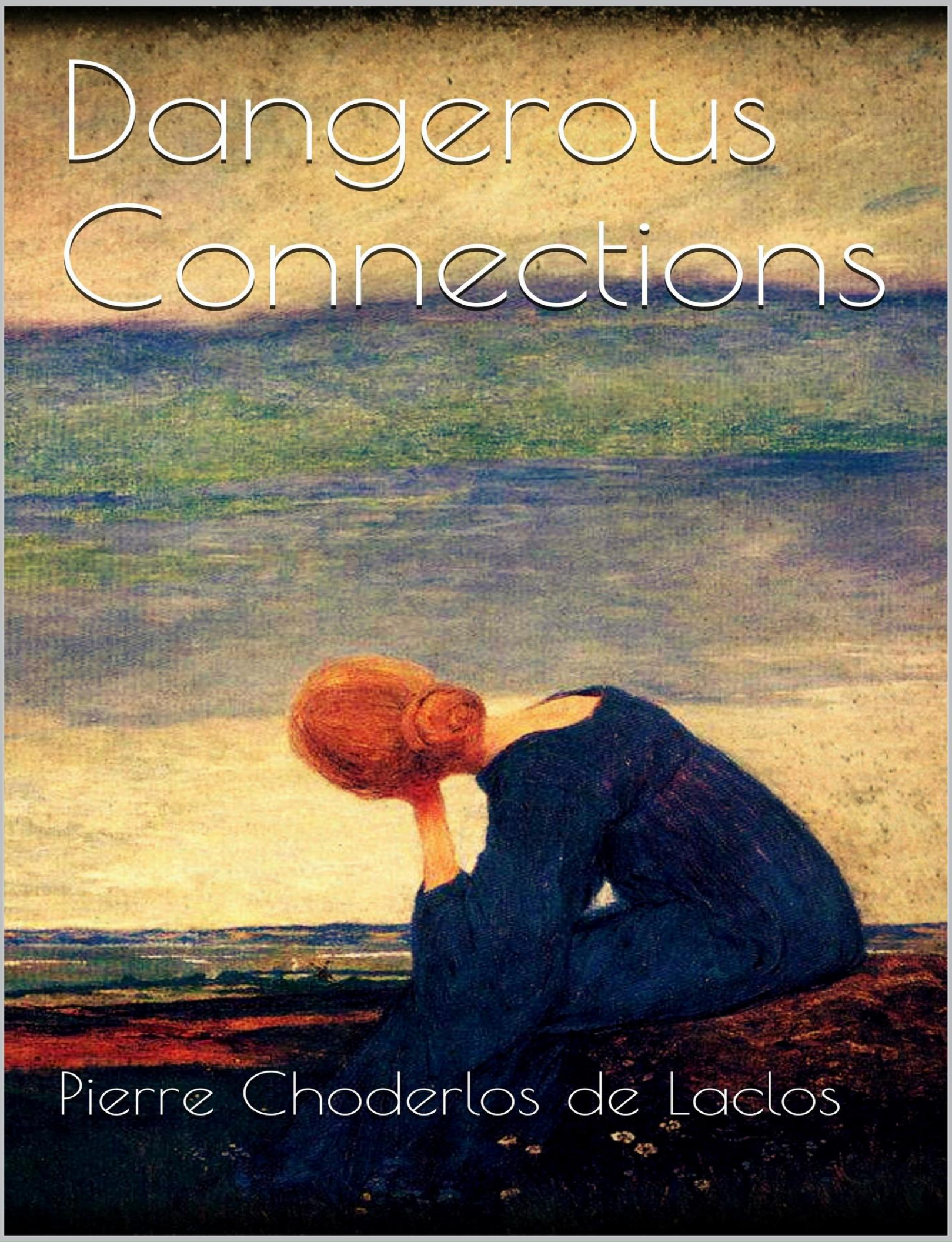
Dangerous Connections



Pierre Choderlos de Laclos

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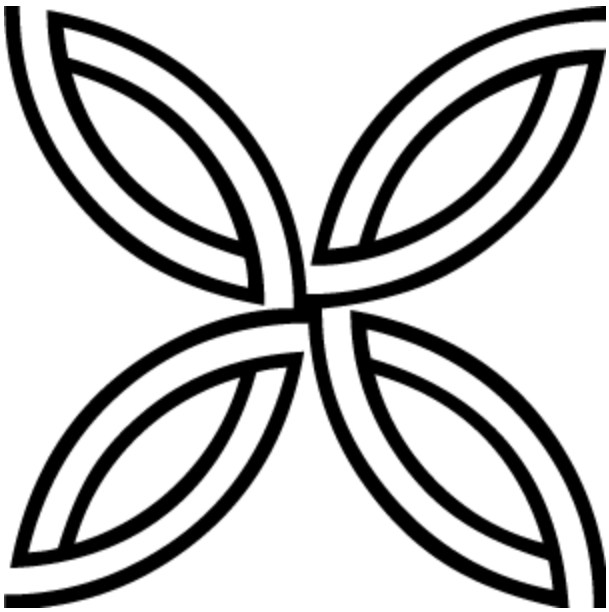

PREFACE.

This Work, or rather Collection, which the Public will, perhaps, still find too voluminous, contains but a small part of the correspondence from which it is extracted. Being appointed to arrange it by the persons in whose possession it was, and who, I knew, intended it for publication, I asked, for my sole recompence, the liberty to reject every thing that appeared to me useless, and I have endeavoured to preserve only the letters which appeared necessary to illustrate the events, or to unfold the characters. If to this inconsiderable share in the work be added an arrangement of those letters which I have preserved, with a strict attention to dates, and some short annotations, calculated, for the most part, to point out some citations, or to explain some retrenchments I have made, the Public will see the extent of my labours, and the part I have taken in this publication.

I have also changed, or suppressed, the names of the personages, and if, among those I have substituted, any resemblance may be found which might give offence, I beg it may be looked on as an unintentional error.

I proposed farther alterations, as to purity of style and diction, in both which many faults will be found. I could also have wished to have been authorised to shorten some long letters, several of which treat separately, and almost without transition, of objects totally foreign to one another. This liberty, in which I was not indulged, would not have been sufficient to give merit to the work, but would have corrected part of its defects.

It was objected to me, that the intention was to publish the letters themselves, and not a work compiled from the letters; that it would be as distant from probability as truth, that eight or ten persons, who were concerned in this

correspondence, should have wrote with equal purity of style:—And on my representing that there was not one which did not abound with essential faults, and was not very open to criticism, I was answered, that every reasonable reader would undoubtedly expect to find faults in a collection of letters of private persons, since among all those hitherto published by authors of the highest reputation, and even some academicians, there are none totally exempt from censure. Those reasons have not convinced me; and I am still of opinion they are easier to give than likely to obtain assent; but I had not my option, and submitted, reserving only the liberty of entering my protest, and declaring my dissent, as I now do.

As to the merit of this work, perhaps it does not become me to touch upon it; my opinion neither can, or ought, to influence any one. However, as some wish to know something of a book before they take it in hand, those who are so disposed will proceed with this preface—the rest will do better to pass on to the work itself.

Though inclined to publish those letters, I am yet far from thinking they will meet success; and let not this sincere declaration be construed into the affected modesty of an author: for I declare, with the same frankness, that if I had thought this collection an unworthy offering to the Public, it should not have taken up any part of my time.—Let us try to reconcile this apparent contradiction.

The merit of a work consists in its utility, or its agreeableness, and even in both, when it admits of both. But success, which is not always the criterion of merit, often arises more from a choice of subject than the execution, more from the aggregate of the objects presented than the manner of treating them: such a collection as the title announces this to be, being the letters of a whole circle, and containing a diversity of interests, is not likely to fix the attention of the reader. Besides, the sentiments they contain being feigned or dissembled, can

only excite an interest of curiosity, always infinitely inferior to that of sentiment, and less disposed to indulgence, as well as more apt to be struck with defects in the narrative, as they are constantly in opposition to the only desire curiosity seeks to gratify. These defects are, perhaps, partly compensated by the quality of the work; I mean the variety of style—A merit which an author seldom attains, but which here presents itself, and prevents, at least, a dull uniformity. Perhaps merit may also be allowed to many observations, either new or little known, which are interspersed through those letters: and this, to pass the most favourable judgment on them, will be found to constitute their best pretension to pleasing.

The utility of the work, which will, perhaps, be more strongly contested, appears more easy to establish: it is at least useful to morality, to lay open the means used by the wicked to seduce the innocent; and those letters will efficaciously concur for so salutary a purpose. There will also be found in them the proof and example of two important truths, which one would be apt to think unknown, seeing how little they are practised: the one, that every woman who admits a bad man to her society, ends with becoming his victim; the other, that every mother is at least imprudent, that suffers any but herself to gain possession of her daughter's confidence.

Young persons, of both sexes, may also here learn, that the friendship so readily held out to them by people of bad morals, is ever a dangerous snare, equally fatal to their happiness and virtue; yet, abuse or evil always unhappily confining too nearly on good, appears so much to be dreaded in this respect, that far from recommending the perusal of works of this kind to youth, I think it of the utmost importance to keep all such very far from their reach. The time when productions of the nature of the present may be no longer dangerous, but begin to be useful, was fixed by a lady of great good understanding. "I

think," said she to me, after having read the manuscript of this correspondence, "I should render my daughter an essential service in putting this book in her hands on her wedding-day." Should all mothers think thus, I shall congratulate myself on having published it.

Yet I shall leave this flattering supposition at a distance; and I still think this collection will please but few.—Men and women of depraved minds will take an interest in discountenancing a work that may injure them; and as they are never wasting in ingenuity, they may bring over the whole class of rigorists, who will be alarmed at the picture we have dared to present of profligacy.

The pretenders to free thinking will take no concern in the fate of a devout woman, whom, for that reason, they will not fail to pronounce weak, whilst the devotee will be displeased to see virtue sink under misfortune, and will complain that religion does not sufficiently display its power. On the other hand, persons of a delicate taste will be disgusted with the simplicity and defective style of many of the letters, whilst the generality of readers, led away with the idea that every thing that appears in print is a work of labour, will think he sees in some of the other letters the laboured style of an author sufficiently apparent, notwithstanding the disguise he has assumed.

To conclude; it will be pretty generally said, that a thing is little worth out of its place; and that if the too correct style of authors takes off from the gracefulness of miscellaneous letters, negligences in these become real faults, and make them insupportable when consigned to the press.

I sincerely own that those reproaches may have some foundation. I believe also, I might possibly be able to answer them, even without exceeding the length of a preface: but it is clear, that were I to attempt to answer every thing, I could do nothing else; and that if I had deemed it requisite to do so, I should at once have suppressed both preface and book.

Are novels useful, or are they prejudicial to the morals? is a question long agitated, and not yet resolved; for the reasons on both sides are equally plausible. Undoubtedly Richardson, who is read and cited every where, though prolix and diffuse, has not a little contributed to the practice of pure morality; and yet, on the other hand, what mischiefs have been produced by the immense multitude of novels of all sorts with which France and all Europe have been overrun for some years past; and, as if the evil done by these temporary plagues was not sufficiently accomplished during their short existence, it is prolonged by reviving them in eternal collections. A novel, the morality of which is equivocal, is a very dangerous poison; a novel that only possesses mediocrity, is at best useless. Even a good novel is but aliment for a child, or some weak being, to whom morality unadorned is a disgusting object. Hence we may conclude, that every thinking man will take care to banish this kind of works from his library.

He will then likewise proscribe that novel, now so much prized, called *Dangerous Connections, or Letters collected in a Society, and published for the Instruction of other Societies* .

After having read a few pages of this work, one is almost led to think this title a piece of pleasantry; the letters of Madame de Merteuil, and of the Viscount de Valmont, *published* truly *for the instruction of society* . Is it in order to form people to the detestable art of seduction, or to inspire them with a horror of it? and yet this work has been censured, and approved; has had all the honours of war, while so many other useful works are like the manes of the ancients, to whom a sepulchre was denied, and who were forced to wander upon the gloomy banks of the Styx, and admitted only by stealth. *O cæcas hominum mentes!*

I am far from a wish to calumniate the author, who, I am assured, is a military man of the highest character for wit

and good conduct; but his work, which seems to have a moral end in view, is in reality very dangerous. It has been said to be a picture of the manners of a certain class in society; and, if it was not a resemblance, where would be its utility? Must monsters be created to cause in us an aversion of ordinary vices? If it is true, it ought to have been concealed; there are shocking nudities which our minds revolt at rather than receive any instruction from. The veil that covers the Tiberiuses and the Messalinas, ought not to be wholly lifted up.

Young men will find in this novel easy means of seduction; young women will here see portraits of embellished vice; and old libertines will be amused by the exploits of Valmont. But what a monster is Valmont, if such a character exists; and those who know that class of society, assure us, they have met with many such. If there really are such beings, ought not their society to be avoided carefully? It is a forest filled with robbers: to enter it we should be well armed. It is a road full of great precipices, to avoid falling into which, we must be very circumspect. What a character is the Marchioness de Merteuil! Sometimes she is a Medea, sometimes a Messalina. Read the tenth letter: vice is to be drawn; but should it be drawn in such seducing colours? Are there many young people who will prefer the character of a virtuous man to the brilliant and lively one of the profligate Valmont? Are there many who will not blush at the awkwardness of Cecilia? And when one blushes at being ridiculed, they are not very far from the vice that exempts them from it. In France, ridicule is too much dreaded; they would rather be vicious; and this book will rather assist that taste.

The style of romances may serve to lead us to the knowledge of the morals of ages and nations. Thus the country, which has lately produced the natural and moving *Henrietta of Gerstenfeld* , is far from the state of depravity of Paris and London. I form my opinion from the book. In

the last age the French novels were full of gallantry and virtuous love, because then they were gallant and respectful. In this age, they have substituted wit to love, and the novels are stuffed with an unintelligible jargon of metaphysics. Of this they grew tired, and libertinism succeeded to it. From thence so many licentious romances. The immense quantity that are produced is a complete proof of the corruption of the age; the rapidity with which they are bought, the rage with which they are devoured, farther prove this depravation.

Doing justice to the zeal that seems to animate the author of those observations, we may be permitted, I hope, to make some farther remarks on the manner he has presented his? Before we begin to examine the degree of moral utility contained in the novel of *Dangerous Connections* , the author of the correspondence first begs leave to ask whether novels in general are useful or prejudicial to morals? This method is the most prudent; but is it not singular, that, acknowledging the indecision of this question, because the reasons for and against are equally seducing, he is still so bold to condemn, indiscriminately, all novels, without assigning any new reasons in justification of this definitive sentence? On the contrary, the author asserts, Richardson's novels have been useful to morality, to preserve them in their purity and in the same breath advises all thinking men to banish them from their libraries! Are the consequences suitable to the premises? Is not that confounding the genus with the species? But if it was even true, that the best novel is only food for infancy, or a weak being, for whom unadorned morality is a terrifying object, would the author's decision be the more justifiable? I will not determine; but I would ask what he means by those *thinking* men, for whom unadorned morality is not terrifying? It would be, perhaps, those declaiming misanthropes, who censure and despise every thing that does not bear a resemblance to their savage and

austere way of thinking? I have sometimes had a good opinion of their understanding, but been ever diffident of their hearts; were we to attend to them, we should also banish from our libraries the divine poem of Telemachus, which is the first of novels, which modest qualification does not hinder it from being, if one may venture to call it, the first of our books; not only by the grandeur of the business it treats, but also by the manner in which it is treated. We should also banish from our libraries even the works of the *Correspondence* , the morality of which is become very interesting, by an ornamented, pure and elegant style; if, notwithstanding those qualities, this work has its opposers, would it find many readers if it was divested of them? God forbid I should ever intend making a general apology for all novels! that would be the idea of a Demoniac; I only mean to justify useful novels. If any one makes a bad use of this kind of writing, I most willingly acquiesce in their condemnation. Let us now examine whether the author of *Dangerous Connections* deserves to suffer.

What is a novel? A correct picture of morals put in motion. —What should be the aim of a novel? To blend instruction with amusement.—When the morals of the actors are corrupt, is it allowable, with deference to decency, to draw them in their proper shades and colours? Undoubtedly it is; but with the greatest caution, lest by giving vice, whose contagion must be dreaded, its true, though seducing and agreeable aspect, without resisting, diminishing, or rendering useless, the effect it may produce by the contrast of gentleness, peace, and happiness, which virtue secures. The author of the *Errors of the Heart and Mind* , and the other of the *Confessions of the Count of* —— , have gone wide of this mark; yet their characters are drawn after nature; the Meilcourts are still the ornament of the Bon Ton societies. But should irregularities be drawn without inflicting their punishment? Should vice, with impunity, applaud its infamous triumphs? Should innocence weep

without being avenged? Certainly not. Those novels deserve the severest censure of the author of the Correspondence; those are the books which should be carefully concealed from the busy curiosity of young people. Let any one take the trouble to compare the works I have now quoted, and similar ones, with the novel of *Dangerous Connections* , shall we not always feel a certain aversion, a kind of antipathy for Valmont and the Marchioness de Merteuil, notwithstanding the brilliant cast he has given two performers. Let some attention be paid to the skill with which he has contrasted them in the gentle, sensible, and generous Madame de Rosemonde; how moving, how unaffected her virtue. The following letter, wrote to the victim of the profligate Valmont, is, in my opinion, alone sufficient to counterbalance, at least, the impression this same Valmont, and the infamous accomplice in his crimes, could make.

LETTER CXXX.
Madame de Rosemonde, *to the Presidente de* Tourvel.

"Why, my lovely dear, will you no longer be my daughter? Why do you seem to announce that our correspondence is to cease? [1]Is it to punish me for not guessing at what was improbable; or do you suspect me of creating you affliction designedly? I know your heart too well, to imagine you would entertain such an opinion of mine.—The distress your letter plunges me in is much less on my own account than yours. Oh! my young friend, with grief I tell you, you are too worthy of being beloved ever to be happy in love. Where is there a truly delicate and sensible woman, who

has not met unhappiness where she expected bliss? Do men know how to rate the women they possess?

"Not but many of them are virtuous in their addresses, and constant in their affections—but even among those, how few that know how to put themselves in unison with our hearts. I do not imagine, my dear child, their affection is like ours. They experience the same transport often with more violence, but they are strangers to that uneasy officiousness, that delicate solicitude, that produces in us those continual tender cares, whose sole aim is the beloved object. Man enjoys the happiness he feels, woman that she gives.

"This difference, so essential, and so seldom observed, influences, in a very sensible manner, the totality of their respective conduct. The pleasure of the one is to gratify desires; but that of the other is to create them. To know to please is in man the means of success; and in woman it is success itself.

"And do not imagine the exceptions, be they more or less numerous, that may be quoted, can be successfully opposed to those general truths, which the voice of the public has guarantied, with the only distinction as to men of infidelity from inconstancy; a distinction of which they avail themselves, and of which they should be ashamed; which never has been adopted by any of our sex but those of abandoned characters, who are a scandal to us, and to whom all methods are acceptable which they think may deliver them from the painful sensation of their own meanness.

"I thought, my lovely dear, those reflections might be of use to you, in order to oppose the chimerical ideas of perfect happiness, with which love never fails to amuse our imagination. Deceitful hope! to which we are still attached, even when we find ourselves under the necessity of abandoning it—whose loss multiplies and irritates our already too real sorrows, inseparable from an ardent

passion. This task of alleviating your trouble, or diminishing their number, is the only one I will or can now fulfil. In disorders which are without remedy, no other advice can be given, than as to the regimen to be observed. The only thing I wish you to remember is, that to pity is not to blame a patient. Alas! who are we, that we dare blame one another? Let us leave the right of judging to the Searcher of hearts; and I will even venture to believe, that in his paternal sight, a crowd of virtues may compensate a single weakness.

"But I conjure you, above all things, my dear friend, to guard against violent resolutions, which are less the effects of fortitude than despondency: do not forget, that although you have made another possessor of your existence (to use your own expression) you had it not in your power to deprive your friends of the share they were before possessed of, and which they will always claim.

"Adieu, my dear child! Think sometimes on your tender mother; and be assured you always will be, above every thing, the dearest object of her thoughts.

" *Castle of ——.* "

If the openness of the little Volanges, or her ignorance, should seem ridiculous to those of her own age, the unhappy consequences that resulted from it, will be an useful lesson to mothers to be cautious in what hands they intrust the education of their children. But can a young girl, who has once imbibed this bad education, avoid the consequences I mention, without any other guide but her timidity and absolute ignorance of vice? Is it in a corrupt world, in which she is just entering, that she will receive the fatal knowledge? Does not the author of the Correspondence himself say, "To enter it, we should be well armed; it is a road full of precipices: to avoid falling into which, we must be very circumspect." This is all well—But if, unfortunately, I am blind, or without a guide, who is to restore me sight, or lead me? I conclude, then, that a young

person, who would be pleased, at first, with the brilliant character of the Marchioness de Merteuil, would soon change her opinion, and not be tempted to imitate her, when she would see the dreadful and examplary punishment inflicted on this guilty woman. She will shudder at the thought of the miseries to which one single fault condemned Cecilia Volanges. Valmont perishing in the bloom of life, by a violent death, loaded with the contempt and disgrace of all men of worth, disowned even by the wicked, will deter all those, whose vanity and a desire to shine might induce them to copy such a character, from attempting to imitate him.

[1]SeeLetter cxxviii.

LETTER I.

CECILIA VOLANGES *to* SOPHIA CARNAY, *at the Convent of the Ursulines of ——.*

You see, my dear friend, I keep my word, and that dress does not totally take up all my time; I shall ever have some left for you. In this single day I have seen more finery of attire, than in the four years we have spent together; and I believe the haughty Tanville [1]will be more mortified at my first visit, when I shall certainly desire to see her, than she used to be every time she came to see us *in fiochi* . Mamma advises with me in every thing; she behaves to me no longer as a boarder in a convent. I have a chamber-maid to myself; a chamber and a closet of my own, and a very pretty scrutoire, of which I keep the key, and where I can lock up every thing. My Mamma has told me, I must be with her every morning at her levee; that it would be sufficient to have my head dressed by dinner, because we should always be alone, and that then she would each day tell me what time I should come to her apartment in the evening. The remainder of my time is at my own disposal; I have my harpsichord, my drawings, and books, just as in the convent, only that the mother abbess is not here to scold. And I may always be idle, if I please: but as I have not my dear Sophy to chat and laugh with, I am as well pleased with some occupation. It is not yet five, and I am not to go to Mamma till seven: what a deal of time, if I had any thing to tell you! but nothing has been yet mentioned to me of any consequence: and if it were not for the preparation I see making, and the number of women employed for me, I should be apt to think they have no

notion of my nuptials, and that it was one of old Josephine's [2]tales. Yet Mamma having so often told me, that a young lady should remain in a convent, until she was on the point of marriage, and having now brought me home, I am apt to think Josephine right.
A coach has just stopped at our door, and Mamma has sent for me. If it should be my intended!—I am not dressed, and am all in agitation; my heart flutters. I asked my maid, if she knew who was with my Mamma? "Why," says she, laughing, "it is Mr. C——." I really believe it is he. I will certainly return and write you the whole; however, that's his name. I must not make them wait. Adieu, for a moment! How you will laugh at your poor Cecilia, my dear Sophy! I'm quite ashamed! But you would have been deceived as well as I. On entering Mamma's room, I saw a gentleman in black, standing close by her, I saluted him as well as I could, and remained motionless. You may guess, I examined him from head to foot. "Madam," said he to Mamma, "this is a most charming young lady, and I am extremely sensible of your goodness." So positive a declaration made me tremble all over; and not being able to support me, I threw myself in an armed chair, quite red and disconcerted. In an instant he was at my knees, and then you may judge how poor Cecilia's head was bewildered; I instantly started up and shrieked, just as on the day of the great thunder. Mamma burst out laughing, saying, "Well, what's the matter? Sit down, and give Mr. —— your foot." Thus, my dear friend, Mr. —— turns out to be my shoemaker. You can't conceive how much I was ashamed; happily, there was no one but Mamma present. I am, however, resolved when I am married he shall not be my shoemaker. Well! am I not now much the wiser? Farewell! it is almost six, and my maid says it is time to dress. Adieu! my dear Sophy; I love you as much as I did at the convent.
P. S. I don't know whom to send with this, and shall wait till

Josephine calls.
Paris, Aug. 3, 17—.
[1]A boarder in the same convent.
[2]Josephine was the portress of the convent.

LETTER II.

The MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL *to the* VISCOUNT VALMONT, *at the Castle of ——.*

Return, my dear Viscount, return! How can you think of idling your days with an old aunt, whose fortune is already settled on you! Set out the moment you receive this letter, for I want you much. A most enchanting idea has just struck me, and I wish to confide the execution of it to you. This hint should be sufficient, and you should think yourself so highly honoured by my choice, as to fly to receive my orders on your knees: but my favours are thrown away on one who no longer sets a value on them; and you presume upon my kindness, where the alternative must be eternal hatred, or excessive indulgence. I will acquaint you with my scheme; but you, like a true knight errant, must first swear to undertake no other adventure until this is achieved. It is worthy a hero. You will at once satiate love and revenge. It will be an additional exploit to your memoirs; yes, your memoirs, for I will have them published, and I will undertake the task. But to return to what more immediately concerns us. Madame de Volanges intends to marry her daughter: it is yet a secret; but she yesterday informed me of it. And whom do you think she has chosen for her son-in-law? Count Gercourt. Who could have thought I should have been allied to Gercourt? I am provoked beyond expression at your stupidity! Well, don't you guess yet? Oh, thou essence of dulness! What, have you then pardoned him the affair of Madame the Intendante? And I, monster! [1]have I not more reason for revenge? But I shall resume my temper; the prospect of retaliation, recalls my serenity.

You and I have been often tormented with the important idea framed by Gercourt, of the lady he intended honour with his hand, and his ridiculous presumption of being exempt from the unavoidable fate of married men. You know his foolish prepossessions in favour of conventual education, and his still more weak prejudices for women of a fair complexion: and I really believe, notwithstanding Volanges' sixty thousand livres a year, he never would have thought of this girl, had she not been black eyed, or not educated in a convent.

Let us convince him, he is a most egregious fool, as one day or other he must be: but that's not the business; the jest will be, should he act upon so absurd an opinion. How we should be diverted the next day with his boasts! for boast he will: and if once you properly form this little girl, it will be astonishing if Gercourt does not become, like so many others, the standing ridicule of Paris. The heroine of this new romance merits all your attention; she is really handsome, just turn'd of fifteen, and a perfect rose-bud; awkward as you could wish, and totally unpolished: but you men don't mind such trifles; a certain languishing air, which promises a great deal, added to my recommendation of her, leaves only to you to thank me and obey. You will receive this letter to-morrow morning: I require to see you at seven in the evening. I shall not be visible to any one else till eight, not even to my chevalier, who happens to be my reigning favourite for the present; he has not a head for such great affairs. You see I am not blinded by love. I shall set you at liberty at eight, and you'll return to sup with the charming girl at ten, for the mother and daughter sup with me. Farewell! it is past noon. Now for other objects.

Paris, Aug. 4, 17—.

[1]To understand this passage, it must be remarked, that the Count de Gercourt had quitted the Marchioness de Merteuil for the Intendante de ——, who had on his account abandoned the Viscount de Valmont, and that then the

attachment of the Marchioness to the Viscount commenced. As that adventure was long antecedent to the events which are the subject of these letters, it has been thought better to suppress the whole of that correspondence.

LETTER III.

CECILIA VOLANGES *to* SOPHIA CARNAY.

I have yet no news for my dear friend. Mamma had a great deal of company at supper last night. Notwithstanding the strong inclination I had to make my observations, especially among the men, I was far from being entertained. The whole company could not keep their eyes from me; they whispered; I could observe plainly they were speaking of me, and that made me blush; I could not help it: I wish I could; for I observed when any one looked at the other ladies they did not blush, or the rouge they put on prevented their blushes from being seen. It must be very difficult not to change countenance when a man fixes his eyes on you.

What gave me the most uneasiness was, not to know what they thought of me; however, I think I heard the word pretty two or three times: but I'm sure I very distinctly heard that of awkward; and that must be very true, for she that said so is a relation, and an intimate friend of Mamma's. She seems even to have taken a sudden liking to me. She was the only person who took a little notice of me the whole evening. I also heard a man after supper, who I am sure was speaking of me, say to another, "We must let it ripen, we shall see this winter." Perhaps he is to be my husband; but if so, I have still to wait four months! I wish I knew how it is to be.

Here's Josephine, and she says she is in haste. I must, however, tell you one of my awkward tricks—Oh, I believe that lady was right.

After supper, they all sat down to cards. I sat next Mamma.

I don't know how it happened, but I fell asleep immediately. A loud laugh awoke me. I don't know whether I was the object of it; but I believe I was. Mamma gave me leave to retire, which pleas'd me much. Only think, it was then past eleven! Adieu, my dear Sophy! continue to love thy Cecilia, I assure you the world is not so pleasing as we used to think it.

Paris, Aug. 4, 17—.

LETTER IV.

The VISCOUNT DE VALMONT *to the* MARCHIONESS DE MERTEUIL.

Your orders are enchanting, and your manner of giving them still more delightful; you would even make one in love with despotism. It is not the first time, you know, that I regret I am no longer your slave; and yet, monster as you style me, I recall with rapture the time when you honoured me with softer names. I have often even wish'd again to deserve them, and to terminate, by giving along with you an example of constancy to the world. But matters of greater moment call us forth; conquest is our destiny, and we must follow it: we may, perhaps, meet again at the end of our career; for permit me to say, without putting you out of temper, my beautiful Marchioness! you follow me with a pretty equal pace; and since, for the happiness of the world, we have separated to preach the faith, I am inclined to think, that in this mission of love, you have made more proselytes than I. I am well convinced of your zeal and fervour; and if the God of Love judged us according to our works, you would be the patron saint of some great city, whilst your friend would be at most a common village saint. This language no doubt will surprise you; but you must know, that for these eight days I hear and speak no other; and to make myself perfect in it, I am obliged to disobey you.

Don't be angry, and hear me. As you are the depository of all the secrets of my heart, I will intrust you with the greatest project I ever formed. What do you propose to me? To seduce a young girl, who has seen nothing, knows nothing, and would in a manner give herself up without

making the least defence, intoxicated with the first homage paid to her charms, and perhaps incited rather by curiosity than love; there twenty others may be as successful as I. Not so with the enterprise that engrosses my mind; its success insures me as much glory as pleasure; and even almighty Love, who prepares my crown, hesitates between the myrtle and laurel, or will rather unite them to honour my triumph. Even you yourself, my charming friend, will be struck with a holy respect, and in a fit of enthusiasm, will exclaim, This is the man after my own heart!

You know the Presidente Tourvel, her devout life, her conjugal love, and the austerity of her principles; that is the object I attack; that is the enemy worthy of me; that is the point I intend to carry. I must tell you, the President is in Burgundy, prosecuting a considerable suit, (I hope to make him lose one of greater importance,) his inconsolable partner is to remain here the whole time of this afflicting widowhood. A mass each day, a few visits to the neighbouring poor, prayers morning and evening, a few solitary walks, pious conferences with my old aunt, and sometimes a melancholy game at whist, are her only amusements: but I am preparing some of a more efficacious nature for her. My guardian angel led me here for our mutual happiness. Fool that I was! I used to regret the time that I sacrificed to the customary ceremonies. How should I now be punished, by being obliged to return to Paris! Fortunately there must be four to make a whist party; and as there is no one here but the curate of the place, my eternal aunt has pressed me much to sacrifice a few days to her; you may judge, I did not refuse her. You can't conceive how much she caresses me ever since; and above all, how much she is edified by seeing me so regular at mass and at prayers. But little does she imagine the divinity I adore there.

Thus, in the space of four days, have I given myself up to a violent passion. You are no stranger to the impetuosity of