language which she knew perfectly, and about a nation in which she took considerable interest.

[534] I had been with Fanny barely a moment earlier. I had left her in a tranquil state, and nothing could have troubled her. Yet scarcely had she had time to glance at the Spaniard than she uttered a piercing cry, and taking her daughter by the hand, she led her in the greatest haste into a chamber that was at the rear of her apartment. Mme des Ogères, my sister-in-law, and Mrs Riding, who were with her, having immediately followed her, I remained alone with Don Thadeo and the two foreigners, who were no less surprised than I at this scene.

The only choice I could make was to have them retrace their steps forthwith, and unable to imagine the cause of such sudden disarray, I bade Don Thadeo do the honors of the house for a moment, while I went to find out what had alarmed my wife. I left him to head toward the chamber; but as I neared the door, I was stopped by Mme des Ogères, who was coming quickly out of it, and who took my hand and led me aside. Tell me, she began excitedly, do you know whom you have just brought to us, and ought you not to have foreseen the embarrassment into which you have plunged us? This reproach was so obscure to me that, in the

distress in which it plunged me, I pressed her urgently to explain what she meant. After the fears, she replied, that the memory alone of the island of Madeira renews every day in the mind of Mme Cleveland, could you confront her with an odious woman who exposed her to the most dreadful peril from which heaven had ever delivered her? I understood all at once that it was that very actress from Madrid whose ruses Gelin had made use of, and was not surprised at the terror which her presence had just caused Fanny. Having often had me tell her what I had learned about her from Gelin's confessions, she had a hundred times qualified as a miracle the strength she had felt in that dangerous adventure, and indeed she never evoked it without trembling. Her fright further increased when, adding to this thought the spells which Gelin had tried on her at Chaillot, she imagined that all the furies of hell had been unleashed against her virtue, and that it had required wonders from heaven to prevent her from becoming their prey. These thoughts had sometimes plunged her into agitations that made me regret having told her too much. Thus, recognizing my imprudence, I entered the chamber with the tenderest signs of dismay, and offered her apologies that easily calmed hers. She retained nevertheless, from the abruptness with which she had risen, a sharp enough pain in her foot to keep her for several days in her apartment. But far from complaining about it, she turned to banter an accident that was going to deprive her of the pleasures I was preparing for her with a new fête I had been put in mind of, and this affectation of indifference which I attributed to the fear lest her indisposition cause me too much alarm came solely from the satisfaction it gave her to avoid entertainments which had become unbearable to her.

Don Thadeo benefitted from her joy by the willingness with which she forgave him for being the occasion of her pain. His excuse was simple. He did not know about Fanny's adventure,

and the Spanish woman, who never would have expected to find in my wife the stranger she had meant to delude in Madeira, was herself extremely surprised by such an unforeseen encounter. He quickly got rid of her, to come make reparation for an indiscretion which one could not truly consider to be his fault.

But this incident was to have other consequences. Along with much astonishment, that cunning woman took away a powerful resentment at the scorn my wife had shown for her. Vengeance was her primary desire; and the views which that passion inspired in her being in keeping with her natural character, which was the desire to please, and to satisfy her vanity with challenging conquests,⁶⁴⁹ she came up with a plan to steal my affection from Fanny. The insights she had received from Don Thadeo about the qualities of heart and mind which my friends attributed to me, made her invest as much pride in this enterprise as the motive of vengeance made her anticipate pleasure. She could see that she must not rely on ordinary means. The difficulty that caused her some [535] hesitation was that of forming some relationship with me. Yet her wiles never failed her in need.

That very evening, I received a most urgent note from her in which, under the name of an English lady who had been in Cromwell's confidence, and who had important secrets to divulge to me, she begged me to grant her a few minutes' interview in a location which she specified. It was where she was staying. Not the slightest suspicion occurred to me. I knew the name she used in writing to me, and civility alone would have taken me to her house independently of a hundred other reasons. I did not hesitate

⁶⁴⁹ This characteristic of La Cortona was already emphasized on p. 463; she had come to Madeira because she had seduced a member of the Holy Office (inquisition).

to have myself taken there at once in my carriage. She had taken care that her lover not be in; and to counter, no doubt, the initial reaction I might have had to withdraw when I realized I was being fooled, she awaited me in a chamber at the farthest end of her apartment. I was led there through several rooms, well-ordered as befits a lady of distinction, and her fortune apparently putting her in a position to live in a certain splendor, she was in the most magnificent and alluring *deshabille*. I did not immediately recognize her. My presupposition, combined with her change in dress, led me to greet her initially in English, and I even sat down beside her without recognizing the slightest feature of her face.

Meanwhile, as she had understood nothing of the few words which I had uttered in a language she did not know, she opened the conversation differently; and since she used the Spanish tongue, I could no longer remain in error. Some signs of surprise which I blurted out did not prevent her from continuing to talk. She begged me to approve an innocent artifice, which was surely forgivable because of the passion she had to know me, and the necessity she was in of justifying herself. Having by chance encountered her old friend Don Thadeo in Paris, she was unable to hear him speak of the excellence of my merit without being animated by a lively curiosity to see me, and that desire had greatly increased when she learned that I could be of service to her in England. She had experienced some mortification in truth at the offensive reception she had received from my wife; but even had she been able to foresee an encounter she was so far from expecting, having no reproach to fear, she would not have thought to avoid it. The efforts she had made to retain her on the island of Madeira were much less deserving of her hatred than of her gratitude and friendship. Sorry, therefore, that such an unpleasant event had obliged me to leave her, and convinced by her

own eyes that the description she had heard of me was not flattered, she had not been able to resist being impatient to see me again. I ought to forgive the little artifice she had employed in consideration of the petulance which is natural to Spaniards, and, if she dared say so, of the ascendant of her star which had never left her heart any freedom at the sight of a man of merit. She looked at me so tenderly as she said these words, and her blush so deftly reinforced the language of her eyes, that if I had not had foreknowledge of her character, vanity would infallibly have persuaded me that she had conceived very tender feelings for me; but sufficiently protected by the opinion I had of her, I interrupted her politely to deny her by my reply any hope she might have had of deceiving me.

Here I confess that, whether from spite at seeing her advances futile and determination to overcome my resistance at any sort of cost, or from impetuosity of temperament, or from an excess of ruse and imposture, she placed me, by a straightforward overture, in the most sensitive position to which the love of pleasure has ever exposed my virtue. I had risen to leave. She grabbed me by the hand, and pressing it sufficiently to hold me facing her, she addressed to me all those passionate expressions that are the most forceful language of love in Spain. Her eyes, which I could not avoid looking into with mine, seemed to be telling me even more than her mouth. Her face was flush with the fairest bloom. All her charms were exposed to my view, and I observed only too well that at the slightest sign of their triumph she was prepared to let me reap from them all the delights that could console me for my capitulation. Must I make this admission this to my readers? I was [536] betrayed by my senses, which were sufficiently in revolt against my reason to make me fear everything from its weakness. Suddenly they assumed such power that, thinking less of combating them than of justifying their

tyranny, I debated whether I would be at fault if I accepted the pleasures which were being offered to me, and which I had not obtained by any desire that went counter to my duty. I do not know what would have been the effect of this reflection, if the image of Fanny, which suddenly sprung up in my memory, had not all but altered the scene I had before my eyes. I no longer saw anything but her, and that gentle modesty that always accompanied the tender expression of her eyes made me blush that I had for a moment been susceptible to brazen caresses and dissolute language.⁶⁵⁰ Fortunately, to confirm my strength, heaven allowed the voice of Don Thadeo to come from the room adjoining the chamber. He was coming to make Doña *** render an account of the incident that had taken place in my house, and about which his haste to leave her in order to accompany my wife had not allowed him to receive from her the full explanation he desired. I freed my hand from those still holding it; and turning my back with a stiff bow, I went out toward Don Thadeo, who had been quite surprised to find my carriage at the door. He was no less surprised to see me rapidly go past, motioning to him to follow me. After following me down, he accepted my invitation to join me in my carriage. My intention was to tell him about the dilemma which I had just happily escaped; but the embarrassment remaining from my weakness gave rise to so many tumultuous distractions that I arrived back home without uttering a single word. The conclusions he drew from my silence, and which he

⁶⁵⁰ This is Cleveland's second sexual temptation, the first having been with Cécile in book VI. But in that case affection played a role, and he had trembled as much for Cécile's virtue as for his own; here the emotion is purely sensual, and traces of his feeling of guilt will still be found in books XIV and XV. This is his only real confession: Cleveland has almost committed the very crime of which he long accused Fanny.

concealed from me for several days, do not belong to this part of my story.⁶⁵¹

I did not reappear before Fanny's eyes without some sentiments of shame, which the very sight of such a virtuous wife was capable of reviving. Nevertheless, the flame of a love which was in no way diminished by it had soon consumed those feeble blemishes. With her I assumed anew all the tranquility and all the joy of which her presence was for me a sort of inexhaustible fountain. Her indisposition keeping her in her room, I declared that my house would be closed to outsiders until she was healed. She vainly opposed this decision, which to her was a sacrifice I was making to her of my pleasures. My heart already felt that all the entertainments which I called by that name did not deserve it in her absence. We supped as a family in her apartment, and this was our routine for until she was recovered. She seemed so satisfied with it, and her conversation rendered our repasts so lively, that I suspected her of making this effort on purpose so as to compensate me for the pleasures of which she imagined I was depriving myself for her.

It was at the end of one of these domestic suppers that I proposed to Mrs Riding that she relate to us in their entirety her adventures and those of Cécile. Perhaps she had already told the whole story more than once, but by fragments and episodes, in the hope which we still maintained of satisfying lord Clarendon, who had wanted it to be told in his presence. His absence lasting longer than he had given us to expect, I urged Mrs Riding not to put off further a narrative which she would be quite free to begin

⁶⁵¹ See book XIV.

all over once the earl arrived. She satisfied us in these terms.⁶⁵²

⁶⁵² The long-awaited narrative of Mrs Riding continues well into book XIV, with a single interruption near the end of book XIII. It goes back to the period when Mrs Riding and Cécile were separated from Fanny and Cleveland by the Rouintons in book V, in about the year 1662, and thus serves to link, both in terms of plot and of fundamental themes, the novel's American and European phases.

[537] BOOK THIRTEEN

It is not difficult for me to recall events of which the traces will ever subsist in my memory. But as I begin a story in which I promise you many more misfortunes than favors of fate, I am given pause by the fear of introducing some bitterness into the happy situation you are in now. Do not at least insist that I renew terrible memories which the change in your fate ought to have erased. I omit from my adventures and those of Cécile everything that might have any connection with your own; and if I have some hope of moving you, it is with sentiments of such sweet compassion that it will contain nothing painful and grievous.

We were separated from you by the Rouintons. I turn my eyes away from the horrible image of our initial terrors. The knowledge that those savages soon acquired of our sex sheltered us from their fury. They relegated us among their women and sick, who made up a sort of rear guard some distance behind their troop. There we encountered no signs of savagery except for those that were natural to such a ferocious nation, which is to say that, seeing they had for us no appearance of hatred, I began to flatter myself that our lives at least were safe, and that wherever they might take us, we would sooner or later find the opportunity to be reunited.

This hope further increased when I saw they were careful to accord to us the same assistance as to their women, and willing to carry Cécile, whom my bulk apparently made them consider a burden too heavy for my strength. But the peril to which my fatigue had exposed us was too present to my imagination to allow me any easing up that might have the appearance of weakness; if I had stopped by a moment of despair that had made me succumb to my pains and give up the effort to live, I realized that, with the precious charge which heaven had placed in my hands, I

was no longer allowed to think of my own woes, and that I must expect help and strength from that same power that more or less obliged me to make use of it.

The determination I made, not only to keep the pace of the other women, but to carry Cécile constantly in my arms, seemed to elicit some signs of admiration, which increased my courage by renewing my confidence. The distance they made us cover every day was not as great as I had feared. Whereas the troop of savages made its usual forays to hunt, we advanced very slowly, and I could tell toward evening, from the precision with which they never failed to rejoin us, that the halts were fixed. Thus my natural strength, combined with the lightness I soon acquired by losing some weight, were sufficient to enable me to endure the fatigue of a long march. I tried more than once during the night to ascertain in what quarter you were being held, only too happy should I manage only to glimpse you and make you aware of our location; but as I could search for you only randomly, I always encountered some savages who seemed to surmise that I had carelessly gotten myself lost, at least to judge by the care with which they led me back amongst the other women.

[538] I have never understood with what purpose they one day divided their woman, to leave some of them behind, while they continued their march with the greater number. I was condemned to remain with those who were abandoned. Their color not allowing one to discern whether it was sorrow or illness that kept them rather dejected, I spend several days in a new sort of fright, which resulted as much from fear of some contagious disease as from the uncertainty of the fate they had in store for us. I had noticed that several women among us had died within a rather short time, whose loss they appeared to mourn. This observation indeed inclined me to believe that those who had been left with me were threatened with the same calamity, and that this

conclusion had not been arrived at without cause; but heaven having happily sustained Cécile's health and my own, I could not figure out why we had been treated with the same harshness. They had, moreover, left us provisions enough to sustain us amply for a long while; and although the women with whom we found ourselves associated had not watched their fellow women and husbands leave without regret, I had not observed the wild transports which I assumed they could not have resisted if they had been persuaded they were being abandoned definitively.

The only thing I thought I could conclude was that they had indeed contracted some illness that was feared contagious,⁶⁵³ and we had been left with them so they would not complain of being treated more brutally than strangers. I had no doubts about this conjecture once I saw some of them die almost suddenly, and the others so unfrightened by that sight that they hardly even distanced themselves from the bodies that had just died before their eyes. They remained in the same indolence, absorbed by some deep meditation, or immobilized by a lethargic weight, as if it made them insensitive to what was going on about them. There were nevertheless a few of them who seemed to recover their strength and lightness. Then they would get up with surprising energy; but far from pausing with their fellow women, or thinking to offer them some assistance, they rapidly took the direction they had seen their husbands take, and alone or accompanied they went away and never returned.

Whatever uncertainty there was in my initial conjectures, they caused me enough fright to make me take appropriate precautions against the danger. I withdrew with Cécile at some

⁶⁵³ A prolongation, perhaps, of the epidemic that had broken out among the Abaquis a short time earlier, towards the beginning of book V.

distance from the troop, not neglecting to take a supply of food with me. The freedom they left me to go off alone was another proof that allowed me to gauge the scale of the disease. For several days I was occupied by the sorry spectacle that was constantly before me. Finally, at the sight of those who seemed to recover, and who at once took flight, two thoughts came to me: first, that whatever the nature of their illness, they believed they were saved from danger once they had survived the initial attack; the other, that the savages could not be very far away, since they took the risk of following them alone. In a situation where I had to fear at every moment lest the air itself bring carry the contagion to us, I also had the thought of catching up to your troop, which I imagined either already back at its settlement, or camped not far away. This option seemed to me so easy, and whatever the savages' intention in leaving us with their women, it seemed so unlikely that they could be offended to see us eager to follow after them, that I decided to leave in the footsteps of the first woman who could serve as my guide.

Two of them broke out that very day, and I did not miss such a fine opportunity. But I had not foreseen that their speed would exceed mine; no doubt the joy of being delivered from a terrible situation made them run with the lightness of birds, whereas my natural weight and the precious burden I was carrying made my progress extremely difficult. I soon lost sight of them. This did not break my courage. I flattered myself that, with the uneven terrain, they would reappear from time to time, or that their footprints would be enough to guide me; and had I [539] lost this hope, I would still not have been tempted to abandon my quest. Would not any other extremity seem kinder to me than the one I had evaded by flight, and moreover, what better motives could I have than to rejoin you, and the fear of being separated from you forever? Besides, after having lost my two guides, and

attempting in vain to stop them with my cries, I still thought some other woman might happen to set out by the same path, and thus restore to me the assistance that had failed me.

I continued to advance, keeping watch with equal keenness before and behind me, and more fatigued by my anxiety than by the difficulties of the path, the thought of resting did not even occur to me until day's end. But noticing finally that the sun was going down on the horizon, I fell into much more intense frights than all those that had been troubling me. What resource was there for a timid woman in such a terrifying wilderness? What remedy even against the hunger and thirst that were beginning to urge themselves on me? The dear child I carried in my arms had up til then been buried in a deep sleep, and the movement of the march had merely helped make her more tranquil; but nature, soon declaring its needs with cries and tears, was a new warning of the deplorable state that was so near, and from which it appeared that nothing could preserve me. However, having realized that despair could only precipitate all the evils that threatened me, I steeled myself with a constancy I would have thought impossible in the same extremity, were it not the direct intervention of heaven. I looked all about me, to find some convenient spot where I could take shelter before dark. I saw one that seemed such as I desired, with the fortunate circumstance that it was near to a brook and thus offered us immediately the means of relieving the most pressing of our needs. But before going there, I set down my burden for a moment on the grass that surrounded me, and prostrating myself before heaven, its help being henceforth my only hope, and to it addressed, in the bitterness of my soul, everything I thought capable of moving it in our favor. Turning next towards the innocent creature who continued by her tears to express her needs to me: Fear nothing, I told her, so long as my life is preserved, for my affection provides me an infallible means

of sustaining yours; but if I am condemned to perish in this dreadful wasteland,⁶⁵⁴ may heaven grant you the succor it has refused to me! I went right away to the shelter nature offered me in a place where human malice had never profaned her treasures. Several trees distributed at random constituted a small wood, and as the eye could see immediately through it, it did not provoke the horror that darkness causes when one enters a dense forest.

My excessive thirst made me think first of quenching it. I approached the brook, and noticed with joy that it was full of fish, which my presence did not frighten. After satisfying my thirst, I did not doubt that I could get the same help from it against hunger, and sensing how important it was to preserve my strength, I happily caught various fish, which I did not despair of rendering fit to nourish me. But I was occupied by a more pressing concern. Day was drawing to an end. A few drops of water which I got Cécile to swallow having stanchèd her tears, I thought about sheltering her for the night. Three trees which formed a regular triangle seemed to me favorable to my purpose. I surrounded with branches the space they enclosed, and made up for her and me a bed that could protect us against the elements.

It was the knowledge I had of the perils of the night that had made me begin there. I had noticed that, after the heat of the day, an excessive chill was pernicious to the savages themselves, and the precautions I had seen the Rouintons take accorded on that matter with my experience. I make this observation to justify my conduct. Amidst a great number of pressing necessities, I gave

⁶⁵⁴ Further on she will call it a “vast wasteland”. The expression (*immense désert*) recalls the great Drexara desert in book V but, besides the fact that the term has no precise geographical value, nothing allows us to conjecture where, after a journey of indeterminate length, the present action might be situated with references to period maps.

first preference to those that were the most pressing; and though hunger was also one which I was beginning to feel acutely, I supposed that having taken some nourishment before my departure, it [540] would be adequate with a bit of constancy to sustain me until the morrow. Soon day's end left me with no light but that of the moon. I did not hope that in that darkness I could manage to gather together what I needed to light a fire. Thus, trusting that sleep would during the remainder of the night compensate for the lack of food, I closed myself up with Cécile inside the retreat I had prepared.

But I almost immediately experienced difficulties I had not foreseen. Consuming hunger deprived me of any hope of rest, and finally becoming an unbearable torture, it forced me to eat the fish I had saved, with no other preparation than to have lain on them for an hour or two, to make them less raw with my natural heat. I was as satisfied by this miserable meal as by the finest dishes. Cécile having appeared rather calm until then, I was beginning to flatter myself I could get a little rest, and even held at bay all the distressing thoughts that could trouble it, with the sole intention of preserving my health and strength, on which my hopes were based. But the cries of that poor little thing soon alerted me that she was suffering from the torments from which I had just delivered myself. What likelihood was there that I could obtain the same relief for her? I offered it to her, nevertheless, and the eagerness with which she seemed to take it made me more aware of the excess of her needs. This thought checked my hands. The nourishment I was offering her seemed to me less likely to relieve her than perhaps to precipitate the end of her days, and deprive me consequentially of the only possession that made me still love life. In such a cruel quandary, I remembered the promise I had made to her with heaven as my witness, and of which I had not believed the execution so near. It was an idea I had retained

from something I had once read.⁶⁵⁵ I took Cécile in my arms, and returning to the edge of the brook in the moonlight, I did for her something which she still does not know, which I have kept secret in my heart until now, and which I would not reveal to you even today if I had not sworn to conceal from you no circumstance of our adventures. With a poor knife which I had preserved through all my journeys I opened the vein in my arm, at the risk no doubt of causing myself a dangerous wound. My blood having begun immediately to flow abundantly, I caught it in the hollow of my hand, and tempering it with a few drops of water which I mixed with it, I had my dear Cécile swallow that strange liquor.⁶⁵⁶ She took some three times with an eagerness that confirmed what I had thought of her needs. Her calm quickly returned with her strength. I admit that my tears flowed as rapidly as my blood during this sad operation; but they came more from the tenderness of my heart than from my uncertainty or fear. I kissed her a thousand times, after rendering her a service that seemed to attach me even more to her and make her dearer to me. I then returned to my retreat, where we passed the remainder of the night in peace.

Fanny, Cécile, myself, and all those who were witnessing such an extraordinary story, had been, as it were, frightened by the preparations with which Mrs Riding had begun; and in wariness of what was to follow them, we had listened to her with an attention that had not allowed us to breathe. But all emerging together from the spell, we rose tumultuously about her, to show

⁶⁵⁵ That something could well be *Robinson Crusoe*, in which a woman relates how she may have saved her life by drinking her own blood.

⁶⁵⁶ Verisimilitude is sacrificed in favor of symbolic value, here by strongly suggesting the pelican which, as symbol of Christ, was supposed to feed its young with its own blood.

her as much admiration as affection and joy. Fanny pressed her hands, unable to express what she was feeling. Cécile was hanging on her neck, and embracing her over and over, she was as speechless as her mother. All the others were congratulating her for an act of which history perhaps furnishes no example. Finally I interrupted these acclamations, and more deeply moved than anyone by the extension I gave to my reflections: Oh generosity, I exclaimed, that surpasses all our praise! But it is to me that congratulations should be addressed. To all the favors heaven is showering on me, it thus adds the inestimable blessing of finding in my friends an heroic soul, and trials of constancy and zeal that alone would suffice for the happiness of an appreciative soul? Mrs Riding begged me to moderate this transport, and feeling her services too well repaid, she said, by expressions of gratitude that were more precious to her than her [541] blood, she requested our renewed attention for the remainder of her story.

The return of light, she resumed, brought consolations that made me lost the memory of that awful night. After fearing we would die for want of the most ordinary necessities, it was most pleasant to me, at the first rays of the sun, when my anxiety had made me explore the small wood about my cabin, to find numerous trees naturally that were bearing excellent fruit, and on the banks of a brook a prodigious quantity of nests containing newly hatched birds, or eggs even better able to serve us as food. The Rouintons neglecting such light food sources, it was not their example that gave me the courage to try them; but I remembered that we had done so successfully with the Abaquis. I needed fire. A neighboring field supplied stones, and the tree trunks a moss that could be kindled with the heat of sparks. I immediately put all these discoveries to work. My ingenuity brought me such success that I felt better about all the fears that had alarmed me.

That was one less problem; but the freedom of mind that I

once again felt only made me even more concerned about all the rest of my misfortunes. Just my uncertainty over your fate was capable of cause me mortal agitation, and a hundred times, from the first day, I felt impelled to start walking again to follow you at any kind of risk. The hopes that could have held me back relating only to the women I had left behind me, it seemed to me that I gained little by waiting for them, and that the same indifference or the same errors that had made two of them deaf to my cries hardly allowed me to hope for more compassion from their likes. Nevertheless that resource seemed to me preferable to the dangers to which I was exposing myself by setting out without a guide, and I did not abandon it until I had passed several days waiting for it in vain.

The benefit I derived from my first test was to learn to do without the help of others to find and prepare my food. This facility which I acquired with little labor strengthened my courage once I decided to press on. I was persuaded that after such a long journey as we had made with the savages, we could not be far from their settlements. I had already so reasoned when I saw their women escape singly, and it is still my thought today that they would not have gone off without having some certainty of their path. On the other hand, the presence of death could have made them undertake something at random, and that alternative, about which I also reasoned, only augmenting the peril in my eyes, I saw nothing on either side but pressing reasons for going forward, either to assure myself of the good fortune of rejoining you, which was my sole desire, or to evade the danger of death which we had only been able to avoid only by flight. Finally, the inspiration of heaven, which doubtless never fails to enter into undertakings in which its providence is so directly engaged, its purposes for Cécile and for me, counsel more profound and wiser than all my reflections, determined me to walk straight ahead,

with no other guide than my affection for Cécile and my courage.

The distance I went each day was proportionate not only to my strength, but also to the conveniences at hand for passing the night. Thus, without any reliable measure of the length of my journey, I figure I never went more than four leagues in a single day. But what notion will you form of the distance I covered if I tell you that I walked for almost an entire year, obstinately following always the same method.⁶⁵⁷ It became too clear to me, after several days' march, that I had missed your tracks, and I completely lost hope of finding you again with the Rouintons. I dared not pause to think about other reasons for fear, which had to do with the safety of your lives. Trying on the contrary to persuade myself that you would have put all your efforts into evading the whims of those savages, I liked to think that you like me had taken the decision to cross the vast wasteland I was in, and I sometimes cajoled myself with the hope of running into you. I had at least the hope of [542] meeting up with you in some inhabited land, or in some port, toward which I imagined I was steadily advancing.⁶⁵⁸ In a word, I closed my eyes to everything that was capable of plunging me into dark despair, opening them

⁶⁵⁷ The influence of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is obvious. But this is not a tropical island, it is North America; and yet winter seems to have presented no particular problems, her sole allusion to climate referring vaguely to warm days and cool nights.

⁶⁵⁸ Mrs Riding wanders somewhat aimlessly: she vaguely hopes to reach some coast by continuing constantly in the same direction, which she does not specify. A year's march, averaging under four leagues or sixteen kilometers per day, would add up to 5800 km at most which is in fact more than the width of the continent; but, as she says in the next paragraph, she also goes in circles and has no idea where the "vast, sterile plain" where she ends up might be (book XIV).

only to vague sources of consolation and hope that had the power to calm my imagination.

It must not be doubted that, walking without information or measure, I often merely described wide circles that may have caused me to retrace my steps. The rivers, the mountains, the dense forests necessarily stopped me, and I would decide to skirt them by long detours. One piece of good fortune for which I cannot thank heaven too much, and which a thousand times filled me with wonder, was that in the midst of a wasteland which is the abode of the wildest beasts, I never once encountered one that could cause me fright⁶⁵⁹; and thanks to another favor the value of which I appreciated no less, my imagination, as if closed to all sorts of fears, did not even picture anything that might have been capable of alarming it. If sometimes the cries of those monsters reached my ears during the night, they were so far off that their impression was never strong enough to disturb my slumber. Meanwhile the advantage of trees generally led me to choose my shelter at the entrance of the first wood I sighted toward the end of the day. I always elected some triangle, for the ease I had in furnishing it with branches and boughs, unless chance led me to discover, sheltered by a hill or rock, some cave of which I could seal the mouth even more easily. In my journey I also would select, in order to rest half-way through the day, the edge of some forest, to which I felt attracted by the shade and cool air. I would have feared to enter into it, but was only the more tranquil once I was covered by such a thick banner. I had nothing left to desire if there was a spring or brook nearby. Along with the convenience of preparing our food there, I was able also to cool Cécile in the

⁶⁵⁹ This “favor” from heaven might recall the divine protection of Daniel in the lions’ den (Daniel, ch. VI).

flow of pure water: this item seemed to me as important for her health as it was necessary to the continual cleanliness in which I attempted to maintain her. At times of excessive heat, which made me fear that a poorly treated pelt would make an uncomfortable cover for her, I would wrap her in flowers and fragrant herbs. You would have taken her for a Cupid, clad in the simple ornaments of nature. Her tongue was beginning to loosen. A few words which I already had her pronouncing, her sweet smiles, her innocent caresses, provided me with entertainment and consolation for hours on end. I became so accustomed to that rugged life that, weary of travels, and charmed by certain spots where nature thus offered me everything which my present necessities required, I could easily have decided to settle there forever my steps and my desires, if the hope of finding you had not endlessly revived my courage against all the difficulties that remained for me to overcome.

They nevertheless were to change in nature. I was destined to enjoy a sort of respite that would not have been unpleasant after such lengthy fatigue, had it not been poisoned by other anxieties. So far my story has been able to flatter only the tenderness of your hearts with the comforts of compassion. Prepare yourselves now for the surprise that marvelous events are able to inspire.⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁶⁰ It seems that this break served only to end volume VII and thus distribute the novel's sequel over two volumes of approximately equal length (360 and 372 pages). Logically, book XIII ought rather to end only with Mrs Riding's story in book XIV. The book XIV thus constituted (45 pp.) is quite long, while book XIII on the contrary is far the shortest.

One day, when after crossing a vast and sterile plain, I was seeking a shelter for the night, I discovered between two mountains on the horizon a very high wall, the summit of which was further surpassed by the branches of a large number of trees. Following it with the eye, I observed that it extended from one mountain to the other, and seemed to serve to close the gorge that left a natural passage onto the plain. In a word, it was the work of human hands, one which even indicated a higher level of industry than that of the savages. But I paused at this reflection only to bless heaven, which was finally offering me what I had searched so avidly for, and in the first movement of my joy, I thought only about approaching the end of all my desires. The sun was so low that, despite all my efforts, it was impossible for me to reach the wall before night. Some sound, which I thought I could hear in the distance, further convinced me that I was close to a city, or to some regular settlement. That was enough to elicit all of a sudden the sweetest tranquility in my heart. That night, for the first time, I neglected all the precautions to which I had accustomed myself, and limiting myself to protecting Cécile from the elements, I impatiently waited for daylight.

It dawned so clear and serene that I drew from it even better auguries. My eyes sweeping along the wall for a long time, I could perceive no gate at which I might present myself; but raising my eyes, I saw numerous human faces who were observing me closely, and appeared to be discussing their opinions. I extended my arms toward them, and showing them Cécile, who was on the ground beside me, I invited them by my signs to grant us assistance. They did not hesitate to answer me by other signs which I thought I understood. Immediately I saw them preparing

a machine which they lowered down to me,⁶⁶¹ from which emerged two men, who came up to me very peaceably; I did not understand their language, but I was struck by their politeness and by their signs of admiration which they manifested at the sight of Cécile. Their faces were white⁶⁶²; and I thought I could detect in their eyes that they were surprised to find the same color in a child who was not of their nation, and who was presented to them in such an extraordinary manner. I was so changed by my tribulations and the constant exposure to the sun that, not seeing moreover that I was dressed differently from most savage women, they took me for a fugitive from some nearby nation. I would not go into such detail over their initial sentiments, had I not learned them subsequently from themselves, once I had learned their language. You will not be surprised, for the same reason, if I explain to you straight off a good many circumstances that at first

⁶⁶¹ Cf. this passage from the *Histoire des Sévarambes* : Sermodas “had us go through a gate in a long wall, which extends from one side of the valley to the other, near the base of the mountain. We found behind that wall various large sleds attached to large cables coming down from the top of the mountain, where we were told they were attached. [...] By this means we scaled that curtain with no difficulty, and without being hoisted either by men, or by horses, but simply by a weight larger than ours, which by descending made us rise.” (I, 119–121). Voltaire would remember surely one of these two sources in describing the spectacular “machine” on which three thousand physicists labor to hoist Candide and Cacambo out of Le Dorado in chapter XVIII of *Candide*. Other aspects of this kingdom, moreover, beginning with its mountainous site, are possible reprised in the utopian episode of the naive Westphalian.

⁶⁶² A curious detail, one which underscores the abstract nature of this story: they are not redskins. It will be seen that their culture is not exactly “natural” either.

were not at all so easy to grasp. This nation, perhaps the most gentle and the most refined in the whole world, left me such an affectionate memory of its blessings that I have a thousand times regretted not having had enough insight to form accurate notions of the location of the land, and to put myself in a position to open the path to it to our travelers. If it is not the desire for riches that could lead them there, those who hold virtue dear would go to admire examples that one does not find in wealthier and more enlightened regions.⁶⁶³

[544] Without pressing my hopes so far, I was incited by the gentleness of those who approached me to yield with confidence to their invitations. They took me through a gate which I had not noticed. And finding myself quickly surrounded by a large number of men like them, carrying long poles armed with an iron point, I had no trouble guessing that they were a company of troops who guarded the gate. Their chief, whom I identified by the deference which the others showed to him, asked me some questions, which he interrupted once he had seen that I did not understand them. He took Cécile in his arms, and after caressing her for a long while, he replaced her in mine. Some of his comrades, apparently moved by the state they saw her in, offered me a very clean piece of cloth, in which I at once wrapped her. They seemed surprised at the facility with which I gave a certain shape to this garment, and concluded that I was from none of the nations known to them. Their own clothes were of the same fabric; that is, of grey wool, rather coarsely made, but in form resem-

⁶⁶³ This is the only time in the novel when the apparent realm of happiness is truly that, and one to which one would like to return. Gilbert Chinard compares this episode, as that of St. Helena, to the Salente of *Télémaque* (*L'Amérique et le rêve exotique*, Paris, 1913, p. 297).

bling the European jerkin.

During this interval I had had time to observe that the place where I was in many ways resembled our cities. The houses were of brick, the streets methodically laid out, and although this small square served only to house the guards of the wall, it wanted for neither neatness nor amenity. I even noticed gardens that did not appear to me as artless. The trees were very numerous, and I admired their fruits. The first impression which I happily entertained was that I had fallen upon a colony of some European nation whose language I did not know. The chief of the guards having ordered with some nourishment for me, crude indeed, but cooked, and tasting good enough to be eaten with relish, I realized from the preparations I saw being made at the door of his house that I was to be transported to some other place. They harnessed to a small coach two animals of a species unknown to me.⁶⁶⁴ I required no urging to be led to it, and feeling my confidence grow with my hosts' every action, I climbed in with Cécile, whom I was still holding in my arms. They seemed as surprised to see me tranquilly submitting to their bidding as I was satisfied to find in them constantly the same gentleness and the same appearance of courtesy.

Thus, being in no way alarmed under the conduct of a driver and of two guards who had seated themselves beside me in the coach, I crossed a rather pleasant plain, where on every side I saw evidence of cultivation and houses that did not look neglected. The disposition of the hills did not allow me to observe things very far away; but after about a four-hour ride, a very large city hove into view. My guides expected to see me give some signs of

⁶⁶⁴ This detail might well be the source of the red sheep in Voltaire's *El Dorado* (*Candide*, ch. 18).

surprise. I gauged what they were thinking from the care they took to point out to me what they thought most likely to provoke my admiration. For my part, I tried to make them understand that this sight was not new to me. Finally we reached the gates of the city, which were defenseless and unguarded. At first glance the streets seemed attractive and the houses very neatly arranged.⁶⁶⁵ The inhabitants, who apparently took me for a savage from the neighboring nations, let us go by without curiosity. I had not seen women up till now. I made out several from their difference in clothing. They were, like their husbands, much whiter than ordinary savages, and their gowns, of a finer wool than the mens', covered them down to the heels.

The building at the entrance to which they let me out seemed to me so superior to all the others, by its beauty and its size, that I easily recognized it as the palace of the nation's chief.⁶⁶⁶ I was introduced into a vast room, surrounded by several armed men who made up the prince's guard. They looked at me indifferently, supposing like the others that I was a savage. I remained with them for some time, while my guides were giving an account to the prince of the circumstances of my arrival. Finally, when one of them gestured to me to go forward, I passed through several rooms, which were furnished with less [545] splendor than order, and I had no need, upon entering into the

⁶⁶⁵ Although she observes brick houses that are well maintained, Mrs Riding does not find here the rigorous symmetry of the La Rochelle colony in book III: for this is not a deliberately constructed utopia, but rather a peaceful, happy city with no special claims.

⁶⁶⁶ Another contrast with the La Rochelle colony (book III), in which the geometrical and dominant center of the city was divided, in significantly ambiguous manner, between the warehouse and the church.

prince's room, for them to take the trouble to pointed him out to me so I would know who he was.

He was seated, in the European manner. His raiment was dazzlingly white, the only feature that distinguished him from the others; but as the respectful attitude of a few officers who stood around him allowing me even less to mistake him, I expressed to him in English the satisfaction I felt, after so many trials, at having come across such a generous nation.

If my words were understood by no one, my action and facial expressions were happily heard. I observed from the impression they made on the prince that he paid no attention to my wretched garments, and that the notion he was forming of me plunged him into deep reflections. He shared them with his courtiers, and their curiosity seeming to increase, they took Cécile, whom they had him examine close up, and for whom he showed even greater admiration. He immediately ordered that she be taken to the princess's apartment. The movement I saw them make to leave with her made me uneasy. Not fathoming their intentions, I started to follow them, and no one thought to stop me.

When I use the words prince and courtiers, I do not meant to imply notions of grandeur and wealth; but I have no other terms for making a proper distinction between the chief of a nation and subjects who are quick to obey him. Imagine, indeed, a society of simple folk, who know no other goods than those of nature, and who adopt no purpose other than to live a quiet life under the leadership of a master as simple as they; informed nevertheless of numerous of our customs by an accident of which they were able to take advantage, and fortunate enough to have established on that foundation a sort of politeness and amenity in their inter-

course.⁶⁶⁷ All the observations which I made among them, before I had come to extend them, caused me as much wonder as surprise.

I was particularly struck by the neat dress and comeliness of their women. The princess stood out as easily as her husband by her mien and attire. Though with no affection of splendor, she was dressed so tastefully that I thought I could detect traces of our taste in her coiffure and clothes. She was not on a throne, but the women who were about her were on chairs much lower than hers, and in everything else I observed the same subordination between her and her ladies. Their movements rather than their words made me judge that before presenting Cécile to the princess they wanted to dress her more decently, and I marvelled at the neatness of the clothes they intended for her. But the princess seemed to want to see her in the state in which I had brought her, and it was only after studying her for a long time with a thousand remarks I could not understand that she had her dressed before her, and began to caress her.

Whatever notion they had formed of us, I judged from the care with which we were treated that we were not regarded as savages, especially when, after offering to me also clothes fairly well adapted to my size, they saw me not only accept them with alacrity, but put them on with a facility at which the entire assembly seemed surprised. We were led to a house where they indi-

⁶⁶⁷ Far from opposing the “noble savage” to the depraved European, Prévost imagines a people whose happiness seems to depend equally on the best of both worlds – paradoxically, a perfected simplicity. Cf. a passage of *Le Pour et Contre* (IV, 254–260) where Prévost tells of the visit to London of several Indian chiefs brought from Georgia by Oglethorpe: they are curious, but not impressed, with what they see, and utter no judgment as to the relative merit of the two civilizations.

cated to me by various signs that I was free to make my home. I made rather successful use of the same language to indicate to them that I accepted this offer. The room where they left me with Cécile was tidy and comfortable. Those who were living in the same house continued to offer me all sorts of assistance and services.

We were scarcely free when, turning all my sentiments heavenward, I gave thanks from the bottom of my heart for so many unhoped-for favors. Cécile was henceforth safe from what I had so long apprehended for her life. In whatever part of the world I might suppose I was, it seemed to me impossible that a nation as gentle and ordered as the one I was in could be without links to the colonies of Europe, or even that it [546] was not one, whose language I would be speaking in short order. With much memory and impatience, I determined I would not take more than six weeks to make myself understood; and how many were the points on which my curiosity needed to be satisfied!

The avid ardor with which I pursued that study was so intense and so constant that I found no difficulties that could hold me back. My hosts observed my progress with amazement; and communicating their wonder to the prince and to the entire city, they disposed everyone to see me come out of my retreat as a prodigy surpassing all their conceptions. I had steadfastly refused to appear at court, and in all places where I thought I was invited to show me off. Cécile had not left my arms, and all the insistence I had put up with even on the part of the princess had not succeeded in letting up on my determination. In short, it was my intention to present myself to the public only after acquiring a perfect knowledge of the language, and obtaining some understanding of my situation.

I achieved this goal more promptly than you would believe. The astonishment of those who lived with me increasing as my

utterances became clearer and more spontaneous, I found myself at once besieged by a throng of curious people attracted by their testimony to hear me. My first concern was to evade all the explanations in which they sought to engage me. I intended to ingratiate the prince by the confidence I wanted to have only in him; and not doubting that he would appreciate this preference, my replies to the importunate questions that were repeatedly put to me at all hours of the day were so well turned to flatter him that he several times sent me messages of thanks. Nevertheless, I took care during this interval to single out, among those who came to me, a man sensible enough to give me accurate explanations of a thousand things which I was dying to understand. Here is the first account he gave me of the origin and state of his nation.

About a hundred and fifty years earlier (which was therefore going back almost to the initial discovery of the Indies), it resembled, he said, the nations of numerous savages who still inhabited the neighboring regions, and were threatened with preserving forever their ancient ferocity. It was like the others, without laws or discipline, naked, accustomed to living a nomadic life, and to feeding on the animals it killed in the forests, with no preparation. The color of the two sexes was close to olive; and the saddest state, in his eyes, from which his ancestors had been delivered was that they had among them neither religious principles nor moral rules.

While in that horrible abjection, which dishonored nature,⁶⁶⁸

⁶⁶⁸ The force of this expression is striking: it again stresses that human nature in its brute state is anything but noble, and calls for limits and morality. It even seems that the present whiteness of these savages' skin is a symbol of their progress, insofar as earlier they were olive-colored.

one savage who had disappeared for several years, and had rejoined his comrades when they no longer expected to see him again, undertook to make them change their life and inclinations, following the example of another people, with which he proudly claimed to have lived very happily. From them he had learned many things which indeed made him admired by all the savages; but having assembled them several times to propose to them the change he desired, he could not get most of them to accept notions that clashed with their ancient practices. After many futile efforts, he narrowed his views to a single nation, which had always distinguished itself by its gentleness, and attempting to recruit among the others only a certain number of individuals whom he found more disposed to hear him, he composed from this mixture a rather considerable body, to which he gave laws which were constantly perpetuated.

Such were the first bits of information I received, and I separate them from many fabulous circumstances which I could easily detect in the relation of a simple man, who had no other lights than the tradition of his fathers. I asked him the name of his nation, and which was the one from which their founder had derived his principles. The latter he could not tell me; but his was called the Nopandes. The resemblance I had found from the beginning between some of their practices and ours, had not allowed me to doubt that it had come to them from some communication with the colonies of Europe. What the knowledge of their language permitted me to discover day by day [547] confirmed me in that idea, and it is still my opinion that their legislator had spent the years of his absence in some Spanish settlement.

Having never yet left my house, every remark I made on the behavior and actions of my hosts served further to persuade me that they derived even their religious practices from Spain. I had at first not known the purpose of many small figurines which I

saw continually in their hands; but upon learning that they were used for their prayers, I easily perceived what I could not learn from them directly, because they had never had clear enough notions of religion to account to me for their principles: it seemed to me quite clear, I say, that these figurines were images of saints, to which they addresses their worship without knowing them. Every house was full of them, and finding them as old in appearance as they were indistinct, I surmised that early on their legislator had made a prodigious quantity of them, which the nation preciously preserved. But the same was true of most of their opinions and the objects of their worship, which appeared to me visibly so many alterations of our own, either because time alone could have produced this change, or because the founder's zeal had been short on understanding.

I no sooner felt myself in a condition to speak freely, I sent for permission to see the prince. It was granted with circumstances that informed me of the opinion he had been given of me. He sent me his own coach, accompanied by his principal officers and a few of his guards. On an occasion where I esteemed it was important to sustain my reputation, I neglected nothing that could help me appear advantageously. I had been given quantities of clothing. Without diverging too greatly from the nation's custom, I used all my skill to lend them a new appearance of smartness and elegance. I paid particular attention to Cécile's attire, and leaving aside precious ornaments, of which the Nopandes' vanity had not yet discovered the source, I doubt that in the most refined of all the cities in Europe one could have dressed her more prettily. So attired, we were introduced to the prince and princess, who evinced as much wonderment at seeing us as at hearing me. They showered caresses on Cécile, and their eagerness to learn from me who we were having greatly increased from the silence I had studiously maintained up till then, they took me aside, ex-

pressing how curious they were to be enlightened.

I had not forgotten how difficult it had been with the Abaquis to obtain from that good people the freedom to leave them. That memory making me fear to establish too easily the same ties among the Nopandes, I had contemplated a speech from which I expected quite the opposite effect. In telling the prince the chain of adventures which had led us by chance to his realm, and the gratitude I felt I owed to his kindnesses, I confessed to him that the greatest misfortune I had to fear was to be retained there too long. I hastened to learn your language, I said, only in order to be the sooner in a position to ask you for the sole favor I am entitled to desire: which is to open to me without delay the path to my country, and to reunite me, if possible, with dear persons whose absence I bitterly lament. Some tears which were elicited by such a moving memory made such an impression on the prince's heart that as he listened to me he shed some of his own, and seeming to be waiting for a fuller explanation, he looked at me steadfastly once I had added some other circumstances of my misfortune. Finally, as if impatient at my silence, he asked me for how long I had been separated from the persons I missed, and whether they had some traits by which I could recognize them. These words rightly causing me some surprise, he went on to tell me that about fifteen months earlier he had received into his city two strangers who had appeared, and had spent some time there; that despite the obscurity of their language, which had not permitted him to understand them, he had been so satisfied with their appearance and their manners, that he had not seen them depart again without regret; that he had showered kindnesses on them, and that at the moment of their departure, when he was trying to retain them with [548] new blandishments, one of them had pressed him tearfully in his arms, and presented him with a package which he still preserved. I do not know what to do with it, the prince added,

and the fond memory which that episode left me is the sole reason why I have kept it so precious. But would it be impossible that those two strangers were the friends you are searching for? They had about the same color as you, and although they were not more richly dressed than you, nothing about them resembled the mien or mores of the savage nations whose attire they had adopted.

I would have flattered myself with some hope if he had spoken to me of two persons of different sex, and I would have taken the space of fifteen months which he counted since their departure for an error of his memory or mine⁶⁶⁹; but after specifically having him repeat that it was two men, and that they were not accompanied by any woman, I preferred to give up that attractive notion rather than focus on it with other fears which would have cruelly troubled it, if it forced me to suppose that an even more terrible fate had separated you from each other. However, my curiosity leading me to take advantage of the disposition in which I found the prince, I urged him to allow me to see the package which had been left with so many tears in his hands, and which could not have been relinquished without a purpose. He made no objection to showing it to me. I opening it in trembling. It was of dried skin, and enclosed another packet, and this second one being very carefully folded, I hastened to open it too. Do not reproach me for concealing such an important circumstance until today. It was hardly necessary to remind you of painful memories

⁶⁶⁹ Fifteen months would be a tight fit, had it been Cleveland and Fanny, for Mrs Riding had wandered for a year before arriving among the Nopandes. As for Axminster, he must have wandered much longer yet, for he had left the Abaqui nation more than a year before they did. There is no knowing exactly who the second white man could have been, but in the party with Axminster, Iglou, and a hundred other Abaquis, there had been some domestics and two other Englishmen.

when I saw fortune keen to lavish its favors on you; but I am at a point where the same silence would be too great a burden for my heart, and you had to expect all the most stirring parts of my adventures when you insisted on my telling them.

That skin, so carefully preserved, consisted of nothing but a few letters. Being traced only in charcoal, I was far from recognizing them. But I did not have to read them all to be assured of the hand from which they came. They were English. I shall never forget their terms: "If some favor from heaven should one day lead my dear children Cleveland and Fanny and my dear friend Mrs Riding to find my path; should they be cast by some chance amidst this benevolent nation, may they take confidence in their hosts. I have spent some weeks here, and I depart grateful for the welcome I have received here. I am setting out directly to the south, to reach the island of Cuba, whence I shall try to retrace my steps here, with assistance that will help me rediscover the valley of the Abaquis. Adieu, my dear children."

Hold back your tears, enjoined Mrs Riding, noticing the impression that this narrative was making on Fanny and me, and think only of the satisfaction I felt at such a fortunate turn of events. Do not interrupt me, she further enjoined, so as to anticipate the effusions of the heart to which Fanny appeared about to abandon herself; remember that it is to my story that you owe your attention. And feigning to believe we were in the disposition which she was asking of us, she continued: I could not contain the transports of joy that rose in my heart. The prince, surprised to see me raise my hands toward heaven with a hundred signs of emotion and gratitude, supposed that he had not been mistaken in his conjectures, and was already congratulating himself for having so happily fulfilled my desires. I quickly undeceived him. After the happiness I am seeking, I said to him, that which your generosity provides me this day is the sweetest thing my heart

could hope for. I learn that a man who is as dear to me as myself escaped from cruel dangers to which I feared he had been abandoned by heaven; but we still must fear a thousand other ills which he does not know, the weight of which falls on me, who do know them. I took this opportunity to explain more explicitly the misfortune I had had of being separated from you, and attempting to get him to add to the penchant he had indicated for my lord a little compassion for the calamity of his children, I conceived the hope of perhaps inducing him to follow the traces of your father and your own. He listened, however, without responding, and I, daring to conclude nothing from the fact that he was moved, [549] put off urging him more forcefully until our familiarity was better established.

We were interrupted by the acclamations of several women, who came with transports of joy to invite the prince to come into his wife's apartment. He motioned to me to follow him. I had left Cécile in the princess's arms; and thinking I already knew the nation well enough to live without misgivings, I saw nothing about me that could have caused me any uneasiness. However, the sight that greeted me when I entered, and the cries of joy that redoubled at the prince's appearance, somewhat alarmed me. I saw Cécile, who seemed to be abandoned to the caresses of a young man, who held her lovingly on his knees, and the princess, who was applauding this scene with all her women. Having asked the explanation of this mystery, I was told that the young man, scarcely twelve years of age, was the prince's eldest son, and that the moment he had cast his eyes on Cécile he had conceived for that amiable child a passion that had declared itself with a thousand expressions of impatience and ardor. His mother had had the indulgence to place her in his arms to content him, and in the rapture of his heart he had seated himself on a chair with her, where he could not have enough of embracing her with transports

of affection and admiration. This was the sight they had wanted the prince to witness, and I heard it repeated on every hand that heaven had never manifested its goodness to the nation with a more favorable augury.

I thought I grasped the meaning of this felicitation; but I found it too contrary to my purposes to add my own to it. Although, at Cécile's age, all the caresses of the young prince had to be considered as playful, propriety did not allowing me to suffer them for too long, I took back my dear daughter with a sort of jealousy. In vain did they urged me let her pass into other hands. I affected this firmness to deliver myself in the future from all propositions that would have exposed me to being separated from her even for a moment. The prince approved of my conduct; and showing attention and affinity for everything I said, he offered me quarters in his palace; but I refused him for the same reason, and the liberty which I was sure to preserve in my retreat seemed to me preferable to honors that could turn into obstacles to my designs.

Meanwhile, the very interest I had in humoring them obliging me to appear often at court, I accepted everything that seemed to me capable of lending me some outward distinction, and sustaining the idea they had of me in the nation. The presents I received from the princess were put into my attire. The care I took to conform to custom not preventing me from conceding something to my own taste, I inspired many fashions which were avidly followed by all the women. I was being importuned at every moment with a thousand questions about my country, and I noted that my replies were not neglected. The prince put more than one to work in his government. With more ambition, or rather with a less pressing memory of the situation in which I had left you, and less ardor to rejoin you, I would perhaps have undertaken to communicate to the nation much knowledge it was

lacking, and did not exceed my own. But the fear of becoming too involved was constantly in my mind; and at the very time when I was attempting to gain the prince's confidence to make it serve my purposes, I was apprehensive lest it become a bond too difficult to break. His son's passion, which grew stronger by the day, to the point of keeping him constantly at my house, was another subject of alarm. His visits seemed to meet with approval, and when I would make light of this extraordinary affection for a child, they would answer me that the ten years that Cécile lacked to have her suitor's age was not an infinite distance.⁶⁷⁰ That was to announce to me clearly the designs being conceived for her. There was, moreover, nothing I could object to the pretext which the young prince used to see me. He desired to learn, he would say, and conversations with me were so many lessons that he wanted to apply to the happiness of his people. Thus I was divided between my own interests, which did not allow me to respond to his entreaties, and that of a gentle and generous nation to which I would willingly have rendered considerable services, had I not had had such powerful reasons to prevent me.

[550] Every day some opportunity arose to open their eyes to countless errors. I hesitated then, with an uncertainty that sometimes turned to the bitterest distress. I often felt even a religious scruple at leaving them as if mired in a myriad of superstitions, which seemed to me easy to destroy. But I saw they were attaching such a high value to my most simple services that, being in the inevitable danger of never escaping from their hands if I let

⁶⁷⁰ A surprising affirmation, given that the interval in question separates a prince of twelve from a girl of two; indeed Cécile is scarcely able to walk. Like Fanny, she inspires love while very young; but Fanny at least was more like ten (she was a mother at twelve).

myself become too necessary to their instruction, the whole difficulty came down to knowing whether their interest ought to take precedence over mine. And in moments when the zeal of religion prevailed over my own happiness, I might have decided to make the sacrifice to them; but did I not owe myself much more to Cécile and to you than to a people with whom nature had given me no connection?

What would you have done, for example, if in a council, to which I was called, the prince had invited you, as he did me, to govern sovereignly under his orders?⁶⁷¹ This proposal, which could flatter a woman's vanity, appearing to my mind solely in the light I have described to you, I considered it a trap against which I could not too much be on my guard. The prince was displeased by my refusal. He asked me what reason I had to scorn a nation that shown me such esteem. This question further increased my consternation. To be sincere, I ought to answer that my only thought being was to depart, I could not assume a function that engaged me in endless captivity; but such candor had its dangers. I began to fear that reminding them so often of that thought might not be the surest way to facilitate my departure, and I defended myself only by the customs of my country, which dispense women from attending to public business.

The principal error of which I would have liked to cure the Nopandes was the opinion they had formed of the sovereign Being based on the first notions they had apparently received of

⁶⁷¹ They recognize the inherent superiority of Europeans, to whom they owe their progress, just as the Abaquis had recognized Cleveland's in book IV. But this episode more pointedly recalls the history of Marguerite Duclos whom the Hurons, recognizing her great knowledge, invite to become their *sakgame* (sovereign) in book IV of Lesage's *Aventures de Monsieur Robert Chevalier* (1732).

him from their founder. I found no one in the nation who could provide me any enlightenment on the origin of their religion and government other than what I have already told you about; but I did not need to see twice the image under which they represents the creator of the world to be sure they got that idea from the Spanish. It was a figure as venerable by the size of its ruff as the whiteness of his hair and beard. They worshiped him as the one, all-powerful God, although on the altars he was accompanied by two other figures which they referred to as his children. I readily recognized in these crude remnants of our faith the three persons who make up the divine essence⁶⁷². But the idea of spirituality having been lost, no doubt, over the span of time, their knowledge went no farther than these representations. My surprise was to see them attributing infinite power and wisdom to almost indistinct statues, in which they themselves admitted they had never discovered any sign of thought or of movement. It was a mystery, they said, into which reason was not permitted to delve.⁶⁷³ Thus, using our language, but confusing all our principles, they had not a single notion which they could clearly explain. Their views sight did not go beyond matter; they conceived no other state after life than a change of form, which they called by the name of resurrection. Sometimes, seeing them kiss with affection the images that filled their houses, I would ask them what notion they attached to that devotion. They would reply that those little statues were so many saints who had merited rewards, and whose happiness

⁶⁷² That is, the Trinity.

⁶⁷³ A somewhat satirical use of the word *mystery*, a term broadly used in Roman Catholicism for rationally unresolvable concepts such as the Trinity (one god in three “persons”).

consisted in being continually kissed and caressed.⁶⁷⁴

Of many other notions which time or ignorance had distorted among the Nopandes, I marvelled at the force they still attributed that of divine justice, even while disfiguring it. If one preferred to attribute it to the politics of their founder, who had perhaps imagined nothing better suited to sustaining the order he had established among them, one would have to adopt a rather lofty opinion of his prudence. I have already mentioned that the terrain they inhabited was protected in some places by walls, and in [551] others by mountains and lakes, though I was unable to ascertain the exact dimensions contained within this enclosure.⁶⁷⁵ But there was a very high rock formation there, at the foot of which was a deep valley, or rather a horrible precipice, into which one could descend only by a steep and narrow path. Access to it was blocked by a very thick wall, and the gate constantly guarded. Those whose responsibility it was to guard it were considered among them as holy ministers of divine justice, and dedicated themselves to this function from their youth. But that was only the first level of their sanctification, for perfection consisted in consecrating themselves to the interior ministry of that awesome place. Admission there was acquired through long trials, and those who had the courage or the folly to commit themselves to it

⁶⁷⁴ This passage naturally entails a critique of anthropomorphism and overly literal beliefs – in hell, for example. But it is also an example of degeneracy of the state of nature of which Prévost had perhaps encountered instances in his reading; later he relates, in vol. XV of *Histoire générale des voyages* (1759), how the pirates of Saint Domingue, isolated for thirty years, had almost forgotten their Christianity (pp. 3–4 and 384).

⁶⁷⁵ This rough overview has some obvious parallels with the St. Helena colony in book III.

once, never left. At some distance from the first gate, and at the point where the path began to narrow, there was another which was even more impenetrable. This was the entrance of the interior ministers. They lived in the bottom of the gorge. Their function was to maintain there perpetually a great fire, from which the flames rose high enough to be perceived outside. This fire was called hell, and the ministers bore the name of devils.⁶⁷⁶

You understand that the purpose of this awesome operation existed was punishment of crimes. But there were few judged worthy of so terrible a sentence. There were only those that offended divine majesty, the prince's authority, and public safety. Thus, profanation, perjury and blasphemy, revolt and treason, murder, theft, and libel, passed as the only offenses worthy of hell. There was no mercy to be hoped for. Conviction of the deed carried its sentence with it. The criminal was escorted to the first gate, where he was delivered over to the guards who occupied it. It was opened to take him in, and the people were free to follow him as far as the inner gate. The space between the two gates was great enough to contain a large number of spectators, and the configuration of the terrain, which sloped downwards, allowed

⁶⁷⁶ These ministers are doubtless analogous to priests on one level, and to monks on another. Such parallelism should not necessarily be understood as satire, given that the system described is explicitly a form of degenerate Christianity. This underground "hell," as well as the use made of it, was probably suggested by a mine in the unknown land described in *Voyages et aventures de Jacques Massé*: "Blasphemy against God is the most terrible sin among them: those who commit it are mercilessly condemned to labor for life at the bottom of a dark mine, which the light of the sun can never reach" (p. 150). The underground passage taken by Siden to reach Sevarambe is also called hell (*Histoire des Sévarambes*, part II).

one to see over the second wall to the bottom of the chasm. The fire, which they did not fail to build up for these baleful occasions, made the spectacle all the more horrible that it was always nighttime that was chosen for the execution. Upon turning the criminal over to the interior ministers, they hurled imprecations at him, as a victim delivered to divine wrath; and the gate closing immediately, they multiplied the horror with their cries, until the moment they could no longer doubt that he had been consumed by the flames.

I have never been able to determine, in the Nopandes' explanations, whether they regarded this torture as a simple image of the punishment that awaits crime in the afterlife, or whether they indeed believed that it was hell itself that was located within their walls. Their ideas had the same limitations as their senses. And it was not in their nation alone that these flames caused trepidation: all the neighboring savages quivered at the very name of hell. Several times I saw those barbarians bring their criminals to the prince of the Nopandes, expose to him their crimes, and abandon them to his justice. He agreed to mete out their punishment, as much as to provide an example to his own people as for the terror of his neighbors. If anything was able to persuade me that there entered more politics than superstition into most of these institutions, it is the care with which they had managed to sustain all those that could contribute particularly to the good order of society and to the maintenance of sovereign authority.

With what joy would I not have undertaken to inspire more truthful ideas in those good people, had I not been held back by fears which experience increased at every moment? I saw their affection and their zeal growing for me by the day thanks to the usefulness they sometimes derived from my suggestions. Their fondness was growing even more for Cécile, and the young prince's assiduity toward her never diminishing, they no longer

concealed the expectation common to the whole nation of seeing her, in a few years, princess of the Nopandes. They thought my ambition flattered by this anticipation, and I continually received congratulations for it. In vain, in the casual visits I paid to the prince, had I attempted a hundred times to turn our conversations to the necessity of my [552] departure, and to the assistance I was expecting from him for my journey. He had turned aside this subject so unceremoniously that he had sometimes seemed offended at my having brought it up again. The compassion he had shown for your father's fate, and which I often tried to rekindle, no longer seemed capable of affecting him. If he listened to some of my protests, he soon quickly interrupt them, to exaggerate the reasons that ought to make me renounce the hope of finding a sure path in wildernesses of which he himself did not know the dimensions, and which had perhaps never been explored. Without having declared to me forthrightly that he was determined to keep me despite myself, he had accustomed me to seeing him reject so abruptly anything that could draw him into any explanation on that subject, that he had deprived me of the boldness to broach it with him openly.

Finally, time, which was passing without bringing me anything more favorable, weariness with my enslavement, and the impatience of my desires, made me summon all my determination to open my heart to him frankly. I spoke to him of his intention of keeping us as a favor that deserved my gratitude; but insisting forcefully on my inclinations as much as on my duty, I protested to him that if he persisted in refusing me the means of following them, what I had absolutely settled on to leave with my daughter in the same way I had come, in other words without guides, without assistance, alone, naked, if he forced me to it, rather than fail all those who were dear and sacred in my life. Fatigue, misery, nothing surprises me, I said to him, and the trials I have

passed through have taught me to fear nothing. He seemed surprised at my ire; but doubtless relying on the means he had for preventing my departure, he then smiled at my impetuosity.

It was then that, no longer expecting anything from his dispositions, and feeling it more urgent than ever to look for you, I contemplated all the paths that could facilitate my escape. Among countless extreme means that came to mind, the sight of the young prince who still continued his assiduities towards us, gave rise to a desire to make him serve my purposes. I had told him a hundred times about the amenities of my country, and had noticed that the description of our wealth and our customs had made a vivid impression on him. I did not despair of inducing him to go with us; and beloved as he was to the whole nation, I imagined he could easily get himself accompanied by a certain number of choice men whom he could take as companions of his fortune. I already considered this plan infallible, when a new incident which I did not expect came along and made it easier still.

When they emerged from savagery, the Nopandes had preserved a custom dear to their nation, and practiced so constantly that it had never been interrupted since the beginnings of their monarchy. Each year, in the middle of autumn, a considerable detachment of their most skillful hunters spread out through the neighboring forests, where they spent about three weeks waging war on wild animals. In addition to the game they killed, which was always sufficiently abundant to serve as their principal source of food through the winter, they had the goal of maintaining a certain reputation for strength and skill among the neighboring savages. Nor were they wanting for domestic animals, which they raised with great care; but this mixture of foods made their table more abundant; and not knowing where they got their venison, I had always been surprised so see prodigious quantities

of it served, which they had the art of preserving for all seasons.

The time of this expedition was approaching, and I heard the young prince, who for the first time had obtained from his father permission to lead the hunters, speak often of the pleasure it would give him. Alas, said I nonchalantly, you will not see us again; for the decision which I have made to leave is inflexible, and I will carry it out before your return. You love us, I added, noting his surprise, and you can keep a secret. Receive our farewell. I would leave with too much regret if I had to go without giving you this token of gratitude and esteem. But take care not to betray my confidence by revealing my intentions. He seemed mortally aggrieved by this declaration; and not daring to threaten me that he would tell his father, he protested [553] that in order to prevent my departure he would give up the hunt. I knew how avid he was to join that party. If it is true, I rejoined, that our departure distresses you, who can prevent you from yourself abrogating the reasons that force me to it? I have no other purpose than to search for persons whose absence I cannot bear: the father and mother of Cécile, who is so dear to you. I have told you twenty times their grim adventure. Have you not been moved by it? Heaven perhaps destines their salvation to your assistance. Is your hunt not the most propitious means I could desire for finding their trail? He received this initiative with a transport of joy, and promising me to bring to bear all his strength in searching for you, he already ventured to assure me of success. But I stopped him again: No, no, I said, I trust no one with such an important undertaking. You could encounter them without recognizing them, without making them understand you, without persuading them to follow you. I want to be with you so as to leave nothing to chance.

Although my proposition was not without difficulty, and the young prince felt it almost as acutely as I did, he thought them much less terrible than the danger of losing Cécile. That amiable

child, who was scarcely beginning to deploy her strength to walk, seemed to invite him with her tender smiles to ignore ordinary fears in order to serve her. He promised me he would risk anything. I sketched out the plan he was to follow: it was to enlist just twenty of his hunters, whom he would leave behind him, at some distance from the enclosure. Being free to walk about with little retinue, I planned on going, two days after his departure, to a place where his men would be waiting for me, and with them to catch up to him. This two-day interval seemed to me necessary to deflect the suspicions of his father the prince, and lead him to adopt other notions of my flight.

A bold plan, but the only one available to me. And I was only too happy to find such ease in carrying it out. The young prince's twenty hunters were all faithful friends, who were attached enough to him to undertake anything for him. I recognized this disposition at the first greeting they brought me on his behalf. They told me that having sent most of his men ahead, he himself had stayed behind to await us, and that we would join up with him before day's end. A comfortable coach, which was at once offered to me, was further proof that he had overlooked nothing.⁶⁷⁷

It was not long before we saw him. His impatience had not permitted him to go far afield. He came up to me with expressions of satisfaction that answered to me for the sentiments of his heart, and I was surprised to hear him speak in a way I had never dared expect. It seemed to me, he said, that it would not much help our design to join with the main body of hunters, all the more since it is their custom to split up once next, when they have

⁶⁷⁷ This quite European attention on the prince's part recalls the woeful lack of a carriage for Mrs Riding in book V.

reached the density of the forest. We will not for that be less thorough nor less fervent in our quest, and we will be free to keep our secret to ourselves. But I have carried my views further, he added, and if it is true that by walking toward the south, following the information you got from my lord's document, we can hope to come to the place which he has perhaps already reached, why should we not take that route directly? If we are fortunate enough to get there after him, we will have spared ourselves the pains of long uncertainty, and will congratulate ourselves for having chosen the shortest path; or if other obstacles keep him still on the way, we will be free to retrace our steps, with the hope of encountering him, just as we are today.

I found this reasoning so sound that, after reflecting that you yourself would not have failed to head toward Havana, I added to the prince's reasons whatever others might redouble his ardor. Yes, I said, it is heaven that sends you this plan, as much for your satisfaction as for mine. Your will be to see those civilized nations whose praises I have so often sung to you. You will give to Cécile's father evidence of zeal and love that may well dispose him in favor of all your desires, and doubt not that one way or another he will give you tokens of gratitude [554] that will surpass your expectations. Even your father, who makes so much of my modest counsel, will be charmed to see you return with the knowledge he seeks in me, which you will have gathered it at its source.

After that brief deliberation, it was simply a matter of seeking the means of following a constant course to the south. The prince dispatched one of our companions to the troop of hunters to inform them of his intention of separating off with those who were following him. This precaution had seemed to me necessary. We awaited the courier's return, too invested in not diminishing the number of our defenders; and unable to devise any other

guide than the sun, we set out knowing nothing more than what we could conclude from its path.

I will not tell you of our meanderings over three weeks through a land covered with forests, and often interrupted by swamps or mountains that considerably lengthened our route.⁶⁷⁸ The fatigue was only for our hunters, who were on foot, and who constantly tried to spare us anything that could inconvenience us. In a fairly light coach, we had no other trouble than that of determining our journey by continual comparisons and calculations. The prince joined in my reflections with a prudence and views that caused me wonder at his age. He joined even more in the care I took of Cécile. A tender mother would not have been capable of such attention. He shared with me, during the day, the burden of carrying her; a constraint which he assumed with such pleasure even deserved some other name. I marveled at such ardor of sentiments, which did not allow him a moment's tranquillity if he was not sure that Cécile was in no way inconvenienced; and whatever charms I already discovered in my daughter, being unable to explain naturally such an intense passion for a child of that age, I attributed it to providence which had provided it for us as an ultimate resource. The nights caused us even fewer problems. The prince's zeal redoubled to make Cécile spend them peaceably. His men were not short of comforts that suited our needs, and taking care each day to kill a certain quantity of game, we found ourselves at evening in calm and abundance.

A part of the time was spent talking about our hopes. I prepared the prince for all the comforts he must expect, if we

⁶⁷⁸ This topography suggests the "impassible swamps" close to the Appalachians of which Cleveland spoke in book IV. And in fact, it could be roughly the same terrain, although Mrs Riding calls it Florida.

were happy enough to come to the end of so many fatigues and desires. My words so impassioned him that he forgot about his country. He protested there would never be any other for him than Cécile's. His fear was that your family, whose grandeur and opulence I had described to him, might not approve of his sentiments. He would implore me to support his interests with you, and emphasize the zeal that had led him to follow me. I would answer that you would be moved by gratitude, and that he must not doubt you would assume for him all the affection one has for a benefactor and a son.

The twenty-third day of our march, when, impatient with such a long journey, I was beginning to feel my heart oppressed by worry and weariness, I saw from the top of a hill a vast plain which I immediately recognized as the sea. My companions, who had never seen a larger body of water than the small lakes bordering their settlement, seemed to be seized with wonderment. I explained to them how they were to understand this sight, and prostrating myself to thank heaven, did not hesitate to assure them that we were approaching the end of our travails.

Indeed I no longer had the slightest doubt, and persuaded that we had followed the direction of my lord, as I was already that it could not have deceived me, I thought that at the least I was on some southern coast, beyond which it could only be a fairly short voyage to the island of Cuba. According to the very notions I had preserved from our former voyages, I figured I had nothing to risk by following the shoreline to my left, and that going no farther than the tip of Tegesta,⁶⁷⁹ the name of which I had heard so many times, I could not fail to come to some Spanish port along my way, where I would find opportunities [555] for

⁶⁷⁹ *I.e.*, Florida.

passage. My hopes redoubled, and my only thought was to communicate them to my companions. We set out along the shore, with less ease than we had had on the plain, but sustained by the joy I inspired in my whole troop. The young prince could not contain his transports. He embraced me as if he had already begun to sight you, and as if, with his misgivings about the welcome he must expect, he were timidly imploring my assistance to obtain your friendship.

We continued walking for three days without sighting any sign of a settlement; but looking out to sea, I thought I could see a ship all sails to the wind, staying the same distance offshore; and if at first I had some difficulty persuading myself that I was not deluding myself, it gradually became clear to me that I could no longer be mistaken. I asked my companions to halt, and having pointed out this sight to them, which at first caused them less satisfaction than fear, I pressed them immediately to light a large fire. My purpose was to make the crew see us; and I could not act too swiftly, lest with a favorable wind it escape my sight before evening. Heaven allowed the first flames to attract the eye of the captain, and it was not long before I perceived it had turned its sails toward the shore.

So overwhelmed was I with joy at this happy sight that, having barely the strength to support myself, I lay down on the ground, watching with passionate eye the ship that I already regarded as the instrument of my deliverance. It was rapidly approaching. I could not make out the flag, but as I could not mistake European dress, I saw all my hopes pleasantly confirmed. I rose to go down to the shore, and invited the prince to join me, with as much confidence as if I had already received a promise from the captain.

The coast, although gentle and regular, did not allow the ship to come all the way to us, and even prudence always requir-

ing some precautions with the peoples of America, I was not surprised to see it drop anchor a canon shot offshore. The captain got into his longboat with a few armed men. He joined us very shortly. I encouraged him with signs, and greeted him in the European manner, to make give him some eagerness to come to me. In short, heaven granted me everything I had hoped for. He was an Englishman. I could not doubt it from the first words I heard. I would have died of joy if the very cause of my transports had not been the pleasure which I found, so to speak, in coming back to life.

I told the captain in briefly of the need I had of his assistance. He promised it to me generously. But in responding to my questions he added two things which changed all my satisfaction to sadness. This sea, which I still took to be the Gulf of Mexico, was the great western sea, and the wilderness I had crossed was Florida. Thus, far from being in the vicinity of the island of Cuba, I was separated from it by immense distances; and what was closest by on my left was Virginia.⁶⁸⁰ The captain had set sail

⁶⁸⁰ The natives accompanying Mrs Riding evidently did not know where to find the sea or the Gulf of Mexico, having never seen them; but it may seem surprising all the same that, believing they are taking her straight south, they have on the contrary been going east. It can be noted here that Carolina has disappeared and the Prévost seems now to remember only the maps that divide this region into just two provinces, although, not quite being in Virginia, Mrs Riding here must indeed be in Carolina. The Nopande kingdom was therefore only 23 days' march to the west of the Carolina coast; and if we suppose, as she did earlier, a maximum of four leagues per day, the distance as the crow flies would be about 300–350 kilometers. But the Abaqui valley was 400 km from the sea (book IV); thus the Nopandes might have been further south than that, but not too distant.

from Risway, an English port, where I remembered having made a stop with you.⁶⁸¹ His course was indeed southward, but was to end at ***, a small colony of French Protestants, with which his own traded.⁶⁸² He assured me that failing one of those extraordinary chances which one must not much count in these seas, I could not expect an opportunity to reach the Spanish colonies.

With this sad news, he declared that, his ship being laden with merchandise, and too frail to carry additional weight, he could not accept my proposition to take me and my companions on board. The only favor that was in his power to grant was to take two of them besides my daughter and myself; and his inclination to oblige me, which I believed sincere, otherwise led him to offer me all kinds of services.

I realized all at once the difficulties that were going to divide me. I must resign myself to leaving my companions behind, or renounce the captain's offers and [556] remain with them. My inclination was not in doubt. Esteem, gratitude, everything made me wish not to abandon the prince, and a hundred times I had enjoyed the thought that you would yourselves take particular joy in welcoming our friend and liberator. Yet could I decline the only opportunity that had come along in so long to be delivered from my trials? Who could promise I would find another? And whatever information I might obtain about our present location, what did I see before me but uncertainty and obscurity? In truth, there was another possibility. It was to take the prince with us, and send his men back to their country. But I could not expect they would consent to leave their master; and how cruel would it be, moreover, to abduct him from his father, from the

⁶⁸¹ In book II.

⁶⁸² On Riswey and the Huguenot colonies, see notes to book IV.

people he was to govern, from faithful friends who had considered their affection alone when they had followed him, and themselves deserved their share of my gratitude? These thoughts had made no impression on me when, being accompanied by his men, I did not doubt that wherever on earth it might please heaven to send us, he could get back to his country with such a good escort: but to take him alone or so ill-accompanied was to steal him forever from his family and nation.

Yet an even more tender regret made me consider what would be his despair at seeing my daughter disappear. The captain, to whom I had communicated all my reflections, advised me without hesitation to choose nighttime to go to the ship. In that way I avoided all sorts of obstacles; and I already foresaw that this was the sole choice I would have to settle on. But dearly loving the young prince, and knowing the force of his affection for Cécile, my heart bled at the cruel deceit I was preparing for him; and when I recall such painful circumstances, I doubt his torments exceeded my own. It was nevertheless necessary to yield to reasons more powerful than bootless compassion. I agreed with the captain that he would return to the ship until nightfall, and that I, after supping unaffectedly with the prince and his men, would go to the shore, where he would come fetch me in the dark. What ruses I had to employ to conceal my intentions, and how many times ought the prince to have realized it from my blushes, had his natural simplicity and candor not made him incapable of mistrust! Our sole subject of conversation was the anticipation he had of seeing you. He was expecting to embark the next day. I did violence to my sincerity, even answering him continually upon that assumption; and that evening, before leaving me to sleep, he embraced me tenderly, in the satisfaction he felt at taking such an agreeable thought with him. I responded to his caresses, but with tears in my eyes, and my heart full of bitterness. Embrace my

daughter too, I said to him, and may heaven grant you all the happiness you deserve. He embraced her with a transport of joy. Those were the last words he heard from my lips. I seized the moment when I thought he was deep in sleep, and stealing off to the shore, I found the captain, who took me into his boat.

Of all the misfortunes in my life, I confess to you that this is the only one that left me with some remorse. My distress was so great through the rest of the night that it did not permit me to close my eyes; and the next day, although the wind had been so favorable to us that we were already far from the coast, I remained sadly closeted up in a corner of the ship, as if I had feared, if I turned my eyes towards land, that I would hear the cries, or meet the eyes of the amiable prince of the Nopandes. In whatever part of the world fate may have led him, may he live happily, and may heaven repay him for his favors to us!

There is nothing more moving left for me to tell except my uncertainties. The English captain, to whom I revealed part of my intentions, repeated to me that unless I reached the point of Tegesta on foot, a journey as difficult and uncertain as the one I had just concluded, I could only hope from chance the opportunity for getting to the island of Cuba. We arrived at ***, where I was told the same thing, and the captain of [557] a French ship which we found in the port added that, even for the goal which I named, the course he thought shortest and surest was to return to Europe with him. What a change in my expectations! I wondered a hundred times whether I should not set out by land again with all its risks; and in the tender movements that constantly drew me toward you, I would not have suspended that dangerous enterprise for a moment, if my health or my life had been the only items I had to consider. But the preservation of Cécile, and even your interests which I considered in all the care I rendered to that cherished pupil, led me to take the only decision that prudence

commanded me to choose. I accepted the French captain's offers, and no other assistance than an extremely modest sum, which necessity forced me to borrow with the hope of repaying it some day in England, I set off for Le Havre de Grâce, where the wind carried us safely.

Inasmuch as the principal circumstances of this narrative regarded Cécile, we had our eyes almost as often fixed on her as on Mrs Riding, during this long account of their travails. There was no one who was not stirred with acute anxiety, imagining her in the midst of those vast, empty spaces which had for so long been her only home, or in that extremity of misery which was so movingly portrayed; and we all shed tears of affection for the young prince of the Nopandes, who so deserved, for his instinctive kindness, to have been born in a less savage place. Cécile herself had not listened to that part of her adventures without experiencing some emotion. She could not deny it, when we pressed her to confess what had been going on in her heart. Don Thadeo was the only one who maintained silence, and who withdrew without having broken it.

It was so late that no one had any thought but to sleep: but the somber Spaniard was waiting for Mrs Riding outside Fanny's apartment, and taking her aside, he requested a few words with her. After some vague remarks about the different circumstances of her story, he implored her to tell him honestly whether this was the first time she had spoken to Cécile of the Nopande prince, and how long ago she had informed her of that strange adventure. Mrs Riding, without seeking to divine the motivation behind this question, answered him that until the clarification of her daughter's birth, that is, until the fortunate meeting with my wife in Quevilly, she had given no one any information that could have compromised her plans; but that since that time, although she had not yet had occasion to go into all the detail which she had just

given in her narrative, she had nevertheless recounted various parts of her story, in the course of which it was not impossible that she had on occasion spoken of the prince of the Nopandes. This admission made a powerful impression on Don Thadeo. He added nothing to his questions; and having withdrawn with a look of hurt, he uttered endless sighs, which Mrs Riding heard in the distance.

She hastened the next day to inform me of this strange conversation. I understood its meaning at the first word. There was no doubt in my mind that Don Thadeo was burning with an ardent affection for Cécile, and I was reassured about that by my reflections. However, as I did not wish to give my daughter a merely affectionate husband, and had no less desire that he be a sensible man, I decided to study with more care both the character of her suitor, and the mystery of a passion the success of which I as yet knew nothing about. First, I wanted to learn from Mrs Riding herself what she thought about Cécile's inclinations. Have you yourself noticed, I said, that she welcomes Don Thadeo's assiduities, and do you see any sign of reciprocity between them? Mrs Riding's answer came as a complete surprise to me. I have more than once intended, she said, to consult you about my own doubts. My eyes have long been struck by our Spaniard's passion, and I tended to believe like you that it would not be so tranquil, nor perhaps so constant, if he did not find some semblance of response in Cécile's heart. This thought has led me to observe all my daughter's actions with curiosity. I sometimes saw in her a suggestion of melancholy which seemed to me [558] very much like love, if it was not already an effect of it; and it had reached the point of causing her to seek solitude. One day toward evening, I saw her go down alone to the garden. I might have stifled my suspicions had I not then seen Don Thadeo take the same path. The darkness was growing thick. I decided to follow them. As the

bowered pavilion is the only place where a person can remain hidden, I already feared I would find them there together. But the minute I set foot in the garden, I saw Don Thadeo sitting alone on a bench, and bending down as I passed by to hide himself in the dark. I pretended I had not noticed him: his intention, no doubt, was to avoid my sight, since he was taking these precautions; however, with the inconstancy of desires common to lovers, he just as quickly followed behind me, and restraining me by the arm: You are going to cause Cécile a mortal displeasure, he said softly. She is in the chamber with one of her chambermaids, and a man with whom she has been conversing for a quarter-hour. I am sure of that, he added; I saw the man arrive and enter here secretly.

I recognized in Don Thadeo's voice a violent spite which was hiding under a forced moderation. However a rightful precaution for Cécile's honor led me to reply that I knew what it was about, and found him indiscrete to have come and intrude into an important matter where he was not invited. Since he is respectful, he withdrew without replying. My misgivings and my curiosity having only increased, I approached the chamber so quietly that I was not heard. The first words that struck my ears were a touching portrayal of the misery of some persons whose names I did not hear spoken. Here is all I have left, interrupted Cécile; but I hope that I will obtain from my father under various pretexts the sum you need. She set another day to meet him in the same place; and seeming to fear someone might notice her absence, she went back alone to the house.

It was not without difficulty that I avoided running into her; but bearing in mind that the stranger with whom she had just met remained in the hands of her chambermaid, who apparently was to see him to the gate, I could not resist the wish to learn more from the mouths of those two persons. I continued to listen to

them. Their words were admirable praise of Cécile's character. Although, in rehearsing facts that were familiar to them, they did not repeat all the circumstances, enough emerged to make me understand that her whole occupation was to exercise the tenderness and generosity of her heart. The stranger was an honest minister who had some time earlier opened up this access to her. The particular subject for which they had agreed upon a further meeting concerned an unhappy lady whose fortune had been so unsettled by the loss of her husband that, finding herself the mother of two young girls who were left without hope of education, she had recourse to the secret liberalities of people of good will to obtain for them a retreat suited to their age; and Cécile, after aiding them until then with her purse and her own clothing, wanted to provide them with a sum that would forever secure them from the dangers by which their innocence was threatened.

But, continued Mrs Riding, I lent my attention much more eagerly to the explanation that followed this exchange. The minister, who was not unaware that your wife is Catholic, and who apparently feared that her example might inspire in Cécile an inclination for the Roman religion, having asked whether there had been any change in her dispositions, the chambermaid replied that she advised him against troubling her on that matter; that as your intention was to marry her to a Spaniard, she would doubtless be required to embrace her husband's religion. But what is M. Cleveland thinking, said the minister to her, to want to give his daughter to a foreigner, who will be only too capable of doing her that violence? That is a secret, she replied, which I discovered by chance. I found a letter from the governor of La Coruña to Don Thadeo, who is his son, in which he gives his consent to this marriage. She added that, having shown [559] it to Cécile, she had observed on her face no sign of astonishment, whence she had concluded that she was not unaware of my intentions, and

that if she was not pleased by them she was obedient enough to submit to them.

That, said Mrs Riding, is the only answer I can give to your questions. It is from yourself that I would have hoped for more enlightenment, and I admit that, reflecting sometimes on what I have told you, I was surprised that you had shown me so little candor and confidence.

I asked her to forgive me for a reserve that came less from my mistrust than my indeterminacy; and sharing with her the views I had formed for Cécile's establishment, I assured her that, having never settled on them as decisions that could not change, I had always awaited from time more powerful reasons than those which had initially suggested them. One might be, I said, my daughter's inclination, if it were true that she had any for Don Thadeo. I do not even see that she need fear the apparent threat of violence with respect to her religion, because the first rule I would impose on her husband would be that he establish his residence in London with me. But what I first want to discover, I added, is Cécile's penchant, and her suitor's character. I am going to have a talk right now with my daughter.

The firm and decisive tone in which I spoke with Mrs Riding, and my request that she bring Cécile to me at once, prevented her from saying more. She left me to go fetch her pupil. I must admit that along with the reasons that up till then had made me favor Don Thadeo, I had a stronger one, which was Fanny's inclination. Often, when telling me what love for herself had made him capable of, as much in the excesses of his loss of temper in La Coruña as in the power of honor and virtue with which he had mastered his feelings once he had learned from M. des Ogères that he could not continue them without crime, she had expressed to me admiration for a heart so noble, and had several times repeated that she wished a husband of that character

for her daughter. However, I was not disposed to go along without precautions, and wanted evidence of his merit which I would be in a position to judge.

Cécile appeared with Mrs Riding. I showed her great affection; and to prepare her heart for confidences that are never more natural than in joy, I pretexted some accouterments she was wanting to make her a present of five hundred gold louis.⁶⁸³ Accepting them, she told me without affectation that she would try to make a good use of them. They are yours, I answered, to give her the freedom to follow her views, and you will give an account of them to no one but yourself.

You are so dear to me, I then said, and without invoking the force of blood, it has been for me such a agreeable habit to love you, that I will never have a more pressing care than that of your happiness. It is my only concerns. But what may I undertake to hasten it, when I do not know on what you would have it depend? And if you do make your preferences known to me, will not the very fear of going against them be forever capable of holding me in suspense? I had imagined, for example, that you might be receptive to Don Thadeo's penchant, and I had thought that you would not be adverse to accepting his hand. The agreement would already have been made, if I had dared rely on my conjectures. But something makes me more uncertain now. As I am thinking only of your heart's satisfaction, I would like it to express itself through your tongue, and I wished to see you here to learn your sentiments.

She kept her eyes lowered while I spoke, and I could not detect from her face whether she was enjoying listening to me.

⁶⁸³ A considerable sum – perhaps something like 10,000 € today – and this under pretext of “some accouterments”!

She even remained silent for a few moments after hearing to me, and raising her eyes to meet mine, she seemed to be inquiring timidly what confidence she could place in my solicitations. Finally, recovering from that uncertainty, which doubtless weighed on the tenderness of her heart, she rose to embrace me. You are too sure of my respect and obedience, she said in a very serious manner, to need to put them to the test; and if one day you require some [560] proof, the pain of the sacrifice will never equal the joy it will give me to obey you. Permit me, she added, to give you right away as an example the very patience with which I have suffered the assiduities, or rather the persecutions, of Don Thadeo; for in him I have respected only your desires, and I accept as the greatest happiness of my life the liberty you grant me to refuse my heart to him. This reply, the serious tone of which was owing only to the importance of the subject, and to me appeared even to be accompanied by a sort of tremor such as an anticipated joy produces after a great danger, made me extremely curious to learn what the persecutions of Don Thadeo, and my desires, were. I urged my dear daughter to explain herself.

She told me that the ignorance in which she found me on that subject giving her more boldness, she could not conceal from me that since we been in Paris she had endured an unbearable tyranny: that Don Thadeo, basing himself on his declaration he had made to her of his love in Quevilly, and attesting my wife's silence as formal consent, to which he thought himself no less sure that I had added my own, had not ceased requiring indulgence and deference of her as in the harshest slavery; that she was not accusing him of lacking virtue and honor; but that he was subject to such impetuosity, dominated by so many humors and whims, so jealous, so anxious, so suspicious, that it had taken all the submission she owed to her mother and me to maintain patience under such harsh constraint: complaints, accusations,

threats, annoying and strange rules, she had borne and stifled everything for this reason. Finally, a few days ago he had brought to her that very lady the sight of whom had caused her mother such emotion; and explaining to her that she intended to go to England, he had intimated that she should make friends with her in advance, as with a woman whom he expected one day to make her companion, and whom he wanted to present to me with that intention. He made me promise, Cécile continued, never to follow the customs of London, where according to him the conduct of women is too free, and placing before me the book of Gospels, he would have forced me to swear to it, had I not summoned enough courage to answer him that that ceremony must be deferred along with that of the Church.

Rightly astonished by such a strange detail, I reproached the innocent Cécile for having sacrificed herself to frivolous imaginations, and for having underestimated her mother's affection and mine, if she had believed us capable of doing the slightest violence to her heart. Then, despite a hundred distractions that her story had aroused, I meant to take advantage of this moment of candor to extract a free avowal of her inclinations, and to learn from her whether among all the amiable Frenchmen who had paid attention to her charms, there was not one for whom she had conceived the sentiments which she was refusing to Don Thadeo. I pressed her for a long time, obtaining nothing. Mrs Riding's entreaties were no more effectual. She persisted in answering us that all her desires were limited to leading a pleasant life, under the authority of a father and mother who were her only loves. We shall judge your sincerity, I said, by the change you make visible to us in your humor. If Don Thadeo's importunities were the sole cause of your melancholy, you must resume your natural jocular-ity once I have delivered you from that persecution.

My intention was indeed to have an unvarnished talk with

that strange suitor, and at the least to dispose him to adopt entirely different means of gaining entrance to a heart from which he had so unhappily barred himself. I was about to leave my room to share my thoughts with Fanny, when Don Thadeo, presenting himself at my door, requested the liberty to speak with me for a moment. He seemed agitated. His greeting was brief. He told me that he considered himself the unhappiest of all men, and that if I had even known the power of love, I owed him as much indulgence as pity. Such sad words made me guess a part of the truth. He had watched Cécile, and coming up to her at the moment she was leaving my apartment, he had not been listened to [561] with the patience which she had previously thought she owed him. She had requested that he deliver her forever from his importunities, and put an end to language she was determined to endure no longer.

But as he had not yet confided in me, and I was happy to take this opportunity to explain myself, I drew him into detail that provided me further information. After confessing to me that he burned with an everlasting passion for my daughter, and that he had flattered himself that, since neither I nor my wife could have been unaware of it, we did not find his sentiments repugnant, since we had seemed to authorize them by our silence, he complained bitterly at the opinion I had given of him to the Spanish lady. She herself declared it to me, he added, seeing me show some signs of surprise, and although she expects to get you to adopt more favorable views of me, I do not expect from her ministries what I have been unable to obtain by the uprightness of my heart, and the honesty of my intentions. Moreover, he continued, with a deep sigh, I see only too much connection between what I learned from her and what I have just heard from Cécile's own mouth.

The acuteness of his pain, the obscurity of his discourse, and

perhaps even more the judgment I made of his mind, to which I had never attributed a more than modest ambit, made me suspect something extraordinary in the subject of his complaints, and come at once to a fairly accurate conjecture on the character of Doña Cortona. I had no doubt she had made sport of his credulity to get him to serve her ends. Without responding directly to his complaints, I insisted that he tell me the nature of his relationship with her. He promised to be sincere. In telling her, he said, of his stay in Paris, he had not concealed that it was love that was keeping him there. She had promised to help; and although he had known her in Madrid for a woman of intrigue, to whom he would not then have confided a secret of any importance, he had imagined that linked as she was to a man whose acquaintance had made her more restrained, he could at least derive some benefit from her cleverness. He had introduced her to me with that expectation. She had been most humiliated by the way she was greeted by my wife; but forgetting that affront in order to continue to serve him, she had flattered herself that if she could arrange a moment's conversation with me, she would dispose me to satisfy his desires promptly by concluding his marriage. She had decided to write to me under another name to request an interview with me. I had had the goodness to grant it. She had attempted to persuade me that there was some advantage to me in giving my daughter to him, and I had made it clear by my reply that I did not have the opinion of him which she wished to give me. He himself had realized this, he continued, from the silence I had maintained in my carriage on the way back home with him, and the stern sentence he had just received from Cécile's lips was too clear a confirmation of that. Nevertheless, far from being discouraged, Doña Cortona had just sent him a letter to assure him that if he could persuade me to see her again at her place, she had come into possession of other means of winning me over, the effect of

which she thought infallible. But he, who fundamentally scorned any means that might be at odds with those of sincerity and honor, and who, in preferring Cécile's heart to his own life, was also disposed to prefer death to the despair of not obtaining it from her inclination and my consent, would rather admit this to me candidly, and place his fate in my hands, than rely on vain promises that offended equally his honor and his love.

That was enough to make it clear to me that there was no injustice in my suspicions. I exhorted Don Thadeo to place less confidence in his friend's offers; and without pausing to tell him why, I went immediately on to the discussion I had in mind. If someone, I said, has spoken to you of the esteem I have for you as a doubtful sentiment, that person has deceived you. The frankness with which I am going to open my heart to you will testify to that. I have noted the attentions you have had for my daughter, and you have not seen me disapprove of them. Her mother shares those [562] same dispositions. We would both consent to give you Cécile, if we consulted only our inclination for you, and the opinion we have of your character; but our dear daughter's happiness is precious to us. She is yours if you can make her happy. What keeps you, I continued, looking at him affectionately, from finding a way to her heart? I know her: she is tender, gentle, indulgent. Whatever is presented to her under those three appearances is sure to please her; and as it is principally by those three amiable qualities that she is capable of making a good man happy, it is natural for her, for her own happiness, to wish to find them in a husband. I have no reproach to make to you, I added, it is up to you to render yourself justice; but I am persuaded that no one will ever win my daughter's heart except by those means.

Don Thadeo opened his eyes at these words; and seeming to discover in himself what he had never perceived there before, he conceded that his behavior with respect to Cécile had sometimes

been harsh and tyrannical. But, alas, he cried, should she not have understood that it is to my excessive passion that she must attribute my mistakes; and if her heart is tender, could she have failed to forgive them in favor of such an admirable cause? Delighted all the same that I did not take from him all hope of succeeding better by other means, he implored me with tears in his eyes to restore all my kindness toward him, and to second the efforts he was going to make to make love more favorable to his attentions. I promised him this service, but without hoping that he would so easily change character, and without agreeing to do the least violence to my daughter's inclinations, if he allowed some more able or fortunate suitor to get ahead of him. I also asked him renounce the friendship of Doña Cortona, which seemed to me as unsuited to his ends as to his principles, and offered him, along with that motive, that it would please Fanny, who would never forgive him for being too closely tied to a woman of that character. In a word, thus combining the counsels of prudence and the sincerest assurances of esteem and friendship, I did enough to put myself beyond any kind of reproach in the dreadful consequences into which love drew that tender and unhappy Spaniard.

In the midst of the wise reflections that thus made me able to regulate the behavior of others, I did have some remorse for the weakness I had had nearly to succumb with Doña Cortona. I marvelled at the betrayal of my senses, for I could not reproach my heart for anything, and it took no effort to summon the disdain I owed to a woman with no shame. But I did not so easily open my eyes to the sensual life I was determined to continue. When I saw Fanny, who was to be retained for several days in her room by her indisposition, I accused her pleasantly of forgetting the value of the pleasures she made us suspend; and after getting her to approve my conduct with Cécile and Don Thadeo, I came back to urging her to get well, to resume the course of our enter-

tainments and fêtes. She did not disagree with my taste; but far from responding to my encouragement, she gave me to understand that she did not hope very soon to be well enough recovered to give herself over to dissipation; which ought not to prevent me, she added, from seeing my friends, and providing for myself with them all the pleasures I seemed to desire. No, I said, they would have little attraction for me if you did not share them, and I will never call anything good unless it is something I enjoy with you.

What I said to her was certain, although experience had not yet made me feel how true it was. Meanwhile the continual visits of my friends, and the impatience they expressed to me for resuming our assemblies and feasts, made me consent to give them occasionally that satisfaction. Fanny herself urged me to do so, and I took her encouragement as a sign that she also was impatient to rejoin us. Joy soon resumed its reign with splendor and fine food. The interval that had seemed to slow it having served only to attract to me new friends, by giving my former guests time to spread the news of my generosity and liberality, I found my table more brilliant and better filled than ever. There were the most celebrated persons of all sorts of ranks. There was the court and the town. I can hardly complain that the taste for fine food [563] is wanting in Paris among people of merit. Wit and polish in my guests answered to the delicacy and abundance of the courses. I was showered with praise, and almost worshipped by a throng of courtiers. I shall not deny it, my heart welcomed their flatteries. Esteeming wealth little in itself, I thought my profusion was only too well compensated by blandishments and praise that seemed to me of greater value. I missed only the presence of my dear wife. I could not forget for a moment the sort of intoxication I was in without noticing that Fanny was absent, because of the anxiety and desires which I felt at once arise. But the hope of seeing her share my satisfaction within a few days sustained me

against this distraction. I attributed my uneven spirit less to the feeble nature of the pleasures I enjoyed, than to the absence of a good that was not far away, and which would soon reappear to consummate my happiness.

At one of those delightful fêtes, the conversation turned one day to the subject that seems to lend itself least to the dissipation of the table, but was introduced so naturally by the interweaving of many other discussions that it could not be accused of indecency. A man reputed for his wit nonchalantly presumed to decide that, of all the sentiments that have until now divided philosophers, that of the immortality of the soul is the least philosophical, that is, the most devoid of reason: for is it sensible, he added, to attach oneself to an opinion that lacks any foundation? People believe the soul to be immortal, and we are still awaiting good evidence of its existence.

He was interrupted by the man whom he had seemed to be addressing. You are very difficult when it comes to evidence, said the latter modestly, if you find none to satisfy you in favor of the soul's existence. I see, of course, he added, that there is no use citing the essential difference of matter, and that you are persuaded along with a few Englishmen that thought is compatible with all sorts of substances.⁶⁸⁴ But even leaving aside proofs of that nature, because no one can be forced to confess what he perceives with the most clarity, has a serious objection ever been made against moral proofs? What do you think of our desires, our fears, our hopes, of our notion of the future, and of that inexpung-

⁶⁸⁴ Cleveland will later declare his scepticism about the attribution of thought to matter, a question raised but not decided by Locke in his *Essay on Human Understanding* (book IV, ch. 3, §6); Voltaire had stressed this supposedly materialist stance on the the soul in the thirteenth letter of *Lettres philosophiques* in 1734.

ible feeling that makes us look upon oblivion as the greatest of misfortunes? What do I think of them? replied the other; but... I call our desires and fears purely material movements, which originate in the heat of the blood, or in a somewhat more or less abundant provision of animal spirits. The notion we have of the future is an image of the past, which we take pleasure in extending before us; and that horror of our destruction which you call an inexpungible feeling, is no more than a property common to the basest beings, which withdraw and make themselves small at the approach of anything capable of wounding or destroying them. And if you believe, he added, that no one has ever been able to make a serious objection to the existence of the soul, I repeat that it is even harder to prove it.⁶⁸⁵

Sophism! replied the other: for there are a thousand things which certainly exist, though their existence cannot be demonstrated. For example, no one doubts that bodies exist, and I maintain that it is impossible to prove it with a demonstration. Stop there, interrupted the adversary of the soul, and do not conclude from the fact that a thing is not doubted that we are certain of it. What is certain, and inclines us too lightly not to doubt the existence of bodies, is a sensitive act of which the reality indeed cannot be denied: but one would wrongly conclude that it necessarily supposes bodies, since it is certain that it could be produced otherwise.⁶⁸⁶ Similarly, no one will deny you all the effects that make you believe in the existence of souls: we think, we desire, that is clear; but there is no need to suppose there are souls for

⁶⁸⁵ Given the date of this conversation (around 1670), doubt of the existence of the soul would particularly call to mind Descartes's *Metaphysical Meditations* (1641).

⁶⁸⁶ Such was to be, notably, the argument of Bishop George Berkeley.

effects that can exist without them.

I speak in good faith, replied the other, and here is what I am willing to grant you. Perhaps we have not yet succeeded in demonstrating the existence of the soul, that is, in fashioning a method of proofs that can bring illumination and conviction to the mind of those who understand them. But it is a truth of which everyone finds the evident proof [564] within himself; and from that alone, it follows that philosophers who have believed in the immortality of the soul have been able reasonably to suppose its existence well established, since all men are alike in the principles of reason as in the form of the body, everyone can conclude with certainty that what is proven for him, is also proven for others. But if there remains some perplexity on that score, added the partisan of the soul, it turns to the advantage of religion, by helping us see how necessary divine revelation was to cast some light into our darkness. And I, retorted the adversary, I believe, for the same reason, that it is not needed. This dispute was much longer, the one attempting heatedly to bring everything down to a coarse materialism, which leaves us nothing to expect beyond the duration of our bodies; and the other, treating that opinion as a criminal illusion, which is refuted by natural understanding as much as by that of religion.

I lent an ear most attentively to a discussion the subject of which had never occurred to my mind. My principles were still those which I have exposed in another part of this history. The example and lessons of my mother had helped more than my own research to attach me constantly to them, and when I had considered them useless, in an excess of suffering for which they could supply no remedy, I had nevertheless regarded them as speculative truths the only weakness of which was that they could not help regulate the sentiments of the heart. But beginning to formulate a hundred doubts over what had seemed to me the most

certain, I found in the decisive tone of the man who had argued against the existence of the soul, and perhaps even more in the novelty of that opinion, reasons for pause, at least in order to examine it. I kept my curiosity to myself, and sending word to the materialist philosopher that I would like to speak with him privately, I made an appointment with him, at which I put to him a thousand questions.

He replied as deftly as if he had prepared himself to hear them. After explaining his system to me: You are, he said, an intelligent man, with whom I have not hesitated to speak openly. The opinions I am proposing to you are those of all cultivated people today. The old illusions are abandoned to the common folk. Such a bridle is necessary to restrain them. The concordance of things, the preference for order, and the laws of society are the only rules of the man of honor and the philosopher. His birth attaches him to a station. His own welfare, which is dependent on that of the public, obliges him to fulfill its duties; and if he troubles order by departing from it, he himself feels it is just that he be punished for it. He is a branch that offends the symmetry in a quincunx or an avenue, and must be pitilessly pruned.⁶⁸⁷

I do my reason little honor by confessing the ease with which I allowed myself to be drawn in by such deplorable precepts. But if you consider that after having more or less renounced my former taste for study, and given myself over to the taste for pleasure, I had nothing more powerful than example to guide me, you will be less surprised that I asked my preceptor for no other proof of his doctrine than the large number of cultivated persons whose authority he had invoked. I sense, I said, the boldness of your decisions, for I do not find lacking in force the

⁶⁸⁷ A Biblical image: see Matthew 5:30 and 18:8.

reasoning which your adversary founded on personal conviction. To make me see it as a vain prejudice, you must put me in some contact with that throng of intelligent persons who think as you do, and I shall see what I should retain of their testimony. He promised me that this satisfaction would not be long in coming.

The very next day he obtained for me the visit of several philosophers (this is the name he affected for them) in whom indeed I found all the wit and all the enlightenment he had touted. He named others to me, who were of too considerable a rank to be brought so familiarly to my house. I had no objection to taking the initiative, and soliciting their friendship. In the space of a few days I thus became acquainted with any number of persons whose merit and name were equally celebrated, and my curiosity did not except even the ecclesiastical order. I observed in most of them the same approach: much [565] reserve, and little openness in our initial conversations; but with confidence soon building with a little familiarity, I marvelled indeed how heatedly they were committed to their opinions, and the zeal with which they attempted to inculcate them in me. I would have thought they were motivated by some pressing interest, if the care they took to disguise themselves to the public had not made me judge that they sought no advantage in this life, and had it not been clear, from the very basis of their precepts, that they had no expectation of one hereafter.

Despite this reflection, which left me many doubts about the truth of a doctrine of such limited utility, the pleasure of being associated with a school distinguished by the mind, and even being considered by them, with that flattering consideration which is common in France for foreigners who bring with them some reputation for merit, made me stifle my earlier understanding in order to embrace a pernicious novelty. I can attribute this aberration only to the indolence in which I was living. The mind

loses strength by subjecting itself too much to the power of the senses, and this willful weakening accustoms it to judging truth only by the impressions it receives from bodily organs. As I confirmed myself in this disposition by habit, I sensed my attraction growing for opinions which I had not at first embraced without some difficulties; and what little vigor my reason still had, I put into justifying my error. I have gone against nature, I would say, when I have tried to be happy by vain and sterile paths. What could I expect from my ideas, since they are nothing without my body which produces them? It was quite foolish of me to scorn matter, by which I exist, by which I feel, and without which, in a word, I would be nothing; for is it not through matter that I am capable of pleasure and pain? And what remains in me that I can call being, when all my senses are occupied by something that offends or flatters them? Does the sentiment of my existence last longer than the composite which I call my body? Do I not see that it grows with the strength and robustness of my members, whereas it weakens and diminishes with their withering and illnesses?

The assemblies which continued to be held at my house became more serious because of the new turn which this mania gave to our conversations. I at least saw to it that our most celebrated philosophers were often invited, taking care on those days to admit no one who was not initiated into our mysteries; and in these philosophical parties, all the secrets of our school were discussed and explored. One day we learned that one of the most devoted partisans of our doctrine had died from a lingering illness. Curiosity became intense among the associates about the manner in which he had conducted himself in his final moments. We took reliable measures to learn more, and the report was as we imagined it. The philosopher had steadfastly upheld his role. Although he had deferred to vulgar opinion in submitting to the

ordinary ceremonies of the Church, it appeared certain from other circumstances that he had died peacefully in our precepts.

After applauding his constancy, someone proposed to derive considerable benefit from such sorts of incidents. This is how he explained his idea to us: If there were, he said, the slightest semblance of truth in the popular prejudices, one should suppose that what is called the soul would never have more strength than at the moment it would separate from the body, the bonds to which, I hear it said every day, are weighing it down. I would there could be between us, he continued, a character firm enough to undertake this sort of experiment; that is, that the first of us who is threatened with death should be willing to notify his friends, and confess to them in good faith how he finds himself disposed once he thinks he is about to breathe his last breath.

This proposition greatly pleased those who heard it. There was no one who did not consent eagerly to it, and I saw more than one who, in their impatience to obtain an illumination which could be expected to produce wonderful fruit for the propagation of our doctrine, would have wished to be promptly the hero of such a fine adventure. Heaven allowed all these [566] desires not to be in vain. Before the end of that same week, one of our associates, whose name was M. de Tréville, a man of wealth and known for his taste for pleasure,⁶⁸⁸ had a violent attack of pleurisy which brought him in few days' time to death's door. Thanks to the inclination we always have to imagine we will live long, he did not suppose the danger as great for his life as it was; but the doctors expressed their opinion differently. One of our philosophers, watching the progress of the illness, had no scruples about

⁶⁸⁸ La Bruyère depicts the Marquis de Tréville in *Les Caractères* under the name Arsène (*Ouvrages de l'esprit*, twenty-fifth portrait).

informing him that he had but few days left to live. He reminded him of his promise, asking him whether he was intending to keep it; and whether because the thought of death had not yet acted on him in all its force, or because the thought of a frivolous honor continued to override other fears, he obtained his consent to receive at his house some of those who had witnessed his commitment.

I was among them. The mortuary paraphernalia was already set up in the patient's apartment. A confessor, who had been summoned for propriety's sake, had just left after fulfilling the functions of his ministry. We approached the spot where the dying philosopher seemed still to preserve all his presence of mind. His voice was a whisper, but he heard our questions. We put a great many to him, to which he replied by various nods of the head, and sometimes with one or two words that emerged with difficulty from his chest. They were the explanation of what he was feeling. We understood that he was extremely weak, and that perceiving no other change than that of his organs, death for him would be, in accordance with our opinion, a simple dissolution of the parts of matter.

However, as the force of our experiment depended on the final circumstances of his life and the very instant when we would see him expire, it was to be feared that his failing voice might deprive us of the most important part of our wait. We proposed to him, in that fear, to give one of us his hand, who would hold it in his own, and to let us know, by squeezing it, if he perceived any other symptom than the movements of matter. He allowed his hand to be held with no resistance, but due either to his extreme weakness, or to refusal to lend himself to our designs, he failed to squeeze it. His eyes which rolled aimlessly, and his breathing, which was becoming oppressed, seemed to us a more certain sign that he was coming to his end. As frightened perhaps

as we were weary of this spectacle, we decided to withdraw.

The reflections we made on our adventure being unable to bring us much further enlightenment, no change occurred in our thoughts. But while we were expecting to receive news of his death, we learned with surprise that he was much improved, and that his recovery was no longer in doubt. There was not one of us who did not wish to see him promptly, and in our impatience to hear his own observations, we did not await until he was well to return to his house. We were politely received at the gate, but only to hear it declared to us that he could not receive our visit.

This welcome would have little surprised us, and we would have attributed it to the patient's need for rest, if a fortnight later, when people spoke of his health as something certain, and we were preparing to invite him to one of our assemblies, it had not been bruited about that he had renounced the world to retire to the Oratory.⁶⁸⁹ We learned this strange bit of news at a dinner I was hosting for a considerable number of philosophers. The most determined ones made light of it, and pitied poor Tréville's good sense, which had not escaped his illness intact. Others, struck by such a singular event, evinced consternation by their silence.

But as if heaven had itself taken care to arrange the circumstances, almost at that very moment I was informed that an ecclesiastic was asking to see me on behalf of M. de Tréville. This incident having revived the curiosity of my guests, they invited me, if I was expecting nothing secret from this visit, to have the unknown person seen into the midst of the assembly. There was

⁶⁸⁹ A congregation of priests founded in Rome in 1575; in Cleveland's time, both Malebranche and Massillon were Oratoriens. Their chapel, the *Oratoire*, begun in 1620, is still extant (but now a property of the Calvinists) on the Rue Saint-Honoré.

no one who did not expect some extraordinary revelation, and [567] no one's expectation was disappointed. It was already quite extraordinary that M. de Tréville had expressly chosen the time of one of our assemblies for this deputation. That is what his messenger did not hesitate to admit from the outset. He had inquired about the names of my guests, and based on information he had received from the man who sent him, he had believed the circumstances favorable to his mission.

What he had to say was simple. He was charged with giving us an account of the reasons which had impelled M. de Tréville into retreat, and we could not hope, he said, for a more faithful one from anyone, since being his confessor he knew his most intimate sentiments. M. de Tréville's character was known to the public. A man of intelligence and honor, according to worldly notions, he had lived above reproach. Madame had honored him with a particular esteem, and the outburst of his grief at the death of that great princess had done much honor to the goodness of his character.⁶⁹⁰ His only flaw his whole life long had been his desire to distinguish himself by opinions superior to those of the common lot, and to consider as weakness or superstition everything that was accepted by ordinary men. He was capable of discovering truth had he simply devoted himself to seeking it; but always concerned with being on guard against the opinions of the multi-

⁶⁹⁰ Burnet asserts, in a passage which Prévost quotes inexactly in *Le Pour et Contre* (XVII, II), that it was the death of Madame that occasioned Tréville's retreat: "Madame had an intrigue with another person, whom I knew well, the count of Tréville. When she was in her agony, she said, *Adieu Tréville*. He was so struck by the incident that it had a good effect on him; for he went and lived many years among the fathers of the Oratory, and became both a very learned and devout man" (*Burnet's History of His Own Time*, I, 527).

tude, singularity was an attraction which he did not resist, and which complemented in his mind the force of evidence. With this disposition he was always ready to receive a new doctrine if it was proposed with some aura of mystery, and for him the sole pleasure of thinking like the small number substituted for conviction.

He had not failed to lend an avid ear to the new doctrine which had come over from London to France. Hobbes had sown the seed of it in Paris during his stay there with King Charles.⁶⁹¹ We have seen how successfully it has spread, and I had always observed that M. de Tréville was one of its most zealous defenders.

However, as outward submission to established practices was another point of this creed, he did not refuse to listen to the ministers of the Church when it was proposed that he receive them during his illness. It was his good fortune that the confessor who was called already knew his character by the report of one of his friends. He was not surprised at the docility and tranquillity with which he saw him accept the ordinary assistance of religion, but what would have satisfied a less enlightened director having served only to increase his alarms, he addressed these words to him: I am not deceived, monsieur, at the false resignation with which you appear submit to the functions of my ministry; I must tell you on the contrary that having but few hours to live, it is yourself who are unfortunately deceived by an error which you

⁶⁹¹ Thomas Hobbes spent eleven years, 1640 to 1651, in France. Prévost might have read in Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique*: "He loved his country, he was loyal to his king, a good friend, charitable, obliging. He nevertheless had a reputation as an atheist; but those who have written his life maintain that he had very orthodox opinions on the nature of God" (art. "Hobbes").

have scarcely the time to repair. What is at stake, if your opinions are false, is passing at this moment into the hands of a terrible avenger, who can be reserving nothing but dreadful punishments for the disdain you have shown to his religion. Compare the unhappiness I threaten you with and the reasons you have not to fear it, and see whether it is wise to run the risk.

To whatever exhaustion his illness had already reduced M. de Tréville, the natural clarity of his mind being no longer opposed by the heat of the blood nor by the appeal of false pride, he was seized with a trembling that suddenly spread to all his members. His face covered over with a cold sweat. As if the veil that hides the objects of terror were lifted before his eyes, for a few moments he could see nothing but the dreadful apparatus of the fate by which he was threatened.⁶⁹² He would have cried out from fright, if the able confessor had not hastened to reassure him by making the scene change in appearance. He exposed for him the recourse of a sincere heart, which returns to the duties it has neglected, that is, the kindness of a judge who is happy to be swayed, and punishes only regretfully.

Among the expressions of repentance which such urgent distress forced from him, he revealed to his director the commitments he had with us. The advice he received from him was to admit us to his bedside, and to take that opportunity to repair the scandal of his errors by confessing to us the change he had just undergone; he consented, but [568] the force of his illness countering his resolutions, he fell almost immediately into the state which I have described, which deprived him of the use of his tongue in our presence. This disorder of his senses was a benefi-

⁶⁹² The assumption is that God uses instruments of torture similar to those of a hangman.

cial crisis,⁶⁹³ which soon restored to him all his vigor. If he had refused our second visit, it was to take the time to strengthen himself in his new thoughts; and after carrying them to the point of resolving to renounce the world, nothing was more on his heart than to have explained to us a miracle the effect of which he hoped might extend to us.

It appeared from the compliment with which the ecclesiastic accompanied this message, that M. de Tréville had maintained the bounds of an honorable man, by concealing from him at least anything that could compromise us and perhaps expose us to the persecutions of indiscreet zeal. However, either because that fear had immediately seized my associates, or because such an astonishing conversion, in a courtier whose merit was as distinguished as his birth and fortune, struck them with genuine wonderment, they maintained a silence that would have made them seem to be a group of reprobates. I addressed some civilities to M. de Tréville's interpreter, to prevent him from noticing their disarray, and after asking him to bear many more on my behalf to the person who had sent him, I escorted him out to his carriage. This excessive politeness was in myself a sign of embarrassment. I wanted to send the ecclesiastic away satisfied, as one tries to rid oneself politely of a man one fears. After rejoining my guests, I found several of them preparing to leave, and I did not retain them. Those who remained behind for a few moments with me better maintained a role that was not without difficulty. The conversation having again fallen as if necessarily on M. de Tréville, it was debated whether an action as singular as his would not be sooner or later belied; and without going into the reasons which had

⁶⁹³ Medical sense of the word: once the crisis is past, the patient is considered saved.

impelled him to it, it was concluded from the usual inconstancy of men, especially at his age and with the relationships which called him back to the world, that he would not save himself from the ridiculousness of returning to it, after having left with such a stir. The commitments which he soon made with the Oratory nevertheless perfectly vindicated his constancy.⁶⁹⁴

I had not attached myself to the system he was abandoning ardently enough to regret losing one of its most ingenious defenders; and I even understood very well that if one could judge the certainty of a truth by the impression it makes on its partisans, there were more favorable inferences to draw from M. de Tréville's behavior for the sentiment he had just embraced, than from the vague reasoning and apparent zeal of some individuals in favor of the opinion he had abandoned. In receiving the latter as a philosophical notion that could be supported with some appearance of strength, I had always been held back by the strange supposition I had had to accept. It did not seem as clear to me as to my associates that thought could be compatible with matter: and while I was forced to confess that I saw no more clearly that it could not, it seemed to me that in an uncertainty from which my natural lights could not deliver me, the only reasonable position was to recognize the limits of my mind, and remain in doubt about it. I had judged also, however, that the combined intelligence of several persons whose probity and good sense were known to me ought to carry some weight for a man who hesitates;

⁶⁹⁴ In fact Tréville did not return to society for a long time, and was accused of an austerity as ostentatious as his life of the mind had been, notably by Father Bourdaloue in his sermon "Sur la vérité évangélique" (*Œuvres*, Paris: Lefèvre, 1823, t. I, p. 105). Prévost mocks the theologians in a comparable scene in *Le Doyen de Killerine* (pp. 133–135).

and example, as I have since admitted, had had more force than my own views to engage me in a precept in which I always found some obscurity. There was also, no doubt, an element of that bantering vanity that makes one find pleasure in thinking differently from common folk, and even something of the false vanity that inclines one to rise above common terrors: as if our manner of thinking about things were capable of changing their nature, and making them as we desire or imagine them to be. But to whatever other source one may prefer to attribute my error, it is certain that it had never gone so far as to capture my mind entirely.

This reflection, on which I pause with pleasure as an excuse for me, would have much more force if I chose to apply it to my associates, that is to say, to [569] place in doubt whether it was sincerely that they were attached to the impious doctrine they professed. I would at least have over them the right to point to the ignorance in which I had lived until then with respect to what is called religious insight. But raised in other principles, by what steps had they succeeded in erasing them in their hearts and minds? There were even times, while I had the greatest penchant for their opinions, when I felt sometimes recalled to more truthful ideas by reflections that seemed to come up on their own. Although I carefully avoided sounding Fanny on these matters, and my intention was always to leave her free in her religious principles, I could not help often opening my eyes to the exactitude with which I saw her fulfilling the duties of Christianity, and I marvelled at the satisfaction which she seemed to draw from her own sentiments. It must not be doubted that her natural character, which was gentleness and tenderness, contributed greatly to putting her in this disposition. Virtue itself always takes on the coloration of the temperament. But what is thus most amiable and most perfect in nature unfortunately turns out to be useless, if the

motive that produces it is a mere illusion: and its most charming effects, such as consistent living, wisdom and tranquillity, rest on deceiving foundations, which can yield nothing solid. This thought sometimes shocked me to the point of turning me away from my new philosophy, and from those who had communicated it to me. Incredulity must be carried farther, I would add, and if the primary Being has been capable of engaging us in so cruel an error, we must form such an odious image of it as to dispense us from worship, or regard it as itself another illusion, the existence of which entails more contradictions than that of our souls.

Nevertheless, either because it was effectively fear that had caused my associates' embarrassment, or because the very consternation they felt at the weakness of their system made them avoid my presence as a reproach, I was surprised in the days following not to see a single one of them at my table. The liking I had acquired for their conversation, combined with the absence of Fanny, who still pretended to be suffering enough from her indisposition to keep to her apartment, had considerably cooled me to the excesses of fine food and dissipation. I was not yet looking farther for the cause of the change in me; but when the company of my philosophers became wanting, and not thinking I should condescend to urging them to come back, I found myself once more turned over to a bantering, sensuous company that could regale me only on songs and funny stories, I felt myself very differently disposed toward pleasures in which I had found some enjoyment, at least when they were shared by my wife and daughter. Yet this manner of living was too well established in my house to be interrupted lightly. I urged Fanny to make an effort; and confessing to her that the table was becoming very tedious to me without her, I asked her as a favor not to protract forever an indisposition which in truth was very slight. She smiled at my appeals; and not manifesting in consequence any more disposition

to acquiesce, she hid behind a new pretext to which I could make no objection. Her two sons were ill at the College, and worry over that did not allow her to show herself in public.

The life she was leading with her daughter was, moreover, much more pleasant than mine. She had been able to choose, among the ladies whose acquaintance I had arranged for her, two friends whose character was to her liking, and who were for her, along with Mrs Riding, Mme des Ogères, and my sister, a faithful company which she delighted at all hours which she did not spend with me. Thus, as long as the engagements I had more or less made with the public kept me occupied part of each day and night, she indulged in simpler pleasures in a society that suited her inclinations. But she did not limit herself to that; and what I was subsequently to discover despite her will doubtless offer a new admiration for her character. The friends she had chosen were not only affectionate and generous like her, but making it their duty to combine the practice of these two qualities with the sentiment of the heart, they continually [570] put all their attentions and wealth into the practice of all sorts of virtues. If they had no need of exhortation to inspire the same desire in Fanny, their assistance had been useful to her, in a country she did not know, for seconding her intentions and directing her beneficence. No longer was anyone in the neighborhood of my house in want since Fanny had found the means of distributing her liberalities secretly. Misfortune and sorrow were qualifications for access to her, and to extract from her lips and her hand relief and consolations. I had given her complete control over my fortune, making her promise that she would never spare anything to satisfy her least desires. what a charm for my heart if, when I was accusing her of spending too little on her attire and personal items, she had at least made me aware of the pleasures to which she was sacrificing tastes so common to her sex; and how I envied her subse-

quently when I learned that she had known sooner than I the pleasure one can find in making someone else happy! Merit that languished without succor, talents that lay fallow out of indigence, beauty that lacked support and was exposed to becoming the prey of the rich lecher, the orphan, the widow, in short every poor or wretched person who did not deserve it, had a share of Fanny's attention and liberalities. My daughter, who found in her heart the same penchant for doing good, was not content to enter with her desires into her mother's undertakings. She opened separately for herself other means of imitating her example; and at a time when she was congratulating her on being so good, expressing a sort of jealousy at not being able to give the same flight to her sentiments, she was finding the means of doing almost as much as she, with what she quietly put aside from her clothing and entertainment.

It was therefore purely disaffection for the tumultuous company and for the kind of life with which I had flattered myself would please them that made them fear to re-engage in the meals and fêtes where I continually pressed them to reappear. The avidness with which I had lent myself to those frivolous occupations had made them think I had a particular penchant for them, and not daring to disapprove openly of my taste, they spoke of it sometimes with an indulgence that entertained my error. The last pretext that Fanny had brought to me became even more plausible because of the real worsening of my children's illness. They had both been in the grip of a burning fever, which resolved itself into an even more dangerous disease. They broke out with the small-pox in all its fury, and following the College's rule, they were relocated to another place to save a host of pensioners from contagion. Fanny's alarms cannot be described. She would have wished to have her two sons, to give them all her care, and not leave them for a moment. But the rector reassured us by the

praise he gave us for the governor he had placed by their side. He was a man whose attachment and zeal exceeded anything we knew. He had enclosed himself with them at the beginning of their illness; and when fear kept the boldest away, he had declared that the presence of death itself could not discourage him. I did not yet know this faithful guardian. His modesty, his selflessness, and a hundred virtues which the rector cited to me with admiration, had always kept him from appearing in my presence. He had limited himself to a modest salary, and when I had sent word he be urged to come occasionally to my house, he had declined, for fear, he told the rector, I might force him to accept presents, or other liberalities which he was determined to refuse. So rare a merit in a man to whom I could attribute no other motives than the obligations of his function inspired in me as much esteem and affection for him as gratitude for the rector who had found him for me. My resolution was to offer him some day a fate worthy of him, by providing him with recompense commensurate with his services, and this desire grew further by the happy outcome of the care he gave to my children. It succeeded so happily that they bore not the slightest trace of a disease of which the least terrible effect should have been to completely disfigure them. The rector, in reporting this happy news to me, promised to bring them to me with their governor as soon as they [571] regained their strength; but he was unable to make him consent to such a visit. The fear of my offers became a pretext that was all the more natural after the signal service he had rendered me. In vain, indeed, did I have him solicited to receive a present befitting my gratitude; he refused it with the same nobility, and my insistence was another reason that authorized him to flee us when I appeared at the College with my wife.

Although this selflessness was carried to the point of affection, I never had any suspicion of the truth, and I thanked heav-

en that took care thus to favor all my desires. On another front, the letters I received from M. and Mme de R... informed me that they were tranquil in London, and that the business of Lord Clarendon was looking better. He had written to me himself that his family had got over its alarms, and that after a long conference which they had arranged with the king, the monarch had treated them with signs of kindness and confidence, which gave them better hope for the future. Charles was not disingenuous, and Lord Clarendon knew his character well enough to rely on his word; what misgivings he still had arose only from the maliciousness of a certain number of enemies he had made during his ministry, and whose hatred he thought incapable of flagging. The reconciliation of the Duchess of York with the king had been followed by such obvious favor that it ought to have entirely assuaged the earl's anxieties, if he had not regarded it as a new cause of jealousy for those who hated him. Lord Cornbury, his elder son, had obtained the post of grand squire, and the king had shown by conferring this dignity upon him that it was the father's services he meant to recompense.⁶⁹⁵ But being as weak as sincere, it was always to be feared lest he be taken in by the inspirations of those who had his ear, and that these appearances of kindness be in turn displaced by his former resentments.

However, as the present could provide us reassurance, I shared these agreeable events with Fanny, and thinking I was on better terms than ever with fortune, I renewed my urgings to draw her out of that simple life of retreat in which she seemed to lose

⁶⁹⁵This is inaccurate. Henry Hyde (1638–1709), Lord Cornbury, was already Lord Chamberlain of the queen as early as 1665, before his father's fall; he was raised to the title of Lord Chamberlain when his father died in 1674 but had no additional dignity conferred on him until 1680 when Charles II made his privy councillor.

herself. All the pretexts were dispelled. I proposed to her an exquisite fête, where I invited her to reappear before a large number of excellent persons who continued to frequent my table, and protested they had not seen her there for so long. I had laid with them the plan for a magnificent divertissement in my gardens at St. Cloud, and nothing was to be spared for pleasure and splendor. I described it to Fanny. She listened attentively, and I inferred that the embarrassment her behavior hinted at was a manner of applauding my design, taking admiration to the point of astonishment. But the reply she made forced me to change my mind.

You will never reproach me, she said, for disapproving of your pleasures, and it is a continual satisfaction for my heart to see you enjoy something with such ardor and joy. But if you allow me to speak with you in the confidence I owe to your affection, it grieves me not to be attracted to the same things. I wonder sometimes how it happened that the conformity which is in our characters does not extend to our pleasures, and this difference humbles me. I admit, she continued, that, thinking only of pleasing you, I long attempted to present a tranquil countenance at your fêtes, and to overcome the weariness that always besieged my heart there. I promise you the same deference again, if you require it of me. But when I see you eager to anticipate all my desires, and cannot doubt the sentiment that makes you want to make me happy, I must not conceal from you how I can do that. It will never be through dissipation and tumult. I love the peace of the imagination, without which I can conceive neither freedom of mind nor tranquillity of heart. My misfortunes and my mistakes have only come from my disquietude. I want there to be nothing to constrain love and virtue, or to suspend them for a moment in my soul. They suffice to occupy it alone. I have no need of other sources of joy. Enjoy your pleasures, and give me what remains

of your time in my retreat, where I will be only too content when you to come spend a few moments with me.

[572] I listened to her with an attention that made me observe even her slightest movements. As she had exerted herself some to explain her sentiments to me so freely, her face had taken on an amiable flush, and I could see in her eyes that she was not without some fear of finding me opposed to her views. My reply was sure to please her. And what other view was I capable of entertaining than that of pleasing her? I hastened to say to her: You assure me then that you have no taste for the pleasures I have wished to provide you? Then you know whether I myself will still have much taste for them after that declaration, when heaven is my witness that in all you have seen me pursue the most ardently, I have thought only of satisfying yours. What opinion have you of my love, if you believe me attuned to any pleasure that leaves you indifferent? My eagerness to make you happy has deluded me. But since I have been so unfortunately mistaken in the choice of what could please you, I henceforth leave it all to you; and I shall begin not only by cancelling the event at St. Cloud, but also by utterly reforming my table.

She opposed this resolution. Propriety, she said most gently, does not allow you make this change all at once. Your table is established; the plan for your event is widely known, and you have ordered the preparations. There is no pretext that you can use as an excuse. Moreover, it is difficult, she added with a smile, for you to renounce without some regret entertainments which your imagination has contemplated with pleasure; and when you have such indulgence for my tastes, I am all the more obligated to wish the satisfaction of yours. I shall accompany you to St. Cloud; you will continue to receive your friends here, and you will grant me the liberty in the future of following my inclinations.

I assured her that they would determine mine. Indeed I was not sure to what extent the form of life I had embraced suited my own inclinations. The vague reasoning that had committed me to it were not yet sufficiently illuminated by experience. I had concluded from what had happened in my heart that happiness could consist only in pleasure; but the concern for another's happiness, to which I attached the better part of mine, had always prevented me from thinking about whether it was from the kind of pleasures I had chosen that I should expect true satisfaction for myself; and that which I had found in them until this time had come less from my own taste, than from the hope I had of effectively satisfying that of my wife and daughter; without yet looking beyond, I asked Fanny if she thought Cécile was as ill-disposed as she for the diversions I had provided them. Her reply gave me another surprise:

You speak to me of Cécile, she said, and I was surprised that since the conversation you had with her, you have paid no notice to the change that is taking place by the day in her humor. It did not worry me too much when I thought love might have something to do with it, and the consent that you gave for her marriage with Don Thadeo made me think with pleasure that she was moved enough by his merit to think herself lucky to receive his hand. But she revealed to you what was really in her heart, and several times I have obtained from her the same admission. If she is in the thrall of some passion, it is not for this suitor. I find her nevertheless more languorous and melancholic than ever. In vain do I encourage her to confide in me. She tells me to be at ease on her account, and while she is trying to conceal from me what is upsetting her, she sometimes betrays herself with tears. I am beginning to suspect, Fanny continued, and I have put off telling you about this only to allow myself time to look into it. Might it not be the Duke of Monmouth who has won her heart by the

brilliance of his standing? She has inquired a hundred times whether we have not had news of him; and when I ask her why that interests her, her only answer is that it seems strange to her that after manifesting such ardor for me, he keeps a silence that hardly accords with such an intense passion. This concern, Fanny [573] added, is not a sign of indifference, and I am deceived if Cécile does not love the duke. How, I replied without hesitation, could such a circumspect and restrained girl possibly have given herself over to sentiments from which she has not the slightest fruit to hope for? The duke is free, to be sure, and I well imagine that after showing so little pride in his first marriage, he could think of my daughter without abasing himself. But how could she, who has so often heard us fault his character, and is not unaware of the foolish ardor he had for you, hope some reasonable fruit from his sentiments? You did not know, Fanny interrupted, that the duke's penchant at first hesitated between my daughter and me; and telling me all she had imagined at Lord Clarendon's, she seemed to me persuaded that the duke's outward attentions and all the attentiveness he had shown for her was no more than a feint, which had very successfully enabled him to disguise his true passion.

The air of plausibility she gave to this strange conjecture by other observations finally made me look at it in a different light; and although Cécile's character, which I knew from so many trials, seemed to me immune to certain weaknesses, I had no trouble persuading myself that a heart as full of sentiment as hers, further warmed by the examples of tenderness which she had continually before her eyes, could have yielded to the duke's seductions. I was reasoning on the ordinary weakness of her sex, for in attributing that sort of corruption to my daughter, I regretted changing something of the opinion I had always had of her delicacy. Without blaming her for her inclination, I would have

wished she were not blinded to the point of seeing nothing but virtues in a man whom I would not have thought her capable of loving if she had opened her eyes to the least part of his flaws. An impetuous, imprudent, presumptuous man did not seem to me worthy of Cécile's heart. Besides, I found that after having such good reasons for being somewhat distrustful about love, to have become engaged so thoughtlessly was to be wanting in prudence.

A discovery of this nature, which we would have had reason to treat as important if it had been founded on surer evidence than simple intuitions, seemed to call for great care and caution. I commended to Fanny the vigilance that befits a mother, and I several times, carrying injustice to the point of seeking every means of extracting her secret from my dear daughter, renewed the efforts I had already made to obtain it from her lips. She thought my questions were still about Don Thadeo. While admitting that he had altered his approach, she added that she felt no more inclination for him, and that if I valued her tranquillity she asked me as a favor to deliver her from his importunities. You shall be satisfied, I told her; if I have enough esteem for him to have approved the attentions he has given to you, my affection for you will put limits to it once you begin to find them so burdensome. But do you think you can long conceal from me that you harbor another passion in your heart? Do you think you can deceive me? I added, looking at her tenderly; you, Cécile, whose soul I have known so well, during a time of innocent error, still so cherished that I do not fear to recall it. Ah, dear daughter, I said with the same emotion, you are made for love. One cannot be hard of heart who is born of such a tender father and mother. May you owe all the joys of your days to a virtuous and happy passion! But why do you shrink from revealing it to me? I await no more than the name of your suitor to put all my efforts into uniting you with him.

She affectionately kissed my hands, and the ardent manner with which she pressed her lips to them made me see that there was more turmoil in her heart than she revealed showed in her words, and than I could detect in her face. But persisting in holding her peace, she left me in the same uneasiness as before, in other words almost certain that she was oppressed by some extraordinary anguish, and lacking any insight to divine its cause. She takes after you, I said to her mother, who was impatiently awaiting the outcome of this conversation. Remember how long you carried [574] a fatal secret, which burned in your breast though it wrenched from you not a single cry, nor did you even conceive that its flame would sooner or later engulf me as well. Fanny, alarmed indeed at this recollection, resolved more firmly than ever to find out what was in her daughter's heart. I added that, losing all hope for Don Thadeo, I did not think propriety permitted us to keep him longer with us. She was of the same opinion, and I promised I would explain our sentiments on the matter to him.

This was not an undertaking in which I could dispense with a degree of tact. I invited Don Thadeo to accompany me to my apartment, and redoubling the civilities with which I was accustomed to treating him, I asked him in a very straightforward tone whether he was beginning to augur better of Cécile's manner with him. I wished to know from his own admission the extent of his expectations. He confessed that love had never favored him less, and that far from having gained something by following my advice, his silence and respectful attentions had only made him lose ground. He was at the point of explaining his sentiments, and if they were not being heard with kindness, at least she was doing herself the violence of listening to them; whereas the decision he had made to speak only with his eyes and services reduced him to wondering whether she took the slightest notice of them, and at

the same time denied him the boldness to renew a language at which he feared she might take offense. He added a hundred unhappy remarks, which signaled his heart's despair, and among which I thought I glimpsed the movements of a violent jealousy.

I expected some clarification, and incited him by my words to say more; but as he limited himself to asking me with new insistence for my compassion and aide, I took this moment to express to him my regret at his pains, declaring that I myself no longer hoped to see him succeed in an enterprise which I had wished to succeed as much as he. My daughter was yours, I said, if you had been able to inspire in her the least sentiment of affection. But her tranquillity is dear to me, and when she absolutely wishes to hear no more talk of love, I cannot deny her pleas. Absence, I added, will soon have its usual effect for the healing of your heart.

He understood my thought too easily to ask me for any other explanations. I was touched by the grief I could see in his eyes. The circumstances of his departure were no less moving to me. He added not a single word that concerned Cécile. With a heavy heart, and a voice scarcely audible, he thanked me in a few words for the signs of friendship he had received in my house. After going forthwith to Fanny's apartment and to that of the other ladies, he gave them thanks and farewells, with the same sad mien. I did not inquire whether he had seen Cécile; but not doubting that he had decided to withdraw that very day, I sent him some presents which he accepted very politely and gratefully.

Far from anticipating the black storm that was ready to form over my head, I thought myself fortunate to have been able to extricate myself so decently from a sort of bond which I feared would not be so easy to break off. I spoke of it with this gist to my wife, and congratulated Cécile on her freedom. It was a new satisfaction for me to believe them both content at the deference I

had had for their desires. The one obtained what was, she said, best in tune with her inclinations. The other was delivered from the sole cause of pain which I had been able to get her to confirm. I had so little regret at these two changes that I thought on the contrary that my peace was better established than ever, with the tranquillity of the two dear objects on which I made it depend. All that remained was to make a new arrangement for myself. Owing something to the public, insofar as I was tied to so many excellent persons, I could not think of reforming my table so abruptly. Although I had never felt a very compelling inclination for that sort of pleasure, I had found it agreeable enough at least to imagine that in deciding sooner or later to give it up, it would be a sacrifice which love would have me make for Fanny; but she herself recognized that propriety required me to some deference to my friends. Thus, adopting approximately the plan she had outlined, I flattered myself that my time would be very well [575] employed once I shared it between her and the pleasures to which I was beginning to become accustomed.

I have never so well recognized as on that occasion how obscure and incomprehensible we become to ourselves, as soon as the imagination gives itself over to frivolous amusements, which deprive the mind of the power to exercise itself through reflection. I had abandoned myself until then to pleasures, with the sole intention which I have recorded; and having nothing certain but my motives, I had little examined the nature of a host of light occupations, from which the example of others and my own experience made me judge each day that there was enjoyment to be had. I could derive enjoyment. Fanny's taste did not wholly determine their power. I have a thousand times pointed out that her character inclined her to melancholy, and the penchant she might have for another sort of amusements did not prevent those which I had had her try from being capable of

satisfying a more enlivened character. It is true that for me, who had no happiness outside hers, anything that was not able to please her could never make a powerful impression on my heart. But as long, nevertheless, as I could find some pleasantness in what was not contrary to this dominant purpose, why should I have refused myself a pleasure that could be reconciled with all the duties of my affection?

And so it was that, for lack of reflection on my heart's true movements, I had taken the satisfactions which I had sometimes found at table and in the dissipation of my other amusements for a taste which I attributed to my character, and which I thought them capable of satisfying by their nature. The new experiment I made of them quickly undeceived me. I was no sooner at table, with the thought that I was not again to see Fanny and Cécile there, than languor and tedium took the place of the lightheartedness I had always brought, Their absence was previously just a passing complaint, which I bore because of the certainty of seeing it end. But the most lively conversation, and all the refinements of fine food, became a torture, once I was assured that I would no longer share them with them. It was not, nevertheless, all at once that I recognized this change. I even tried for quite a while to overcome a heaviness which was not customary to me, and which I thought I could attribute at first to something wrong with my health. It was only in my heart, the turmoil of which was communicated to my mind. Finally, continuing to recognize that it pursued me in the same way, in all the collective distractions into which I still allowed myself to be induced by my friends, I opened my eyes to the cause of this worrisome agitation. Frivolous pleasures, powerless amusements! I cried one day, bringing my reflections more to bear on myself, you are not made to fill my heart. I can tell what is the only good that can appeal to me without disaffection, and I do myself woefully wrong to disturb its enjoyment with such

pathetic diversions.

Pausing again on this single thought, I would have without hesitation abandoned all the companies to which the sole penchant for amusement had engaged me, if the fear of exposing myself to some mockery by too abrupt a change had not always been powerful enough to hold me back. I was, moreover, on the eve of the divertissement I had prepared at St. Cloud, and even Fanny's opinion was that I could not break off a fête announced so far in advance. But I sharedadmitted to her my new dispositions, or rather, examining with her what had always been taking place in my heart, I confessed to her that I had been deceived by false hopes; I confessed that all the pleasures I had imagined so wonderful appeared to me now as nothing more than a shameful illusion. She received these words with modest joy, which did not express all the satisfaction it gave her. But after looking at me for a moment, as if to wait and see whether I had anything more to tell her: I have foreseen, she began, that sooner or later this is how you would judge your plans for a happy life. One would not hear so many laments about the misery of our condition if goods that depend on fortune, and which anyone can obtain with a little luck or effort, were capable of making true peace reign in the heart. They nonetheless deserve the name we give them, since their deprivation is accompanied by a hundred other kinds of ills. But do you know, she added, where I [576] think the error lies? It is precisely in the two excesses, one of which you seem to recognize only to wish already to plunge into the other. Either to take material goods as one's sole object, or to hold them so wretched that one can hope for nothing from them for life's enjoyment, is, I think, to be equally ignorant of their nature and of ours.

This reflection was interrupted by an unwanted visit, which did not allow us to continue our discussion; but it remained engraved in my memory. I knew Fanny's judicious character, and

I had found in her words a plausibility which was striking to me. The admissions I have made in twenty places in this story must have accustomed my readers to the humble opinion I had of myself. An insurmountable disaffection for my former principles kept me from even thinking of recalling them and putting them to work; and being suspicious of anything that was suggested to me by my reason, just about the only rule of conduct I had remaining was sentiment. I do not exaggerate if I add that in the ease with which I had lend an ear to materialism, there entered less insight and conviction than desire to humiliate my soul by lowering it to the basest state I could imagine, and extract a sort of vengeance for the disservices it had rendered me. My heart was happy through love; I had essentially given up being happy through wisdom, and was beginning to fear it on the contrary as the enemy of my happiness. Meanwhile the infelicitous experience I had just had with pleasures, and even the memory of my weakness at a moment which I did not remember without shame and which made me avoid the very name of the Spanish actress, in short, seeds of anxiety, left in my mind by a void already begun by my resolution to abandon my frivolous occupations had left in my mind, caused me to receive avidly from Fanny's mouth the new plan of conduct which she seemed to be outlining for me.

But perceiving that something that perhaps seemed wearisome to me only for its continuity could become more agreeable once it was taken with some admixture, it remained for me to find a base of less frivolous occupations to fill the intervals. This task, which I spent some time at, induced me despite myself into a most bitter reflection on the misery of the human condition, which offers almost nothing which can provide an assured re-

source against ennui.⁶⁹⁶ Even love, which I made my supreme happiness, left me a hundred moments that were asking to be filled otherwise. I could not be endlessly with my wife without possibly exposing myself to the danger of wearying her by my very caresses, or at least covering myself in the ridicule which the world attaches to the excessive attentions of a husband.⁶⁹⁷ It was only after long meditation that I finally decided on something that did not appear to require such research, but which I offer nevertheless, after my experience, as the only one from which there is any solid satisfaction to hope for in the natural order, for a man capable of reflection and sentiment.

After convincing myself more firmly than ever, through a brief review of the past, that philosophical truth and wisdom are phantoms of the imagination, I concluded that the study of nature, having at least a real and palpable object, could attract the mind with all the more satisfaction that it deals with the objects that surround us; not to mention that the errors into which it might lead are never important enough to alter our tranquility or that of others. Considering this, my thought was to collect all the most estimable things that had been written on this matter, and I included among them, along with what bears the name of physics, that multitude of sciences which are encompassed in the name of mathematics. Far from being dismayed at entering such a vast career, its very dimensions were another reason for taking it on,

⁶⁹⁶ The correlation of the misery of the human condition and the inability to remain tranquil is Pascalian. The French term *ennui* (“chagrin, fâcherie, tristesse, déplaisir,” following the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*) is more ambiguous than any English equivalent.

⁶⁹⁷ Nivelles de la Chaussée had already, in his play *Le Préjugé à la mode* (1735), characterized as bourgeois the “prejudice” that stigmatizes any man in love with his own wife; this theme is recurrent at the time.

because it opened to me a space in which I ought not to fear encountering limits too quickly. I planned no other object for my mind; and if I did not formally exclude the other sciences and arts, my determination was to admit them only on the same condition as pleasures, in other words, occasionally, and merely as recreation.

[577] I had nothing to desire in matters of the heart, as long as love could reign there with the same power. However I understood, from the satisfaction that Fanny and Cécile took in good works, that it was an innocent pleasure to which I could still pretend. My own penchant already led me to conceive this thought, and my only problem was to seek the insights by which I should determine my good deeds. My first instincts made me think of unrecognized merit, and virtue mistreated by fortune. I had observed all my life the strangely capricious manner in which nature distributes its favors. She seems to seek expressly to shower them on indigents, as if, thinking only of her own glory, she were trying to show that her power is independent of wealth; and fortune, which has thereby deserved the epithet blind, hardly hastens to repair the injustices of nature. It seemed worthy to me to offer some examples of a better order, by choosing in Paris or in London some unfortunates of outstanding merit, and making them affluent. I was not excluding from my liberalities, however, the wretched of no merit, because their misery is all the more pitiable that they have nothing but motives of humanity to plead in their favor. The services of civility and friendship were also to be a part of this project, as dependent upon the same principles. In short, it was on these bases that my new system was established, and I convinced myself as I contemplated it in advance that it was the only one that accorded with my inclinations. I even thought it likely that the theatre, assemblies, and even the pleasures of the table would cease to seem tedious to me, when I would make

them serve occasionally as intermissions from such serious occupations. Fanny, whose only repugnance was for excesses, was the first to wish that the theatre be exempted from this reform. She promised to go with me often; and when I cut out the prolonged feasts and tumultuous assemblies on the one hand, I was renouncing neither the company of a certain number of chosen friends, nor the agreements of a table well served, where I wanted to be always prepared to entertain some excellent persons with my family.

The fête I had prepared was such a natural pretext for beginning this new order of life that my change was not at all noticed by the public. An interruption of a few days in my custom of receiving all persons of some name who came to my table provided me the freedom of ending it quietly. And the magnificence alone with which I hosted my friends at St. Cloud sufficed to put a stop to the unpleasant rumors that always arise when a change occurs such as the one I was planning. Good taste heightened the richness and profusion of every detail of my fête. I will be allowed to omit a description that would do honor only to the two Frenchmen in whose hands I had placed the whole operation. The events that were born on that great day are already capturing my imagination, and oblige me to clarifications that require all the strength of my mind and my pen.

I had neglected to follow the adventures of Doña Cortona; and recalling the thought of her only with embarrassment, I would have invited those who would have spoken of her to me to choose another subject of conversation. Don Thadeo, not having figured out the reasons that had taken me to her house, and which had made me leave with the distractions which he had noticed, had nonetheless judged that I had had some extraordinary purpose in my visit, and the response I had made to his complaints had not effaced this thought. He had attempted to extract more informa-

tion from her; but more wily than he, she had taken advantage of his curiosity to get him to tell her instead about the workings of my family, and little by little she had drawn him into details that had left her nothing more to learn. Perhaps she left her decisions to be taken in England. It was enough she had learned that I had considerable property, the oversight and use of which I was leaving in the hands of M. de R..., and that the members of my family were persuaded that the Duke of Monmouth was passionate for Fanny. In her own passion to take vengeance, not only on my wife, but on me as well, whose silence and coldness, after the advances she had made to me, she had been able to take only as disdain even more mortifying than Fanny's, she thought that [578] this knowledge would be more useful to her resentment than all the advantages she could obtain in Paris from Don Thadeo's ingenuity.

Upon leaving France, under the pretext she had originally given, she had taken care to have her lover ask him for a letter of recommendation for M. de R.... Don Thadeo had not been able to refuse this service to his old friend, and no longer having the boldness to speak to me about it, he had had flattered himself he was well enough known to M. de R... to obtain something from him at his own behest. Indeed, M. and Mme de R..., who knew the consideration with which I had received him in my home, and were aware that I still was lodging him, had as much respect for his request as they would have had for mine, Doña Cortona further raised herself in their eyes by her intention to live in England, and perhaps to embrace the Protestant religion there. She worked her way into their confidence and even became indispensable to Mme de R..., who was charmed to have found such a pleasant friend in a country where she was still without regular acquaintances.

It was no more difficult than that for this sly creature to

acquire the favor of the Duke of Monmouth, and even that of the Duchess of York. With what she had learned from Don Thadeo, it was a simple matter for her to feign relations and correspondences that made her pass for one of Lord Clarendon's best friends and one of mine. I do not know what her initial intentions had been, but with so many favorable circumstances placing her in a position to formulate any she wished, she began with the Duke of Monmouth, whose mind she poisoned with a thousand fantasies. Without affecting other sentiments for me than those of friendship, she found the means, by approaches that seem not to offend them, to make the duke aware that I had little regard for him; and placing in my mouth what she had heard Don Thadeo say about his character, she greatly exacerbated the former prejudice which, I have noted, he already held against me.

Yet it was not by passing as my friend that Doña Cortona had opened such free access to him. But a passion that was more alive than ever in his heart caused him to seize avidly the opportunity of obtaining some news of the person he loved. If he did not at first speak openly of his sentiments, he inquired about everything about my family, with an ardor that indifference does not inspire in a person of his rank, and which could not be an obscure language for the wily Spaniard. She felt so certain of what she had learned of his love that, in the hope of deriving from it a higher degree of consideration, she took in advance the risk of adopting the tone of an intimate friend of my wife's; and speaking with the air of a confidant, who conceals a part of her knowledge to hide things too flattering to a lover, she tried to give the duke to understand that he was as right to love Fanny as he was to detest me. This affectation of confidence even produced a misunderstanding from which she would have had difficulty extirpating herself with a man less full of his preoccupation. Really! he said to her, so Mme Cleveland is persuaded that I love her? Alas, she

would well deserve my heart if it did not belong to her daughter. Either by the duke's indiscretion, or by willful intention to escape a constraint that was beginning to weigh on him, he thus avowed his true sentiments; and La Cortona, who understood from those few words the bottom of the mystery, recovered adroitly enough to take the same advantage of them as of her initial suppositions. Far from withdrawing the sentiments she had had the audacity to attribute to Fanny, she continued to depict them as a full-blown passion, of which my wife had confided to her the entire progress; and the duke's replies having facilitated the enlightenment she wished to obtain through this ruse, she all at once changed her plan. Though the worries she had hoped to cause me by contributing to the seduction of my wife would have better flattered her hatred, because she would have thought them more harmful to me, she hoped that my daughter's misfortune would cost me scarcely fewer tears, and from then on her cruelty made her think only of succeeding on that side. She flattered the duke's passion, applauding his choice; and speaking of the success of his desires as something that suffered few obstacles, she induced him to express himself more openly about his intentions. He confessed to her that he adored Cécile, and that [579] this passion troubled his peace. But he was torn between what he owed to his rank and the respect he could not fail to show for a girl who possessed as many virtues as charms. The former did not permit him to think of taking to wife the daughter of an exile, who was moreover only the bastard son of the usurper; the latter allowed him even less to undertake the seduction by base means the most perfect and amiable girl he had known in his entire life. It was this uncertainty, as much as the difficulty of making his sentiments known to Cécile, that had made him choose to feign love for her mother. He had hoped that by obtaining the pleasure of seeing her freely under that guise, he would find the means of speaking with her,

and perhaps, sooner or later, of reconciling his honor with his desires. But the precautions taken to keep him from seeing her, and the order he had received to return to England, had so distanced him from his hopes, that he had been unhappy since he had left Paris, not knowing how such torments would end. He was nevertheless intending to return without delay to France, with the purpose of abandoning his enterprise to fate, and taking his resolutions according to events.

It took much less than that for a woman like La Cortona to fashion a plan that answered to all her purposes. That uncertain mixture of virtue and weakness that seemed patent in the duke's words did not threaten her with strong resistance to her advice. Thus it was scarcely disguised. She attempted to increase with various reasons the reluctance he manifested for a marriage disproportionate to his rank, and lifting, on the contrary, all the scruples that gave him pause on the other hand, she argued that the honor of being loved by a man of his kind, added to all the benefits he could shower on a girl who he made his mistress, was a sufficient compensation for the charms of Cécile, and even for her virtue; that besides, the best fruit which her sex could reap from all its perfections, was to use them as many means of achieving a happy life, and that having the power to make Cécile's happiness in a thousand ways, he would owe her nothing once he paid such a price for the gift of her heart and her person.

These horrible inspirations were only too avidly received. The only problem that remained for the duke regarded the difficulties of a distant enterprise, and one for which he as yet could see no opportunity. But that was the triumph of his new confidante, who lost no time proposing the means to him after giving him such a happy a foretaste of the end. And to lend her motives an appearance of self-interest, without which it would have been difficult for her to disguise them, she put a price on the success of

her intrigue by requiring, as reward for her devotion, some employ with which she could live in London with her lover, whom she passed off as her husband. The deal having been sealed by the duke's word, she took it upon herself to get my daughter to London within three months, and assumed all the risks of what might happen. This intrepid confidence nevertheless did not so reassure him as to make him lose sight for so long of an expedition that seemed dangerous to him. He decided to follow her to France, either simply to witness her acts, or to abet them. Before crossing back over, the devious mind of that wretched Spaniard made her imagine two other means of facilitating her plans. Having with the same success opened to herself very free access to the Duchess of York, she had the guile to obtain from her a letter for Lord Clarendon, in which that daughter so precious to her father, and so sure to obtain whatever she could ask of him, requested that he grant his friendship and protection to the woman who would deliver it to him. On the other hand, abusing the most sacred rights of familiarity and confidence, Doña Cortona discovered the hiding place where M. and Mme de R... kept the important act by which Lord Tervill⁶⁹⁸ had recognized, in the hands of the late Madame that he had been but the depositary of Lord Axminster's estate, and that he was accountable for it to my children. That faithful friend had died some months earlier. I had entrusted his affidavit to M. de R... as a necessary document in order to take possession of our property. The miserable courtesan imagined that at the very least this theft would keep me in her dependency, because of the concessions I would be forced to make in order to wrest from her hands a paper so essential [580] to my family; and

⁶⁹⁸ It was Terville or Terwill who held in trust the property belonging to Axminster, and by inheritance to Cleveland in book V.

armed with so many weapons to undertake the deed of my ruin, she boarded a ship that heaven was about to sink as it left the port.

She had little knowledge of French, and it was another of her deceptions to have managed to push her malice so far in a foreign realm, where she had no acquaintances or protection. But of what is vengeance not capable in the heart of a Spanish woman without virtue?⁶⁹⁹ She was, to be sure, supported by the wealth of the Duke of Monmouth, which put her in a position to pay liberally the ministers of her designs. The first associate she took was a domestic who had served me, and whose loyalty I had suspected on more than one occasion. That wretched man, perhaps the only man on earth who, with her, was capable of harming willfully Cécile, promised her all sorts of services, and sold them dearly. He had maintained some relation with my other domestics, and they were not surprised to see him occasionally at my door. No one could better inform Doña Cortona of what took place in my house.⁷⁰⁰ She learned from him that I was making preparations for a fête to be celebrated at St. Cloud. The circumstances, such as we were already broadcasting them, seemed to her suitable for the execution of some part of her scheme. But having not neglected, in the meantime, to assure her actions by other information, she also learned that my daughter's benevolent inclination often led her to assist those in dire need, and that she took pleasure in receiving and hearing them, to judge for herself the greatness of their needs and the nature of their pains. What plans did she not

⁶⁹⁹ In what language had she then conversed with Monmouth? For Cleveland has already pointed out that she does not know English either.

⁷⁰⁰ It is indeed from him that Cleveland subsequently obtained much of this information, as we shall see subsequently.

lay on these two foundations! She first wrote to the Duke of Monmouth that, given his intention of traveling to Paris, he should get there before the celebration of my fête. The hopes she led him to conceive for that event determined him to depart at once. He set out with such a small party and with such secrecy that he could easily make his absence appear as a drive through his lands. But while awaiting his arrival, Doña Cortona had the brashness to travel to Rouen, and present herself to the Earl of Clarendon with the recommendation of the Duchess of York. She was so graciously received by him that, taking advantage of his kindness to confide in him a hundred lies, she obtained from him, under pretext of some business calling her to Paris, two letters, one for Fanny, and the other for Cécile, by which he affectionately commended this despicable woman to them as a person of merit whom his daughter had sent to him.

She hurried back to Paris, with these two guarantees of the favorable reception she should expect from Cécile; and having herself introduced to her in a disguise that would not have permitted even me to recall her face,⁷⁰¹ she offered her the letter from the earl, which she first invited her to read, to inspire confidence in her for the speech she had prepared. Once she saw she was disposed to hear her, she did not disguise the fact that she bore a second letter for Fanny; but although duty obliged her, she continued with a few affected tears, to present herself to the mother before obtaining an interview with the daughter, the consternation that is inseparable from misfortune had made her take the path that was least onerous to her timidity. She had heard various persons praise Cécile's gentleness and generosity. She even

⁷⁰¹ She is a professional actress, who has already played two fairly convincing roles in the novel.

hoped, by opening her heart to her, that her sad adventures would remain hidden in her bosom, and expecting from her only the help she needed to come with an appearance of decency before my wife, she flattered herself that the consideration of the Duchess of York and of the Earl of Clarendon would obtain for her what an unhappy foreigner could not otherwise deserve.

As she had indeed covered herself in a quite pathetic garment, and the earl's letter, in combination with the composed manner she was so skillful at adopting, left Cécile no doubt of the sincerity of her tears, she had hardly finished speaking before the tender girl attempted to console her with her caresses; and sparing nothing in a situation where the earl's very name was a claim to generosity, she begged her to take her purse, which contained about a hundred pistoles. This present was accepted with transports of gratitude. The treacherous woman pretended that her only remaining concern was for secrecy, and imploring her [581] to have this respect for her embarrassment, she promised her that not two days would pass before she would appear more decently before my wife's eyes.

Several went by, during which Cécile was very loyal to the secret she had promised. It nevertheless seemed strange to her that the stranger should take so long to present the earl's letter to her mother, when she received from her a letter that contained new complaints of fortune, with the relation of a dangerous indisposition she had caught the very day she had been at my house. She implored Cécile in conclusion to consummate her generosity with a moment's visit. Believing she was at her last hour, she had important secrets to leave behind, and it was again to the bosom of her benefactress that she wished to confide them.

Cécile did not believe that a proposition of this nature obliged her to the same discretion as everything she had so care-

fully kept from us. She communicated it to her mother, lending to the first part of this adventure a turn that in no way offended her commitment to confidentiality. Fanny did not permit her to expose herself to the dangers of a visit which seemed suspect to her; but fearing also having to reproach herself for some harshness towards an unfortunate woman, she took the trouble of dictating a reply to her daughter in which she had her inform her unknown friend that, given her dependence on a father and mother, she could not see her at her house, unless she allowed her to come accompanied. However, she sent with this letter several presents to which Fanny added some of her own. The messenger who had come with the letter, and waited for the reply, returned an hour later with a very short note, but couched in the most natural terms of intense gratitude, in which Cécile was thanked for her excessive kindness, and her visit was refused under the conditions she had proposed.

The silence she continued to maintain about the initial circumstances of this adventure prevented us from judging the others important enough to merit investigation. However, what was already at stake was her abduction, which could not have failed to be carried out with extreme ease, in the secret visit into which they had hoped to draw her. The Duke of Monmouth had arrived in Paris. In his impatience to satisfy his desires, he had concerted this evil betrayal with La Cortona. The primary aim of that evil woman in making my daughter's acquaintance had only been to lay the foundation for another enterprise, which she was reserving for the fête at St. Cloud. As the day for it was approaching, she consoled the duke by the expectation of succeeding better in the dark of a tumultuous night, which would leave him, with the same certainty of success, the choice of adroitness or violence.

When I recall the circumstances of that night, and the

strange revolution that occurred at that time in my thoughts and sentiments, I marvel how those unforeseen events which so often come to trouble the best-established prosperities and necessarily leave so much anxiety and bitterness after them, do not suffice to open the eyes of a sensible man to the vanity of everything we honor with the name of peace and happiness. How is it that we call tranquil and happy a life that is at every moment dependent on the unruly passions of others, and we will accept the smallest confidence in a deceptive calm, where we would never be without fear if one knew all its dangers? What moment does fortune choose to renew its deceits? We were in the lap of joy. A numerous assembly, one composed by all the most amiable people in Paris of both sexes, had finished a supper where all the delicacies of the table had been lavished. The dancing had begun, and with the use of masquerades reigning in France, as Lord Clarendon had told me about England, already many masked visitors had already come from Paris, who were admitted with no difficulty at the door upon the declaration of a single known name, which seemed sufficiently to answer for each group. My apartments were filled of them, and the garden being another joyful scene, thanks to the freedom people had to walk about with the aid of countless torches, there was not a single place in my house which was not the realm of pleasure. My wife and [582] daughter had themselves attempted to contribute to the fête with their jolly humor as much as by the elegance of their attire. Everyone had donned a mask after the meal, in accordance with the practice of the times; and although my friends, under which name I include all the invited persons, had their faces exposed, there was not one who had not brought a fancy costume, so as to appear at the ball in different attire than at supper.

For my part, I had overlooked nothing to do myself proud as much by my gaiety as by my liberality and polish. I had pored

over the detail of everything capable of pleasing and entertaining, and had the satisfaction of hearing my praise echo on all sides. This exercise having tired me somewhat, I invited Fanny to go down to the garden for a moment to take in the air. I found her disposed to follow me for another reason. I do not regret, she said, once she found herself alone with me, the efforts I have made to maintain my role here, and I will not even deny that I have taken pleasure in many of the circumstances of this fête. But concede as well, she continued, that this is all very long and very tumultuous. Peace would suit me better than dance right now, and that is the drawback I find in all the amusements of which we cannot control the duration. I replied that I felt that annoyance as she did. Pleasures that lose their attraction by lasting too long, I said, undoubtedly become a tedious burden. I feel that as much as you. But as one cannot enjoy them alone, one must necessarily subject oneself to the inclination of those who share them, and to the rule determined by the greatest number. I am just delighted, I added, that not everything has displeased you in a fête where I have no object but you, and conceive better than ever how entertainments must be organized to satisfy you. Instead of stopping to rest on the first bench, as I had in mind, these thoughts carried us to the end of the avenue we had taken, and we were attracted into the cool of a neighboring wood to continue our discussion for a few moments longer. We saw several masks go by, who like us were seeking some repose in solitude. But the attention I was paying to Fanny's remarks, combined with the freedom which I myself had allowed for those who preferred a stroll to the dance, prevented me from attempting to recognize them. Finally, having sat down in a place where the wall was low enough to allow us the view and air of the countryside, we fell gradually into considerations so serious that they utterly dissipated the impression of joy that we had brought from the table and the dance.

That was the only obligation I had to Fortune. By attending to the betrayal that threatened me, she was at least preparing my heart to receive her blows, for it would have been much more terrible yet if she had caught me in some outpouring of affection and joy. In the midst of a reply I was making tranquilly to some observation of Fanny's, I heard a piercing cry, which struck her ears as it did mine; and although it hardly seemed likely that I could discern anything at a certain distance, my affection for Cécile, or the force of nature, if you prefer to attribute it to that cause, made me believe it was my daughter's voice I had heard. Happily, it did not provoke the same fear in Fanny. Stay here, I said, I absolutely command you. And finding my way toward the place from which the cry had seemed to come, I had not gone twenty paces before I heard the clicking of two swords, which was accompanied by no other sound. I left the avenue I was in to pass through some shrubbery that separated it from another, and soon recognized that I had not been mistaken in thinking I was taking the shortest path. Emerging from the shrubbery, I saw a masked man lying opposite me, who suddenly recognized me by the light of the torches, since I was not masked. Another mask was fleeing, sword in hand, towards the wall at the far end of the avenue. Although unarmed, my first impulse was to follow him; but a languishing voice that was calling me by my name, and which I suddenly recognized as that of Don Thadeo, checked my desire to go farther. I approached him with all [583] the dread such a sad event could cause me. Look to Cécile, he said; she is unconscious in an avenue nearby.

I would give a feeble notion of my transport if I paused to express it. Don Thadeo's sword lay on the ground beside him. I seized it, and running forward without knowing what direction I should take, a happy instinct, rather than any awareness, made me enter a path where I saw my daughter. My troubled senses calmed

down somewhat at this sight. I saw her lying against a hedge, but I had heard only of a faint, and seeing no one about her who could make me fear other perils, my only thought was to detach a torch that was suspended nearby to verify first the condition she was in. I had thought she was immobile in the dark. But the light I got from the torch revealed to me a spectacle worthy of pity. Though not the slightest bit conscious, that sweet daughter was in a convulsive agitation, which left none of her members at rest, and would have made me think she was in the throes of one of those terrible maladies that inspire as much terror as compassion, if had I not seen her a moment earlier in the most perfect health, and had I not known her temperament well enough to fear nothing so dreadful. Every part of her body was trembling, and her open eyes allowed almost nothing to be seen of her pupils. Oh, poor Cécile! I cried, trying to lift her. What poison has made you forget your duty and even to protect your life? It was unjust of me to accuse her. She seemed to regain consciousness partially, and each degree of movement seemed to relieve her. I had with me some spirits, which completely restored her strength. She got up by herself, evincing extreme surprise to see me by her side.

In her initial consternation, she seemed ready to fall at my feet. I halted her. Oh my dear daughter! I said, what am I to think of the condition I find you in; and if you do not tell me quickly what this strange adventure is all about, what report am I to make to your mother? Hide nothing from me, I added, embracing her; remember who is this father to whom you open your heart, and do not suppose there is anything he cannot hear. Tears came from my eyes as I pressed her in this way, and I awaited her reply with a mortal terror. Her tongue still tied, she led me to the nearest bench without opening her mouth, and being unable to avoid my gaze which she seemed scarcely able to bear, she asked me to listen to her, casting on me an eye troubled by fear.

Her suffering serving only to move me, I again urged her to explain herself, and promised her an inviolable secret so she would be sincere. Finally she said: Alas, what will you think of me! Here I am alone deep in the middle of the garden. I have seen here horrors you will scarcely believe, and which I tremble still to tell you about. Hide them from my mother, who would die from anxiety to hear me tell them. And asking me whether I had heard of a foreign woman who had approached her three weeks earlier to obtain some assistance from her with the recommendation of the Earl of Clarendon, she told me that that same woman, of whom she had heard nothing since, had come up to her in the ballroom at the very moment I had gone out with her mother. The new disguise she wore had at first prevented Cécile from recognizing her; but a few words of explanation having brought all that back to her, she had believed she owed her the same civilities which she had seen me proffer to all the masks in the assembly. This woman coming close to her ear thanked her affectionately for her kindnesses, and manifested great eagerness to be introduced to my wife; but she added that she was not alone, and that having brought her daughter with her, her passion was to let her see her, so as to interest her more and more in her fortune by showing to her a young person who was not without merit. She is in the assembly, she said, but adding that this was not a convenient place for carrying on a few moments' conversation, she had urged her to go down with her to the garden. With no apprehension in the middle of my house, and at a time when nothing but joy was on everyone's minds, the credulous Cécile had consented to slip away a moment and go with them. All three had gone down to the garden. The daughter had observed great modesty and [584] silence all the way to the end of one of those avenues that lead into the wood, and letting her mother talk, who was not wanting for matter to sustain the conversation, she had feigned

such airs of self-consciousness and timidity that even the shrewdest would have been fooled. But after taking a few steps into the wood, she had opened her mouth while making no change in the gentleness of her manners; she had revealed herself as a passionate lover who had long been seeking with excruciating impatience the opportunity to declare his sentiments to her; in short, this traitorous mask, flattering himself perhaps that her silence, which came from her fright and surprise, was a sign of approval, had confessed to her that he was the Duke of Monmouth, and that he was coming to receive from her a decree of life or death. This declaration had been supported with all the images of splendor and felicity that can make an impression on the mind of a girl of her age. She was to be the first lady of England after the queen and the Duchess of York. I myself would be delighted to set her up in a manner so worthy of her, and would unfailingly approve of offers so honorable for my family. But he wanted to owe her esteem and affection to her alone, and implored her, in the name of heaven, to approve the innocent ruse he had used in order to declare his sentiments to her.

Cécile breathed easy again, after a surprise that had taken her breath away. Her reply was what honor and her private sentiments required. But the duke and his confidant had not come without the resolution of obtaining a different result from their enterprise. I have always supposed that had they found in my daughter a certain disposition to listen to them, the hope of getting her to go along with their views willingly might have contained them within the bounds of flattery and indulgence. The Duke of Monmouth did not neglect, following his declaration, to show himself unmasked, in the persuasion no doubt that the natural beauty of his physiognomy would add something to the force of his persuasions. But the reason and virtue of my dear daughter finally overcoming her fear, she gave him a reply firm

enough to make him blush at his intentions. What ought to have heaped shame upon him served only to inflame his desires. He changed his tone to declare to her that, loving her to the point of risking everything for her, he was determined to obtain by violence what he would have preferred to receive with her consent; and taking one of her hands while the wretched Cortona seized the other, he prepared to drag her against her will to the wall, where his men were waiting for him with a chaise. Thus, innocence was about to become the prey of a blackguard, when a mask who had been hiding behind the hedge advanced proudly, raising his voice: it was Don Thadeo. *En garde!* he said to the duke, and remember I am not of the sex which you violate. The impetuous Monmouth immediately drew a sword which he was carrying under his robe. Don Thadeo, who also had his, was respectful even in his fury. Four paces will separate us from them, he added; and if you are not the most bestial of men, you will spare a woman's eyes. He crossed to the next avenue, and the duke did not hesitate to follow him. Doña Cortona chose to flee; but Cécile, who was already seized with mortal terror, did not hear the sound of swords without falling into the state in which I had found her.

This narrative was so short that Fanny had not time to worry much about my absence. Divided as I was between her and my daughter, I admit that for a moment I forgot about Don Thadeo. Heaven has come to your defense, I said to Cécile, and I think your abductor is far away. Let us put off clarifying this unhappy adventure until more tranquil moments. Your mother, I added, is waiting for me in the wood. We must take care to conceal from her the peril you have just escaped. Try to return to the house without her seeing you, and lose no time obtaining all the succor that you may still require. I shall keep an eye on you as you cross the garden. She tested her strength, and finding she was able to

walk, she left me, uttering repeated sighs.

I rejoined my wife, whom I happily found with no concern other than my delay. However, the sword which I still had in my hand making her judge that [585] something extraordinary had occurred, I changed my intention of seeing her back to the house before coming to the aid of Don Thadeo. The state in which I had left him had seemed dangerous to me, and with whatever intention he had come to the garden, I owed him too much gratitude, after the services he had rendered my daughter, to neglect to attend to his life. I declared in a word to Fanny the misfortune which had just happened, and without naming either the Duke of Monmouth or Cécile, I urged her to return alone to the house, and to send help to me for a man I thought to be dying. I could not persuade her to go off and leave me there. Fortunately, several masks came by, whom I instructed to alert my servants, and, forced to accept Fanny with me, who absolutely insisted on following me, I returned to the spot where Don Thadeo was still struggling with death. He recognized us both. But he lacked the strength to speak. He took my hand while I went about searching for his wounds, and pressed it tenderly. Fanny too was trying to stanch the blood which was flowing abundantly, and this attention seemed to revive him. I am only too happy, he said, that my accident saves you from a mortal distress, and perhaps saves Cécile's honor. All I was seeking here was the innocent pleasure of seeing her, and I did not believe the honor of dying for her was reserved for me. It is such a happy fate that it leaves me no regret for life. He expired as he uttered these last words.

This untimely death cause me less fright than it did Fanny; but along with the sorrow of seeing so sadly die a man to whom I owed esteem and friendship, it left me with terrible remorse for having taken too long to help him. It is likely that more prompt assistance, which would have prevented his losing as much blood

as he had time to shed, could have prolonged his life, at least for a few moments; for of the two wounds which he had received, one was too deep to allow for hope that any aid could have saved him. I was still left with the regret of not knowing by what chance he had found himself so near the Duke of Monmouth, although I have always imagined that, having entered the ballroom behind some known masks, he apparently followed Cécile when he saw her go down to the garden with two persons he did not know.

I was difficult for me to reply to Fanny's questions without allowing her to glimpse some signs of hesitation that provoked her suspicions. She pressed me to tell her what I had been able to learn about such a tragic adventure, and I had to elude the truth with a hundred equivocal replies, to avoid her getting the thought that her daughter had been involved in the circumstances I was forced to relate to her. It was not easier to stifle this incident among the servants whom I ordered to remove the body of Don Thadeo. The news spread quietly, as I myself realized from the murmur that rose from the assembly a few minutes after my return. My principal friends advised me to take measures with respect to the constabulary, and M. Briand left immediately to get the bailiff of St. Cloud on my side. All it cost me was a few liberalities, which I willingly granted to the memory of a man I had so many reasons to esteem. The Duke of Monmouth owed to my discretion the tranquility in which he went on living in Paris. He flattered himself no doubt that, disguised as he was, neither his adversary, nor I, whom he had seen approaching without recognizing me, had been able to identify his face, and that supposing Cécile revealed his temerity, little credence would be given to the deposition of a person of her age. Moreover, having arrived secretly in Paris, and lodging there in a house where he was not known, he had indeed few reasons to fear that justice would pursue him with any diligence.

A fête that had begun with such delight thus ended in the most deplorable event in the world, and in the sorrow by which it could not fail to be followed. Its impression remained in my heart, although I was still far from fearing all the consequences. Cécile, in deference to my wishes, had feigned ignorance of what had taken place before her eyes. She had borne up the rest of the evening with a courage which had required her every effort, and having approached her several times to check on her health, she had [586] replied in a rather firm voice that she begged me not to worry: yet we were no sooner free from part of the assembly than she indicated an eagerness to retire. Sleep was a natural pretext, after the fatigues of pleasure. Nevertheless she had a fainting spell as she was being undressed, which was long enough to cause us great concern. I would have wished to speak with her that very evening, had I taken account only of my impatience, and on the other hand I would have lent an ear to long conversations had I listened to her mother's pleas. But reasons of almost equal force made me avoid with the same care these two sorts of explanations.

I gave less thought to taking it easy myself, and if I feigned sleep, it was to abandon myself more freely to my reflections. By how many fears did I find my heart beset! Those that remained from the sorry fate of Don Thadeo were not the most powerful, and I was much more absorbed by the loss of such a fine gentleman, than by the woes of which it might become a new source for me, if the maliciousness of some enemy had poisoned this adventure. He had died before my eyes. How terrible a recompense for such services and love! And how could Providence be justified, thus sacrificing virtue to insure the impunity of a crime? But what was I to think of his murderer's enterprise? If he loved Cécile, what path was he taking to win her affection? Knowing nothing of the odious designs he had made on her, and still judging them

only by the things she had related to me, why seek to abduct her, I said to myself, when he wants to offer her such an advantageous position? If he loves her enough to raise her fortune to himself, can he doubt that I wish for my daughter's happiness and glory? This thought, which came so naturally, gave me some doubts about Cécile's sincerity. Could not the story she had told me be a fable of her invention, to cover some meeting granted to the duke, and troubled perhaps by Don Thadeo's ill-timed arrival? Or, if he intended an abduction, was it not in concert with her that such a resolution had been conceived, and was the turn she had given to her words not a ruse by which she had assured her justification against the testimony of the unhappy Spaniard who had caught her with her suitor? I remembered her melancholy, her fondness for solitude, her indifference for the attentions of Don Thadeo and of several young Frenchmen who had attempted to find favor with her. Could this behavior, at her age, have any other cause than love? Doubtless she loved the duke as much as she was loved by him. It was by agreement with her that he had feigned love for her mother; and seeing us so biased against the character of that suitor, the fear of finding us opposed to her inclination had made her decide to leave her family and go to England with him. Her obstinacy in concealing from us the subject of her sadness, and refusing a husband from my hand, so confirmed the plausibility of all these conjectures that, going well beyond doubt, I thought I could thank my insight for knowledge I would lose no time making use of; and impatience banishing from my eyes any disposition for sleep, I got up to walk off my anxieties in the garden. Drink, who had his bed in a neighboring chamber, and had just gotten into it after restoring a little order in the house, heard me leave my room, and felt impelled by his zeal to follow me. He asked me what made me leave my bed so early, and having confessed to him that I was agitated by a cruel insomnia, I

urged him in vain to let me go out alone. He at once got his clothes, to walk a ways behind me, and be ready to answer me at the slightest sign. I plunged into the woods. My reflections became even more bitter at the sight of the spot where I had watched poor Thadeo expire, and I could still see some traces of his blood. However, picturing also the sad state in which I had found Cécile, and those natural signs of consternation and grief which art has such difficulty mimicking, I began to doubt again the explanation I had given a moment before to her words and behavior. What deviousness, I said, would I not have to attribute to her, to think her capable of such extreme dissimulation? Is that the character of this tender and amiable daughter, in whom I have never [587] observed a desire or an impulse contrary to her duty? She has a heart more tender than most; but is she not also more docile, more modest and generous? And why should I attribute to her vices as great as her virtues? In short, the more I thought about her and compared everything I remembered having seen myself or learned of her sentiments and inclinations, the more weakness and injustice I found in the reasoning that had led me to such dark suspicions. I determined to remain firm in a prejudice so favorable to my dear daughter, and awaiting only her awakening to have a talk with her, I already could not wait to embrace her with all the tenderness in my heart.

This change of ideas restored some tranquillity to my mind. I was thinking of going back to my apartment when I heard the voice of Drink, calling me urgently to come help him. I took several steps without seeing him, but as I turned the corner of an avenue from which I judged that his interjection had come, I saw him wrestling with a man who was attempting to escape from his grip, and whom I immediately recognized as one of my former servants. He was the one whose betrayal I have already mentioned to my readers, when telling about his relations with Doña Cortona. He appeared even more frightened by my presence than he had been seeing himself arrested by Drink. The latter had seen him climb onto the wall that was at the far end of the avenue, and then slip into the woods, with precautions that had made his intentions look suspicious; he had hidden beneath some branches to continue observing him, and mistrustful of everything after the baleful event that had occurred that same night, he had felt obligated, for our security, to arrest him when he went by.

The circumstances which I have related were still unknown to me, and while I had a poor enough opinion of a man whom I had dismissed only for well-confirmed misdeeds, it would never have occurred to me that he was mixed up in our adventure. Meanwhile Drink, who judged ill of his purposes as much by his fear as by the path he had taken to enter my property, pressed him rudely to confess his intentions, and spoke of putting him at once into the hands of justice. I added my prodding to this threat. Finally, when at the same time I gave him my word that he would be set free if he was willing to be sincere, he was persuaded to promise me a confession without reservation. He began a story where every word struck me with astonishment and horror. The very name of La Cortona would have been enough to provoke

them; imagine then my reaction at learning that she was the chief of my enemies, and had sworn my ruin! She had had so much confidence in this pathetic fellow that he was informed of her enterprise from the beginning. He concealed from me none of its circumstances, and here is what he added to those I have already related. As it was the Duke of Monmouth's plan to return directly to England with my daughter, the only difficulty that had put him off had to do with the route and the embarkment, which it was almost impossible to accomplish without commotion if, of the two choices to which his hopes were limited, he was obliged to opt for violence. Doña Cortona had delivered him from that problem by having the Earl of Clarendon contribute to the success of his enterprise. The earl, being sufficiently respected in Versailles to obtain from the minister certain personal favors unrelated to interests of state, made no objection to intervening in Doña Cortona's favor when, under the pretext of having something to fear in France from Spain, she pressed him in the name of his daughter the duchess to facilitate her prompt return to London. She entreated him to help her obtain a passport from the court, in the guise of a foreign lady attached to the Duchess of York, with an order to the commander of Calais to furnish her, upon her arrival in that city, whatever could hasten her passage. She flattered herself that with these two documents it would be easy for her to get to the coast, without having to give any account of her journey, and even without being [590] exposed to fearing anything from Cécile's resentment. Thus the insidious woman exploited my best friend to pierce my heart. She obtained what she had hoped with Lord Clarendon's influence, and all her measures being taken to depart with my daughter the moment she abducted her, she was supplied with the two documents he had requested for her with as much diligence and attention as if he had thought he was rendering a service to his own daughter or to

mine.

As for the reason that brought the traitor to my house, it was merely to observe what effect the Duke's coup had produced there, and whether Don Thadeo had died of his wounds. Surprised to hear him name Don Thadeo, I asked him whether he was known to the duke,⁷⁰² and his reply unveiled another mystery, which I learned with all the more distress that it was the kind that could diminish markedly the compassion I thought I owed to the unhappy Spaniard. But it helped on the other hand in my eyes to justify Providence, whose rigor had already indiscretely drawn from me some murmurs. Doña Cortona had not been in Paris long without learning that he had left my house. Curiosity to learn the cause, or the hope of using him for her purposes, had made her find the means of meeting with him, and in the conversations she had had with him, she had had no difficulty extracting from a forlorn suitor the confession of his woes. These new insights gave her new ideas. It occurred to her that by giving in him as to the Duke of Monmouth the desire to abduct my daughter, she would derive two useful results from this trickery: one, to make him serve the duke's interests, by the very means he would employ for his own, and thus to assure the success of a matter in which she could not otherwise involve him without betraying herself; the other, to turn to her profit the expenses in which it she could easily engage him. Though she met obstacles in the virtue of Don Thadeo, who was repelled by her initial insinuations, she managed to argue so skillfully that the first rule is to satisfy oneself, and that, moreover, his only goal was an honest marriage, for which he had even obtained my consent, that delicacy and respect

⁷⁰² Cleveland seems still not to know about the altercation between Don Thadeo et Monmouth which took place earlier in Rouen.

were smothered in his heart by such flattering hopes. After seducing him, she had no trouble getting him to follow all of her impressions. He became her dupe, with the most humiliating circumstances for a man to whom honor had always been dear; and the very day preceding his death, he had given that vile woman a considerable sum to buy a hundred things which she had persuaded him that Cécile would require on the road to Spain.

Drink's opinion was that we should deliver his prisoner over to the constabulary at St. Cloud. That was the only way, he said, of scaring the duke enough to send him promptly back across the sea with his lady friend. That was wise advice. But besides the fact that I was bound by my promise, I considered that in the midst of my just resentments I needed to observe some caution with a mind capable of the most violent extremes. The interest of the Duchess of York, to whom he had indeed rendered essential services, and even my own and that of my family, were reasons only too powerful for going carefully with him. I could not have his emissary arrested without exposing him as well to the pursuits of justice, which would arouse itself despite me at the slightest deposition. In short, resigned to granting this scoundrel his freedom, I merely obliged him to tell where those he was serving so zealously were staying. I made a point of taking a pencil to write it down in his presence, in the thought that, reporting this to his masters, he would cause them enough uneasiness to make them choose to protect themselves by fleeing. Get this monster out of my sight, I said to Drink, who had not ceased holding him by the collar. Let him go tell those who employ him that I know their names, and that after betraying and massacring an honorable man, they are not rest easy if they have no potion to put justice to sleep.

I sent notice immediately to Lord Clarendon about the disgraceful abuse that had been made of his confidence, and not entrusting it to the post, I dispatched one of my men to take my

letter to him. Given my grieving disposition, I sadly upbraided him for taking so long to return to Paris after promising me several times in his letters that he would, [591] and at a time when I had such need of his insights and consolations. You will be surprised, I wrote, to see me adopting a tone so different from the one you admired in my letters, but do I know what heaven has in store for me? And laying out my situation for him, I asked him what I was to think of the menaces of fate, which seemed to be targeting nothing less than my daughter, after sparing her in my greatest adversities, and would grieve me much more by taking her than it had consoled me in restoring her to me. The Duke of Monmouth having continued, since he left Rouen, to maintain a correspondence with him, I asked him to use the power he had preserved over his mind to interest him in projects more in keeping with his honor and my tranquillity; or if he did not hope to perform this miracle on a character so difficult to govern, to obtain secretly by the influence of the Duke and Duchess of York that he be recalled to the court London. Finally, seeking an epithet commensurate with the sentiments of my heart, I called him my father,⁷⁰³ and notified him that if his business continued to keep him in Rouen, I was might go surprise him there with my entire family. The edifice of my happiness, I added, is threatening to collapse in Paris, and I want to see whether a change of place will not bring some remedy, sure at least that your presence and friendship will always be a more reliable one than all those of fortune.⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰³ Thus ends the cycle of seeking for a father, a place left essentially void since the death of Axminster nearly nine years earlier.

⁷⁰⁴ This letter, recorded in indirect style, ends in a direct quotation in the second person; approximately the same procedure is found in Manon's letter to Des Grieux (*Manon Lescaut*, p. 414).

The melancholy that inspired such sad expressions in me did not go so far as to make me fear the misfortunes they seemed to forecast. I had taken assurance, on the contrary, from my reflections, against the events that seemed the most prone to alarm me. Had the Duke of Monmouth and his confidant been intrepid enough not to go away, and to reiterate their plans with new expectations, I was in a situation which would not allow me to fear them. A peril of such nature is great only so long as it is not known. I had more men with me than the duke ever would have dared assemble in the vicinity of Paris and the court; and if the confidence I had in my men let me rest easy against violence, I could well say to myself that with all the information I had obtained, my own vigilance would shield me from all kinds of betrayal. Only one doubt remained, which all this enlightenment had not been able to dissipate, and which I could not entertain without retaining some mistrust in the midst of all the reasons that tended to reassure me. In Cécile's discourse, I had not well discerned whether she was without inclination for the duke, and consequently whether she was not up to a point in his interests, at least by her heart's secret desires. That comedy played with such art and so long sustained by a spirit as impetuous as the duke seemed a mystery to me in which I feared she had been involved. If her heart was attuned to her suitor, I foresaw only too well the futility of my role. But also, why refuse me an avowal which I had so insistently asked of her, and by what whim would she have persisted in concealing her sentiments from me, when I was expressing eagerness only to satisfy them? The duke's rank, and familiarity with his character even more than his rank, would never have permitted me, in truth, to think of him for my daughter; but supposing he thought of it himself, and that despite so many vices which I would have thought hardly compatible with Cécile's inclinations, he had found the path to her heart, it is no

less certain that setting aside my reluctance, I would have been content to warn her that love was giving her many illusions, and I would not for that have yielded any the less easily. Perhaps I would have suspected her of conceding something more to ambition than to affection, and I would have confessed that the honor of becoming daughter-in-law to a great king could be purchased with some sacrifices. All these considerations supposed my continued ignorance of the duke's most hateful plot: for the traitor who had just made his confession to me had not been able to tell me what I imagine he himself did not know. On this reasoning, I made a resolution which may seem strange after what had transpired in my house just the night before, but will fully make clear how passionately I desired my daughter's happiness. It was to obtain an interview with the Duke of Monmouth, to learn from him what his true feelings were, and his [592] degree progress in Cécile's heart. This explanation was a matter of a minute. If he made to me the slightest disclosure that permitted me better understanding of my dear daughter's inclinations, I was determined to offer her to him at once,⁷⁰⁵ with all the advantages that my fortune put me in a position to promise him; and not putting off for long what could be carried out in the space of a few days, my only condition would have been to take the time necessary to obtain the permission of his father the king. Whatever distance there was between his birth and mine, the name of Lord Axminster, and the king's earlier favor for my maternal grandfather and for myself, made me hope that he would pass over a flaw that

⁷⁰⁵ Because it seems to arrange everything conveniently, Cleveland, who had too hastily promised Cécile's hand to Don Thadeo, now proposes to commit the same mistake with Monmouth. This is a failing he shares with the Dean of Coleraine (*Le Doyen de Killerine*), who promises his sister's hand in turn to a whole series of suitors.

would be further repaired by my wealth.⁷⁰⁶

I settled so accommodatingly on all the parts of this plan, that without waiting for Fanny to awaken, I sent Drink to go propose civilly to the Duke of Monmouth that he receive my visit. The news I learned of Cécile's health would have caused me some alarm, had I not flattered myself I had in hand an unfailing remedy for all her problems. The women who had remained with her had not observed that she had enjoyed a moment's rest. She had appeared continually agitated by somber contemplations which it had been impossible to interrupt. They will end, I said to myself: for while doing justice to my daughter's character, which I indeed thought above any kind of suspicion, I was beginning no longer to doubt that, whether out of ambition or love, her heart was possessed of a violent passion for the duke.

Her mother, who had already been awakened by her anxiety and was awaiting news of her at the moment I entered her room, begged me to tell her something about what had happened at night in the woods. I had obliged her to retire before her curiosity had been satisfied, and my replies had perhaps calmed a part of her alarms; but the reflections which she had entertained when she went to bed had troubled her sleep. I persisted in concealing from her the truth of the adventure, and being unable nevertheless to elude the force of the reasoning which supported her conjectures, I confessed to her that it was at the hand of the Duke of Monmouth that Don Thadeo had received the fatal blow. At the

⁷⁰⁶ Is Cleveland ambitious? The protagonist of the spurious "tome 5" had become counselor to the king. Here he will underscore the arguments which Monmouth can use on the king; further on, he will do his best to persuade his daughter of them; he admits a little further on that he pays no attention to unpleasant interpretations that could stand in the way.

same time, to forestall the prejudices which this calamity could have given her against the duke, I added that, both of them loving Cécile, it was not surprising that jealousy had armed them against each other, and that if heaven had decided that one of them should die, it was rather fortunate for my daughter that it was the one for whom we had found in her the least inclination. Following this thought, which could not seem new to her after the suspicions which she had been the first to conceive, I told her without affectation that I thought I was certain of the duke's love for Cécile, and had almost as little doubt that she returned it. And so the mystery is cleared up, I added; and I went on to inform her of my plans, fairly sure she would not hesitate to approve of them.

Indeed her objections stemmed only from the opposition she apprehended from the king of England. I saw she was even flattered by the sentiments I attributed to the duke, and ready to praise a man from whom she had feared for her daughter only the ordinary imprudence of his age and rank. Having reassured her with the same expectations that had filled my own imagination, my only thought now was to set out for Paris to broach the matter with the duke; and when I saw Cécile again, whose health seemed to me genuinely affected, I did not ask her the cause of an illness which I thought I understood as well as she.

Scarcely had Drink returned than, undeterred with the description he made of the duke's embarrassment, I retained from his mission only what was favorable to my views. He had found him alone in his apartment, and the greeting he had made to him on my behalf had greatly troubled him; but after getting hold of himself, he had replied that I would find him always disposed to serve me, and that he would receive my visit with pleasure. Drink had not been able to determine by observing him whether he was already informed of the unfortunate outcome of his last orders; and thinking of my safety, he advised me not to enter his house

without being well accompanied or well armed.

[593] I rejected this advice with disdain. It was not treachery of such nature that I had to fear from the Duke of Monmouth, and if I have sometimes called him deceitful,⁷⁰⁷ I have not in that reproach confused his sentiments of honor with his principles of gallantry. I would have entered his house alone without fear or misgivings. Moreover, the questions I had to put to him were not ones that could offend him. However, if I refused to take any weapons besides my sword, my ordinary retinue was sufficiently numerous for me not to fear the accusation I had exposed myself inconsiderately. I arrived, no doubt, much sooner than he was expecting, for I surprised him with the confidant he had sent that morning to my house, or at least I spotted that scoundrel who was leaving his room at the moment I was being announced, and he was unable to disappear deftly enough to avoid my seeing him. I pretended not to notice him. Upon his return, he had gone to Doña Cortona's, who sent him to the duke only after discussing with him for a long time the circumstances of his adventure. He had been sincere in that report. The duke had listened to him, and by a caprice which is difficult to explain even for those who, like him, would be capable of the same thing in the same circumstances, after wanting delicacy to the point of undertaking anything to ravish and corrupt an amiable and virtuous girl, he had enough to be cognizant of the generous proceeding I had shown with his emissary. My refusal to turn him over to the constabulary, and the terms I had instructed him to repeat to his masters, had made an impression on the duke's impetuous, but noble and generous, temperament. This conversation had disposed him to receive me with other sentiments than those it is natural to main-

⁷⁰⁷ Once, toward the end of book XIV.

tain with a man against whom one has intended a crime. If he showed some signs of consternation on seeing me appear, they were almost immediately erased by the air of civility that followed them.

My resolution was to avoid anything that had any connection with the Don Thadeo's misfortune. I took my exordium from the subject of my visit itself. Love, I said, exerts its power in all ranks, and my daughter being lovable, I would not be surprised if it had inspired in you some inclination for her, if I could understand how such a great passion can be reconciled, in the heart of a man of the world, with the intention of offending the one he deems worthy of love. But I admit that I do not see how such an accord is possible. Do you love my daughter? I added, looking at him in a firm, but civil and placid manner. This question seemed to embarrass him. However, perceiving no anger in my eyes, he took my hand, which he brought to his lips, and his heart came, if I dare use the expression, onto his lips, to protest to me that he worshipped Cécile. It remains for you to explain to me, I replied, how you could have so betrayed yourself as to lay a plan to abduct her. Does a noble heart use violence to achieve its happiness? And were it to have enough influence over its loved one to make her regard an abduction otherwise, what satisfaction will he ever find in a happiness which he owes to such base means? I could have continued for a long time with no fear of being interrupted. He kept his eyes lowered, and his natural temerity seemed to have abandoned him. I spoke up again: Is honor itself quite secure in an enterprise that offends so many sacred rights; and if there is some difference between a thief and an abductor, is it not to the advantage of the one who only takes a sum of money or some other trivial part of another's possessions? This comparison stung him. I had intended, seeing him so consternated, to ascertain whether indeed he was capable of recognizing his errors. Oh,

he exclaimed, blushing, so you are here only to insult me? No, I replied at once; I have a good enough opinion of you to imagine that generosity, justice, and honor are qualities which you hold dear; but I do not disguise to you that the heat of your passion has made you forget them. See whether in turn, I continued, you will recognize them in my procedures. My daughter loves you, no doubt, for it would be indeed insulting to you to suppose you think otherwise. If she loves you... He stopped me by the suddenness with which he left his chair. Do not conclude, he said, until you have heard me. I see that I have not been misled in the portrayal I received of your noble character and the uprightness of your sentiments. [594] I open my eyes to my injustice, and do not want you to explain your thoughts to me before you know my own.

I love your daughter, he repeated with more composure, and to me she is worthy of the greatest king in the world. Nevertheless, mistaken ideas of grandeur, sustained by the pernicious counsel of a woman for which I moreover have little esteem, had made me fear that my sentiments would not be approved by my father the king and the public. Do not ask me what I had decided to do. I will confess it to you some day to punish myself for it. But your procedures persuade me at this moment that there is nothing higher than honor and virtue. I ask you for Cécile as I would ask you for a rich treasure, and I take only the time necessary to travel to London, where I flatter myself I can by my entreaties wrest from the king his consent.

I embraced him tenderly after this declaration, and renouncing any further questioning, I let myself enjoy seeing Cécile's fortune take such a happy turn. It did not even occur to me that she might receive otherwise than with transport what I supposed to be the only thing she desired. If I avoided further knowledge of the engagements she might have made without my knowledge, it

was to spare her modesty. The duke's satisfaction seemed even to surpass mine when I assured him that in my statement which he had interrupted I was going to offer him what he had done me the honor of requesting. As his interests became mine and those of my daughter, confessing that I fully appreciated the value of his alliance, I set before him what could diminish the obstacles he feared from the king's authority and the public judgment. My daughter was the last remnant of Lord Axminster's blood, and heir of his entire estate. The blemish of my own birth was repaired by the honor which King Charles had done me in making me a Knight of Great Britain in Bayonne⁷⁰⁸; and although the natural son of a simple gentleman does not derive great prestige from his lineage, there was perhaps some distinction to make in my favor, insofar as I was the son of a man who had long enjoyed sovereign authority. I added the reasons I had to hope that the king in his goodness would show some recognition for my grandfather's attachment, and I had been informed since I came to France that that good man, on his deathbed, had asked his master as a last favor to provide for my fortune, should heaven brought me back to England.

The Duke of Monmouth, already calling me his father, would have preferred not to leave Paris without expressing his transports at Cécile's feet; but without condemning this desire, which I myself would have been very pleased to satisfy, I pointed out to him that after the fatal accident of which I did not wish further to remind us, prudence did not allow him to be seen in St. Cloud. His presence alone there could foment suspicions which I had happily parried. Go to London, I said, and depend on me for everything it is in my power to do. Thus, almost as moved as he

⁷⁰⁸ At the end of book II.

by the happy outcome of such a delicate adventure, I was preparing to carry promptly to Cécile news which I believed more certain to restore her health than all the medicines when, rising to leave the duke, I heard one of his men announce the visit of Doña Cortona.

That name, which I had so many reasons to loathe, would have made me hasten my departure, if the duke had not wished, to give me another confirmation of his reliability, for me to witness the dismissal he had in store for that malevolent confidant. He had her shown in. She was alarmed in the extreme at seeing me, and all her effrontery did not suffice to control her countenance. However, having accepted an armchair which the duke had brought forward, she listened with great modesty to the reproaches he addressed to her for having engaged him in an enterprise of which he was ashamed. He advised her, if she returned to London, never to let him see her, and to fear above all to exercise her ignominious practices in places where he would have some power. I was curious to see what response would be; but nothing could equal my surprise when after seeing her [595] shed a few tears, and use her handkerchief to dry them, I heard her complain bitterly at having herself yielded to demands which a necessary submission had required her to obey. She was dependent on a man who had found only this means of setting himself up in London, and had used extreme violence to engage her in an enterprise which she had a hundred times lamented. She was only too fortunate that I should be present, I who could do justice to her sincerity by my testimony; for I knew her sentiments for me and for all those I held dear. She remembered having made them known to me before she went to England, and I would never believe that she, with such a disposition to love me, could have conceived a plan to cause me terrible distress, had she not been forced to it by the violence that had been done to her inclinations.

In short, the tone and the gestures that accompanied this speech made such an impression on me that, allowing myself to be taken in by appearances, I would have exhorted the duke to treat her less harshly, if what she added, in the hope of increasing the pity to which she saw me in thrall, had not on the contrary inflamed my indignation. She begged the duke in turn to bear witness that she had exhorted him to offer advantageous conditions to Cécile, and to show her attentions that were scarcely different from those one has for a wife. What I had made a point of not inquiring into thus ceased to be obscure, thanks to her brashness in explaining it to me openly. I would have reproached both of them bitterly, were it not for consideration of my daughter, whom I would have felt I was harming by renewing those dreadful thoughts. Meanwhile the duke, attributing my disarray to the distress I felt at seeing an odious object, ordered her unceremoniously to leave. I left a few moments after her. With unbelievable temerity she had remained at the bottom of the stairs, where I was again subjected to a bevy of impostures which she had arranged on the spot with new stories. She so counted on my credulity that she proposed I take her in my carriage and drop her off at her home; but after listening to her in silence, I turned my back sharply to her, with an ironic dismissal, which further filled her heart with rage and consternation.

Amidst the joy that I bore to St. Cloud, it was difficult for me not to feel the indecency of the duke's original intentions, and not be much more offended by it than by a simple plan of abduction in which I could suspect my daughter of being implicated, without attributing to her any other design than a legitimate commitment. I did my best to suppress the disturbing conclusions I would have had to draw in spite of myself from those thoughts; and too satisfied with the arrangements I had made with the duke, I arrived at home most impatient to communicate them to Fanny.

I found her with Cécile, who had gotten out of bed, although in a most languishing state, but who ran to me with open arms at the first step she saw me take into her mother's room.

During my absence they had been having a talk that had cast light on numerous mysteries. Fanny, gravely disturbed at the languor in which she had found her upon awakening, had incited her with renewed insistence to open her heart to her. She had not succeeded in eliciting from her the secret of her troubles; but being persuaded as I was that we had happily guessed it, she had spoken to her of the Duke of Monmouth and of our assumption that she loved him as much as he did her. That was a declaration that provoked Cécile enough to make her leave her bed at once, where she still was, and where her health perhaps required her to remain. She had protested, with an abundance of tears, the opinion we had of her; and when her mother, who still took such language only as genuine dissimulation, had added that I had gone to Paris possibly to conclude her marriage with the duke, she had fallen into agitations that culminated in a deep faint. Finally, she had regained consciousness only to object just as vociferously that she had never felt the slightest penchant for the duke; that she had first heard of his for her the day before; and that far from staking her happiness on marrying him, he was of all men on earth the one for whom love was the least capable of touching her. In the anxiety she had felt, and daring not doubt [596] our affection for her, she would have wished to dispatch someone to me immediately to make me change my intentions; but Drink, who alone knew where the duke was staying, was accompanying me, she had awaited my return with inexpressible dread, and threw herself into my arms when she saw me appear, to implore me not to turn the rights I had over her to her unhappiness and despair. Fanny, persuaded by her tears, immediately added joined her in her plea.

I looked at both of them with astonishment; and my consternation growing by the present thought of the action I had just taken, I invited them to take a seat to reason more at ease. It is certain, my daughter, I said to Cécile, that if someone is guilty of imprudence here, it is neither your mother nor myself, who life hangs on your happiness, and who have long been seeking to discover what can flatter your desires and predilections. Need I remind you of my attempts? But while you see us focused solely on this task, you persist in maintaining a silence which grieves us, and you place us in the necessity of divining your inclinations in order to satisfy them. She interrupted me, her eyes filled with tears. Alas, she said, if you allow me to justify myself, have I not sworn to you a hundred times that I aspired to no other happiness than to live with my mother and you? You did so swear, I replied. But whence then this sadness that consumes you? Is one plunged into a deep melancholy, when one enjoys the happiness to which she aspires? You are deceiving us. I have seen you in very different humor; and you will never persuade me that at your age a change of this nature can be owing to chance.

Listen, I went on, putting on a sterner mien: here is what I will still do for you. As it is time for me to think of establishing your fortune, and propriety itself does not permit a daughter to reject advantageous propositions without giving some just reasons for her refusal, I will make your marriage with the Duke of Monmouth depend upon your straightforwardness with me. Any other attraction will be a just reason, but I want to know what it is; otherwise, my daughter, you must sense that the more I love you, the more I must insist upon a union that makes you the first lady of England, and cannot fail to be highly advantageous to your brothers. I leave you a few days, I added, to mitigate the law I am imposing. Remember where I myself find it: it comes from my affection as much as from reason.

It had not been easy for me to adopt such stern tone with my daughter. I was accustomed to treating her with the affection and familiarity of a brother. So I withdrew after these words, to avoid the sentimentality that might have led me to belie them. In going back so soon on promises I had made to the duke, I was not intending to notify him before his departure. In addition to the reproach of hastiness which I would rightly have incurred, I would have feared some new enterprise from his passion; and in whatever way Cécile's inclinations might turn, I was very happy for him to have the time to go away, and especially to lose sight of his confidante. But if it came to pass that I was obliged to break with him, my thought was to write to him in London. A letter carries explanations and attenuations that the heat of a conversation sometimes makes difficult. I had counted on Cécile's penchant, and my promises were all based on that supposition: I was surely free to retract them, once so necessary a condition was not fulfilled.

Before the day was over two messengers came, who caused me almost equal perplexity. The first came from the duke, who was writing to me in the tenderest terms before leaving Paris, and sending considerable presents to Cécile. His courier was under orders to give them to her in person, with a compliment such as civility and love can dictate. Given the sentiments in which I had left my daughter, I did not hope her to receive this gallantry with much indulgence. Having sent to know her dispositions, I learned most pertinently that some remaining languor had forced her to retire to her room, where she seemed to have been asleep for several hours. This excuse satisfied the [597] courier, who left his errand to me. But he was scarcely a few paces distant when a stranger brought me another letter, without being able to explain from whom he had received it. He had been liberally paid, he said, to bring it to me in St. Cloud; but not knowing who it was

from, he required no reply from me. I left him free to leave. The Spanish handwriting, and the name of Cortona made me judge at once that it was some new imposture from that dreadful woman, and I came close to throwing it into the fire without reading it. But another impulse won out. I wanted to see to what extreme malignity and vengeance can be taken.

It was no longer against me that they seemed to wish to exercise themselves. Doña Cortona's hatred seemed to be turned against the Duke of Monmouth, whose frauds and dark designs she was pretending to reveal to me. He was a deceiver, if I would take her word for it, all of whose offers and promises had been so many ruses to reach his primary goal. His sights were set not only on my daughter's honor, but on my wife's, and his passion was inflamed to the same degree for the one and the other. Such an implausible accusation, and one cloaked in the most damaging terms, made me feel such horror for this awful letter, that I again felt the first thought I had had to burn it. The reason that had prevented me again restrained me. After musing on the unruly heart which the Spaniard was attributing to the duke, I found by reading on that he planned to do away with me, in order to obtain more certainly the possession of the one he loved; and the proof of this determination lay in the presents he was sending to my daughter, where I would find one marked with my name, and intended for me, which contained a poison so subtle that she feared her letter would not reach me quickly enough to make me avoid its effect. She added that she had been informed about it by one of the duke's men, who had an intense passion for her.

Just reading this dreadful letter made it fall from my hands; for in whichever direction my fears were to go, I saw in the crime or the accusation the blackest plot ever known. I did not long hesitate to let my suspicions fall on the Spanish courtesan. Nevertheless it was true that the duke announced to me in his letter an

admirable confection for the stomach, which I would find among the presents he was sending to Cécile, and which he bade me accept as a token of the interest he took in my health. It was, he said, one of the most precious elixirs of Europe, which he had long confirmed by his own use. I had before me the case where the presents were contained. I hastened to open it, and saw the one that was addressed to me. What conclusion was I to draw in such bizarre uncertainty? Could experience help to procure me further insight? At random, I had one of my dogs brought to me, and having closed myself in, I had him swallow a few drops of that deadly potion. In less than a quarter-hour I saw him gradually fall asleep, and finally die without any sign of struggle.⁷⁰⁹ That time had sufficed to make up my mind. I took my pen, and without suggesting to the duke the slightest mistrust of his intentions, I wrote to him all the circumstances of an episode that still made my hand tremble as I wrote. At the same time I sent him the letter from La Cortona, and his own presents, which it was not fit I should keep in my house, by whoever's hand they had been poisoned.

Drink, whom I chose for this errand, but without explaining to him its mystery to him, was ordered to observe the duke's face upon receiving the case, and especially upon opening my letter. I also instructed him to affect profound ignorance of what he was charged to execute, and to make no reply to whatever provocative or insulting things he might hear said against me.

However submissively and exactly he was accustomed to

⁷⁰⁹ The importance of poisons in both the popular mind and that of the court during that last decades of Louis XIV is well known. Prévost does not seem to doubt their efficacy; Patrice's wife, in *Le Doyen de Killerine*, will make use of a casket of "elixirs" which she has inherited from her father (pp. 307–308).

obeying me, his curiosity was aroused by such extraordinary orders. He bore my letter to the duke, who was preparing to set out for London that very night. He observed him, and at first saw him manifest no more than simple signs of surprise; but his fury was kindled as he read the letter which was enclosed with mine. It was already was evident in his eyes and [598] in his every movement, when, seeing Drink frightened and on his way out, he ordered him to stay. The experiment I had made, and about which he had just read, at once gave him the idea of replicating it. He had a dog brought to him, not explaining his purpose, and having caused it to die in a few minutes before the eyes of Drink, who was marvelling at the spectacle: Stay, he repeated; you will report back to your master that I have avenged my grievances and his. The orders he had given for departure that same night were advanced, and his chaise ready in a moment. He had himself driven in a single carriage with Drink to Doña Cortona's, while his chaise and his men, with exception of his manservant, went to await him at St. Denis.⁷¹⁰ That woman was not worried, because knowing that he was about to leave, she had not imagined that her scheme could be figured out so soon, and was on the contrary expecting to lend it even more plausibility after his departure. I do not know how she could have reconciled the trip he would make to London with the expectations she thought he had; but the duke found in her little indication of unease or discomfiture when he entered her lodging. He pretexted, for purposes of announcing his visit, a minor matter which he discussed with her for a moment; and feigning all of a sudden some order he needed to send to his home, he requested that she lend him a man who served her. His

⁷¹⁰ St. Denis is on the Seine north of Paris, thus on the way toward Calais.

manservant, to whom he sent him, was under secret orders to retain him. Finally, having no other witness than Drink, his face and voice changed, to lash out at her with rage and contempt that made her tremble.

She easily surmised from his first reproaches that the intrigue was discovered, and that it was useless to dissimulate. Her first recourse was to tears, and summoning nevertheless all the resources of her mind, she still had the temerity to reply that he ought not to blame her for something she had undertaken to serve him; that after the honor he had done her of granting her his confidence, she, seeing him contemplating a marriage that could only ruin his fortune, she could think of nothing more appropriate for breaking it off than the means she had employed; that she admitted in truth that her hatred for my family had something to do with it; but that it was not he who should take offense at that, when despite his harshness toward her, her primary intention was to convince him of her loyalty and her zeal.

The ruse was grotesque. Indeed the duke replied to it only with new marks of indignation, and returning to the circumstances of her heinous enterprise, he demanded that she confess them without exception. That point could not be extracted from her mouth without a continual renewal of insults and threats. She named one of the duke's men who had informed her about the presents he had sent, and who having in fact some affection for her, had allowed himself to be drawn by various promises into mixing into the elixir the poison which she had placed in his hands. Her concern was not that its effect would be too quick, because my death would only have flattered her vengeance; but she had nevertheless wished that I should have only the scare of the danger, with the humiliation of believing I had been gulled by the duke, and lose all the hopes of grandeur I had conceived for my daughter. So then you paid no thought, the duke interrupted

furiously, to making me out a traitor and a cowardly poisoner? And as if that thought had redoubled his rage: Take this, he added, plunging his sword into her breast, there is the just reward for your crimes. It will be more honorable for you to die by my hand than by the hangman's. The sword was drawn so swiftly, and the blow delivered so suddenly, that Drink had no power to prevent it. The unhappy Cortona fell unconscious to the floor, and lost her tongue and her life at the same moment.

Drink stood there stunned. But the duke, seeming more tranquil after this execution, turned toward him with a look of satisfaction: I fear less, he said, the reproach of having dipped my hands in the blood of a miscreant, than of sparing a monster who would have lived only to multiply her furies. Return to your master, and tell him that I would not refuse justifications to him if he should expect any from a man such as me. You will relate to him what you have seen. I am leaving for London, he added; [599] and if the two accidents I have had do not permit me to return to France right away, I flatter myself that upon the happy news which I will be sure to send him, he will be so kind as to come join me in England. Drink started to leave. No, the duke rejoined, I do not wish to expose you to the consequences of what has just occurred; and carefully closing the room in which he left the corpse of Doña Cortona, he took him with him in the carriage that had brought them, to drive him to the corner of a distant street. I go forthwith, he repeated; assure your master that I would have been less impetuous had I had but my own grievances to avenge. He departed only after seeing Drink get into another carriage, and even instructing him to abandon that vehicle on leaving the city, to cut off any path for suspicions that could have veered in the direction of St. Cloud.

His vengeance was only half-satisfied. It remained for him to punish the disloyal servant who had lent his hands to La Corto-

na to mix her poison into the elixir. I subsequently learned that after sending him out to St. Denis with his chaise, he had the self-control to give him no sign of resentment before Calais. His journey was carried out with such diligence that he arrived the next evening in that city. He promptly hired a ferry, which he boarded with his own men only; and when he was in the middle of the Channel, he had them go on deck with him, not having emitted a single word that could give them any foreboding of his intentions. There, assuming a furious countenance, he accused the traitor of the abuse he had made of his confidence. He did not listen to his justifications, nor his cries, and after piercing his heart with a dagger, he plunged him with a kick into the sea.

I awaited Drink in such anxiety that, for fear of betraying myself by my countenance or something I said, I remained in my cabinet until he arrived. His manner in which he approached, and the care he took to close my door behind him, foreshadowed something of what he had to tell. He had returned on foot, in accordance with the duke's advice. I listened to him with all the surprise that his tale was able to cause me. I was avenged on my enemies, and delivered from all the threats of their hatred: this was a satisfaction, but which I contemplated much less than I wondered at the maliciousness of men, which goes so far as to make them enjoy their crimes in the very midst of the torments that are inseparable from remorse. What, does it not suffice a good man, I cried out, not to have to struggle any more against fortune, and work to establish peace in his own heart? He is at war with the passions of others when he flatters himself he can calm his own; and to live tranquilly, he would, after controlling himself, have to succeed in communicating the same taste for order and tranquillity to all creatures of his species? Who will dare attempt such a prodigious effort, or think he will succeed once he has undertaken it? Yet such is the fate, I added, to which

the perfection itself of what we call wisdom and virtue is forever exposed. What good is it then to try, and what use can it be for making the heart content? I gave all the freer vent to these protests that they seemed to me to justify more and more the disaffection I had developed for all philosophical speculations; and being not more satisfied by the other systems to which I had held, I tended to believe at that moment that the peace of mind and heart for which I had been searching was nothing at bottom but an illusion. Drink, who saw me in such deep meditation since his report, remained standing there to await my orders. A glance in his direction brought me to myself.

Among a hundred questions which I put to him over what he had heard, I asked him how the duke had explained himself about the passion he was said to have at one and the same time for my wife and my daughter. He had maintained a silence that provoked new reflections. Could it be possible, I said, for the heart to be capable of this bizarre division? There can be no doubt, it is a ridiculous ruse of calumny. But, I continued, does it make sense either for La Cortona to have adopted such strange imaginations, if they did not [600] have more truth than plausibility? Fanny long believed that the duke was in love with her. He spoke to her in the language of love. He showed submission and zeal for her every wish. Perhaps he settled on my daughter only from despair at ever fazing the mother; and I easily conceive that, anticipating ease in seducing a young person whom he supposed unengaged, he finally turned his heart's every inclination in her direction. The miserable Cortona lent him the insane design of snatching them both from me at once; but he had confessed to her that he loved them both, and it is on that basis that she made her abominable accusation.

Thus, while doing justice to the duke, I persuaded myself that he had long harbored for my wife the same sentiments he

expressed for my daughter; and this thought accorded quite well with the notion I more than ever formed of his character: an impetuous young man, with generosity and honor; but born as he was, and then raised without any other principles, subject consequently to all the variations that can come from the heat of the blood or the force of circumstances; in short, an unstable mixture of vices and virtues. Such as he was, I would have stubbornly overridden all my reluctance, had my daughter's heart been moved in his favor; but the bloody image of the murder of La Cortona, in which the savagery of the action struck me much more than the justice of the punishment, gave a new force in my mind to Cécile's last declarations, and my only thought from this point on was to find some means of breaking civilly with him.

It was not to be hoped that so many extraordinary events could remain entirely hidden from Fanny. The sole means of tempering her alarms was to prepare her with a narrative the details of which were in my power to attenuate. I carried out this delicate task the very next day, and succeeded rather well in calming her imagination. She nevertheless retained from our discussion a silent terror, which was at every moment augmented by her daughter's lethargy. Our dear Cécile's health was visibly beginning to worsen by the day. There was no longer the joyful vivacity that was natural in her eyes, nor the shining complexion that would have stood out amidst the brightest flowers. She was becoming visibly more pale, and even her lips were losing some of their color. While losing none of their sweetness, her glances were becoming somber and pensive. If her willingness to please caused her to lend her attention to an anecdote by which someone was attempting to amuse her, she would approve of it with a tender and gracious smile; but everyone noticed that the impression did not go to the heart. Her lack of interest in all sorts of diversions became so insuperable that she finally implored us to

stop proposing them to her. Her only contentment was in solitude; or if she sought her mother's company and mine, it was less to talk to us than to remain seated between us, absorbed by her meditations without opening her mouth. She would look at us sometimes by turns, and in such a tender way that her mother, who studied her every movement, could not hold back her tears. I incited her to talk with various questions: a short reply was all I could get from her. I did not succeed better by obliging her to some exercise which I thought could give her some amusement. She submitted to my orders, but I could see that her heart was opposed; and out of pity as much as affection, I left her the freedom her eyes were asking for.

There is not a prominent doctor in Paris who was not consulted about such a strange sickness, nor perhaps a remedy we did not propose that she try. But what hope was there of healing her, since she seemed enamored of her illness,⁷¹¹ and since to all the questions that were constantly put to her, she answered that she was without the least indisposition? The doctors themselves could detect nothing to which they could ascribe that name, and I easily discerned that it was at random that they suggested medications. I thus felt less the need to urge them upon her. Whatever notion I conceived of her situation, I could not persuade myself that it was dangerous. Her age and the excellence of her temperament were reasons too good for feeling reassured. Nevertheless, Fanny's anxieties sometimes planted secret alarms in my heart. She would say to me, with tears in her eyes: I shall lose [601] my daughter, I

⁷¹¹ Cécile in turn manifests this characteristic of the novel's other protagonists.

have a premonition I cannot shake.⁷¹² Heaven, she would add, with a dread that seemed to fill her, what would you ever give me that could console me for her loss and keep me from following her to the grave! I attempted to inspire her with better prospects. Finding in Cécile no penchant for returning to Paris, she proposed to her that we at least a change in situation by lodging in the pavilion in the park. Besides the amenity of variety, she was hoping to cheer her with some rustic diversion, in a season when the grape harvest which was about to begin in the neighboring countryside invited everyone to pleasure. The pavilion had a most agreeable open view in the direction of the plain. Fanny herself oversaw the planning of her fête. It was not at all a project for a brilliant assembly and tumultuous joy, as the one I had so unhappily produced. Simple pleasures: a concert of rustic instruments, shepherdesses dancing, a repast distributed to all the grape harvesters of the plain, who were to assemble within sight of the pavilion, in short everything that Fanny thought prone to cheer a melancholy heart, without putting it off with ostentatious display and the agitations of gratuitous pomp. She had distributed among the local peasants an abundance of fabrics, linens, and ribbons, with a model for the form she wished for their attire. She had taken the trouble to design it with her own hands. Her charitable inclination thus found a means of being satisfied, under the pretext of a pleasure as real as the one she expected from entertaining her daughter. Cécile went along willingly with all these thoughts, and even expressed satisfaction at participating in an

⁷¹² This foreboding is perhaps inspired by Fanny's phantasm in "book IX" of the apocryphal "tome V," which confronts her with the pierced body of their son Will: soon afterwards he is assassinated in the manner described in the first preface.

undertaking to which she saw her mother so devoted.

I had not neglected, in this interval, to communicate to the Duke of Monmouth the change that had been effected in my resolutions. The fear lest he find in his father the king all the indulgence which we had hoped, and that it become more difficult for me to disengage myself once his consent had been obtained, had led me to a course of action that did some violence to my natural sincerity. Instead of expressing my thinking to him directly, I had enrolled Lord Clarendon to have the king forewarned by the Duke of York of a marriage as ill-befitting his son as well as my daughter, and I had put off writing to the duke until the king's refusal had disposed him to be less surprised at seeing me change my sentiment on so proper a pretext. Indeed the only surprise he had in receiving my letter was to find me already informed of his father's response. But his displeasure as a result being only the more keen, he expressed it to me in the terms most able to move me: his life depended on the happiness I had seemed to promise him. He begged me to suspend my resolutions, and allow him time to renew a hundred times his efforts with the king. It was impossible for a father by whom he was loved to persist long in making him despair. And if the inclination I had indicated for him was sincere, did I want means to make him happy despite all the obstacles? He was prepared to leave England and put down roots in France with Cécile. For that he awaited only a sign of consent, and the plans he already had for the secret exchange of his property seemed to him infallible.

I have never known how sincere these protestations were; but it is true that having confided in M. de R..., with whom he had not failed to make acquaintance, he found the means of putting him in his interests. Such pressing advances on the part of a man in whom all the advantages of fortune and nature were combined were regarded by M. and Mme de R... as the greatest

honor their dear daughter could receive. Those were the terms in which they expressed themselves to me. I was even surprised to learn from them that the Duke of York, in confiding to them his intervention with the king in response to the Earl of Clarendon's wish, had manifested some surprise to see me fear an alliance that ought to have spurred all my ambition. Besides the consideration of which it assured me at once in England, what greater happiness could I desire for my daughter? He had M, de R... urge me to I think it over more than once; and the king, he added, not having expressed any opposition to this marriage other than the one he had suggested to him, he flattered himself, if only I felt so inclined, to make it succeed as easily as he had diverted it.

[602] It was because of Lord Clarendon that the Duke of York had adopted these benevolent sentiments toward my family; and he himself had not learned that the Duke of Monmouth's intentions had turned to Cécile without arguing that I ought to think less of opposing them than of taking advantage of such a felicitous opportunity to set up my daughter. But I had easily made him understand that ambition was not my heart's principal motivation, and that having no other passion than my happiness and that of the persons dear to me, I gave the name grandeur and fortune only to whatever could lead me to that goal. His own manner of thinking on all that the world considers in a different way had made him return to my principles, and I had received his congratulations for what had at first drawn me his reproaches.

Although I had renounced all hope of curing Cécile's indifference, I gave her M. de R... 's letter with that of her suitor. She read them without emotion, and the only sentiment she evinced was one of gratitude for the trouble I had taken to deliver her from that worry. She took the opportunity to ask me if it was not most unjust in most men to trouble with their importunities the peace of a woman they love, and think their love is a right to

insist on being loved. I quite understand, she added, that it would be monstrous to detest a suitor, and that his very persecutions may derive from their cause a more favorable name. But what law imposes another's affection on us, when far from having sought to inspire it, we have declared that it wearies and distresses us?⁷¹³ She asked me to tell her what she was to think on this matter. But..., said I, it is rather difficult for our sex to determine what is proper for yours. We are edified by your mistakes, and we would be hard-pressed to name all your duties. Yet I have always thought that, men's passions being commonly as unruly in their source as in most of their effects, they do not even oblige a woman to that sort of gratitude the refusal of which your goodness leads you to consider a monstrous injustice. If you could read into the heart of a suitor, and if, divining the motives that impel him, you were perfectly aware that it is as much the charm of merit as that of beauty which he seeks in his object and has enjoyed in it by his sentiments, not only would I find you excusable to give him your heart, but supposing you were bound by other engagements, I would find you at least obliged to grant him gratitude and esteem. The misfortune will always consist in the difficulty of making that discrimination, and that is the stumbling block of all amiable women. They plunge ordinarily into one excess or the other, putting too much trust in appearances that deceive them, or refusing the confidence they owe to sentiments worthy of them, but which they cannot discern.

Alas, replied Cécile, how needless is the second of these

⁷¹³ Like her mother, Cécile, after an initial, reciprocated love, is the object of the love of others without being able either to requite it or to free herself from it; she will call herself "the victim of the passions of others".

speculations, since there are so few men in whom even their appearance is able to fool a reasonable woman for a single moment! She added nothing to this comment; and seeing it as no more than a pleasantry our their rather ordinarily makes of ours, I suspected no more mystery in it than in any other discourse that chance might have given rise to. Fanny was much more insightful. She imagined from this sally that in Paris her daughter had had some affectionate attachment which had not been happily sustained, and had ended, in a word, with her own disaffection, or with the faithlessness of her suitor. She recalled frequent exits from her apartment, short absences, a few letters furtively received and opened surreptitiously; in short, other circumstances the secret of which she had never figured out. These suspicions, which she lost no time communicating to me, seemed to me implausible. I pointed out to her that Cécile's conduct had been too direct and too regular to receive such interpretations. Your daughter, I said, did not just begin being sad and pensive. It has been her habitual disposition for a long time. If you suppose she has loved, she is not someone who would be unrequited; and had her passion ended in her own disaffection, still one must allow some moments when her heart was satisfied. Yet I do not recall a single one when I have seen in her that playfulness of spirit which is natural to her, and which I saw in other times. Paris [603] changed nothing in her humor. Despite this reasoning, Fanny secretly questioned the women who served her daughter. She pressed them; she added threats to her promises. But instead of the discoveries she anticipated, she made a hundred others that charmed her heart by destroying her presupposition. Cécile's absences, her notes, her intrigues, were mysteries of generosity, of zeal, of compassion, in short the continual exercise of all her virtues.

No great change took place in our situation until the time

Fanny had set for the celebration of her fête. The ladies were staying in the pavilion in the park. They had little room there, but the opportunity to see each other continually, or rather the necessity of always being together, only made the society more animated. One might have expected it to do Cécile some good, if amusements had been a medicine for her. I, who was beginning to regard her languor as an illness of the imagination, for which time only could offer hope of a cure, was quite aware that the constraint in which this new living arrangement held her from morning to evening rather increased her suffering than helped to diminish it. During this time I was trying out the new system I had created for myself in my most recent reflections. The study of nature occupied all the time I had free to spend on it in my cabinet. I devoted a part of it to reading and to contemplating principles, the rest to the conducting experiments; and if I had doubts about something, I was not ashamed to communicate them to the most celebrated philosophers of a century fertile in great men. I was on friendly terms with Father Mersenne, who was living in Passy. His method and interventions spared me many difficulties and delays. All the students of physics who had made some reputation for themselves in Paris, at least those who combined a little affability and polish with the lights of the mind, saw me seek their acquaintance and cultivate their friendship. I extended my relations even to foreign countries. M. Descartes, who had made a philosophical retreat for himself in Egmont, a small city in Holland, accepted several letters from me, and always was prompt in answering them. Besides philosophical discussions, I consulted him about the order he had instituted in the occupations of his solitude, and the fruit he drew from it for his life's amenity

and tranquillity.⁷¹⁴

A modest number of sensible and virtuous friends, but more suited to the common functions of society than to study of the profound sciences, constituted another sort of occupation of which I appreciated the amenity no less. They were not those persons distracted by the noise and amusements of high society, with whom M. Briand had furnished my house in Paris, nor those brash minds rejecting all principles, who had attempted to draw me into their new opinions. The friends to whom I had decided to limit myself in St. Cloud were a few persons of each sexe, whose passions were no longer lively enough as to delude their minds, but who had known enough of them to reason rightly about their nature, and to explain their effects judiciously; people accustomed to the ways of high society, where they had spent their youth, and the constraints of which had become unbearable when they were a little older; who had consequently taken from it what is estimable without contracting its silliness and follies, and who discussed the taste they had had for it as a peril from which they had happily escaped. They had not attained the age where one ceases to appreciate pleasures, but they were at the age where one likes to enjoy them with decency, and where reason makes one reject those with which it is less satisfied than the senses. Such were the companions of my leisure, and the guests at a table from which I had banished lavishness, leaving only good taste to reign.⁷¹⁵ I went with them to the theatre, and made an additional spectacle of hearing their critique of a new play, or seeing them

⁷¹⁴ A considerable chronological distortion in both cases cited, since Father Mersenne had died in 1648 and Descartes in 1650,

⁷¹⁵ The notion and definition of good taste was a much-discussed topic in the 1730s: cf. Voltaire's *Le Temple du goût*, published in 1733.

discuss the judgment of it which they wanted me to have. We would thus examine in common all the creative works that merited some esteem, and did not fail to observe the reservations one must sometimes apply to the applause of the public. Fanny, and even Cécile, no longer showed any reluctance for such moderate entertainments. They [604] listened to our discussions, and very often took part in them with their observations; and my affectionate indulgence, which was incapable of failing for a minute for them, caused me to derive as much benefit from their satisfaction as from mine.

I repeat, with a certainty which I believe I have acquired with experience: if there is some contentment to expect from worldly intercourse and the enjoyment of its pleasures, it is only in that choice and in that moderation that can maintain the soul's freedom to know and savor what it possesses. A sensitive heart, if it is accompanied by a precise mind, has no happiness to hope for in the confusion that necessarily follows on disorder and excess. But is even that happiness which I make to consist in moderation, untroubled and unmixed? If among so many men who seek the means to happiness in good faith, there is some one who for whom there is nothing to aspire to beyond what he possesses, let him publish it to the glory of nature and of the objects in which she flatters herself she will find her peace. I for my part confess that in a state where I indeed saw few things to desire, I still had fears; and I give this name not only to my worries over Cécile, in whom I discerned through all the veils a perpetually agitated heart; but with enough reason to reflect on what was occurring about me, could I see many people less happy without being warned by their example that the happiness that was granted to me depended on a thousand possessions which they lacked, and of which I could be deprived as they were, since I owed them solely to chance, and it had not necessarily attached them to my

person? Could I have any delusion about so many unforeseen deaths, which I heard about every day, and conceal from myself that what happened to a thousand persons in whom I took little interest, must sooner or later be the fate of all those I most cherished? Could I already see occasional disappearance of some of my most faithful friends without trembling at perceiving the peril so close to me? And when I saw them leave the position they had occupied in the world, was it possible for me to avoid the thought that it was never to exercise it again? What had become of them? What strange power had taken them from our midst without consulting their wishes or ours? After laboring like me to be happy, how much had they achieved? And to whatever place they had gone, if they had taken with them the same desires, would they find a way to satisfy them there? But it seemed to me that this was a matter with which I had never seen them occupied. Strange neglect of such a cherished interest! Could I help an intense anguish for their fate? So we think it is necessary here to be happy, I said a hundred times on these sad occasions, and we do not ask whether we are capable of it, or whether not being happy is to be feared, in a situation which does not change, and in which we know not what fate awaits us.

It is one of the most unfortunate effects of the impression of sensory things, that these serious meditations, which no doubt do not fail to occur on occasion to any sensible man, can be dissipated in a moment by the first object that catches the imagination, and that they remain ordinarily without force even in those who have best understood their importance. They had enough power over me to trouble often the amenity of my life, without being yet able to act more powerfully on my heart.

Yet the spell had to be broken: but alas, at what a price! If I have no right to accuse heaven for cruelty when it required me to pay such a price for the most estimable of its benefits, grant me at

least the freedom to bemoan myself, and deplore the blindness of my heart, which could not be enlightened by less terrible means. I was in my chamber one morning, occupied with my usual studies, and perhaps more tranquil than ever, because of the disposition of my health which had suffered some setbacks from which I was well recovered, when Fanny entered alone, looking so downcast that it made me anxious for her own. She was nonetheless doing herself violence, and not half of her grief was apparent on her face. But she had scarcely drawn near to me before she [605] lost the courage she was still affecting. Instead of opening her mouth to tell me what brought her, she began to shed a stream of tears, accompanied with sobs that cut off her voice's passage. I rose in great alarm. What are you going to tell me? I said, embracing her. She kept me a few more moments in suspense. Finally, her heart opening with a hundred sighs: Ah, she cried, I shall lose my daughter! I am condemned to lose Cécile. I shall not have her two days more. Consider me already dead with her, she added, embracing me in turn, for I do not want to survive her for a minute.

Before undertaking to console her, I asked her the cause of a fear for which I so far knew no foundation. She told me, less in words than in sighs, that being called to her daughter's room by the women who served her, she had found her in a condition the very thought of which made her tremble: burning with a frightful fever, by which she confessed she had been tormented all night, with such visible signs of deep despondency that she feared the doctors, who had to be called from Paris, would find her expiring on their arrival. I reproached her, Fanny added, for keeping her illness to herself through the night, and not even asking help from her women; she replied that the short time she has left to live, it was not worth her causing anyone any effort.

This language alarmed me much more than the description of her illness. Objects are enlarged in passing through a mother's

eyes; but words, which are repeated by faithful lips, are not so easily deformed, and I thought I saw in my daughter's a symptom of despondency that seemed to me more dangerous than her fever. I of course refrained from sharing this thought with Fanny, and making on the contrary an effort to comfort her, I then went with her to the pavilion in the park, where I was nearly the only one who had not taken up lodging. The state in which I found Cécile no longer permitted me to regard her mother's report as an exaggeration. Despite the ardor of her fever, which still maintained the color in her cheeks, I noted such a change in her eyes and even in the sound of her voice that I myself needed all my courage to conceal my consternation. I immediately ordered that the most skilled doctors be sent for, and doing everything I could to relieve her, I waited at her bedside for the attack that seemed to me subsiding had completely passed before I engaged her in any conversation. She was pressing my hand, to let me know the regret she had not to be able to thank me otherwise for my affection. Finally, I saw her color slowly fade: her eyes became more tender as they got over their agitation; and her pulse, which I checked from time to time, resumed a more regular beat. Some refreshments which she accepted from my hand, calmed her completely. I thought the danger had passed, and while her mother went to be dressed, I remained with her to talk to her in the same calm.

Interrogating her over the particular causes of this new illness, it was impossible not to mix with my questions some of my earlier reproaches about her melancholic humor, which was visibly the primary source of all the alterations in her health. I had more or less given up pressing her on that point, less from the abatement of my curiosity than from fear of irritating her with my insistence. However, the natural train of my thoughts, and perhaps even more the sight of a place as dear to my memory as the

reader has had occasion to find it remarkable in my story,⁷¹⁶ did not allow me to stifle a hundred sentiments that rose confusedly in my heart. Dear Cécile! I said to her after a few moments' pause, for what fateful reasons do you persist in refusing me your trust? You harbor in the secret of your heart a poison that consumes you. Your vivacity and playfulness are gone. Your strength is perceptibly failing, and your very life is only too much threatened with some baleful accident. In short, you are perishing from an ailment I do not know. Who can be causing this self-hatred, and give you, at your age, such cruel presumptions against a hundred things which [606] you should love? Yet if life has advantages that can sometimes make it pleasant, it seems to me that one can hardly find them better combined than they are around you. What are you lacking to be happy? Tell me, speak, I continued more forcefully, seeing her lower her eyes; is it some irremediable infirmity? It is a hopeless passion? A deep sigh, which seemed to escape her despite herself, made me interrupt my apostrophe. I waited to see what this effort was going to produce. Alas, she said, I have no other infirmity than the one you know; and if I have some passion, it is unknown even to me.

I thought I grasped something in this reply, and that renewed urging could get her to expand on her sentiments. Ah, Cécile, I rejoined, I remember a time when you would have found it less difficult to open your heart to me. The name of father has made me lose your confidence. Look where you are. Think back to circumstances that cannot be completely erased from your memory. You would not then have had to be pressed to make me

⁷¹⁶ An allusion, as again in the following paragraph, to the moment in book VI where, in this same pavilion Cleveland had come close to seducing Cécile, about three years earlier.

the confidant of your pains. I had given you examples of sincerity and openness that had touched you. Is it possible that nature is less tender than love? For you loved me then, and you would not have wished any hand other than mine to dry your tears. I had never recalled our earlier weaknesses so openly to her. But I will admit that, remembering how responsive she had been to the expressions of my blind passion, I had felt some suspicion that she could still have retained some affection for me, which was combatted in her heart by nature and reason. After such efforts to discover her secret sufferings and the cause of her continued resistance to all our proposals, I saw no other reason than this on which I could conclude. I became all the more convinced of it when, having raised my eyes on her, I saw hers full of tears; the impression she appeared to feel from my plea made me expect more enlightenment than I had ever obtained from her.

She indeed opened her mouth, and her first expressions answering less to her thought than to her sentiments, I could make out nothing in it through a hundred sobs that smothered them before they could get out. The cloud, bulging, if I may be allowed this expression, from such obstinate silence and so many somber meditations, burst with as much bitterness as violence. Perhaps my own emotion prevented me from identify her first words; but those I began to make out, the memory of which is engraved forever in my heart, presupposed some others it had been impossible for me to hear. Death will be its remedy, she said, though I could still not guess from what kind of suffering she wanted to be delivered, and I desire it with such impatience that from now on only its delay can grieve me. I will not tell you, she continued, that love has been a calamity for me. The way I am, I would inevitably have felt the same bitter moments without having experienced it. I thought of it in my youth as I think of it now. I believed it necessary to the happiness of which I already had a

notion, and going wrong perhaps insofar in imagining all women as affectionate as I, from that time on I attended to my imaginations and desires. The difficulties did not escape me: besides a hundred stories I heard of the inconstancy and bad faith of men, I sensed that a real composite of all I combined in my thoughts might never exist outside my imagination; and yet, either because I mistook the movement of nature⁷¹⁷ for a taste of affection, or because appearing to me indeed such as I desired a suitor to give him my heart,⁷¹⁸ you inspired in me a true passion, it is true that I worshiped you as long as I could without reproach, and the approval even of M. and Mme de R... authorized my sentiments. I pass rapidly over so beguiling an error. All it left me was a delightful idea, at which I have made a scrupulous halt, and which I would have sacrificed solely out of consideration for my mother even if I had not had a hundred other duties as motives. These explanations, continued my daughter sadly, were [607] necessary to cast some light on what you wish to hear. You will understand that in the midst of my present languor, I have been able to answer you a hundred times, without misleading you, that I had no awareness of any passion in me which I intended to conceal from you. Alas, I would have been too happy had there been one of that nature to reveal to you; I would have seen more clearly into my own sentiments, I would have found the confirmation of what was still doubtful even to me; or rather, you would never have had any concern over my situation, nor I anything to reveal to you, since that secret itself, that passion I am supposing, would have pro-

⁷¹⁷ *I.e.*, consanguinity, speaking in its own mysterious way.

⁷¹⁸ The ambiguity is, apparently, authentic, and will never be resolved: as in the plot itself, the problem of incest – as that of infidelity – is explicitly raised without being definitively settled.

tected me from all the extremes to which I have allow myself to be carried. Understand then, to tell you the least obscure part of it that I have sorted out, that after being recognized by my mother in Quevilly, and abandoning myself for several days to the initial affections of nature, I was not long in feeling the void that was left in my heart by the ruin of a passion to which my entire happiness had been attached. I was not capable of an indulgence that could bring it back to life, and besides the name of father was constantly a protection that would have made me overcome it. But all my sentiments subsisted none the less after the loss of their object. I had their source imbedded in a very tender character; with what power did they make themselves felt, when inflamed as they were by several month's exercise, they were forced to pull back, and all their action was bottled up in my heart! I do not know, after that, where I found enough virtue to bear my woes. Nor do I know whether it is to heaven's favor, or merely to the agitation of a encumbered spirit seeking relief, that I owed a resource almost as painful, in truth, as my ills, but nevertheless capable of sustaining my virtue, by a sort of diversion it naturally gave to the struggles I had to sustain. The story of my family's tribulations and the image of so many sad adventures, which my life had not been spared any more than that of everyone to whom I was related by blood, filled me with sentiments as somber as those tragic thoughts. I abandoned myself languidly to them, because they became a sort of veil under which all the other movements of my heart soon began to hide. It is from this mixture that my habitual disposition was gradually formed. I found it comforting, and I allowed nothing there that seemed incompatible with duty. In changing my humor⁷¹⁹ it may have altered my

⁷¹⁹ In the physiological sense; this is a sort of medical analysis.

blood; but you see that far from deserving the name obstinacy, which you gave to my silence, I have never had anything to explain to you that was clear to me; and perhaps you find it difficult to understand what I am trying to describe to you today.

However I must add, she added with a sigh, that if the derangement of my health can be attributed to my melancholy, it is since your pressure has made me undertake to overcome my sorrowful sentiments. You have proposed that I suffer the attentions of Don Thadeo: I made a hundred efforts to accustom my heart to welcoming them, and found nothing in me that spoke to me in his favor. The freedom you granted me to follow my inclinations among so many men who came forward in Paris and seemed to be trying to interest me, gave me some hope of one day developing an affection. I lent myself to that fantasy. I sought to blind myself to the merit they were lacking, and tried to lend them the qualities that could have swayed me. Is it possible, I would say, that heaven which has made me with a heart such as mine, has produced no one that is like me, or that it has placed what accords with my inclinations only in the one man on earth whom it makes it a crime for me to love? Complaining to myself of that unfortunate delicacy that has made me look upon all the men I have known with the same aversion, I have asked a thousand times whether all the rest of their sex was the same; whether vanity, love of self, flighty sentiments, neglect of the essential principles of justice and goodness, and above all a lamentable air of conceit, so opposed to openness and simplicity of heart, were the lot of the entire sex that places itself over ours. I put that question to my mother, to Mrs Riding, to my aunt. They replied as if in concert that the difference was only one of degree, and that in general there is little faith to be placed in the [608] character of most men. I did not appeal a decision which accorded with everything I knew. I gave up hope of finding in a suitor the

qualities I desired, and without which I was not free to love. Thus, when you pressed me to tell you what passion I had in my heart, I was sincere in protesting to you that I granted to no one the affection I was refusing to Don Thadeo.

But that is the point, she added, where I confess that the torments of my heart could have altered my blood, and reduced me progressively to this weakened state. The bitterness of my reflections as of my sentiments has only increased since. I had begun to see myself as the object of heaven's wrath, since it seemed to condemn me to bearing throughout my life, in my heart, a penchant which it deprived me of the means of satisfying, and I have believed myself more unfortunate because of that thought than you have ever been from all the persecutions of fortune. I have realized day by day that my blood was souring in my veins. My mirror did not alert me more faithfully to the change in my coloration and the pallor of my complexion. You speak to me of the contentments that are attached to the circumstances of my fate: yet what enjoyment can I find in them, since everything in life is sad and tedious for me? Is another's happiness anything but torture to those who cannot attain it, and who look upon it with envy? Your fêtes and entertainments have put me under unbearable constraint. The passion of the Duke of Monmouth came along to crown my despair. I could not listen to him speak of his affection, and see you yourself admire what it made him capable of doing to win me, without wishing that with so much love and so many other brilliant qualities, he might possess those that could make an impression on my heart. I would adore him if he were loveable. But despite that semblance of a penchant, I cannot endure him. I shall never admire a man who is haughty and crude; to my eyes he is a monster.

Or perhaps I am one myself to yours, she continued, recovering some from her anger. Alas, you are witness to the life I have

led since the incident at the ball. The misfortune of Don Thadeo, the violence of the duke, and the very amusements with which you strove to dissipate my sorrows, have had on me the effect of a fatal poison. Everything takes on that mortal quality in a mind as sick as mine. I can no longer fight it. My death, which I do not believe far off, will deliver me from so many torments, and relieve you too of a burden that troubles the happiness of your life. Do not tell my mother about this conversation, she added; I had resolved to keep my peace to the grave, and the rambling story with which I have just wearied you has told you nothing that I could not have hidden from you without failing in the submission I owe you. But some power has loosened my tongue despite me. Attribute it less, if you wish, to paternal authority than to a remnant of those sentiments which you were the first to arouse in my heart, and which your words had the power to reawaken as much as the sight of this place.

I did not leave her the time to lapse into reflections that could follow on this confession, and although the tears which I saw flowing from her eyes were more prone to augment the tender compassion I had felt listening to her, than to make me adopt a tone that accords with joy, I hastened to embrace her with expressions of satisfaction she was surprised by. I win, said I to her gaily, and would gladly give some of my blood for what I have just obtained. How wrong of you, Cécile, I added, looking at her tenderly, to make me pay for this insight with such cruel delays! No, perhaps duty does not oblige you to have this candor with a father; but how many reasons ought to have made you give in to more tender motives! Now, dear daughter, I added, embracing her again, the sentiments I have preserved for you are scarcely different from love. If heaven does not offer you a husband who can answer to the perfection of your own, I promise you that you will find in the inexhaustible depths of my heart enough to fulfill

the full extent of your desires. And far from having to fear a rival in your mother, I guarantee you she will help me to convince you that I am the most passionate of your lovers.

[609] But, I continued in a more tranquil voice, and again taking my seat beside her, if the laws of earth and heaven force us to add nothing to that title, why should we give up on finding for you a husband worthy of you, and such as you desire to be happy? The virtues that can move you are less rare in our sex than in you have supposed. You distrust appearances too much. Often the most amiable man even in the eyes of reason finds himself forced by the tyranny of a few frivolous fashions to assume an outer bearing which he is first to condemn, and by which it would do him an injustice to judge his principles and sentiments. The vague decisions on which you have relied, even your mother's, are a language common to women, and one not more serious than the jesting you sometimes find our sex invoking against yours. In short, if it is my uprightness, my indulgence, my sensitivity of heart, and some other qualities I will not deny, which have made wish for a lover like me, I promise to find him, wherever on earth he is hiding; and as I think it is impossible for the same reasons that would make you find him amiable not soon to assure you all his affection, I take heaven as my witness that all my possessions, and my life itself, will be put to use, if need be, to make your happiness a certainty.

I was thus using all my skill to calm her mind, and the intention of my heart answering to my promises, I have never doubted that they had made some impression on hers. I dared even to judge already by the ardor with which I saw her take my hand and press it in hers, when the physicians, who had come from Paris with the utmost diligence, came to disrupt a conversation from which I was beginning to anticipate so much fruit. A secret intuition had made me worry being interrupted. I had

gestured away some servants who had come to the door of the room, and Fanny, who was more eager than anyone to join us, had shrewdly understood from their report that I did not wish without reason to be alone with Cécile. However, the impatience with which I had sent for the doctors caused my servants to conclude that they could not usher them in too soon. This precipitation, which prevented them from recognizing the Duke of Monmouth in disguise as he was, was a fatal imprudence, of which my desire not to provoke my own grief does not yet permit me to name the sad effect. The duke, to whom I had indicated unambiguously that my promises had supposed not only the permission of his father the king, but also that of my daughter, and that, having lost hope of obtaining either, I begged him not to take offense at the decision I was making to break my engagements, had not received this news without abandoning himself to all the transports of a desperate passion. Having no third path to choose between supplication and violence, he had resolved to return to Paris, despite all the risks to which he might be exposed there, waiting to determine his course of action according to circumstances. He had brought with him only one servant, whose loyalty and courage were proven; but having sent ahead of him some trusties, whom he had assigned to a lodging in Paris, he was sure to find them if needed. Upon his arrival, having easily obtained information on my daughter's state, he had learned of her languor, and the use she was beginning to make of medical assistance. It was based on this knowledge that he had arranged his plans. Instead of seeking to meet with me, he had figured that the surest choice was to find a way to see Cécile, to attempt to touch her; not to mention that the ardor of love made him regard this satisfaction as supreme happiness. The pretext of medicine seemed to him equally favorable to this design, and to the imperative that he not allow himself to be seen in France without some

precautions. He stoked his memory with a few terms of the art, and disguising himself in a costume and under a name that matched his views, he assumed the title of an English doctor, by dint of which he found little difficulty getting in contact with some of the doctors who saw Cécile.

With them his liberalities and flatteries were doubtless a more powerful recommendation [610] than his knowledge. But having had the cleverness to induce them to discuss my daughter with him, and to reason about the nature of her illness, he obtained from the outset two advantages that greatly flattered his expectations: one real, by making them promise to take him with them the first time they were called to my house; the other, as fanciful as his pretensions, which was to explain Cécile's illness in his favor, and to believe himself the object of this melancholy which he heard attributed to some violent passion. With this presumptuous thought, he could barely control himself until the day when the doctors sent to inform him that I was calling for them. He joined them in the carriage I had sent for them; and if he counted on being recognized by no one in his disguise, his colleagues did not doubt that I would willingly see a doctor of my nation, who seemed to be coming to my home out of pure zeal for my service.

I was with my daughter, in the situation I have described; and seeing four doctors enter, whom I took to be my regular consultants, I drew some distance away to leave them freedom in their initial observations. Nor did the urgency with which they had been introduced permit them to pause first to make me a salutation. I heard the questions they put to Cécile, and there appeared to me to be nothing new in their whole procedure. However, the duke, apparently moved by the sight of the woman he loved, had seized hold of my daughter's hand, on pretext of evaluating her pulse, and scarcely allowed the others time to take

it in their turn. He remained silent; but once the others had ended their questions, and seemed about to step aside to share their thinking, he offered a rather bad one, the conclusion of which was that the seat of the illness being, in his opinion, in the stomach, which he found to be functioning poorly, whence necessarily followed a bad chyle⁷²⁰ which then corrupted the whole mass of the blood, he wished to see the conformation of Cécile's stomach, the better to judge its interior affections by the disposition of the exterior. Thus did this flippant and impudent character indulge himself in sensuous impressions, at the sight of a charming object, who ought to inspire in him as much respect as affection. I was taken in by his ruse, as I was also by his disguise. Despite the resistance of the modest Cécile, I required her to submit to this cruel order. Her servants spared her the mortification of having it carried out by his own hands. The duke's unruly passion was doubtless satisfied by a spectacle that was intended solely for the happiness of a virtuous lover. His ecstasy was expressed only by his silence. He withdrew with the others to a corner of the room, in the guise of holding a consultation; and in my present persuasion that he was abusing their good faith, I do not doubt that he sustained the imposture with some prepared verbiage. But having become bolder with success, he said to them that since I had not noticed he was a foreigner, there was no reason to make a point of it and present him to me more ceremoniously. He easily obtained this concession from them, and conceiving another design, he returned to Cécile's bed, while the others came to me to give me an account of her situation. Having taken her hand once more,

⁷²⁰ A medical term, from the Greek *khulos* meaning juice or sap: "A white juice composed of digested meats" (*Dictionnaire de Trévoux*, 1743).

which he impudently raised to his lips, he thought he risked nothing in saying to her: How happy the Duke of Monmouth would be if he had the slightest part in your present condition, and how willingly he would ransom with all his blood a single moment of the tender melancholy he had caused you! Cécile did not hear this name and the passionate tone of the accompanying words without grasping at least part of the truth. While she did not recognize the false physician, she took him to be an emissary of the duke; and her imagination filled with the flagrant abuse he had made of her modesty, she uttered a sharp cry, which in her weakened condition was nearly her life's last.

It was followed by a deep unconsciousness. It was a good thing for her mother that, for fear of receiving some awful prediction from the doctors' mouths, I had implored her not to appear during the consultation. She did not learn about this bizarre episode. And I, who as yet had no suspicion of it, rushed to my daughter's bedside, where finding her pale and motionless, I remained persuaded for some moments [611] that she had just expired. The three doctors reassured me a little by finding that her pulse was still beating. They seemed rather frightened themselves at such an unforeseen accident. But while they were giving her their full attention, and I myself was running about with inexpressible distress, the Duke of Monmouth, who was perhaps beginning to augur ill of his enterprise, slipped out of the apartment. He reached the outer court, where his manservant, whom he had taken the precaution of having follow him with a hand-led horse, provided him forthwith the means to flee. Heaven alone knows of what moderation it would have made me capable on an occasion of this nature; but I cannot recall the horror and indignation that seized me in soon unmasking such an odious scene without persuading myself that either by my hands, or those of my men, the duke would have paid for it on the spot with his life.

Cécile regained consciousness only to lament her fate with the greatest bitterness. Ah! she said, ever the victim of the passions of others, while the labor of my entire life is to control my own. She told me what she had just heard, which caused me to pass through every level of indignation and fury. I gave orders for the false doctor to be arrested. I was informed, after some searching, of the way in which he had escaped. During that time I questioned his three colleagues, who seemed no less irritated than I to have been deceived by an imposter. They could tell me only the circumstances with which I began this story, and their own astonishment, combined with the esteem they held among honest men, did not allow me to carry my suspicions much farther. But although nothing they told me permitted me to identify the duke, and Cécile had not recognized his face, a vague memory I had retained of the sound of his voice convinced me from the first moment of what he soon had the temerity to confess to me himself.

The most dire effect of this episode was the redoubling of Cécile's fever, and consequently the terrible blow that was not long in piercing our hearts; for though I must concede that at the moment she uttered her cry the doctors had already declared to me that they believed her fever to be dangerous, it is none the less certain that such a sudden shock augmented its poison, and unfortunately hastened its effect. The intensity of the illness, and the signs of its acuteness very quickly became so palpable that the doctors made me apprehend contagion for Fanny. She had fortunately remained in a chamber, which I had made her promise not to leave before my return. It was not easy to forbid her to see her daughter, and I already feared that the order I imposed on her would seem to her too stern. Nevertheless it was so absolutely necessary for me to save from the shipwreck at least a part of my expectations, that if I hesitated for a few moments, it was only

with respect to the means which my affection obliged me to employ. I left Cécile in the throes of her illness, but with all the less pain at leaving her, that the doctors deemed nothing so necessary to her as rest. My offers were considerable enough to make them agree to spend the rest of the day and the night following in her room, while I would personally see to removing my wife to Paris. I foresaw the difficulties I would have to combat; but I was determined to invoke my full authority to force her to accompany me. Besides, Mrs Riding, who was of an age to have little fear of diseases of the young, promised me not to lose sight of her dear pupil.

Before announcing my decisions to Fanny, I ordered the horses to be harnessed immediately to my carriage. My plan was to take with her my sister-in-law and her daughter, as much to remove them too from the peril as to make her find her absence more bearable. I sent word to them to prepare for our departure, and after taking leave of Cécile with a few words of exhortation, to which I forbade her to reply, I hastened to join her mother.

The disarray of great fears and great anguish sometimes stands in for constancy, by the very confusion it spreads in the mind, which makes it act with a [612] sort of extravagance that has all the hallmarks of insensibility. Such was exactly my disposition. I entered Fanny's chamber quite composed, and while I attenuated my terms in order to avoid frightening her too greatly, I spoke to her of her daughter's illness as an accident that all our regrets and all our tears could not prevent; I added that, if I were to believe the physicians, it was more dangerous for us than for her. At that age, I said, one always has certain resources in the strength of nature, which is constantly increasing; but ours promises us nothing more than what we already possess, and every diminution, on the contrary, is a loss that we are not certain to repair. In short, I made her understand that it was the smallpox

which the doctors feared for Cécile, and that it not being the practice anywhere to expose oneself needlessly to this sort of peril, we must absolutely leave for Paris.

I saw her trembling while I spoke. She seemed to foresee the conclusion. Indeed she appeared not more shaken by it than by my preparations. I, Cleveland! she answered, looking me straight in the eye; I, leave my daughter in the condition in which you yourself depict her! And it is you who so advise me! Oh, the most terrible fears would not make me consent to that; and were I to see death as certain, could it ever confront me with a kinder visage? No, no, she repeated, starting towards the door of the chamber, I want to be a not a moment longer absent from her bed. For at what time will she be dearer to me than when I am justly anxious for her life? I stopped her. Her tears, which began at once to flow, and the effort she was making to escape from my arms, made me fear a much more worrisome scene if I lost any more time explaining myself in a different tone of voice. I am not here, I replied, to consult your inclinations. Mine are not being heard any better. We shall leave this instant. Put your trust in the measures I have taken to preserve a daughter who is without a doubt as precious to me as to you, and do not expose me to the dismay of having ordered you to do something that you object to carrying out.

Never had sad Fanny's heart undergone a crueller trial. I could see the bottom of her heart through her eyes. She would have preferred death at that instant to the necessity of leaving St. Cloud. She may have come close to hurling accusations and insults at me. To me, who knew her character so well, her silence said more than a torrent of expressions would have. She sat down again, melting into tears, and resting her head on one of her hands, she did not appear to be preparing to go with me. I took her by the hand that I saw free, and repeated to her that I expected

to be obeyed. She allowed herself to be less led than dragged. Do you mean I shall not see her at least for an instant? I shall not embrace her before we leave? Are you her father? Do you want to be her executioner? A hundred protests of this nature, which she addressed to me, sobbing all the way to the carriage, did indeed move me to tears, but did not make me yield an inch on my resolution. We found Mme Bridge and her daughter, to whom I had no explanation to give, because I had already had them notified of my intentions. The time was spent most sadly on the road. As trembling and as grieving as Fanny, what efforts did I not need to make to be in a position to comfort her?

All her sorrow did not make her lose, on arriving in Paris, a thought which she did not communicate to me, but which I would not have disapproved if she had consulted me before acting on it. She sent to the rector of the College word of the condition in which we had left Cécile, entreating him to go quickly to St. Cloud. This precaution, of which I was informed only the next day, restored a little peace to her for the rest of the day. I had hoped that she would be tranquil enough to leave me the liberty to return to St. Cloud toward evening. But the approaching darkness seemed to redouble her alarms. She would have escaped from me a hundred times, and the length of the road would not have prevented her from attempting it on foot, had I not constantly kept an eye on her every movement. Although I had left an order for some of my servants to bring me news of my daughter at the slightest change in her situation, I dispatched Drink with instructions to find out everything that [613] had occurred in my absence, and to come right back if anything had happened that could increase my fears or hopes. Two hours having elapsed with no mention of his return, I began to augur well of this delay, and shared my thoughts with Fanny. However, with night still advancing, it then surprised me so see no one come, and I fell into anxi-

eties which I had great difficulty concealing. I dispatched another servant, who also had not returned two hours after he received my orders. I sent successively two others, and although I had ordered them very pointedly to retrace their steps immediately, in whatever situation they found my daughter, I was distressed to await them as vainly as the first ones. Vexed at being so poorly obeyed, and troubled by a thousand cruel thoughts, I would have flown myself to St. Cloud, if the agitations in which I saw Fanny had not retained me at her side by fears that seemed to me even more pressing. Finally, towards daybreak, I heard the sound of a chaise in the courtyard. I gave Fanny to hope for good news, and instructing her to await me with my sister, whom I left with her, I hastened to go myself to meet the blow that threatened me.

The messenger who was arriving at my house was the rector, whose kindness and zeal cannot be too much lauded on this sad occasion. He saw me when his foot touched the ground. I had descended alone, bearing a torch in my hand. The same discretion which had made him arrange all the events of this fatal night made him come to me with no sign of trouble or emotion. He embraced me in a tender manner, and knowing my soul to be too strong, he said, to look upon the adversities of nature in the same way as common people, he congratulated me on having a cherished daughter in the bosom of God.

This language was too clear. I grabbed his arm: What? My daughter is dead? I said to him in a voice half choked with heart-ache, and so unsteady on my feet that I would inevitably have fallen had he not supported me. What awful sentence from heaven reduces me to the extremity of despair! He interrupted me: Your dear Cécile foresaw your sorrows, he said; she was thinking of them when she expired, and her last desires, which I bring to you, will have been formed in vain, if you abandon yourself to regrets that can do nothing for her happiness. I have the same

declaration to make to your wife. You are going to make my mission more difficult, he added, if you stop me at the first step with obstacles which I anticipated only from Mme Cleveland. What constancy will I be entitled to ask of her, if you destroy the effect of my effort by your example?

The sincerity and gentleness that accompany the language of virtue have more force than all kinds of reasoning to make themselves heard. Their impression penetrated my heart through the thick clouds that had suddenly surrounded it. I understood, despite my distress, that Cécile's last desires, and Fanny's interest, were for me inviolable laws to which all the revolt of my senses and my reason had to be sacrificed. I promise you I will be steadfast, I said to the rector in a trembling voice; but tell me the detail of my misfortune before we share it with my wife.

He replied that he would grant me this satisfaction all the more willingly that I would find in it further reasons for patience and strength. Fanny having sent word to him the day previous to go to St. Cloud, he had hastened to signify his obedience and zeal with the greatest dispatch. He had found Cécile in the condition in which I had left her, which is to say with a violent fever; but still strong enough, as even the doctors saw it, not to fear anything too grave in so short a time. Knowing she was a protestant, and being not unaware that her mother had often discussed religious matters with her, his only thought at first had been to ascertain what degree of enlightenment she had attained. From the innocence of heart and the principles of charity he had found in her replies, he had concluded that she could not be far from the way to heaven, and that a God whose [614] goodness is his most cherished attribute does not require such extensive or perfect understanding at that age. But what then, when, while delving further into her dispositions, he had discovered a heart worthy of God himself by the astonishing ardor of her sentiments. In truth their object was

uncertain for her. She hungered for the happiness of loving without boundary or measure, and the shadows of the senses had until then hidden from her the direction in which her desires needed to go to be fully satisfied. But he had scarcely unveiled to her eyes the genuine sources of love, than her heart had exploded with an ardor that seemed to surpass the forces of nature; and thirsting only for the possession a good of which she bitterly regretted learning about too late, all her remaining thoughts and desires were related to that happy end. It was no longer difficult after that for a heart that was so well disposed by love to receive the truth. Her fever, which the doctors had begun to judge fatal, had seemed to redouble the transports of that sublime passion by redoubling the heat in her blood. She had remained in that celestial state until the last instant of her life, and already less resembling a mortal creature than those blessed spirits whose substance is wholly composed of love, her last breath had been but the passionate ejaculation of a lover who plunges into the bosom of the one she loves, to satiate forever the passion she had to love and be loved.⁷²¹

She had died at four in the morning. The rector having learned from the doctors, after Drink's arrival, that they were beginning to fear seriously for her life, he had not deemed it wise to let him return to me with such terrible news. He knew my wife's heart, and besides the hope he still had of seeing my

⁷²¹ This intense desire (*furie*) echoes, transposing it to a metaphysical level, Fanny's "insatiable desire to love and be loved" (book IX). *Élancement*, the word translated here by *ejaculation*, is borrowed from the vocabulary of spirituality; cf. *Les Divins Élancements d'amour* by Claude Hopil (Paris, 1629) – not to mention Tartuffe's *grands élancements* in church (*Tartuffe*, act I, scene 5).

daughter escape such a great peril, he had preferred, even supposing he would soon have to announce her death to her, that she should receive that baleful information all at once from his mouth, rather than risk her dying a thousand deaths from her agitations and fears over the ill-expressed report of a servant. I took it all upon myself, he added, and I am sure you will approve my intentions. Your daughter herself, from whom we could not hide that word of her situation was being sought on your behalf, wanted us to conceal from her mother the danger she was in; and instructing to me to convey to you her heart's last emotions, she begged me to ask both of you for moderation in your laments, which she will observe from heaven above, as the greatest proof of your affection.

I listened to this report with interrupting it, but taking from it only what could justify my grief, and even regarding the rest as the imaginations of an honest and simple ecclesiastic, I said to him sadly: Go, Father, go fulfill your mission in a manner worthy of the opinion I have of your kindness and zeal. I have in me neither the courage to announce our misfortune to my wife, nor the hope I could manage to conceal it. Go easy on her: in the name of God, go easy on this dear half of myself, since your care was not able to save the other one for me. He went up alone to Fanny's apartment. I followed him nevertheless, but resolved to remain seated in the antechamber, near enough to her to fly to her aid if she were to be overcome by grief, but too dispirited to undertake to give to her courage which I felt myself lacking. How changed were the times! What a difference between this dispiritedness and the strength of mind with which I had been able to withstand my earlier misfortunes, and had given me sufficient resources within myself to sustain my entire family with my counsel and example! The vigor of the soul, like that of the body, depends on certain principles of life and action that

must be constantly employed to sustain and renew it. It does not restore itself when that source of strength is exhausted. There was nothing left of my earlier precepts; and the habit I had formed of a sensual and sumptuous life had left me utterly feckless. I was like a feeble reed that bends with every wind that blows. My affection for Fanny, the only one of my sentiments that could withstand any kind of change, could indeed make me share her sufferings, and even [615] make them much more painful for me than my own; but I was only the more to be pitied with that double sensibility which exposed me to the most dreadful attacks, without providing me any weapons at all for defending myself from them.

I do not know with what precaution the rector undertook to pierce Fanny's heart, or rather with what demeanor he made her at first avoid the sight and sentiment of her wound. I heard neither the cries, nor the transports I had expected. More than a quarter-hour went by, during which I remained divided between doubt and hope, happy myself that this sort of diversion prevented me from surrendering entirely to my dark agitations. A cry that nevertheless reached my ears, and which I recognized as the rector's voice, obliged me to enter the apartment. He was calling for my sister and Fanny's women, whom he had at first asked to wait in an adjoining chamber. I was by my wife's side as quickly as they. If her comforter's skill had sustained her against her initial transports, he had not been able to raise nature above herself, nor furnish her with means of repairing the exhaustion which this very constraint had caused her. Fanny, after withstanding the impetuosity of her grief, had suddenly fallen without

strength or consciousness.⁷²²

Bring her back just from this faint, the rector said to me, and be sure that with the religious sentiments which I know her to have, I shall manage to calm her mind and heart. Oh, you have cruelly killed her! I replied, paying no attention to his promises; leave your consolations, if all they can do is deprive me of my wife and my daughter in the same day. He took no umbrage at this offence. Our assistance, to which he added his own with the same zeal, finally restored Fanny to consciousness: while coming to, before she could yet find the strength to open her eyes, she uttered her daughter's name, and this tender invocation was immediately followed by my own. Let her know I was present. Nothing could be so moving as the first laments she addressed to me. Is this the happiness of which you flattered me? Is this the fruit of so many promises and hopes? Then I must recommence an unhappy life, to be condemned to spend it in bitterness and tears! Have you not told me a hundred times, she added, that I was at the end of all my woes, and that all that remained for me was to make good use of our fortune? Oh baleful happiness! Oh the cruel error; should we have relied on such deceiving appearances? The sight of the rector, who had wanted to allow free passage to a part of the her lamentations before he again drew close to her, had the power to make her interrupt them, and I noted, from the course that grief had made her initial reflections take, by what maxims he had undertaken to comfort her. He resumed his exhortations in the same principles, that is, by stress-

⁷²² There is much fainting in this novel; this is the last of fifteen instances involving Fanny. Cleveland has also fainted five times, Cécile four, and once each for Axminster, Mrs Riding, Cleveland's son, and Mme Lallin.

ing to her the vanity of all that is called the goods of nature and of fortune, and the imprudence of a heart that is attached to them as if to sound happiness. Everything he said to her was so right and so sensible that it made the same impression on my mind. We listened to him with a silence which he must have satisfied him, and even Fanny, without ceasing to shed tears, seemed to respond to the charms of truth and eloquence, which were admirable on the lips of this worthy man.

She nevertheless interrupted him with a few exclamations that perhaps despite herself vented the violence of her sentiments. At the moment when I thought she was paying the closest attention to what she seemed to be listening to, she uttered her daughter's name with a new flood of tears. She rose several times suddenly, imploring me to take her at once to St. Cloud. Let me at least see her, she repeated, her hands tenderly clasped together; may I have at least once more the contentment of seeing and embracing her. The zealous comforter would begin his lessons over again with renewed ardor, and regain enough influence over her to restore to her some appearance of calm and resignation. Part of the day was spent in these alternations. Finally, I made her understand that my presence being required at St. Cloud, she would make me fail in all we still owed to Cécile if she did not promise me to remain tranquilly in Paris until [616] my return; and unable to extract from her a promise that deprived her of the hope of embracing her daughter one last time, it occurred to me to divert her with proposals which she could not fail to approve avidly. It does not seem likely, I said, that after the blow that heaven is inflicting on us, you can find it very pleasant being at St. Cloud. I even foresee that your disaffection is going to extend to all of France, and I confess to you that if your own has yet to be felt, mine already is. I will never again behold with satisfaction anything that will forever remind me of my loss. In a word, I

propose that we go to England; and since we could little bear to leave behind us the treasure whose remains we may preserve, I shall see to it that our dear daughter is preciousy embalmed, to be our faithful companion as far as London, whence we will have her taken to the tomb of her fathers in Devonshire. This anticipation assuaged Fanny's grief, and made her consent to let me get into my chaise alone.

How changed St. Cloud appeared to me as I approached the center of my sorrow! That enchanted retreat, that delightful abode, where I had made the most agreeable use of my fortune, and would a few days earlier have preferred to the vastest possessions on earth, seemed to me no more than a dreadful dwelling where death had extended its veils, and seemed to darken with its blackest colors. This sentiment only continued to increase up to the entrance to my house. The sorrowful greeting of my servants, the lamentations of Mrs Riding, the baleful disorder I seemed to see in everything that met my eye, helped further to augment the horror that reigned in my soul. Mrs Riding, whose sobs I could already hear resonating, did not learn of my arrival without rushing at once to meet me; and open-armed, her face bathed in tears, she repeated Cécile's name a thousand times, hugging me with all her strength, unable to add a single word of explanation. Drink, who had not left St. Cloud since I had sent him there, came to consummate my disarray by informing me that the Duke of Monmouth had just arrived, and had despite him entered the room where the body of my daughter lay. But what he immediately added had only too much power to suspend the movements of anger and indignation that were rising already through the clouds of my sorrow. That brash young man, unworthy of possessing any virtue, or worthy indeed, by some of his rare qualities, of not being virtuous by half, had not gone far enough from St. Cloud to be unaware for long of Cécile's death. He had come running with

all the transports one can imagine from the impetuosity of his character, and nothing had been able to prevent him from entering Cécile's room and falling to his knees before her bed, where he was still, shedding a torrent of tears, with cries and sighs that moved all my servants.

I entered without forewarning him, still divided between the various movements that were agitating me. I found him on his knees as he had been described to me, his lips glued to my daughter's hand, and consuming himself in moans and sighs. He saw me. The throes of his grief did not prevent him from rising, and anticipating what I was preparing to say to him: Oh unhappy father! he cried, the unhappy guardian of my happiness and yours, what have you done to your daughter? Ah! Would she not have been safer in my arms? Would I not have saved her life at the cost of my own? Live on then, he added, if you can after losing her. For my part, I do not hope to survive her.

These reproaches, which came from a broken heart, were some comfort to mine. I could forgive anything to the despair of a lover. But the memory of a temerity that was still fresh, and the resentment of which, I did not doubt, had precipitated Cécile's death, caused me to reply more bitterly than he expected. It ill befits you, I said to him with a tear in my eye, to impute to my want of care a misfortune you have brought on me through your indecency! And going over to my daughter's bed, without listening to his justifications, I assumed the place and posture he had relinquished.

[617] It was not to make my cries heard, nor to move the spectators with my tears. All my consternation gathered in my heart. I contemplated with gloomy avidness that composite of perfections and grace, which death itself had not yet had the power to disfigure. Sad plaything of nature, which had seen fit to create it only to abandon it in its flower to the cruellest enemy of

youth and beauty. What confidence must I have in the length of my life, when that age is not safe from the darts of death? But, I rejoined inwardly, am I thinking about life! Alas, is what it promises me in the future not more cruel than the misfortune of losing it? What will it be to me without you, dear Cécile! And what must I hope for henceforth to fill the void you leave in my heart? I would have lost myself for a long time in these morose reflections, and I do not know how, from the sorrow of my thoughts itself and from the terrible bitterness which such a sight was constantly spreading through all my sentiments, a situation came to be which had some charm to me. But when the Duke of Monmouth, who had been striding about during this interval, returned to the bed with new transports, I thought that if Cécile could still be aware of anything, she would regard this familiarity by a man who had offended her as a new insult; and seeing him again putting his lips to one of her arms, I myself thought of such boldness as a profanation. I rose, and pushed him away with my hand. Then, bending over my dear daughter's face, I gave her the kiss of an eternal peace and affection. This is for me, I said after pressing her lips for a moment; for your unhappy father, whom you have never known well if you believed he had ceased for a moment to adore you. And this is for your mother, I repeated, kissing her once more in the same place; for that incomparable mother, who would have left her soul here if I had granted her the sad satisfaction which I have just taken in her stead. This thought, which seemed to join in a single point all the movements of my heart, cost me a sob so violent that I thought my strength was about to abandon me.

At that point I closed the bed curtains; and taking the duke by the hand so he would have to leave with me, I ordered Drink, in his presence, not to allow anyone to enter the apartment. I added to this order that he was to send quickly to Paris for some

surgeons to embalm my daughter's body with the most precious perfumes, and preserve her from all sorts of corruption.⁷²³ The duke listened while I spoke. I was surprised to see him fall to his knees and embrace mine passionately. He implored me by the memory of a daughter so amiable and dear, by the affection of my wife, in short by all that he could imagine that was holy and apt to move me, to grant him Cécile's heart to make it his idol for the rest of his life.⁷²⁴ I refused him this favor, seasoning my refusal nevertheless with all the civilities that could console him for it. He seized upon a portrait, in which I had had the mother and daughter portrayed by one of the best painters in Paris. I contested even this slight present with him, and made all sorts of efforts to get it out of his hands. But having several portraits of Cécile where she was not less of a likeness, I finally gave in to his obstinacy. A new source of poisoned darts, which fate was readying in advance against my life's peace.

Counting on Drink for all the arrangements that did not require my presence, I was expecting, when I returned to Paris that evening, to have Mrs Riding accompany me, and supposed that she was as eager as I was to see my wife again. But she resisted leaving St. Cloud for two reasons. The decision you have

⁷²³ Such costly techniques had been introduced only recently in France (Robert Favre, "Sur un regret de l'abbé Prévost: 'l'usage de France est incommode pour le transport d'un cadavre'", *Dix-Huitième Siècle*, no. 5 [1973], pp. 304–310).

⁷²⁴ He has just heard that she will be embalmed, whence it follows that the organs will be removed. A morbid thought, but one which has already furnished an important scene in *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, where the narrator encloses himself into a tomb with the body of Sélîma, having had her heart enshrined in a golden case which he places on a table covered in black (p. 97).

made, she said, to embalm the body of my dear pupil and to transport it with us to England, is my fondest wish in the terrible desolation to which her death condemns me for the rest of my life. If you had decided to bury her in France, I would never have left her tomb. The same reason will prevent me from leaving her coffin until the moment of our departure. As for Mme Cleveland, she added, although I no longer have anything so dear as that tender friend, I tremble to see her, and I do not know how I will ever be able to bear her [618] presence after answering so poorly to the confidence she had for me in leaving her daughter with me here. It was impossible for me to bring Mrs Riding to entertain any other thoughts.

I armed myself with what courage I had left to reappear to my wife's eyes. The rector's assistance had not flagged. I found him in the occupation where I had left him with her, and was told on my arrival that though he had not been able to give her the strength to withhold her tears, he had at least preserved her from all the excesses I had feared. The account I gave her of my journey brought her a sort of contentment which sometimes mingles with the greatest sorrow. Although her tears redoubled when I related the last farewell I had given to Cécile from her, she found perceptible satisfaction in that tender image. The orders I had given to Drink, the constancy of Mrs Riding with her pupil, even the visit and transports of the Duke of Monmouth, anything in a word that was in harmony with her affection and grief, had some power to calm a little the disarray of her imagination. I foresaw for her what I was beginning already to feel for myself. Our misfortune not having been preceded by those striking circumstances that sometimes bring as much confusion to all the faculties of the soul as the evil itself of which they are more or less the harbingers, it was better able to fix itself in the intimate part of our hearts to leave there indelible traces, than to impel us for long

to those great movements of despair the very excess of which seems inevitably to announce the end. So from the first moment when, finding myself alone with my wife, we began to reflect together on our cruel calamity, all our thoughts led us to a certain disaffection for the world and all its goods, which is perhaps the surest mark of the strong impressions of adversity. We are not made for what ordinary people call happiness: this was our first conclusion. It is true, I said to Fanny, who had ended her statement with that remark, that fortune has accustomed us since our childhood to the language and meditations of sorrow. When we tried to leave it behind, we entered an unknown career. The first traces still persist. New objects do not spawn new tastes by presenting new images to the mind. We are constantly recalled to our habits; and the very difference, or rather the total opposition there is between sorrow and joy, serves only to make this necessity more perceptible in those who believe they can easily give themselves over to pleasure after they have made of everything that is contrary to it a second nature to them. What then was I thinking, I continued, when I chose such a miserable system to take the place of all the calamities which fortune had inflicted upon us? I deluded myself with false reasoning, which were perhaps a remnant of my former philosophy, and which induced you into the same errors. But no, you resisted better than I, and I bear at once the blame for my weaknesses and for the struggles in which I reproach myself for engaging you. Is it my error, oh God, I added, that you have meant to punish? Your punishments would be just, had they had no other object than me. Could you not make me miserable without wrapping innocent souls into this punishment? But these are so many reasons that oblige me to punish myself in turn. I would return by choice to the abyss of mourning where I am, were I not forced to it by the baleful course that makes it henceforth for me a necessary law. Fanny interrupted me sweetly:

Let us abandon ourselves to sorrow, she said, but for other reasons. Our loss suffices to justify our tears, without seeking a new matter in the murmurs that would too much increase its bitterness if they made us as blameworthy as we are unhappy. Let us grieve, because even heaven, by taking from us our dearest possession, imposes on us the necessity of grieving. Let us renounce joy, because it is as contrary to our duty as to our inclination. Let us revert, as you say, to a mourning without end, and let us no longer seek other pleasures until the grave, save in the sentiments of so just a sorrow.

[619] We maintained only too religiously the exercise of this resolution. But I must confess the difference there was between Fanny's sorrow and mine. Her heart, soundly nourished by religion, came to see in our misfortune only reasons to reinforce oneself by scorning perishable goods, and aspire to another happiness of which she believed her daughter already in possession.⁷²⁵ Thus she became more somber and melancholic, but that is to say more attached to meditating on the truths she knew, more hostile to the vain occupations which could only serve to dissipate it, more ardent for everything she undertook as a duty, more tender even and attentive towards me, whom she henceforth regarded as the only possession on earth which she was entitled to love. Thus our loss, at least after the initial movements which had forced her to yield to nature, became for her a source of enlightenment and virtues; whereas given my way of assessing my situation, I could find in it nothing but reasons for an inner horror

⁷²⁵ There is nothing specifically Catholic about this view – Cécile after all, who has never officially converted, from a strictly Catholic standpoint could hardly be in heaven; the point is simply that she has faith, whereas Cleveland does not.

of myself, and continual despair. What resource remained to me, when I could not better see which way to turn my desires than my hopes? I had tried out everything that passes for desirable and pleasurable. If I had been left with so little satisfaction from them at a time when my heart was tranquil enough to assure me that only their vanity could have caused me a disaffection for them, how could I revert to conceiving better notions of them, or expecting more fruit from them for my peace, when grief over my loss reminded me constantly that I required more powerful medicine? I had found study and intercourse with my friends enjoyable; but I still felt that they were the amusements of a free soul; and the continual memory of my dear Cécile, with which mine was filled, left me really no attention for such slight traces. My only resource then was my affection for Fanny; happy enough no doubt through a sentiment so full of charms, if the void in my mind had not always left room in it for somber meditations, which necessarily communicated their poison to the tenderest movements of my heart.

The plan for our departure not having receded, I was meanwhile attending to the preparations for a journey that was not without its difficulties. Whatever cause of satisfaction I had in the respect shown my family since the death of Madame, I was concerned lest my determination to leave cause some change in that, at least with respect to my two sons, whom they might be reluctant to allow to leave the site of their education. I would have been willing enough to leave them with the Jesuits until the end of their studies, could their mother have consented to seein them so far from her. Thinking only of satisfying her, it occurred to me to make use of an innocent artifice to deliver us from all the obstacles which our affection made us fear. Instead of announcing our departure for England, I spoke only of a trip to Rouen, where I pretended I was called by urgent letters from the Earl of Claren-

don. A strange happenstance lent more truth than I thought to this pretext. I had not written to the earl since my daughter's death, and while I could hope for no more perfect consolations than those of such a friend, the disarray which was still with me had caused me to neglect both my own interests and propriety. By going indeed to spend a few days with him, not only did I acquit myself of a duty in which I could no longer fail, but I imagined I could easily arrange to have my children come there after me, and that he, seeming himself to desire to gather my whole family together for a while, would furnish me the means of having them pass secretly into England without attracting attention. The difficulty of collecting all the furniture and books I had amassed while I lived in St. Cloud and in Paris was a matter to be handled by my servants.

Nevertheless, in showing the gratitude which I thought I owed to the rector of the Jesuits, I very nearly betrayed myself by a few expressions that could have permitted him to guess my intentions. The lasting sentiments of which I assured him, and the offers of service which I made to him in my country, were not the language of a man thinking of his return. I added to those civilities a present of a thousand pistoles; and if anything [620] could persuade me that the fears I had for my sons' freedom were unwarranted, it is that the rector, who cannot be assumed to lack the wit to have understood me, made no objection to their departure when they left Paris to follow me. I have preferred to make this admission of my imprudence, to allowing a society for which I have always retained my esteem to be suspected of any violent intention.

Mrs Riding, after being informed of our decisions, prepared for her part to set out for Rouen in a carriage which I had constructed expressly for her. The precious charge for which she was responsible obliged her to many precautions. Custom in France is

not convenient for the conveyance of a corpse.⁷²⁶ Although Cécile had breathed her last breath in the hands of the Jesuit rector, she had belonged all her life to the Protestant religion; and Mrs Riding, who still remained in her original principles, would not easily have consented to deposing her, in according with the order established in France, in every church along the way, or to receiving at a price the permission of a parish priest to continue on without obstruction.⁷²⁷ The casket could be hidden from view in the carriage I sent to her. Moreover, I had thought that with each day bringing some diminution of the most violent pangs, having Mrs Riding leave twelve or fifteen days after us would allow Fanny's constancy some additional time to gather strength. I even instructed her to find some pretext to put off her departure as long as she could.

If we left Paris without regret, with the motives that impelled us to withdraw to our country, it was not without gratitude and esteem for a good number of illustrious friends whose society we had valued. But hearts drunk with sorrow were hardly capable

⁷²⁶ This convoy recalls that of Julie, another girl who dies far from her homeland, in *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* (p. 25), and is opposed, as Jean Sgard has remarked (*Prévost romancier*, pp. 144–145), to the aborted nuptial voyage in book VI. The objective obstacles to the transport will be seen.

⁷²⁷ Robert Favre quotes (p. 310) this passage from Étienne Poinson's *Le Pasteur instruit de ses obligations*: "It was the custom to depose the dead in the parish through which one was passing, before reaching the one in which they were to be inhumed, to have some prayers said there by the pastors with their clergy. This act, which was an act of piety, has become an onerous law, by virtue of which the curates demand money, but a law that is founded on nothing more than custom." (Paris: Saillant, 1767, t. III, pp. 139–141.)

of being greatly moved by other sentiments. Having no reason to hasten our journey, we did not arrived at his Lord Clarendon's until evening of the second day. The first sight that struck us at his gate was to see his coat of arms there affixed in black, following the custom observed by the English in a period of mourning. I had let several weeks go by without giving him any news of me. A deathly fear made me at once imagine that he was himself the object of this funereal ceremony. We scarcely dared express this doubt to the porter. But as Fanny had been recognized by several of his servants, they anticipated our questions by informing her that the earl and his entire household had for three days been mourning the death of his dear daughter, the Duchess of York.⁷²⁸ What an addition burden of affliction for us! The grief of our loss being renewed by the thought of the earl's, we alighted with nearly as much consternation as when we first heard news of Cécile's death. I forbade the servants to notify their master of our arrival, and having ourselves introduced at once into his chamber, where we had been told he was alone, we entered with tear-filled eyes.

He was seated in the midst of his books, a pen in his hand; and keeping his head bent over his table, he seemed intensely absorbed in what he was about to write, or he had already put to paper. Turning nevertheless at the sound that distracted him, he

⁷²⁸ Anne Hyde died of cancer on 31 March 1671; her conversion to catholicism in 1670 was learned only after her death. This date does not quite square with the events in the novel, for it seems that more than a year must have past since the death of Madame (June 1670). The great fête of St. Cloud given by Cleveland could not take place in winter, and must surely come several months later; thus the death of the Duchess of York, according to this narrative, would probably have to be situated in 1672.

rose as he recognized us, and came to us with open arms. His eyes were shadowy, but his countenance seemed to me firm and tranquil. All I noticed was some pallor in his face, which was not the natural color of his complexion. The marks of our affliction being much less measured, he imagined that it was compassion alone that caused us to take such a keen interest in his calamity, and anticipating us in that thought: You have put yourselves out too much, he said in a voice moved more by gratitude than grief, and as you cannot have received my letter before this morning, friendship has made you come with a diligence that may be prejudicial to your health. Alas, I replied, embracing him, your letter has not reached my hands. We have just at this moment had our first news of your misfortune; and when we left Paris yesterday to come weep with you, it was only ours for which we were still protesting heaven's rigor. Fanny's sighs increasing at these words: You see my wife's tears [621], I said, and I admit that I do myself violence to contain my own. You are not the only unhappy father. Death has taken our dear Cécile from us.

The earl, as struck by an event so unforeseen as by the force of our affliction, seemed to forget his own loss for a few moments to think only of ours. He pressed me to tell him the circumstances of my daughter's illness; and I, still too filled with my grief to reflect on whether protocol permitted me to tell him this story before hearing his own, abandoned myself to the sad pleasure of depicting the dying Cécile, and describing my desolation. Nevertheless, remembering myself after a long detail: Ah, My Lord, I said with some embarrassment, I am forgetting that I am wearying a father who is no less to be pitied than I. But it is from your very grief that I hope for indulgence for mine.

He had listened with various signs of affection and pity. However, serenity and moderation resuming their dominance in his features, his first words were an exhortation to submit to the

ever-equitable judgments of Providence. Then, responding to my invitation to tell me in turn the circumstances of his loss, he related to me with the same serenity and the same constancy what he had received from the mouth of Dr. Morley, whom the Duke of York had sent to him after the death of the duchess. His entire account would have deserved a place somewhere else in my story; but here, where the very interest of the dearest of my friends would cool the compassion I am asking for mine, I shall pause only for the small number of events that are connected to my essential narrative.

The weak, inconstant character of King Charles had not long sustained the return of the affection and confidence he had shown for the Duke and Duchess of York. Either because the Duke of Monmouth's good offices had lacked since I had taken from him the hope of obtaining my daughter, or because the Hydes' enemies had acquired a new degree of favor, the duchess had been subjected to neglect and signs of aversion which had been perceived as the presages of open hostility, and utter fall from favor. She had had but one child, which she had lost⁷²⁹; but her youth made her hope for others, and the nation's desire being that the Duke of York at least should have children when the queen's continuing sterility no longer allowed one to expect any from the king, the Earl of Clarendon's most loyal friends persuaded his daughter that the sole means of protection against her enemies' unjust persecutions was to feign an advanced pregnancy, which would interest all of England in her honor and preservation. She

⁷²⁹ Historically, nothing is could be farther from the truth: of the two daughters who survived her, one was to marry William of Orange, thereby becoming Queen Mary II in 1689; the other, Anne, would succeed to the throne after William and reign from 1702 to 1714.

yielded to their advice. The Duke of York was himself deceived by appearances that it is always easy for a women to simulate.⁷³⁰ He expressed joy over it that soon spread to the entire nation, but in private only irritated his brother the king by renewing all his prejudices. The duchess, under pretext of favoring the precious charge she carried in her womb, avoid appearing at court. This affectation further served as grist for a hundred malicious interpretations. It was portrayed as the beginnings of independence, which would result, after the duchess's confinement, in arrogance which even the king would not be spared. The mistrustful king, jealous of his authority, was led to fear lest the favors he had showered imprudently on the earl's two sons become chains for him that would ineluctably turn him into the same sort of slave he had been to their father. He was even made to envisage the recall and re-establishment of Lord Clarendon as a necessity which he would be forced to concede. In short, the glory of the Hydes and the humiliation of the royal house of the Stuarts were depicted to Charles as inevitable consequences. His pride could not bear them. One dares not think it could have induced him to take decisions that would cast everlasting ignominy on his memory; but a dissolute court, where vice opens the surest path to favor, is not wanting for persons who are up to any venture; and the earl's enemies, who would have been only too capable of a crime solely to satisfy their hatred, were otherwise incited by the signs of anger and jealousy that the king could not conceal.

[622] Whatever hand hell may have used to carry out one of its blackest deeds, the duchess had an attack of an illness so sudden and so violent that she immediately recognized its nature.

⁷³⁰ A possible allusion to the long, fruitless "pregnancy" of Queen Mary following her marriage to Philip II of Spain.

The grandeur of her soul made her disdain an attempt to get at its source. She sent for Dr. Morley, who had long had her confidence; and revealing her misfortune to him, she required of him, so as not to kindle futile resentment in her husband's mind, that he should forever conceal the cause of her death; but proper precaution for her family made her desire that her father and her two brothers should be informed of a peril that seemed to threaten them after her. Among the things she revealed to the doctor, she confessed with contrition the supposition of her pregnancy; but by a disposition of heaven, which she regarded as a punishment, after having deceived the public for some time with this fiction, she really believed she was pregnant. This was both a new crime for her enemies, and for her a surfeit of grief that brought more bitterness to her last moments than the loss of her fortune and her life. Morley, entrusted with this secret, and with her tender sentiments for a father who had never had anything so dear as her, had arrived in Rouen three days before us. He had believed it necessary to go very carefully about informing the earl of such sad news. But he did not know of the fruit which that hero had garnered from his calamities. The earl, raised to the perfection of wisdom by the principles he had assimilated in his isolation, possessed a heart prepared for anything that could happen. Without pretending to be unmoved by the reactions of nature, he had found the happy art of moderating them. His affection was not diminished for his daughter, but lifting his sight beyond a space of limited trajectory, the end of which he did not think far away for himself, he did not grieve over a misfortune that saved her from the malice of men, nor over a separation that would only assure him sooner the pleasure of rejoining her. We had found him in deep contemplation of the great truths that comforted him in his loss. He was writing down his reflections to engrave them in his heart, and to recall them more often to memory. The pallor

which I had noted in his face resulted less from his grief than from the contention of his mind, and his moderation in the use of all good things that serve only to enhance the tyranny of the senses.

We spent part of the night talking together about our losses; but the tone that my lord had adopted, and which he sustained without affectation, made it necessary for us to do violence to our sentiments. Even Fanny felt encouraged by this admirable example of constancy. We retired very late. My weariness ought naturally to have made me seek some rest in sleep. Yet the impression of the earl's words and his fortitude that stayed with me so stirred my blood that I could not manage to close my eyes. I searched avidly for the spring from which he had drawn the principles of such an heroic philosophy, and I remembered some partial revelations that had escaped him at other times. But were imagined systems, such as I still thought his to be, able to master the senses with such power? The earl's imagination, I said, is perhaps more lively and more ardent than mine. He pictures his own fantasies more strongly, and that illusion produces the effect of a reality. Besides, I added, what comparison is there between his heart and mine, and am I to judge what he feels by what is going on inside me? The earl is a man weakened by age and by application to work. Perhaps he has lived his entire life without knowing a violent passion; I know from him that he has known none stronger than ambition. To what extent has age already cooled his blood? He manages easily to control himself, because he has nothing inside him to combat. Oh, had he had for his daughter the half of our affection for Cécile, he would not reason so tranquilly over her loss, and the hope of rejoining her in an obscure and

uncertain future would not suffice to comfort him!⁷³¹

After spending the night in these reflections, my most task when I arose was to see the earl again. Whatever opinion I was to form of this supposed wisdom, which he had told me so many times was the object of his study, and of which I saw indeed that he [623] was reaping the fruit, I was determined to learn more about its principles. His tranquility caused me a sort of jealousy. How is this, I said; can nature, reason, religion if you will, for that is a famous name, to whatever chimera it be given, provide help to overcome grief, secrets for happiness that are perhaps unknown only to me, and which I have desired my whole life, without being able to discover them? In the ardor which I felt inflamed by this thought, as pressed by my curiosity as by the disarray and the impatience of my woes, I went straight to the earl's apartment, and finding him already busy with his studies, I begged him to suspend them to hear me.

Your tranquility, I said, or the control you take of your agitations, in the cruellest misfortune a father can have experienced, seems to me a wonder that surpasses all my knowledge. From the very beginning of my reason I have been seeking that happy port that you have found. After a hundred efforts, I have despaired of finding it; and when I flattered myself the most audaciously that I approached it, an unforeseen storm did not fail to throw me back amongst the tempests, which as quickly plunged me into some new abyss. Is the calm which I see you enjoying your own doing, or the effect of chance? Is it a depend-

⁷³¹ The afterlife indeed plays little role in all the novel's religious contemplations; and even as he moves in a religious direction, Cleveland, though he believes is some sort of heaven, is not preoccupied by the notion of salvation.

able secret, which can be communicated without losing its virtue; or is it but blind and ill-assured luck, whose source is unknown even to you who possess it? Forgive me for pressing you; but I cannot see you so happy without envy. You have pitied my suffering, you have vaunted the peace you enjoy: it would be cruel to refuse me the communication of a good that seems to come so easily to you.⁷³²

An air of indulgence and kindness which immediately covered the earl's face was like the dawn of all the fair days that the favor of heaven had in store for me. But the shadows that clouded my eyes were too thick to disperse in that light. I awaited the earl's reply; he appeared to be seeking terms, in keeping with the affection and earnestness of his heart. Finally, yielding to the movement that was pressing him: Dear Cleveland! he said, friend whose uprightness is well known to me, and whose errors I have a hundred times indeed pitied, what compassion I feel for your suffering, and what a gain in strength for my own consolation, if I could manage to help assuage it! But as well as I know your principles, the healing you desire is not an easy undertaking. He was going to continue. I interrupted him: You know I have principles! I cried. Oh, what notion have you conceived of me, on the remains of some false knowledge which you have more rightly called my errors? I have deceived you, I said, if I have been able to persuade you of anything to the credit of my strength and insights: for one is weak who withstands nothing; one is blind when he lacks discernment to steer himself. Aye, he interrupted in turn; but it is to be strong, it is to be enlightened, to know one's

⁷³² The author had announced in the preface of t. I and again in the notice of volume VI that Clarendon would be the instrument of Cleveland's conversion.

blindness and one's weakness. This very sort of vigor and insight which consists in recognizing that one is devoid of both, is perhaps what is most opposed to genuine wisdom, at least in those whom this admission does not make to feel their need they have of it; because in losing hope or the desire to seek another resource, they stray definitively from the sole path that could call them back to it. That, the earl continued, is why I feared I might find you more resistant than another to truth, and what my friendship for you has often deplored. In your youth you filled yourself with a thousand maxims to which you gave the name of principles, and which sustained you in more than one test. They have failed you. But I have not observed that in complaining of their weakness, you have thought to fashion others. The things you said to me in St. Cloud, and the decision you made almost immediately afterward to devote yourself to the tumult of the world during your stay in Paris, made me judge that if you had not fallen back into your former errors, you were perhaps in an even sorer state, which is that of renouncing all truth.

No, no, milord, I hastened to reply; be sure that after clearly recognizing the falseness of a principle, I am incapable of deceiving myself twice. Be sure as well that having abandoned those which had deluded me, I have not ceased [624] to feel that it was not enough to have freed myself from those miserable guides, and that at the very time when I thought my happiness the most secure, something was wanting for my perfect peace of mind. How much more intense has become that feeling since the loss of my daughter has re-opened the old wounds in my heart! But a sad despair, as necessary an effect of the vanity of the good things I have tried as of the vanity of all my insight, has led me to view the tranquil state in which I find you, with the same reasons for grief, as an illusory perspective, to which I could aspire only by impotent desires, the futility of which would have exacerbated my

pains. Even the evidence which my eyes offer me of your serenity of soul will not suffice to persuade me that this happy situation is not impossible for me, unless you open to me this very day some sure path, the sight of which will begin to restore some hope to me.

You are asking me, the earl replied, for something that may be beyond my power. A minister of state, accustomed in the course of a long life to the tumult of affairs, is ill-equipped for the discussion of so many important points to which I believe your healing is attached. Truth itself loses something of its luster when it is poorly grounded. Yet, he continued, with a man accustomed to making use of his reason, and consequently capable of grasping the full extent of an object when he is shown a part of it, I do not fear I commit myself too much by stepping into such a fine arena. I am undertaking to present you with a naked side of truth; and lifting the rest of the veil yourself, you will have the glory of owing the progress of your understanding to your penetration alone. Nevertheless I would wish, he added, before asking you for the attention you seem prepared to grant me, that you take the trouble to explain to me what precisely are your thoughts on the primary duties of man, so I will know what I have to combat in your mind or in your heart, and at what point I must begin.

This proposition frightened me. What reflections did it not oblige me to make on myself, and what likelihood was there that I could all of a sudden penetrate a chaos which I had so long avoided contemplating? Alas, dear my lord! I said, how do you pretend I can tell you what I constantly attempt not to know? Are you aware that for several years⁷³³ my principal effort has been to flee

⁷³³ In other words, since the crisis of Saumur related in book VI, some four years earlier.

the sight of myself, for fear of constantly finding there an enemy which has allowed me scarcely a single moment of placidity? What can I tell you about the order of my thoughts? I recognize the supreme power of the infinite Being to whom I owe my existence. My faith is goodness and justice, by which I have always attempted to imitate that great model. The variety of human institutions that bear the name of religion has always prevented me from wanting to know about them; and I have even refused to lend an ear to the explanations that have been proposed to me, for the single reason that, each sect damning all the others without pity, I have always found most of them opposed to the one I was being pressed to embrace. Content with the testimony of my heart, which has never been sullied by injustice or hatred, I have not looked beyond that; and I have stopped at that with all the more confidence that if there were some useful or necessary religion, that could only be through the relationship it has to this goal. One point has caused me some difficulty; even there I have owed my doubts only to the heady reasoning of a society of clever men who had taken pride in drawing me into their opinions. Is the soul a substance distinct from the body, which is destined to make use of its faculties after this mortal life? Or is it but a modification of matter, which makes the body capable of more or less elevated functions according to the delicacy of its organs; and in that case does it have any other relationship with the Being that fashioned it than that of a passing homage, which must end with its existence? All the power of the proofs that kept me for a while in doubt could not prevail over the power of sentiment. I have come to think once again, despite myself, that what is capable of doubling back upon itself through the power of reflection is nothing like matter. In short, my understanding such as I am explaining it to you has been constant, and if some cloud has been able to obscure it, it has never made me it as notions

whose falseness I had acknowledge.

[625] But, I continued with a sigh, I am doing no more than exposing my speculations to you, and my unhappy heart seeks to delay by long detours the openness you require about its miseries. It is appalled by the darkness of this abyss, where I would vainly attempt to shed light if it were necessary to retrace for you all its situations and depict all its sentiments. I can tell you to my credit that I have never recognized any variance there in what has accorded with my understanding; in other words, that basing my principles of goodness and justice on the idea of the same attributes in a supremely good and just Being to which man's duty is to conform by faithful imitation, I do not have to reproach myself for having ever strayed from that rule. But with a sensitive heart, and a sound temperament, how many inclinations and desires of which I have known neither the source nor the end, and for which I have futilely sought a more enlightened guide than reason! I am not speaking of my affection for my wife, although it has exposed me to all the torments that you know; I know that a just penchant animates the sexes for each other; it is established as much for the joy as for the preservation of society, and the attacks of fate or human malice that can trouble its charms must not be blamed on nature. But to consider my miseries only since the fortunate return of Mme Cleveland, what laments have I not to express for a hundred intrusive desires which have led me only to disarray and consternation when I have undertaken to satisfy them, and left me even less peace when I resisted them? Why, in all the things of which the state of my fortune constantly offers me the choice, have I found nothing that has filled me enough to occupy me entirely, and heal my distractions? I have experienced only languor in the pleasures which I see all men pursue avidly, in fine food, in concerts, in a string of games and plays, in short in everything that passes in the eyes of the world as the height of

felicity. Am I then the only one for whom pleasure changes to bitterness? Worse yet, I have seen heat rise in my blood for which my reason, which shamed me, had not the power to desist: in spite of the most tender and sacred love with which anyone ever burned for a wife, the charms of a courtesan provoked an unforeseen rebellion in my senses, and, which I hardly dare reveal to you, their disarray for a moment let the poison into my heart. What a dismaying situation, to be content neither with pleasure, nor sure of oneself in a matter of duty!

But I am coming to the most unbearable of my sufferings. Memory of the past is not necessary here to exaggerate my object. I have lost my daughter. Death is a evil attached to the human condition, and I could not expect that heaven's favor could dispense me from the common law. Just tell me, I continued, redoubling the force of my expressions with the ardor of the sentiment that animated them; oh, milord, tell me by what rigorous disposition of my fate the same power that made me with such a sensible heart does not make me find in my senses or in my reason, if not the absolute remedy for my sufferings, at least an equivalent in consolation that can compensate for them, and halt the continual effect of my despair? I ask you, my lord, why I find nothing that can comfort me, after being capable of becoming unhappy? This is the question which must be answered, if you wish to enlighten me before healing me. Do not evade it, I beg of you. Do not have recourse to vague and uncertain suppositions. Yes, my lord, make me discover in the attributes of the sovereign Being or in my own, in ideas of reason or in the nature of things, a semblance of proof, a trace of justice, a hint of plausibility, that can help me find less derangement and cruelty in this disposition. You will at once buoy my hopes; I shall believe nothing impossible for your philosophy, if it can offer me to begin with the means of resolving such a terrible opposition.

The earl, who for his purposes had no need of such a long exposition, seemed to be waiting impatiently for me to finish. He seized the opportunity I was giving him to stop me. What you ask of me as a prelude, he said, and which you think so apt to shed light [626] on your difficulties, depends on several other explanations. It would be reversing the order to put the consequences before the principles; but ever mistrust my good faith if you find me evading a single one of your objections. Then, lifting his eyes heavenward as if he had wished to involve it in the success of his undertaking: I bless the sovereign Being whose power you recognize, he continued, for having you preserve at least a general notion of the dependence you owe to Him. I am speaking to a man who recognizes a Master, and who has not erased from his heart the first impressions of nature. It would be of little importance to me if you still had doubts about the spirituality of the soul and its immortality. That is a question which I leave to physics. Suppose the soul by nature immortal: you will not contest that the Creator has the power to destroy it. Suppose it is perishable in itself, composed of parts, in a word, material (if one can conceive this notion without contradiction, of a substance capable of thinking and reflecting): you will similarly admit that the all-powerful Creator from whom it has received being with the faculties it possesses, can make it preserve these assets forever, in other words, so long as he himself enjoys his power. The difficulty is only to know how long he destines it to last, and what fate he has decided for it. That is the point on which reason is perhaps blocked, when it has only its own lights as guide.⁷³⁴

⁷³⁴ Locke, in his *Essay on Human Understanding*, had suggested that the immateriality of the soul was not as crucial as some people thought (book IV, ch. III, §6), since it might be within the scope of God's

While relating the initial circumstances of the earl's undertaking, I do not wish to make my readers expect a very lengthy account of all our conversations. It is enough to be able, in these imperfect sketches, to get some idea of his method. He was quite willing to state it at the outset. Such as you have just made yourself known, he said, could I have too highly vaunted a medicine to which I owed my own recovery by the same steps that I confidently expect your own? Listen to my promises, he added, and if, in the detail which I cannot wait to get to, you find some obscure term or some thought that bothers you, fear not to demand of me all the explanations it takes to satisfy you.

Once more, it is in few words that I shall retrace the labor of several days and the subject of a great number of conversations. The earl had in mind three objectives, which were progressively unfolded, and which the most skilled orator would not have argued with more force under their different facets. In his first lesson he gave me the outline of what he still designated only as his medicine; and his promise was that even independently of my woes, which must make me ardent for my healing, I would not see the picture he had to offer me without hoping it was the representation of a genuine good. Indeed, the description which he began of all the particular advantages of religion captured me much less by the newness of the images than by the comforts which, according to him, are attached to them. The notions of Christianity which I had received in Saumur consisted of a certain number of gloomy and repugnant suppositions, which had been able only to repel me once they had been separated from their proofs. Here I was being offered a joyful aspect of which the charms alone were at once a relief for my imagination: inner

powers to organize matter in such a way that it could think.

mercies, invisible assistance, constant favors that needed only to be asked for to be obtained, an anticipated bond of the spirit and heart with an order superior to nature, and as final perspective an eternity of happiness and love. What I combine in such a short space being exposed to me with all the force and unction of a simple and natural eloquence, I could not hold back some sighs, at seeing so many goods that flattered the bitterness of my heart.

This the earl perceived. I have not deceived you, he went on; your agitation reveals your desires. But if I have succeeded in making you desire the medicine I am proposing to you, I shall now force you to admit that it is the only one that will do for you, and that in consulting even the feeble means that nature offers to judge it by, there is nothing that accords so well with the knowledge we have of ourselves and the objects that surround us.⁷³⁵ My attention redoubled all the more that it was plausibility that seemed to me lacking in his propositions. He had vaunted to me goods whose connection to our present condition I did not see. What were invisible assistance and [627] inner mercies for woes that made themselves felt by the perturbation of organs? What resource in spiritual comforts against sufferings that torment the senses? And was even hope for that perfect happiness that belonged to another state and another time, able to diminish the sentiment of a present misery which it could not make us avoid? This point of view, toward which he had turned my desires, therefore seemed to me a merely illusory object, and I was beginning to believe again, as I already thought, that it was realized in

⁷³⁵ Cf. Pascal: "In order for a religion to be true, it must have known our nature. It must have known the greatness and the smallness, and the reason for both. Who has known it but the Christian religion?" (*Pensées*, Lafuma 215).

his mind only by the force of his imagination.

In these thoughts I impatiently awaited what he had promised for a second conversation. The air of confidence which he brought to it would have disposed me to listen to him with some hope, had I not been filled with a thousand reflections that kept me on guard against anything that might mislead my reason. What fruit would there be for me to gain from a new error, and what good would it do me, I said, to owe perhaps a few moments' peace to my illusion? This is where I regret the rule I had adopted of including none of these discussions in my story.⁷³⁶ Those who, seeking for truth in earnest, are waiting only for a guide to enlighten them, and ask only for sound reasons to yield, would find here in the earl's teaching a source of instruction and light. It made a just impression on my mind. If I do not pretend that truth has much honor to gain from this victory, because being proof against all sorts of objections, it is always to ourselves that we must impute our darkness, there is at least considerable glory for the earl for having presented it to me in this light that illuminates even the recesses of the heart, and leaves no more opening for the slightest doubt.

I rightly emphasize this period of change in my principles, or rather this renewal of my soul, which allowed it little by little

⁷³⁶ Under pretext of limiting the narrative's length, Cleveland avoids explanations which could clarify the (otherwise rather vague) nature of this conversion. Thus we will never know how authentically Christian Cleveland must be considered at the end, all the more so since it is uncertain whether Clarendon himself could be situated at this time on any map of organized religions; he was a staunch Anglican who bitterly disapproved of his daughter's conversion to Catholicism. But Prévost is unconcerned here with confessional specificity and Clarendon's theology remains vague.

to recover all the vigor it had lost during such long self-neglect, and finally elevated it to the degree of knowledge and strength to which heaven was calling it through so many trials. For the just and sincere mind that has once become convinced of the necessity of religion, for its concordance with the idea we have of the Creator's rights, and with that which our own heart forces us to adopt of human nature, the path is short to conviction on all the other parts of the truth to which the perfect peace of the heart is attached. Belief in the mysteries, in historical points, submission to the rules of morality and discipline, are then nothing more than consequences that emerge on their own from the principle. Nevertheless, after proposing religion to me as the most desirable of goods, and bringing me to consider it the most just necessity, the earl undertook to prove it to me as the most real and best established truth.

There was nothing new in his proofs except the method,⁷³⁷ for I remember having recognized them since then in all the books I have acquired on this important subject. But he had noted that unbelief has no more potent weapons against religion than the weakness it purports to find in every one of the arguments on which it is founded; and not yet daring to rely as much as he could have, had he consulted my sentiments, on the impression I had retained of our second conversation, he adopted with me the method which, he has told me a hundred times since, he wished were always adopted with unbelievers. Instead of informing me

⁷³⁷ Cf. Pascal: "Let it not be said that I have said nothing new: the arrangement of the material is new." Clarendon, like Pascal, first addresses the heart and seeks to make religion attractive before proceeding to evidence for its truth. Also like Pascal, Clarendon seems to move from moral suasion to historical proofs (miracles and prophecies), avoiding most abstract philosophical arguments.

of the intention he had of using every argument as a proof, he kept that thought from me so I would receive his words as an historical discussion the utility of which he would show me in time. He had me examine carefully all its circumstances; and without grasping his direction, I observed that while he neglected nothing of the strength of the testimonies, neither did he disguise the strength of the objections. After passing before my eyes everything that has some relation to religion, he asked me what I thought of a truth sustained by so many proofs. I could not refuse a submission that was as if wrested from me. The slightest wind can put out the light of a torch. But a hundred torches together cast a victorious light, which all the winds combined are powerless to diminish.

[628] Nevertheless, I tremble lest it be unfair to religion to restrict its elements withing such narrow boundaries. My respect for it, which grows each day with my gratitude, obliges me to avert by this remark the reproach I might expect of having devoted less space to my enlightenment than to my doubts. But at bottom is it not a glorious testimony to truth, to recognize how powerfully it has subjected us? And when for other reasons one is forced to omit a part of its progression, can one better dispel the clouds with which he has had the misfortune of obscuring it, than by congratulating himself for having embraced it without self-interest and without constraint? Besides, the principal objection which had put me off for so long, and which I had even renewed to the earl, was very happily destroyed by some of his principles. If the diversity of religions is an obstacle that blocks reason in choice, it is proud and arrogant reason that should fear it. The kind that is seeking enlightenment, with the humble caution that natural weakness is able to inspire, need not fear obstacles, since in the principles of the doctrine which I was adopting, it is guided by an inner assistance that supplements its lights. My experience

itself therefore sufficed to destroy a pathetic sophism. I will add that being still only at the door of faith, I could not be deterred by the competition of some monstrous religions which are a disgrace to reason; and had my objection had some force, it could only be with respect to the various sects into which Christianity is divided.⁷³⁸

What notion can I impart of my heart's satisfaction when, being alone to meditate on my new-found knowledge, I found in my reflections an aid almost as powerful as the earl's incitement and instruction? The value of the service he had rendered me consisted in having shown me the career. I entered it by my own ardor, and was already could not wait to break into a run. In a moment the spell fell away, that my reason alone had never been able to penetrate. Worldly attachments, its goods, their duration, everything took on its real worth in my eyes. I no longer valued anything except by the relation of each thing to the new objects of my esteem and affection. Nothing seemed great to me except the sacred truths that filled me, and nothing important except that which always lasts. Fanny soon perceived this change; but far from taking from it cause for alarm, she was eager to congratulate me. It had long been the object of all her wishes. Only her modesty and the respect with which she was imbued for me had

⁷³⁸ This is the response given by Cleveland to the problem of forty-nine false religions against one true, to which Cleveland himself had alluded in book V and raised explicitly in book VI. Cleveland's Catholicism thus appears uncertain, insofar he sees now as much difficulty in accrediting one type of Christianity among others as he once did one religion among others. This whole paragraph was eliminated from the Ryckhoff editions and those that imitated them: see Bérénice Cooper, *op. cit.*, p. 289. The same ambiguity applies to religious practice as Cleveland presents it.

prevented her from shaming me for my wanderings and proposing to me her insights. With what joy did she see me willingly enter the path which she had dared not show me! I received her congratulations as a surfeit of happiness. You are then as happy as I am, I said to her, since you feel the value of the blessings I am beginning to enjoy. So what was occupying you in your moments of solitude, I then said with surprise, what you called your exercises of piety, and what I regarded as an amusement pardonable to the feebleness of your sex, was perhaps contemplation of the profound truths unknown to me? Heaven had favored you with that knowledge, whereas I was languishing in the dark nearby, or by an even more terrible misfortune, I was imprudently abandoning myself to error! Alas, I added, how were you capable of such indifference for my tranquillity? She pretexted the fear she had always had of seeing me disapprove of her zeal, and by the very opinion of her occupations which I had expressed to her several times. She had not been mistaken, she continued, since I had just admitted as much. But how many sighs had she addressed to heaven to obtain from its goodness that my eyes be opened!⁷³⁹

Another question which I hastened to put to Fanny, and which posed a considerable difficulty for me in my initial fervor, concerned the dejection in which I had seen her for her earlier calamities, and particularly over the death of her daughter. With the strength with which I felt filled by contemplation of the great truths of religion, I had difficulty understanding that having long

⁷³⁹ In this paragraph, it seems that Cleveland's faith is supposed to be essentially Catholic; the reunion of the two spouses in the same faith would thus complete the work of reconciliation begun in book VI. Religion henceforth rationalizes misfortune, and no longer views it as providential injustice.

possessed the same assistance, she could have abandoned herself to the many regrets I had witnessed, and seem so vulnerable to misfortunes or [629] losses that no longer seemed to me able to trouble the tranquility of a Christian. What I had not understood in the rector's mouth, when he was exhorting her to regard Cécile's death as a separation of short duration, and not to call misfortune the best thing that could happen to her daughter, became so clear and so palpable to me that I could no longer conceive how she could have thought otherwise with the same principles. I pressed her to satisfy this question. She replied that it was no doubt humiliating for her to have shown so little patience and submission in that trial, and that she was persuaded that as the assistance of heaven could not fail her, it was on hers that the entire blame for her weakness must fall. But I am a mother, she added, and naturally the most tender of all women. The bonds of nature are not destroyed by the assistance of grace. I have learned from religion itself, she continued, that our wretched life is a perpetual scene of miseries, and this truth ought properly to be understood only for battles we have to wage against our own sentiments. Whatever takes place outside us, like the loss of goods, and the agitation of the objects that surround us, requires no more patience and courage than what we can find in the strength of reason alone; and you yourself, if you recall, had no need until that point of any aid beyond your natural constancy.⁷⁴⁰ Where then do the struggles begin that are the true test of a Christian? It is in those sorts of calamities where the sentiment is so intimate that all our efforts can neither overcome it nor dismiss it. The blow stays with us despite ourselves, and patience that comes

⁷⁴⁰ Fanny apparently knows nothing of the crisis of Saumur and Cleveland's aborted suicide in book VI.

from nature alone is soon exhausted. Grace is then a resource that does not fail him who asks for it; but even in receiving it, just as our needs require, it still happens that the weakness of nature makes itself felt.⁷⁴¹ She added to that remark many excellent maxims that appeared to me the fruit of consummate virtue, and kindled in me a sort of emulation. A woman, I repeated with admiration, a feeble and delicate creature, has discovered a treasure unknown to the most enlightened of men! She has secured a happiness for herself which so many of the blind seek in vain; and in the simplicity of her heart she proves capable of communicating her insights to those from whom she ought to have received them.

The ardor I felt growing by the day through conversations with her and with the earl might have carried too far a heart as easy to stir as mine, if the habit I had of reasoning had not allowed me to discover in their very principles as many rules for moderation as motives for zeal. The separation from the world and taste for solitude which had been the first conclusions of my new philosophy, soon seemed to me excessive, when I considered, following Fanny's maxims, that our obligations are not limited to ourselves, and that with the knowledge of true principles, religion requires their practice, which consists in the exercise of every virtue. Thus, far from being satisfied with the unsociable sentiment that would willingly have caused me to break off all intercourse with men, I saw that it could only come from a

⁷⁴¹ The question which Cleveland had raised at the beginning of the paragraph is important if one considers that what has already discredited other belief systems in his eyes was their inability to compensate for natural collapse in time of misfortune. If grace comes to the rescue, why did it seem to fail Fanny when she needed it most? This is Fanny's only answer.

blameworthy indolence which leads one flee the bother of making oneself useful to others by dint of lessons and examples; or from an abusive mistrust of oneself, which makes one renounce the merit of struggle to keep his cowardly self out of danger. By raising myself above worldly goods, and learning finally to what pleasures the name of happiness belongs, I discerned through an infinite number of false ideas and flawed reasonings with which I found most books of piety replete, that the Gospel cannot grant the use of material goods without permitting their appreciation, and consequently that any moral system that makes a crime of reasonable attachment to creatures is a fanaticism that goes against religion as much as nature. After many meditations on this important subject, I became persuaded that each of them condemns only their excess, in other words, that sort of extravagance that implies the preference of pleasure over duty. Thereby are justified all the penchants and tastes of an upright man, who knows not only how to contain his desires within the bounds of the law, but even ennobles them by the relationship he gives them to a better end.

[630] I was elaborating, on this principle, a new plan of conduct, entirely different, perhaps, from what one might imagine after the idea I have projected of my fervor. Those who do not know the ways in which nature and religion are intertwined will no doubt be hesitant to approve: but founded on the very rules of truth I was embracing, and of which I flattered myself to understand the duties, after placing the love of God and the desire of things celestial in the first rank of my affections, I put the inclinations of my heart, and the course of my actions, in the following order: 1. The duties of religion: they were to become the source of my happiness, as the sole path that would lead me to my ultimate end. 2. My affection for my wife: it was so just a sentiment that it could not be counter to any law. 3. The duties of society,

among which I included those of friendship. 4. The assiduous study of holy writ,⁷⁴² to fortify me more and more in the appreciation of my new maxims; but without abandoning the study of nature, from which I had scarcely less fruit to anticipate for the same purposes, since to eyes well enlightened by religion, the natural order relates to God as that of grace. 5. The moderate use of pleasures: on this principle, that the perfection of the Gospel consists no more in privation, than in wise enjoyment. Thus fine food, music, and the other satisfactions that flatter the senses were not excluded from my system. Even the taste for women, which is considered such a terrible stumbling block, seemed to me without danger with the sentiments that served to protect me. My unalterable affection for Fanny exercised my heart sufficiently never to fear it was capable of betraying me; and now that the vulgar rebellion of my senses was all I had to fear, I relied on more strength than required from the great impulses of religion, in a peril where the ease with which I had formerly allowed myself to be defeated had proven only my extreme weakness. Why could one not find innocent enjoyment in nature's most perfect handiwork? Beauty and grace would be fateful advantages for a woman. We would then have to flee her, because she deserved to be pursued, and treat her, because she is amiable, with all the signs of hatred? What a strange contradiction! Based on this brief notion of my new system, I will perhaps be asked how religion could make me revert to some of the amusements which reason had led me to abandon. He who does not anticipate my reply is ignorant of two of the principal advantages of Christianity: one, which is to sanctify by the innocence of desires and the care taken to relate it to the ultimate objective, whatever is not either evil in

⁷⁴² *Saintes lettres*, in other words the Bible.

itself or specifically forbidden by law⁷⁴³; the other, which consists in the strength it communicates to those who lend themselves in good faith to its impressions, to protect them from an immoderate attachment to sensory goods, and take advantage of even the small disappointments which always accompany or follow their possession, to redouble the ardor that makes them constantly incline to the possession of a more solid happiness. In a word, the Christian finds in the pleasures he obtains from the use of the world's passing goods a reason to desire more perfect ones. He little fears their loss, because he counts on a compensation that is assured. He considers them as a sample of those that await him in a condition less subject to change, and this disposition, in which he is sustained by the inner aids of religion, makes him preserve that peace and equanimity of soul of which philosophy alone provides but a phantom, and which is already a kind of anticipation of the happiness to which he aspires.⁷⁴⁴ But what honors religion most, and invincibly proves the divine power of its assistance, is that instead of the slowness with which reason and nature succeed in forming their habits, religion makes one find all at once as much enjoyment and facility in the execution of its maxims, as if one had never had any other exercise in one's entire life. Fanny and I soon had the opportunity to conduct this happy experiment.

We had heard nothing of Mme Lallin since her flight. Drink had entrusted me with the order my wife had secretly given him to inquire what direction she had taken, and to put his every effort

⁷⁴³ This is the principle of the moderate use of Christian freedom according to St. Paul (I Cor. 6:12, 10:23).

⁷⁴⁴ For the first time here Cleveland alludes directly to a reward in the afterlife.

into discovering where she had gone to hide. I knew Fanny too [631] well to have suspected her of some purpose other than generous compassion; but I would not have imagined either that after having made various fruitless attempts to pursue such a noble sentiment, and furthermore being constantly preoccupied by so many other thoughts, she could have found room for a memory that nothing obliged her to preserve. Nevertheless, she came to me one day with a letter which Drink had sent her from St. Cloud, and preparing me with a most affectionate preface, she bade me, in conclusion, to grant her the freedom of rendering some service to an unfortunate woman who had punished herself too harshly for the injustices of fortune. I was unsure of her intentions until, after explaining to me the sorry situation to which Mme Lallin had reduced herself, she proposed that I recall her to join us, and restore to her our confidence along with an esteem that she had never deserved to lose. Chance had led Drink to discover what he had long been searching for unsuccessfully. My name having gotten about, since our most recent adventures, among some Englishmen who had frequented the court of Madame, it had gone as far as England, where one of my oldest enemies had not heard it without surprise. It was John Will, the persecutor of Viscount Axminster and Mme Lallin's tyrant. The traitor was of an age when remorse begins to expiate the wrongdoings of a long life. Mere repentance would perhaps be enough to set him right with heaven for the woes he had caused Lord Axminster and his family; but he owed other reparations to Mme Lallin, whom he had so cruelly deceived under the pretense of marriage, and whose possessions had remained in his hands when she decided to deliver herself from his tyranny by fleeing. He had no doubt that she had found the means of catching up with me, or that by going to France he would learn from me what had become of her. It was his hope to win her heart with promises, and per-

suade her to assume in his country the station and title she had earned there by her misfortunes. He went to St. Cloud. I had departed. But Drink, whom I had left there, gave him the information he desired, at least up to the point when the obscurities of our own fate had led her to leave my house of her own volition. Though he was unable to provide him further enlightenment, he gave him to understand that, having left with few provisions for a long trip, she could not be very far from Paris.

This search became Will's sole occupation, and he succeeded in it better than Drink, who had not been able to devote himself to it fully. An English woman, in whom Mme Lallin's had virtually had to confide, given her custom of associating with women of our nation, fortunately happened to be acquainted with some of John Will's friends. He learned from them that our unhappy fugitive had spent several days with that faithful friend, and that having retired to the convent of Hautebruyère, which is a few leagues from Paris,⁷⁴⁵ she had not ceased to maintain a close relationship with her. But with few resources in terms of fortune, she found herself compelled, in order to subsist in an institution where her expenses would soon have exceeded her means, to reduce herself to the level of that sort of servants whose humiliating condition is palliated by calling them *lay sisters*. Will had asked to see her under a name less likely to appal her than his own. She was horrified at the sight of him, and confounded as he had felt from her reproaches, he had returned to St. Cloud having not had the strength to reply to her.

Drink indicated to us both Mme Lallin's location and Will's propositions. My wife, to whom betrayal had always been the

⁷⁴⁵ The convent of Hautebruyère, near Montfort l'Amaury, was founded in the twelfth century by Bertrade de Montfort.

most awful of all crimes, found Mme Lallin as much to be pitied for having nothing better to hope for than Will's offers, as she was for the sorry state of her fortune. What confidence could she take in the most deceitful of all men, and does even religion offer cause for security against the ruses of a traitor? This consideration stirred Fanny so powerfully that, becoming even more moved by the misery of a woman to whom she finally recognized that we owed less hatred than compassion, she came to ask me to forgive her, and to offer me an example of generosity which she urged me to follow.

I interrupted her. My heart had no violence to do itself, since far from harboring the [632] least resentment toward Mme Lallin, I had always done justice to her intentions, and willingly forgave her for all our misfortunes. But while applauding Fanny's generous inclinations, I feared it might violate prudence to follow them too hastily. More testimony was needed than that of Will and a letter from Drink, to justify an action of which I thought I could sense the full importance. Even considering Mme Lallin's true interests, I did not see why she should indicate such reluctance to accept the promises of a man who returned to her by the path of repentance. And whatever opinion we form have of it, I felt myself obliged at least not to trust my own eyes alone. Thus, without utterly rejecting my wife's insistence, I got her to agree to the decision I made to invite Will and Mme Lallin to come to Rouen, to examine together what their interests and mine could allow us to do. Mrs Riding, whom I was expecting any moment, was requested by a letter I wrote to her that very day, to pick up Mme Lallin at Hautebruyère. Despite all her plans for retirement, I had no doubt that an invitation coming from Fanny and me would dispose her at once to set forth. In addition, I had written to the rector of the College to ask him to send my children under the escort of the governor whose zeal and wisdom he had so praised.

Everything was thus working out for my passage to England, and I had already shipped the biggest share of my baggage from Dieppe.

I was awaiting the only persons whose absence was holding up my departure, and Lord Clarendon, extending the good offices of friendship to all my needs, took time to give me some insight into the character and interests of those who governed at the court at London, when one day the visit of the Duke of Monmouth was announced to us. He was simply dressed and almost without retinue, but he was recognized by the earl's servants who had often seen him at their master's house. There was no longer any reason for me to resent him, and given my intention to leave France, it seemed on the contrary that his friendship could become useful to me. I imagined that after spending some time mourning the loss of my daughter, he was coming to offer Fanny the common obligations of civility. This conjecture was correct, but it did not include all his motives, nor even all his pretexts.

After acquitting custom by a greeting that seemed to renew his pain, he took me aside, and making a great show of his friendship, he announced to me a misfortune that was going to make it necessary for me, he said, to make my way swiftly to London. Prepared for all sorts of events as I was in my new fervor, I heard this exordium without emotion, and replied that I was, happily, on the eve of departing with my entire family. He seemed more moved than I at my response, and I thought I detected at least that it was contrary to his expectation. Yet after indeed affecting a satisfaction he did not feel, he told me that M. and Mme de R..., unsure how to communicate some very disturbing news to me, had had recourse to him through a letter in which they bitterly regretted having lost the title that had put them in possession of my lord Axminster's inheritance. The only person whom they could suspect of this theft was the wretched Cortona, in whom

they had long had blind confidence, and whose just punishment they knew about. But into whatever hands that document had fallen, the greatest threat, they added, came from Lord Terrill's heirs, who having apparently found the means of recovering it, were beginning to make use of it to dispute properties which had been in their father's possession for thirty years.⁷⁴⁶ Indeed, whatever injustice there be in extending their claims to someone else's inheritance, it seemed that in the absence of the legitimate heir, they had more right than two foreigners to property that had been preserved for so long in their family. I immediately took the matter in this sense, and despite the air of importance which the Duke of Monmouth had given to his account, I supposed that the presence of Fanny and of my children would suffice to resolve all the difficulties.

[633] This was not the duke's thought, having contrived, based on this incident, two hopes worthy of his flippancy and presumption. Fanny's portrait, joined in a single painting with that of my daughter, had served not only to cure him of his grief, but also to inspire in him a new affection, which had become in little time his heart's dominant passion; or rather having been predisposed, as I have noted, with a nearly equal ardor for the mother and the daughter, his desires which had come together on Cécile impetuously resumed their flight towards Fanny. He had seen little likelihood of satisfying them, and perhaps he had spent some time resisting them. But the request he had received from M. de R... was such a favorable opportunity that, in the principles

⁷⁴⁶ The interval is in fact completely implausible: Axminster must have left England (at the end of book I), about 1658, and the date of the Duchess's death (1671) situates this passage scarcely fourteen years later.

of gallantry that reigned then in England as in Paris, he had decided not to neglect it. He was therefore counting on the misfortune he had communicated to me inducing me not only to get myself to London, but to associate myself more closely with him than ever, for the need I would have of his protection, and that the liberty which my wife would not be able to refuse him to see her familiarly during my absence would offer him a hundred opportunities to satisfy his love.

Although the approach of our departure, and the chilliness with which I received his offers of service in a matter where I thought them needless, had suddenly deflated some of his hopes, he did not lose that of at least making his sentiments known to Fanny. The habit he had had of living at Lord Clarendon's during the time he had spent in Rouen, allowed him the liberty of requesting of him an asylum for a few days. There his passion took on new strength from the continual presence of the object of his love. Soon it was no longer able to remain concealed. The earl and his entire household could see it from a thousand signs. Fanny and I were the only ones to whom this thought did not occur. I was constantly consumed in such serious meditations that they left me little attention for the behavior of others, and Fanny in a mixture of sorrow and tasks as she was on the eve of our departure, was not capable of opening her eyes to a folly she would have scorned had she noticed it.

Lord Clarendon, to whom our repose was as precious as it was to us, became seriously alarmed at an excessive security of which he feared the consequences. His earlier knowledge of the duke's character was for him as strong a reason for mistrust as everything I had told him about our most recent adventures. He took a moment when I was alone with Fanny to tell us his concerns. With less faithful and less virtuous friends, he said, I might be hesitant to issue a warning that might be less well received.

But knowing you so well, he continued, addressing my wife, my only risk is to reap too much gratitude for a feeble sign of my zeal. And explaining to us all the observations he had made about the duke's passion, he made us fear that such extravagance could become damaging indeed to our tranquility. Examples were not far-removed. It is a madness, the earl continued, and your experience ought already to have persuaded you that all his passions never deserve any other name. I see him spending entire nights, he added, pacing about under your windows, with an agitation that has sometimes made me tremble at the attempts he might be plotting on your virtue. I have reassured myself only by the precaution I have taken to have some trustworthy servants keep watch around you. I am informed, he continued on, that he has your portrait on a sort of altar, in the most secret chamber of his apartment, and that he spends there all the time he cannot spend with you.⁷⁴⁷ I do not know where he has stolen it from you; but you quite understand that I would not have so freely revealed it to you, were I not sure he has done it without your permission.

We thanked our dear friend warmly for this token of such pure and constant zeal. I related to him the circumstances in which the duke had absconded with the portrait. It was easier to retrieve skillfully it from his hands, once we knew where he kept it hidden, than to be rid of the importunities with which we were threatened by his passion. The order went out at once to some servants to remove his idol [634] at some point in the day. With respect to his sentiments, it was not in Fanny's power to destroy them, and if civility obliged her even to pretend not to see them as long as they did not make him violate the bounds of respect, we

⁷⁴⁷ The stolen portrait recalls Nemours's theft of the princess's portrait in *La Princesse de Clèves*.

thought, as she did, that at the slightest declaration he made to her openly, she was to punish his temerity with a reply that would cover him in shame. Lord Clarendon had first been of the opinion that without waiting for explanations from his mouth that would put her in some embarrassment, she could make use of various extravagances that had occurred in sight of the servants to give him a public reproach. But that was to ask of my wife more boldness than she was capable of; and even pitying her for the violence she would have to do herself to assume rightful indignation when the time came, I got the earl to agree that she was right to prefer to wait until she saw herself forced to speak.

However, the path the duke chose to declare his sentiments to her was so shrewd and so respectful that it would have been another reason for embarrassment for her, had heaven had not intervened to guide this episode to the best possible conclusion. Such an opportune moment was seized to recover the portrait that, the duke's suspicions being unable to fall on anyone, his presumption made him believe that only Fanny would have dared cause him such a cruel mortification; or perhaps he feigned being persuaded of that only to obtain the opportunity of broaching the subject which he had been contemplating for a long while. He decided to address his complaints to her in a letter. It was so naturally couched that one would have believed him sincerely aggrieved by the necessity he was in of exposing himself to her resentment: but when he was doing sufficient violence to smother a dreadful passion in his heart, and wished his whole life long to be the victim of a respect without example, did he not have the right to accuse her of cruelty, she who was depriving him of the sole consolation to which he limited all his desires? Was it from her hand that he held that precious portrait? Alas, that was a good fortune to which he had never dared pretend. Why then rob him of something he owed only to chance? Was he being accused of

profaning it through some indiscretion, or of not worshipping it religiously enough? In short, under the pretext of intending to reduce himself eternally to silence, and not to desire anything more than the possession of which he asked the restitution, he made a more vivid depiction of his passion than if he had not affected concealing it behind that veil. His letter was handed to Fanny by a stranger who pretended to have brought it from Rouen. Her reading of it to the earl before communicating it to me was a precaution she felt she owed to my tranquillity. They brought it to me together. We were discussing the incident, when we were notified that my children were arriving from Paris with their governor, and their impatience being as great as ours, they appeared before our eyes at the same moment.

While their mother was taking them from my arms, where I had held them in a long embrace, I glanced at their governor, who had remained modestly several paces behind them. The opinion I had been given of his merit and the gratitude I owed to his important services already was made me try to think to myself what recompense I should pay for his zeal, or by what offers I could attach him to me permanently. I thought I recognized in his reluctance to come closer the detachment and modesty which the rector had so praised. His physiognomy was somewhat disfigured by a natural defect; he could see only in one eye, and the other, too weak, I had been told many times, to bear light, was perpetually covered by a large patch that hid almost half his face. But this slight deformity was compensated by a most noble countenance and other advantages that lent his face interest at the first glance. A thousand persons I had seen in the course of my life might have some resemblance to him; thus, although I thought I discerned some of his features right away, I did not pause to search in my memory what might have remained there from such a vague impression.

Impatient at his continuing reluctance to come forward, I myself took several steps toward him, extending my arms with a gentle reproach at his reserve. Do you think I am [635] unappreciative, I said, of all that I owe you; or do you imagine that your generous ministries could have remained as unknown to me as your person? You have rendered a service, I added, embracing him, to hearts capable of gratitude, and I would begin for the first time to complain about you, if you did not have faith in my esteem and friendship. He accepted my embrace by bowing deeply, and when I took him by the hand to present him to Lord Clarendon and my wife, he muttered a few embarrassed words to me of which I heard only the last few: he was begging me to come outside with him for a moment.

Although I understood nothing about this mystery, I did not hesitate to satisfy him. Imagining even that he might have some pressing favor to ask of me, I told him on the way that I would deem myself most happy if he could offer me the opportunity of beginning our acquaintance with some services that corresponded to my desires. No sooner were we without witnesses than he asked me to stop, and lifting the mask that altered his face, he asked me in a timid voice and a humiliated air whether I recognized the miserable Gelin.⁷⁴⁸

He took advantage of the surprise that left me for a few

⁷⁴⁸ Also in the spurious continuation of 1734, Gelin had become a Jesuit – but in that case an evil one. His exact status here is not clear; he could conceivably be a lay teacher. Is he really half-blind, in which case it would doubtless be a reminder of his devotion to Cleveland's sons when they had the smallpox; or is that only a pretext for disguising himself? In any case, the great villain of the story finally proves his own goodness; evil acts do not prevent one from having an *excellent naturel*, as the Man of Quality put it (*Mémoires d'un homme de qualité*, p. 305).

moments with no voice, to protest to me in few words that if he had not made himself more useful to my service, it was because he had not known for what purpose his strength and even his life could be used. And as for the gratitude of which he had just been fortunate enough, he said, to hear me utter the word, he wanted none other than to forget the horrors he had done to me.

I shall take care here not to credit nature with one of the greatest miracles of grace.⁷⁴⁹ After the oppression that had arrested my natural goodness in the visit I had received from Gelin in St. Cloud, and which had even made me regard as an exceptional effort the patience with which I had listened to his expressions of remorse, I shall never attribute the change I immediately experienced to any power other than the one that governs hearts. Greatness of soul will go as far as to disdain vengeance; but it will never make anyone grant affection to a cruel enemy in exchange for repentance. Seeing Gelin humiliated before me, moved even, and reclaimed by duty, as no doubt could remain after such a long and constant expiation of his wrongs, my only thought was to embrace him, with all the signs of affection I thought capable of bolstering his courage. Let the past, I said, in the movement of my heart, forever evacuate your memory and mine. I no longer wish to remember anything of it except the initial reasons I had for esteeming you. And promising him my friendship as long as he preserved the same love of virtue, I added, in the impression I still retained of his services, that such a noble means of righting his offenses inspired more admiration in me than any hatred they had ever caused me. He seemed over-

⁷⁴⁹ *Grace* is a recently learned word for Cleveland; he has used it once, following Fanny's example. The grace he refers to here is not that which has converted Gelin, but which brings Cleveland to forgive him.

come with joy; his silence, and the ardor with which he pressed my hands, told me better what was going on in his heart than any expression.

I wanted to know what had prevented him from identifying himself to my wife, and whether he doubted that she would be as susceptible as I to the pleasure of seeing him now virtuous. He confessed to me that, not expecting to appear in her presence at the first moment of his arrival, he had been disconcerted by her presence. Come, come, I said, leading him by the hand, and do not believe Fanny is less capable than I of recognizing the sentiments of a true virtue. I forced him to go back with me into the apartment. He turned his face aside while I presented him to my wife as the person who had rendered us so many services. It is your liberator, I said, in a peril which Milord has shared with you, and about which he has a hundred times repeated to me that you would not have got out of it without his help; it is the faithful guardian of your two sons. He has spared his life neither for you nor for them. And not perceiving that in the position in which he was standing, disguised moreover by a large wig, she was yet beginning to recognize him: It is Gelin, if you do not know, I added, raising my voice; it is a generous and faithful friend, to whom we both owe the preservation of all we hold most dear.

[636] Fanny started with surprise and fright, making me doubt for a moment the reception he was to expect from her. But turning towards me, and appearing to consult my eyes: If he is such as you describe him, she said, I do not hesitate at all to adopt for him the sentiments of which you give me the example. Those few words, uttered with the grace that never failed that dear wife, restored life and assurance to Gelin. He dropped to one knee to express to her his transport of joy. His compliment was brief, and speaking of the eternal gratitude he would take away with him, he seemed prepared to leave us immediately. But after promising

him my friendship, I did not think a simple erasure of his misdeeds was a sufficient mark of it. If forgiveness was due his repentance, I owed a just recompense for his services. You will not leave us, I said; I shall never consent to lose you once I find you again amiable and virtuous. My fortune puts me in a position to do something for yours. The desire to assure him an agreeable and happy life had already made me think of offering him a retreat in England at one of my country estates. He did not accept my offer without being pressed. But the urging of the Earl of Clarendon and Fanny finally got him to agree.

I regarded as another proof of the honesty of his sentiments the open and familiar manner which he quickly resumed once he believed we were persuaded of his sincerity and repentance. My curiosity made me want to learn how he had managed to introduce himself into the College, and merit the commendations which the rector had made to me of his character. He held back nothing from us. In the assistance which, he said, compassion alone had led him to give to the poor fellow who had died from his wounds at Rueil, he had been struck by the sentiments of piety he had seen him manifest in the last moments of his life. This scene and the other circumstances of his death had made such an impression on him that the image he had taken away from it having stayed with him for a long time, it had finally determined him to profit from that example to govern his conduct by the maxims of religion. Although he was a Protestant, the dispositions of a man he had seen die in principles opposed to his own had provoked in him a perplexity he had never imagined. He had devoted himself for some time to study, and his difficulties only increasing, he had decided to seek enlightenment in a society of which he had formed a favorable opinion since the testimony which the poor fellow of Rueil had been forced to give of it as he lay dying. He had gone to see the rector of the College, who had

been able to dissipate all his doubts. But having not limited himself to illuminating his mind, he had shone the light into his heart as well, by making him feel the necessity of fulfilling the duties which heaven had given him to know. It was that virtuous Jesuit who, upon demonstration of his remorse, had advised him to acquire merit with heaven through the services he could render to me. He admitted that the state of his fortune had also made him consider this proposition as an advantage, but that if I were nevertheless to judge it by his true sentiments, his principal purpose had been to repair the harm he had done me and to deserve the forgiveness of his misdeeds, without ever having flattered himself to see the happy restoration of my esteem which I had just granted him.

This noble candor was about to make me redouble the compliments by which I saw him so affected. But the beginning of a much more interesting scene called me into the earl's courtyard, where I was notified that Mrs Riding was arriving with the Cécile's casket. I forbade my servants, who had given me this notification privately, to let it get about before my return: my hope was to spare Fanny the tears that such a sad sight would inevitably renew. I went outside alone. Mrs Riding, who had already gotten out of her coach, came sorrowfully to meet me. Although accustomed by a practice of several weeks to the sight of the precious charge she was bringing to me, she could not see me again without such heaviness of heart that she lacked the strength to speak in my arms. I was expecting Mme Lallin to be with her. I saw only an elderly man who was supporting her, whom I easily recognized as Captain Will. This title escapes from my pen, because [637] it was the only one under which I yet knew him. But having made his peace with the royal household, the services he had continued to render to the state had raised him to the rank of vice-admiral, and I was surprised to see him wear-

ing the Order of Bath which the king had added to this recompense.⁷⁵⁰

He accosted me timidly. His words conveyed an humble avowal of the terrible betrayal by which he had dishonored himself. But as the most merited resentments, he said, must yield to repentance, he flattered himself that his would make an impression on my heart, and that I would accept his shame in the stead of reparation. I spared him the rest of such a humiliating confession, and extending my arms to him: You may be at ease, I said, if your heart's peace depends on me. I forgive you. This assurance cost me no effort. A superiority of soul, which was the perceptible effect of my recent insights, caused me to regard all the woes which had come at the hands of men as disorders that had harmed them more than me; and should I see them become once more their true selves by repenting of their offenses and embracing virtue, I was disposed to rejoice in their interest much more than in mine. I praised the vice-admiral for his intention, of which I had learned, of making just reparation to Mme Lallin's honor, and asked Mrs Riding why she had not come with her. They told me that all the persuasion they had brought to bear on her to leave her convent had not been able to shake her. She had constantly rejected Will's offers, and when he had invoked the promises he had made to her, her reply had been that while he was doing his duty by offering to fulfill them, no law obliged her to answer to his desires, she whose will he had forced with terrible tyranny. Mrs Riding had been kind enough to go in person to entreat her at Hautebruyère. The situation in which she found her

⁷⁵⁰ The Order of the Bath is one of the high orders of merit of British knighthood, but in fact it was not founded (by King George I) until 1725.

had moved her: sad, poor, and all but alone. She had not been able to extract anything more from her than touching regrets at having been the instrument of the malignity of my fate to cause me the cruellest troubles it had ever made me bear. She could not forgive herself for piercing her friend's heart, and crushing her benefactor with woes. In short, in the unwavering determination which was hers to punish herself willingly for the rest of her life, she implored me to forget misfortunes and misdeeds which she dared not beg me to forgive. Mrs Riding was requested to deliver the same message to my wife, and to give her a letter from her hand, which was nothing more than a repetition of her apologies and regrets. Will, more moved than ever by this narrative, begged me with tears in his eyes to use all the power that my kindnesses had given me over her, to get her to change her mind. I knew of nothing more forceful than the efforts that had already failed me, and beginning to fear lest Fanny be wary of the reason for my absence before I had taken certain measures, I asked him to suspend his impatience for a moment.

With the help of a few faithful servants, whom I quietly sent for, I dismissed those whose indiscretion I feared, and having the coach brought up to a hidden entrance, I ordered my daughter's casket to be unloaded secretly, and taken to a room I thought little frequented by my wife. I was beginning to regret the decision I had made to have it taken to England, or at least to allow Fanny to know about it. What had seemed necessary to moderate her initial transports of her grief now seemed likely only to renew them. However, I was hopeful that seeing Mrs Riding arrive without the sad memento she had brought us, she could keep occupied solely with the satisfaction of seeing her friend again, and completely lose sight of what could only distress both of them. It would not have been difficult for me to hide the casket from view in the ship, and have it taken without her knowledge to

our estate in Devonshire.

But I was doing little justice to Fanny's virtue⁷⁵¹ when I thought she could lose in a moment the constancy and resignation which she had worked so hard to acquire. The tears she had left to shed were no longer those of a weak and passionate mother, who yields to the initial movements of nature, and has no other [638] reason to weep than the sentiment of blind suffering. It was the fruit of the reflections which were her constant sustenance, on the misery of the human condition, and on a distant, better fate, which was to reunite us one day with her daughter in the very bosom of happiness. She gave her friend a tender greeting. She read Mme Lallin's letter, and expressing wonderment at her sentiments, she tranquilly advised the vice-admiral to leave to that unfortunate woman the repose she seemed to desire. Then, proposing to me to secure for her before we left an annuity to allow her to subsist with dignity, she broke off this conversation only after deciding with me the sum and means of having it paid to her regularly. I was already imagining that the thought of the casket was erased from her memory; but at the moment when I thought she was occupied by another thought, she asked me, in such a firm and pressing voice, to let her see her daughter's remains, that I could not refuse her desire. Everyone present hastened to accompany her on this sad visit, and the Duke of Monmouth, who had come to join us as soon as my children had arrived, was not the slowest to follow her. Her intentions, though unexpressed, had to do with him. After shedding her tears for a few moments over the casket, she turned to him, and pointing to that grim spectacle, she took the opportunity to address to him such moving words on

⁷⁵¹ In this context, the word has here some of the etymological meaning of moral strength of the Latin *virtus*.

the indecency of his sentiments, and the vanity of his aspirations, that if she did not wholly extinguish his passion in his heart, she freed herself from the displeasure of putting up any longer with its tokens. The consternation this caused him made him leave immediately the assembly and the earl's house. Everything else having worked out as we wished, we had nothing more on our minds than to prepare for our departure.

The End.

*M. Cleveland's manuscript contains only what is included in the seven volumes of which this is the conclusion. It was in this state that I⁷⁵² received it from his son. But the events of his Christian life have been recorded by his children and will some day be offered to the public.*⁷⁵³

⁷⁵² It is the Man of Quality who speaks here, as in the original preface.

⁷⁵³ Nothing is indicated about the situation of Cleveland at the time he is supposed to be writing these memoirs. This rather abrupt ending has sometimes given rise to doubts as to whether the novel is truly finished, and it is true that this final declaration much resembles those that were formulaic at the time, either to excuse the fact that a novel was not concluded, or to conclude it provisionally while leaving open the possibility of a sequel. While Prévost did in fact reopen *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* – after it was ended, so to speak – to add *Manon Lescaut*, and while he was also to conclude *Le Doyen de Killerine* with a similar kind of open-ended notice, nevertheless nothing leads one to suppose he ever really planned a continuation of *Cleveland*. Above all, these lines serve to rationalize the absence from the novel of certain events situated in England that were announced in the preface of 1731.

Appendix

Summary of the apocryphal volume V

The first four volumes of *Le Philosophe anglais* appeared in 1731 and 1732, and contain Books I–VII. The final three volumes containing Books VIII–XIV did not appear until 1738 and 1739. In the interim, his editor in Utrecht, frustrated by waiting for the continuation, commissioned a conclusion by an unnamed and unknown writer which he issued as a fifth volume.

We could ignore this apocryphal conclusion were it not for the fact that, because it preëmpted many of the story lines foreshadowed in Prévost's original Preface, it inflected the remainder of the work. For Prévost simply abandoned most of these themes that had been spoiled, in effect, for his own continuation, in such a way that it takes off in different directions: instead of the remainder of the novel taking place in England, Cleveland remains in France and those English events are never again mentioned.

For this reason it is useful, before reading the "second" *Cleveland*, to have an idea of what the apocryphal fifth volume had done to complicate, and eventually wrap up, the plot. Then that must all be forgotten as one reads what Prévost wrote after abandoning much of his originally projected plot.

The author of this spurious volume scrupulously took note of all the indices given in the first four volumes, to which his continuation corresponds more exactly than does Prévost's own. One might add that although nothing in this first part of the novel (chronology aside) is incompatible with the role Cécile will assume in the sequel, neither does anything really suggest it, and she is only a minor figure in the false sequel.⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁵⁴ See Philip Stewart, "Sur la conclusion du *Cleveland* de Prévost: l'influence de la suite apocryphe", in *Revue de Littérature Comparée*, 51 (1977), pp. 54–58.

Book VIII.

Madame's sudden death having left Cleveland without protection, the Jesuit⁷⁵⁵ obtains an order from the court to abduct Cécile and lock her up in a convent. M. de R..., having heard this, sets out in pursuit of them, but as soon as he catches up with them he is killed by a guard. Cleveland learns that Gelin has confessed his crimes and at the same time attested Fanny's fidelity to her husband. Cleveland sees Axminster in a dream, who confirms to him that his daughter is innocent. Upon reflection, Cleveland decides to believe it. He meets M. de Groot, who has come to France as ambassador of Holland, his mission being to avoid war between the two countries; discussions on this subject with Cleveland (we are in 1671).

Gelin, whom Cleveland visits in his prison, expresses his hatred for those responsible for the failure of his enterprise, and tells his story. Found guilty of kidnapping and murder, he was sentenced to be broken on the wheel, but was saved by two Jesuits on condition he convert and become a Franciscan; he was executed, but in effigy. M. de Groot having advised Cleveland to verify the facts asserted by Gelin, Drink is dispatched to La Corogne to find witnesses of what happened there and return with affidavits in due form. Cleveland for his part goes in person to Calais to find the captain of the vessel on which Fanny had fled St. Helena with Gelin; the captain tells of Fanny's remorse and of her tears. Cleveland persuades Mme Lallin to remain with him. Drink's report upon his return confirms everything. After the mediations of Mme Lallin and Mme Bridge, Cleveland goes to see Fanny and brings her back to St. Cloud. Discussions about religion with de Groot. Although desirous of returning to England

⁷⁵⁵ Still identified as "the J." or "the J..."

to claim the succession of Axminster, Cleveland and Fanny are prevented by the outbreak of war (1672) between their two countries and the United Provinces,⁷⁵⁶ which makes crossing the Channel too dangerous.

They therefore make a stop in Rouen where they are retained by the friendship of Clarendon. He tells them about his fall, which he attributes to the unbending rectitude of his character in a corrupted court, and to his inflexible opposition to the “papists.” Cleveland declares to Clarendon that, having become a Christian thanks to his reading of the Bible over two years’ time, he inclines to Anglicanism; he adds that he would like to be closed up with his whole family in “some Rumney Hole.” Clarendon is opposed to this, insisting on man’s duty to live in society, not to mention his need for worship and sacraments. The earl immediately falls into a syncope and dies a few days later (December 1674).

Nothing further retaining them in France, the Clevelands set sail for England. On the way they fall victims to a tempest, after which they are captured by French buccaneers, who separate them from Mme Lallin and from Mme Bridge and her daughter. In Marseille, after a few weeks’ wait, they manage to ransom themselves and again head for England. We learn that they had lost on their first passage a daughter they had had in the interim. Cleveland succeeds in claiming the inheritance and is thinking of retirement when the king, who has heard about them, sends for him. He insists that Cleveland remain at the court, where he will be rewarded for Axminster’s services as for those of his Grandfather Cleveland.

⁷⁵⁶ The passage on the war is very hostile to France and almost as much so to England; the author is almost surely a Dutch Protestant.

Book IX

Cleveland describes at length the English court, its personalities and politics.⁷⁵⁷ Having become a member of the Council, he remonstrates with the king for his religious policy. Their eldest son becomes an officer of the king, the other a page. Fanny strikes up a friendship with Elizabeth Cromwell.⁷⁵⁸ Story of the “papist plot” or Titus Oates affair of 1678: among the Catholics arrested is the Jesuit of St. Cloud, named Gissard. He tells the story of a life full of horrors of all sorts: sodomy, incest, seduction, atheism. Having first wished to marry Cecile, he ultimately raped her at knife point, only to stab her afterwards.⁷⁵⁹ To help him escape justice, his order has sent him to London, where the king, on Cleveland’s advice, has him secretly poisoned. Alone among the people of the court, Cleveland remains firmly anti-catholic, just as he opposes despotism.

Troubles in Scotland; Monmouth’s campaign there. Monmouth’s insolent remarks upon his return with relation to the role Cleveland plays at court provoke a duel between them that is barely prevented; the king despoils Monmouth of his rank of general and sends him into exile, thus succumbing to the influence of the duke of York. In the meantime, Fanny has given birth to two more daughters. The elder son leaves for his regiment accompanied by a page named C., who establishes a liaison with

⁷⁵⁷ Its elements are taken from Burnett’s *History* de Burnett, from which Prévost had borrowed (via Rabin) much of the information cited in his Preface.

⁷⁵⁸ The author of this sequel relies on Prévost’s Preface, which mentions this daughter of Cromwell’s, who in fact had died in 1658.

⁷⁵⁹ A genuinely sadistic character *avant la lettre*, Gissard, unlike Gelin, is a thief and a thug, pressed by need and the pleasure of crime in itself.

the D..., “the king’s favorite mistress,”⁷⁶⁰ and for sole punishment is sent to France. Fanny has a relapse of melancholy and finally explains that she has had a dream of the lacerated corpse of their younger son, Will. Thereupon Cleveland decides it is time to withdraw from the court; the king allow him to establish himself twenty miles from London, but keeps Will, whose fortune he promises to make. A few months later, Cleveland invents a way to have Will sent to him by dispatching Drink with a letter from him; but when Drink arrives in London he finds that Will has left for Windsor. That very night, Cleveland and Fanny are seized with fright and conclude that Will is surely dead. Drink returns in the morning to tell them that indeed, Will, wrapped in the king’s robe, and sleeping in a place the king had just left, has been stabbed.⁷⁶¹ Cleveland is kept in bed for two months by a great fever. The elder son returns to France, resigns, and enrolls in the service of William of Orange, who gives him a company.

Book X.

Cleveland retires to Devon. Visiting Rumney Hole one day, for the first time in thirty-five years, he happens upon a richly clothed man who, after many lamentations, draws his sword and stabs him in the chest. Happily, Drink finds a surgeon who heals him. This man, who is living in Axminster’s old rooms with a

⁷⁶⁰ “C.” is identified further on as John Churchill, who had nearly been caught *en flagrant délit* by the king himself and fled, some said, through the window. It was a famous anecdote, related by Burnet and Hamilton among others. The lady “D...” (also called “P...”!) is Barbara Villiers, duchess of Cleveland; Hamilton relates the negotiation by which she had obtained this title in *Mémoires du comte de Gramont*, chap. X.

⁷⁶¹ The author does no more here than develop an anecdote from Welwood which Prévost had found in Rapin and quoted in his Preface.

pretty girl, a governess and two servants, tells his story: he is the chevalier H..., earl of R., Clarendon's personal enemy, who has had various adventures with his friend C...; the girl, whose name is Ledi, was born after the death of her mother, the wife of a friend or R... Returning to the cavern one day, Cleveland has a strange adventure: he is stopped by gentlemen brigands who, since he has no money, accept his note for two hundred pounds. They turn up a week later to demand payment, in the middle of a grand dinner that Cleveland has prepared expressly on the occasion of this curious encounter.

At the end of the meal two foreign ladies appear: they are Mme Bridge and her daughter Betty, returning after an absence of six years. Mme Bridge tells their story: The captain of the vessel wanted to sell them into slavery in Barbarie, but his lieutenant, M. de Longchamp, defended them and managed to kill the captain. One of the other prisoners on board turns out to be a brother of Mme Lallin. A M. Longchamp declares his love for Mme Lallin and the ship's chaplain married them. They all arrived in Toulon where Longchamp has some properties; Lallin leaves them to go to Rouen, and returns just before Mme Longchamp gives birth to a son.⁷⁶² Lallin leaves again. Mme Bridge receives news of Cleveland and prepares to leave for England, but two days before her departure a catastrophe occurs: the Jesuit confessor of Mme Longchamp has slipped into her bed in the guise of her husband, then fled. Mme Longchamp, like Lucrecia, kills herself, and her husband then succumbs to despair and dies.

Cleveland recalls his elder son to whom he wishes to marry Betty. She tells the story of Lallin, who had fled Rouen after

⁷⁶² This son will nevertheless be eight years of age before Mme Bridge's departure.

killing a rival for the love of one of his relatives; after a voyage to Sweden and the episode on ship he had returned to Rouen, obtained a pardon and, finding the lady relative still well disposed toward him, married her.

The Cleveland son returns and indeed married Betty (1683). The earl of R... and his whole retinue are slaughtered in Rumney Hold. Betty gives birth to a boy, then goes with her husband to Holland; they return before her second childbirth. On day in the forest someone fires on Cleveland and wounds him in the arm: it is the surgeon of Rumney Hole, who is immediately arrested by two peasants. He confesses to having sold himself to the enemies of the earl of R... and himself participated in the murder. He attributes the plot to the Jesuit Blood,⁷⁶³ who too is after Cleveland. Blood is arrested and Cleveland goes to see him: he turns out to be Gelin, who confesses all his black deeds. After becoming a monk, and being sent on a mission to England, he had been captures by thieves and joined them. To qualify as their chief he stole the crown jewels, which had led to his arrest; but he persuaded the king of his usefulness and was pardoned. It is he who killed Will to avenge himself of Cleveland, and he too who killed R... and the others, reserving the same fate for Cleveland. Gelin is transferred to Newgate prison, where he commits suicide.

Book XII.⁷⁶⁴

For Cleveland, a peaceful retreat and renewed studies, along with Fanny, their son and Betty. Fanny catches a fever and dies

⁷⁶³ Another peripateia based on a foreshadowing found in the Preface of *Cleveland*.

⁷⁶⁴ By oversight, there is no Book XI in this sequel.

suddenly. Cleveland's despair is finally calmed by the supplications of the others. His son remains in England where William gives him secret missions. King Charles invites Cleveland back to the court, but he resists. A letter arrives from Germany: it is from Cecile, who lives there with her mother, her husband, two sons and a daughter. After recovering from her wounds (and with her virtue intact, she says), she had gone with her mother to B..., where the count de D... married her; she has just learned of Fanny's death. The king again pleads with Cleveland to rejoin him. He goes to London, but has scarcely arrived before he learns that the day before, 1 February 1685, the king has been felled by apoplexy. Cleveland remains secretly in London for a few days, but the king dies five days later, it appears by poison. The next day, Cleveland retreats to his country home.

Further reading

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