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*A LADY  
WHO LOVED HERSELF*

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A  
LADY  
WHO LOVED  
HERSELF

THE LIFE OF MADAME ROLAND

BY  
*CATHARINE YOUNG*

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ALFRED A. KNOPF  
NEW YORK LONDON

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*A LADY  
WHO LOVED HERSELF*



## CHAPTER I

### *MADAME ROLAND*

PITY the poor landlord! At best his life is no bed of roses, and when the dramatic uncertainties of a revolution increase its normal cares, it may be one long series of trials and tribulations. Thus Jean Alexandre Cauchois, Parisian bourgeois and member in good standing of the Jacobin Club, counted himself lucky when early in 1792 he rented the second-floor rear apartment of his house at Number 51 rue de la Harpe to the Rolands de la Platière. Quiet, orderly, and undemanding, they were admirable tenants indeed. With the whole city in an uproar, would not such qualities warm the heart of any landlord? True, they were rarely in their apartment. They had occupied it only from mid-June to mid-August, but Cauchois, never once kept waiting for the rent, took their goings and comings with friendly indifference, and when a wintry day in January 1793 brought them back beneath his roof, he was doubtless very glad to see them.

Monsieur Jean-Marie Roland de la Platière, tall, thin, slightly bald, and nearing sixty years, possessed penetrating and intelligent features and a coldly reserved bearing—characteristics which won him much respect, some fear, and little love. He went out rarely, received few callers, and spent most of his time in writing and research, chiefly along economic lines. Madame his wife served as patient, devoted, and extremely efficient secretary. Nearly twenty years her husband's junior, her dark glossy hair, her sparkling grey eyes, and her brilliant complexion made her look even younger. A tall and well-built woman, with light, graceful move-

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ments, she overflowed with energy and vitality. Her face, the tell-tale mirror of a lively mind, was now calm and serious, now animated and smiling. As she and her husband went about the streets of the neighbourhood on their homely little errands, more than one casual observer must have envied the old gentleman his attractive young wife.

The Rolands' absorption in scholarly labours left the care and education of their eleven-year-old daughter in the hands of a governess. Louis Lecocq, their manservant, and Marie-Catherine Fleury, their cook, who had served her mistress devotedly for more than twelve years, completed the little household. It was the simplest sort of home. Comfort was adequate, but luxury was unknown. Monsieur and Madame added high thinking to plain living and seemed contented with their lot.

For several months their life was uneventful. If the agitated condition of Paris disturbed them, they did not show it. And Paris was agitated. Four years had passed since the Revolution wrecked the ancient régime in its tempestuous torrent of social and patriotic exaltation. Now it had entered its final phase of exhausting itself and the country in one interfactional quarrel after another. Not for several years more would weary France "throw herself into the arms of a strong man," but she was headed down the road where Napoleon Bonaparte stood waiting with his whiff of grape-shot. In this winter of '93 the bitterest of these futile party quarrels was approaching its crisis. The Girondins and the Jacobins, those talented but jealously irritable offspring of old Mother Jacobin Club, stood locked in a death-grip. From the first the odds were against the Girondins. Fundamentally the difference between them and their rivals was slight. Both groups had derived their revolutionary theories from the same sources. Both were soaked in the eighteenth-century doctrine of the perfectibility of man, and

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both looked to ancient history for illustrations in proof of the proposition. Both had the same blind faith in human reason as the creator and infallible guide of human institutions. If the Girondins spent more time in discussing liberty, fraternity, and equality than in practical accomplishment of those magnificent but hazy ideals, the Jacobins were certainly not free from that weakness. Save for Danton, there was scarcely a constructive statesman in either party. Nor is it true that the Girondins were less sanguinary than the Jacobins. A Girondin victory in this quarrel would not have saved France from the Reign of Terror. That interlude was inevitable, the one means of checking internal dissension long enough to leave the distracted country free to stem the menacing tide of invasion by a coalition of outraged European monarchies. The chief difference between the Girondins and the Jacobins, and the deciding factor in the latter's victory, lay in the question of the pre-eminence of Paris versus the power of the provinces. The Jacobin strength was largely recruited from the capital. Consequently Jacobin policies closely followed the expressed desires of the Parisian populace. The Girondins, for the most part, were drawn from the outlying districts. During their short time of dominance in 1792 they had displayed an alarming tendency to emphasize the provinces at the expense of the capital, which, jealous of its time-honoured pre-eminence in the nation raised the cry of "Down with federation!" Parisian anger drove the Girondins from power, and Parisian strength won ultimate victory for their rivals.

Is it surprising that the Rolands lived quietly? In the earlier part of the struggle they had played a fairly prominent rôle among the Girondins. Long before the quarrel with the Jacobins had become acute, the Roland apartment had been an informal meeting-place, a sort of unofficial council-room for a small group of



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men who visualized the Revolution as the affair of all France. Evening after evening saw gathered there Brissot, Pétion, Buzot, Vergniaud, Barbaroux, and their followers and hangers-on. Even Robespierre had come once or twice. When the Girondins had a brief period of power, and an ill-fated attempt at cabinet government was launched, Roland had twice risen to the lofty eminence of a ministerial portfolio. He and his wife had left their unpretentious apartment for the luxurious quarters of the old Hôtel of the Controller-General, rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs, and there he had directed the Ministry of the Interior of France. Just as in the rue de la Harpe, his hard-working and entirely unofficial secretary had been his wife, Manon.

By January 1793 Roland had endured many things. His transient moment in the sun had cost him dearly. Bitter criticism of himself and his measures, the desertion of some of his friends, the defeat of others, the triumphs of his enemies—all these he had faced bravely. Suddenly he became too discouraged to go on. He submitted his resignation. Read to the Convention on January 23rd by Vergniaud, the brilliant Girondin orator, it came as a surprise. Why had Roland, that stubborn and persistent man, who had held on for so long, who had even announced that he would stick to his post no matter what happened, suddenly laid down his arms? All Paris asked the question, and all Paris could not answer it. None knew then that despite the show of wifely devotion made by the lovely Manon, the minister's domestic life had suddenly and cruelly become intolerable. Wifely confidence and frankness, she told him, compelled her to confide to him a certain very private secret. The confidence may have saved her self-respect. For him it meant the end of everything. Nothing seemed worth while any more, and his one thought was to resign and bury his anguish in the obscurity of private citizenship. He would even have left Paris

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at once, but that was impossible. Did not his honour demand that he remain in the city until the Convention had formally passed upon the accounts of his office? So, accompanied by Manon, ever solicitous of his health and welfare, ever eager to help him in his work, and yet ever a constant thorn in his flesh, he withdrew to the rue de la Harpe, there to live in melancholy seclusion, one of the most hated and reviled men in Paris.

His seclusion was a real one. He did not seek to mingle in political affairs, and he indulged in no back-stage attempts to direct the losing strategies of the Girondins. True, the letters he wrote during this period are often acrimonious. He was an embittered man. No friend in whom his suspicious mind could detect the least disloyalty escaped his scornful censure. The denunciations which the Jacobins continued to hurl at him even after his resignation goaded him into acid contempt. With tiresome regularity he reiterated his desire to leave Paris, and with mulish obstinacy he insisted on an examination and auditing of his official accounts. Was not that the first step in his vindication? That he would be vindicated, if not by his contemporaries, certainly by the judgment of posterity, was a fixed idea which he never lost. Time and time again he appealed to the Convention to pass upon his accounts, or, failing that, at least to give him provisional permission to leave the city. His efforts were fruitless, and the pleasant days of May found the Rolands still residents of Paris. Worry over financial affairs added to the burden of anxiety, and on the tenth of that month, as a measure of economy, he dismissed his daughter's governess.

Madame Roland shared her husband's eagerness to leave the capital. She, too, had had enough. When the insurrection of May 31st sounded the death-knell of the Girondins, she was vainly trying to secure passports for herself and her daughter to return

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to Le Clos, their country home in the Beaujolais, near the little town of Villefranche.

A rude interruption to their quiet retirement came during the night of March 31st, when by order of the all-powerful Committee of Public Safety their papers were seized. The order was given in the fever of excitement caused at Paris by the treason of the popular general Dumouriez, who had gone over to the side of the Austrians. During Roland's first period of office Dumouriez, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, had been one of his colleagues. In August 1792 he had been made commander-in-chief of the army sent to protect Belgium and the northern frontier against the Austro-Prussian coalition. Roland's enemies could not overlook what seemed to them an excellent opportunity for showing complicity between the retired minister and the traitorous general. The Committee of Public Safety read the Roland papers, and on May 19th the deputy Brival reported to the Convention. No trace of any connexion between Roland and Dumouriez since the latter began to plot the betrayal of his country was found. The former minister lost no time in replying to Brival's report. May 21st saw the publication of a twelve-page pamphlet, *Observations of the Ex-Minister Roland on the Report Made against him by Deputy Brival*. He scarcely mentioned Brival's insinuations. The contempt of lofty silence—was it not more crushing than argument? His pamphlet was a passionate justification and glorifying of his ministry. Disavow any of his acts? Never!

Madame Roland, thwarted at every attempt to secure her passports, and fuming with exasperation over this delay to her plans, fell ill of nervous indigestion late in May. A week in bed failed to dispel her restlessness, and Friday the 31st found her dressed and determined to make one more effort for the elusive passports. The time was ill chosen. An air of ominous expectation hung over the

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city. Since three o'clock that morning the tocsin at Notre Dame had been tolling, warning enough that some crisis was impending. She realized that the triumph of the hated Jacobins was at hand. But to her forceful temperament, any kind of action—even the excesses of her enemies—was preferable to the Convention's weakness and vacillation. The cannon of alarm, the shouting of the mob gathered in the streets, far from frightening her, merely gave her a pleasant sense of excitement. She did, however, decide to remain quietly at home. During the day two or three people called. Every one spoke of the good intentions with which the citizens of Paris were arming themselves in order to prevent acts of violence. This point of view seemed most extraordinary to Madame Roland, for had not the citizens calmly allowed all this violence to be prepared?

Shortly after five in the afternoon, six armed men visited the apartment, bearing an order for Roland's arrest, signed by the Revolutionary Committee.

"I do not recognize your authority," replied the former minister. "If you use violence, I can only offer the resistance of a man of my age, but I will protest to my last moment."

"I have no orders to employ violence," answered the man. "I will communicate your answer to the Council of the Commune and I will leave my colleagues here."

Immediately Madame Roland had a brilliant thought. Why not go to the Convention and describe this visit? The very boldness of the stroke might cause a reaction in their favour. Thus Roland's arrest might be prevented, or if it were accomplished in the meantime, it might be countermanded. For her, to think was to act. Hastily outlining her plan to her husband, she scribbled a letter to the President of the Convention, and in a few minutes she was on her way to the Carrousel in a hired carriage.

## *A Lady Who Loved Herself*

The court of the Tuileries was filled with armed men, but they paid no attention to her and she sped past them. Posted sentinels barred the way at the doors of the first rooms, but what obstacle were they for so clever a woman? Borrowing the language of a devoted follower of Robespierre, she made them a pretty little speech.

"But, citizens! In this day of salvation for our country, in the midst of the traitors whom we must fear, how can you judge the importance of the notes which I must give to the President? Have an usher come out, that I may confide them to him."

Her trick succeeded, the doors were thrown open, and she entered the petitioners' room. She asked for an usher and was told to wait until one appeared. Fifteen minutes passed. At last she saw August Roze, an usher whom she knew slightly, and she persuaded him to take her letter. It was an endless hour before he came back, and his report was not encouraging. The session was in pandemonium, for the petitioners then at the bar were demanding the arrest of the "Twenty-two"—the most prominent among the Girondins. She begged Roze to bring out some deputy with whom she could talk.

"Whom shall I bring?" he asked.

"I know or esteem none but the proscribed. Tell Vergniaud that I am asking for him."

Vergniaud came, but he could promise little. "In the present state of the assembly I cannot flatter you and you scarcely ought to hope," he said. "If you are admitted to the bar, as a woman you can secure a little more favour, but the Convention can no longer do anything good."

"It can do everything!" she cried. "The majority in Paris asks only to know what it ought to do. If I am admitted, I will dare to say what you yourself could not say without being accused. I fear nothing in the world, and if I do not save Roland, I will at least

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express truths which will be useful to the Republic. Inform your worthy colleagues. An outburst of courage can make a great effect, and it will at least be a grand example."

But Vergniaud did not share her optimistic confidence. "In any case," he reminded her, "your letter cannot be read before an hour and a half. They are going to discuss a decree in six articles; the petitioners from the sections are waiting at the bar—you see what a long wait you will have!"

"Then I am going home to see what has happened there. I will return soon. Tell our friends."

"Most of them are absent. They show courage when they are here, but they lack assiduity."

"Unhappily, that is all too true!" she exclaimed.

Back at Number 51 rue de la Harpe, the porter told her that Roland was in the landlord's apartment. She went there, but he had already gone to seek refuge in the home of a friend. Good Monsieur Cauchois brought her a glass of wine, and while she drank, he told her what had happened. The head of the armed sextet had returned, but apparently he had been unable to secure a hearing before the Council of the Commune. Roland had continued to protest vigorously, and the men demanded his protest in writing. Only after he gave it to them did they leave. He immediately came into the Cauchois apartment. Fortunately it had an entrance on the rue des Maçons-Sorbonne, and his escape was easy.

Madame Roland finished her wine and then left to find her husband. She succeeded, although not even later did she reveal his hiding-place, and no one knows where they held their last conversation. It was half past ten when she left him, but she took a carriage and returned to the Convention. To her amazement the session had closed. She could hardly believe her eyes. Approaching

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a group of sansculottes who were standing near a cannon, she asked them if the session had been successful.

"Oh, wonderful!" answered one of the men excitedly. "They all embraced, and every one sang the Marseillaise there by the tree of liberty."

"Does that mean, then, that the right quieted down?"

"Heavens! They had to give in to reason!"

"And what about the Twenty-two?"

"Oh, the municipality will have them arrested," replied the sansculotte, shrugging his shoulders.

A few more remarks were exchanged, and Madame Roland turned away. Clearly, nothing more could be done, except get into her carriage and go home. At the post of the Samaritaine the sentinel halted the cab. There was a slight altercation, but at last her explanation that she had been to the Convention to present a petition satisfied him and she was allowed to proceed, after he had remarked on the imprudence of a woman's venturing out so late at night and alone.

She smiled, lifting a slightly ironical eyebrow.

"Alone, monsieur? Do you not see that innocence and truth are with me? What more is necessary?"

Home again, she found her household upside-down with excitement. She calmed the servants, took a reassuring glance at her sleeping child, and sat down to write a letter to Roland. It was about midnight. Scarcely had she written a line when there was a knock on the door. A group of men stood outside, asking for the ex-minister. Their questioning was pitiless, but to it all she replied, firmly and pleasantly, that she did not know where her husband was and had no idea when he would return. At length the men went away, but she noticed that they took the precaution of leaving a guard at the entrance.

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Utterly exhausted, she yet managed to eat a little supper and finish her writing. Then, her letter confided to Fleury, she threw herself into bed. She had slept soundly for an hour when the maid roused her with the news that some gentlemen of the section were asking for her. She realized at once what that meant. To poor Fleury's surprise, she dressed completely.

"I have to be decently dressed in order to go out," she explained to the maid, whose eyes filled with tears.

She found her sitting-room crowded with men. One of them read her the orders for her arrest, which had been issued by both the Revolutionary Committee and the Council of the Commune. Mentally she calculated her chances of resistance. She knew that there was a law forbidding nocturnal arrests. The Legislative Assembly had passed it on the very eve of its dissolution, in September 1792. Why not appeal to it? Of course such an appeal would be countered by citation of the law allowing the municipality to arrest suspected persons, but was the municipality itself, destroyed as it had been, then recreated by an arbitrary power, possessed of unimpeachable authority? She did not think so, but she realized that she was only one of an unpopular minority. Were not the events of the day substantial proof that the majority of the citizens of Paris stood behind the Committee of Public Safety, ready to sanction illegal acts? What chance of success was there for resistance from a person in her position? She decided to submit.

There was a long delay, while the arresting officers put seals on the apartment and all of its contents and complied with other formalities. The prisoner collected a few of her personal belongings and packed her daughter's clothes, for the poor child could not stay there alone. She would have to be put in the care of friends. A large number of people kept coming in and going out. The little apartment became unbearably stuffy. Madame Roland had to go



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to the open window in order to breathe, but the officer in charge either would not or could not order the people to leave. Amid the confusion she managed to write a letter to a friend, telling him of her predicament and begging him to look after her child. Unfortunately, the officers saw her sealing it and they immediately demanded its address. The sound of tearing paper was her only reply. When one of the men rushed to pick up the torn pieces and put them under the official seals, she could not suppress a smile of amusement.

It was seven o'clock in the morning before they were ready to leave. She said good-bye to her daughter and her servants, urging them to be calm and patient. They were all crying, and one of the officers, impressed, remarked to her: "You have people here who love you."

"I have never had any others near me," she answered quietly, as she accompanied the men downstairs.

Outside she found a body of armed men waiting and a crowd of curious people gathered. A carriage was standing on the opposite side of the street. The prisoner and her escort entered it, the armed men drew up behind, and the mob pressed close. "To the guillotine! To the guillotine!" rang the bloodthirsty cry.

"Should you like the curtains drawn?" asked the men courteously. She shook her head. Her supreme self-confidence, which would gladly have faced a Convention seething with rage at her and her friends, found only an exhilarating tonic in the hostile gaze of the populace.

Their destination was the prison of l'Abbaye. The prisoner had not been expected by those in charge and there was no cell ready for her. She waited in a small room while the officers who had brought her there went into an adjoining room, registered her arrival, and gave their orders orally. Presently the jailer appeared

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and asked her what she would like for breakfast. She ordered milk or tea with water. As the officers prepared to leave, they remarked to her that Roland certainly must be guilty. Otherwise would he have disappeared so promptly? The gibe drew blood. Her colour rose, and her eyes gleamed with indignation as she answered: "It is very strange that any one could suspect a man who has rendered such great services to liberty. It is odious to see persecuted and fiercely calumniated a man whose conduct is so frank, whose accounts are so clear that he should not have had to flee from the cruelty of envy. Just as Aristides; severe as Cato—these are the virtues which have made him enemies. Their rage knows no limit. Let it avenge itself on me. I will brave it and sacrifice myself. He must save himself for his country, to which he can still be of great service."

Her auditors merely bowed, and she thought she detected some confusion in their manner. In a few minutes her breakfast was brought, and then the wife of the jailer came to take her to her cell. The good woman remarked that she always felt sorry to see women enter the prison. "Because," she added, "all do not have as serene an air as Madame."

The prisoner smilingly thanked her, and the woman locked the heavy door. Madame Roland sat down in the narrow little cell and thought profoundly. Courage and the sincerity of a clear conscience gave her strength. Resolved to face her destiny bravely, whatever it might be, she refused to torment herself with anxiety about the future. For the present her one concern was to find some good employment for the only wealth that prison offered—leisure. This serenity, so easily attained on her own account, eluded her completely whenever she thought of her country and the fate of her friends. She could hardly wait for the journal of that evening,

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and the cries in the streets, faintly penetrating the silence, filled her with an indescribable eagerness. How would it all end?

Meanwhile she took stock of her new manner of living and tried to find out what liberties, if any, remained to her. Presently Lavacquerie, the jailer, came to talk with her. She found him a very kind and human sort of person, ready to grant the prisoners under his charge any favour within reason.

"May I write? May I see any one?" she asked eagerly. He assured her that within limits she could do both. Her first letter was to Fleury, asking her to come and see her. She was careful to warn the faithful creature to ask for Madame Lavacquerie and to make no mention of her mistress. Other letters were written that day, too. There was one to Monsieur Louis Bosc d'Antic, whose intimate friendship with the Rolands dated from the first year of their marriage, and who was to give many touching evidences of his sincere devotion in the trying months to come. And naturally there was a letter of protest at her arrest, addressed to the National Convention and filled with all the bold and ringing phrases with which she had vainly hoped to confound that body in person.

As her imprisonment lengthened into days, then weeks, and finally months, she wrote more and more. It was not correspondence alone that kept her sitting at the rough little table, her pen racing over sheet after sheet of the heavy grey paper with which Lavacquerie kept her generously supplied. Shortly after her arrest she began to carry out a grand project, conceived long before her arrest, and now, thanks to the endless time of a prison-cell, possible of achievement. This was the writing of her memoirs.

The idea which so obsessed Roland—that he would receive his vindication, if not from his contemporaries, surely from future generations—had naturally become part and parcel of his wife's

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thought. But while her confidence in posterity's justness was strong, her confidence in herself was stronger. Posterity would be impartial; it would judge fairly; but prisoners at the bar do not scorn the chance to voice an appeal, no matter how unprejudiced the judge. So Madame Roland voiced her appeal to impartial posterity. She knew that no one, not even her husband, could do it half so well.

The days and weeks passed, and *cabier* after *cabier* of the rough, grey manuscript was smuggled out of the prison by her friends. She became more and more absorbed in her self-appointed task. She wrote quickly, and long before the tumbrel called at the prison gates to carry her on her last ride through Paris, the rôle which she and her husband had played in the Revolution was described in a manner that seemed fitting to her. Still the leisure of dreary confinement hung heavy on her hands. Physical escape was impossible, but what can lock a lively mind and a soaring spirit? One day she took another sheet of coarse grey paper and wrote: "I propose to employ the leisure of my captivity in tracing my private life from earliest youth to the present moment. Thus to follow again the course of one's career is like living a second time, and what better can one do in prison than to transport one's existence elsewhere by a happy fiction or by interesting memories?"

As she unfolded her life on paper, there to stand for ever, she accomplished far more than her own solace. In a very special sense Madame Roland was the incarnation of the French Revolution. Born in a position of obscurity, hemmed in by a social and political system that gave but slight opportunity to one unprivileged by birth, sure that by talent and character alike she was entitled to something better, throughout her whole life she was profoundly dissatisfied with a reality which she was intelligent

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enough to recognize and egotistical and stubborn enough to reject. Her mental history, revealed alike in her memoirs and in her letters, unfolds the process through which, by dint of persistently keeping in mind the kind of person she wished to be, the kind of life she wished to lead, she almost succeeded in becoming that person and in living that life. The process was not unique with her. Who has not, at some time or other, escaped from an unsatisfactory reality into a pleasurable fantasy? But Madame Roland carried it to an extreme. Not content with merely escaping from reality, she sought, and not entirely in vain, to seize it and remould it to her heart's desire. Was the French Revolution itself any more than a magnificent attempt on the part of a whole nation to do that very thing? If Madame Roland has been chosen as more nearly typifying the process than many who played far greater rôles in the drama, it is because her facile pen depicted the psychology directing the movement with a clarity and detail not found in the writings of any other Revolutionary character.

It is true that the personal memoirs give very little information about her life that is not available in the more than nine hundred voluminous letters from her pen which have been preserved—a correspondence which covers the entire period of her existence from her thirteenth year. The facts—what she did and when and why she did it—are contained in both letters and memoirs. But the memoirs reveal so much about her mind and character that does not show in the letters, while the letters indicate the steps of her mental and emotional processes in a way that is not even hinted at in the memoirs, that to know her as a human being, as well as a historical character, one must turn to both bodies of material. Together they present a wealth of information about the psychological development of this woman, who was so much more inter-

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esting for what she thought and how and why she thought it than for what she did. To those who see more significance in men's thoughts than in their deeds Madame Roland affords a rare opportunity. A biographer would have to search far to find a subject more self-documented than the Egeria of the Gironde.

## CHAPTER I I

### *MANON PHLIPON*

BORN in obscurity, of highly respectable parents—such was Madame Roland's commonplace beginning. Her father, Monsieur Gatien Phlipon, was a master engraver. She introduced herself in her memoirs as "the daughter of an artist." Gatien, "strong and healthy, active and vain . . . could not be said to be a virtuous man, but he had a great deal of what is called honour. He would have no objection to receiving more for a thing than it was worth, but he would have killed himself rather than not pay the price of what he had purchased." Such business acumen does not suggest the artistic temperament. One hardly thinks of Gatien himself, sitting in his workshop, turning out enamelled snuff-boxes and occasionally adding to his income by the purchase and sale of precious stones, as an artist. Yet his daughter was not stretching the truth. Machinery was just beginning to dig the chasm between the fine arts and the industrial arts, and the chasm was scarcely perceptible. The same sources still watered both fields, and the engraver for the trade, like the painter in oils, studied and copied the classic models. Her father did not have learning, but he did have "that degree of taste and knowledge which the fine arts give superficially in whatever branch they are practised."

The Phlipon family came from the province of Touraine. The first Gatien Phlipon, born in 1655 and dead in 1701, was a wool-carder of Châteaurenault. His son, also Gatien Phlipon, moved to Paris and went into the wine trade. In 1722 he married Mademoiselle Marie-Geneviève Rotisset, herself the daughter of a wine

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merchant. The Rotisset family had relatives among *la grande bourgeoisie*, and when Marie-Geneviève's younger sister, Marie-Louise, married Monsieur Jean-Baptiste Besnard, the prosperous agent of the wealthy *fermier général* Haudry de Soucy, the marriage was regarded, at least by Madame Gatien Phlipon, as something of a *mésalliance*.

Gatien the wine merchant became the father of Gatien the engraver in 1724. The latter, when he was twenty-six years old and had become a master engraver, married Mademoiselle Marie-Marguerite Bimont, the daughter of Jacques Bimont, a mercer. He cannot have been a very prosperous mercer, for Mademoiselle Marie-Marguerite brought the young master engraver no dowry beyond a "heavenly mind and a charming face."

On March 13, 1752, the young couple became the proud parents of a daughter, baptized Marie-Marguerite. Their happiness was short-lived, for the baby died a few months later. But in less than two years, on March 17, 1754, Providence compensated them with another daughter. She was baptized Marie-Jeanne, and Grandmother Phlipon and Great-uncle Besnard acted as godparents. They must have been a propitious choice, for the little Marie-Jeanne lived, a rosy, healthy child, to become, as Madame Roland, one of the famous women of French history. Four other children, born after Marie-Jeanne, suffered the fate of Marie-Marguerite, and died in infancy.

It was a fortunate impulse that led Madame Roland to soften the rigour of her imprisonment by turning to her past. Her childhood had only happy memories to offer her. Madame Phlipon followed the usual custom of sending her child to a wet-nurse, and little Manon's first two years were spent on the farm of a peasant woman near Arpajon. The good soul lavished excellent care upon her and sent her back to Paris a healthy peasant



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baby, none the worse for her long separation from her parents. Modern mothers, jealously anxious for entire possession of their children, would doubtless regard such an arrangement with horrified scepticism. But it never prevented gentle Madame Phlipon from acquiring complete influence over her child. The little girl was warm and affectionate, but her naturally strong will was transformed into obstinacy whenever she thought that authority sprang from caprice rather than from justice. Wise parents control such children by appealing to their reason or to their emotions. Madame Phlipon was as wise as she was gentle.

“My mother’s goodness and wisdom won for her at once an ascendancy over my sweet and tender character, which she never exercised except for my own good. It was thus that in those little disputes which are inevitable between the reason which rules and the childishness which resists she never needed to punish me more severely than by coldly addressing me as ‘mademoiselle’ and looking at me sternly.”

Every Sunday Madame Phlipon went to see her mother, and naturally Manon accompanied her. These visits were anything but enjoyable. Grandmother Bimont was paralysed, deaf, and in her dotage. With the petulant perversity of old age she wept if her grand-daughter smiled, and cackled mirthfully if the child seemed sad and ill at ease. Toys and amusements were unknown in the silent, gloomy household. There were not even any pictures to look at or books to read, except the psalter, and that was scarcely interesting after twenty readings and more. Manon could do nothing except sit as quietly as possible while her mother gossiped endlessly with Marie, the servant who looked after the crazy old paralytic.

“It was a lesson in patience for me, very painful indeed, but it had to be endured, for one day when ennui caused me to shed

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tears of rage and demand to go, my mother remained all evening. She did not fail, at all opportune times, to represent her devotion to her mother as a sacred and touching duty, which it was an honour for me to share. I do not know how she managed it, but my heart received this idea with tender delight."

According to the memoirs, Monsieur Phlipon did not share his wife's success in dealing with their daughter. Speaking of her father's influence upon the development of her character, Madame Roland says firmly that it was "feeble, because he scarcely concerned himself about it, but it is not out of place to mention what decided him to concern himself even less. I was very stubborn. That is, I did not consent readily to anything for which I saw no reason, and when I felt nothing but tyranny, or when I believed I could see no reason but caprice, I did not know how to yield. My mother, clever and wise, judged correctly that I had to be influenced by reason or won by sentiment. My father, who was very brusque, ordered me about as if he were master, and my obedience was tardy, or I did not obey at all. If he tried to punish me like a despot, his sweet little daughter became a veritable lion. He whipped me several times. I bit the leg across which he laid me, and I screamed my protests."

Once, during a childish illness, some very disagreeable medicine was prescribed for Manon. She tried to take it, but the odour was intensely repulsive. Despite her mother's pleadings she could not overcome her distaste and swallow it. At that junction her father strolled into the room and, hastily attributing her hesitation to stubbornness, proceeded to administer a sound spanking. This was the signal for his "sweet little daughter to become a veritable lion." Up to this point, it had been "I can't." Now it became "I won't." Her father naturally, if not very wisely, threatened to spank her again.

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"I can feel at this very hour that I am writing," Madame Roland wrote more than thirty years later, "the kind of revolt and development of force that I experienced then. My tears stopped suddenly. My sobs ceased. A sudden calm resolved all my senses into a single resolution. I raised myself in bed, turning to one side. I inclined my head, supporting it against the wall. I lifted up my night-gown and offered myself to the blows in silence. He could have killed me on the spot without drawing from me a sigh.

"All the details of that scene are as vivid to me as if it had been recent. All the sensations which I experienced are just as distinct. In solemn moments since then I have felt the same resolution manifest itself. I would have to do no more to-day to mount the scaffold proudly than I had to do then to abandon myself to a barbarous punishment which could kill me and not conquer me."

A stubborn, spirited child, truly foreshadowing the woman who joyfully traded life itself for a brief moment in the centre of life's stage! But justice must be rendered to Monsieur Phlipon. There are only the memoirs as guide, for Manon's earliest extant letter bears the date 1767, when she was thirteen years of age. After that she wrote frequent letters, addressed chiefly to her most intimate girlhood friend, Mademoiselle Sophie Cagnet, of Amiens. These letters, voluminous and self-revealing, constitute a day-to-day journal of her life and thoughts. If the antagonistic resistance to her father which these passages from the memoirs reveal was so strong, and developed so early in her life, there would be evidence of it in them. There is no hint of such disharmony between father and daughter until a year or so after Madame Phlipon's death, which occurred in 1775, when Manon was twenty-one. Up to that time, according to the confidential

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letters to Sophie, the family life of the Phlipons was peaceful and harmonious, and their mutual affection was deep. After the death of her mother, Manon and her father did have serious disagreements. Bitter antagonism did develop, and it culminated in a complete estrangement after Manon married Monsieur Roland, in 1780. The incident of the medicine was recorded in her memoirs more than thirty years after it had occurred. It was nearly thirteen years since she had even seen her father. Perhaps it was only natural that the memory of the unhappiness they had had after her mother's death was stronger than the memory of pleasanter moments with him in her early childhood, when he had been proud to take his pretty little daughter out for a walk, and when he had enjoyed teaching her the art of designing. Perhaps she could not avoid unconsciously introducing an antagonism towards her father before, in actual fact, it appeared.

The point is worth noticing, because it is a perfect illustration of something which occurs often in the memoirs, and which has led Madame Roland's biographers into more than one serious misconception of her fundamental character. That is, she frequently gives a recital of perfectly true facts in such a way as to create an impression that is far from the truth. Doubtless she did meet her father's threat to whip her again with brave indifference. Yet is it not probable that in writing, "I would have to do no more to-day to mount the scaffold proudly than I had to do then to abandon myself to a barbarous punishment which could kill me and not conquer me," the mature woman of thirty-nine was ascribing to the child of six the feelings which she was experiencing at the moment she was writing?

She was sure that the incident impressed her father, for, she continued, "from that time, my father never laid hands on me.

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He did not even undertake to reprimand me. He caressed me a great deal, taught me designing, took me out walking, and treated me with a courtesy which made him more worthy of respect in my eyes and assured him of complete submission on my part."

For all her self-willed nature, she was easily disciplined. Healthy and active, she needed above all else interesting occupation. Her lively and growing intelligence, thirsting to examine and question every idea presented to it, made books her greatest pleasure. She could not remember a time when she did not know how to read, but she had heard it said that she had learned by the time she was four years old. After that to be happy and busy she had only to be supplied with books. She learned everything with astonishing ease and quickness. Had some one suggested her learning the Koran, she would gladly have attempted it.

Madame Phlipon's younger brother, an abbé, was a great favourite with his little niece, and she with him. So delighted was he with her intellectual progress that he decided to teach her Latin. She already had tutors in writing and geography, and masters in dancing and music. Her father had begun to teach her designing, too. Far from finding this program too heavy, she was charmed at discovering a new subject to study. Five o'clock in the morning, when every one else in the house was asleep, saw Manon jumping wide-eyed out of bed. Clad in a wrapper, without bothering to dress, she slipped softly over to the table in a corner of her mother's room which held her work. The enthusiasm with which she copied and repeated her exercises ensured her rapid success.

Proud of their precocious daughter, the Phlipons spared neither trouble nor expense in educating her. Probably no other

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young girl in the neighbourhood of the Quai de l'Horloge had so many teachers and studied such a variety of subjects. Was the result worth the effort? There she was, intelligent and ambitious, her mind stored with the cream of the world's philosophy and wit. Careers were not yet open to talent, and fate had landed her in a poky little circle by the Pont-Neuf, a circle in which the two most distinguished persons were Great-uncle Besnard, who was only the salaried agent of a rich farmer-general, and Uncle Abbé Bimont, who never became more than canon of the Sainte-Chapelle at Vincennes. What did the future hold for her? Nothing very rosy. Marriage, of course, but it would be marriage with the well-to-do butcher across the way, or with the more prosperous jeweller round the corner, or, if she were very lucky, with some mediocre professional man. Slight prospect of happiness it was for a gifted and supremely ambitious young woman—a young woman who, the more she learned, only thereby the less was reconciled to her obscure position and humble surroundings. She admitted them freely enough, even after she had known fame and tasted power.

“Born in an obscure station,” she wrote in her memoirs, “but of honourable parents, I spent my youth in my father's studio, without knowing any superiority except that of merit, or any grandeur except that of virtue.”

The admission of the fact was frank, but we scan her life in vain for any acceptance of it. To the very end she was a rebel against the reality which she was too intelligent not to recognize, and although she achieved a fair measure of enduring fame, she never attained real happiness. Doting Mamma and Papa Phlipon, blind to the result of educating their daughter beyond her allotted station in life, saw only that she was a child of superior intelli-

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gence, and they cheerfully hired the quartet of special teachers which her talents deserved.

There was Monsieur Marchand, who taught her writing, geography, and history, a "wise, patient, clear, and methodical man." From Monsieur Cajon, "a little man, lively and chatty," she took singing-lessons. Her instruction in dancing was in the hands of Monsieur Mozon. "I can still see the wen that disfigured the right side of his face, whenever he turned his snub-nosed, pock-marked countenance towards his '*pochette*.'" That she might lack no accomplishment, she had guitar lessons from Monsieur Mignard, "a huge Spaniard, whose hands were like Esau's, and who outdid all of his fellow-countrymen in gravity, politeness, and blustering."

Her education was not all formal. With the uncritical, patient greed of childhood she devoured every book that came her way. Her parents wisely placed no restrictions on her reading. It was limited only by the size of the family library.

"After the elementary books which they were careful to furnish me, I soon exhausted those of the little library of the household. I devoured them all, and I reread them when I had no new ones. I recall two folio volumes of the *Lives of the Saints*, a Bible in ancient language, an old translation of the *Civil Wars* of Appia, a book on the Turkish theatre, written in a bad style, which I reread many times. I also found Scarron's *Roman comique* and some collections of supposed epigrams and bons mots, but these I did not reread. Then there were the memoirs of the brave de Pontis, which amused me, and those of Mademoiselle de Montpensier, whose pride made me love her."

A brave collection of literature for a seven-year-old! But there is more to come. A dusty corner of the family store-room yielded a treatise on the art of heraldry. She studied it so thoroughly that

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she became her father's authority in the designing of coats-of-arms. A volume on contracts was the next grist poured into her mill. It bored her and was one of the few books that she never finished. Occasionally Papa Phlipon made the young book-lover a present of a few tomes. He piqued himself on cultivating her serious tastes—strange that he should have thought they needed it!—so his selections were often unusual. At the age when most little girls are thinking only of games and dolls, he gave her Fénelon's work on the education of young girls, and she was hardly out of pinafores before he had her poring over Locke's essay on the education of children.

One day, playing in her father's studio, she found a tiny collection of books belonging to one of the apprentices. No treasure-seeker ever had a sweeter thrill, and, true treasure-seeker that she was, she said nothing about her find. Slipping stealthily into the studio, she would cautiously extract one of the books, swallow it whole, and return it, unobserved, at the first opportunity. Presently she noticed that her mother was also quietly taking advantage of the windfall. After that she rested secure in a perfect precedent for her action. The youth was by no means lacking in literary taste, for Manon found that his little library boasted the travels of Renard the poet, and the Plutarch of Madame Dacier. The latter, she thought, gave her one of the profound experiences of a lifetime of reading.

"I shall never forget the Easter of 1763, when I carried it [Plutarch] to church in place of my prayer-book. It is from that moment that I date the impressions and ideas that made me a republican, without my dreaming of becoming one."

If Madame Roland thus dated the beginning of her interest in republican principles, that beginning was certainly long in coming to fruition. The seed may have been planted then, but



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it is strange that there is so little indication in her letters of any interest in politics before the middle of the year 1789. Then she suddenly became an ardent convert to the Revolutionary cause. In vain we scan her letters before that date for any evidence that she considered contemporary political and social problems from any other point of view than the conventional one of the well-educated bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century. Was she, then, deliberately creating a false impression when she made the statement in her memoirs quoted above? Not at all. In 1793 she had been a thorough Revolutionist for four years—so thorough a one that she simply could not imagine herself at any period of her life as not having the feelings and ideas which were so entirely a part of her as she sat in prison. It was inconceivable to her that Manon Phlipon had not always been a republican in word, thought, and deed. Unconsciously she transferred the ideas of her maturity to the mind of her childhood.

Plutarch was a unique experience, but other books made an equally vivid, though quite different, impression on her youthful mind. Fénelon moved her deeply, and Tasso fired her imagination.

"Sometimes I read aloud at my mother's request—something I did not like to do. It robbed me of the composure which made my delight and obliged me to go more slowly. But I would rather have swallowed my tongue than to have read thus the episode of the isle of Calypso, or a number of passages from Tasso. My breathing became rapid. I felt a sudden blush cover my face, and my altered voice betrayed my agitation. I was Eucharis to Telemachus, and Herminie to Tancred. However, entirely transformed into their personalities as I was, I did not yet think of myself in that relation to any one. I did not look into my own heart. I saw nothing beyond myself. I was those

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women, and I saw only the objects which existed for them. It was a dream without waking."

Did her pen rush on from this point, or did she stop and think awhile? The picture is one of a very naïve little girl indeed—naïve enough, in fact, to be simple-minded. But simple-minded was the last thing which Manon Phlipon, at any period of her life, wished to appear. It is amusing to read what follows this description of innocence overwhelmed by the didactic romance of Tasso.

"However, I do remember seeing with emotion a young painter named Taboral, who came sometimes to see my father. He was perhaps twenty years old, and he had a sweet voice and a charming face. He would blush like a young girl. When I went into the studio, it was always to hunt a crayon, or something like that, but as his presence embarrassed me as much as it pleased me, I left more quickly than I entered, with a beating heart and a trembling which I hastened to conceal in my tiny chamber."

Again, in speaking of reading the Bible, "In our old translations, certain things were expressed as crudely as doctors express them. I was struck by certain naïve expressions which would not have occurred to me. Thus I received instructions which are not ordinarily given to young girls, but they were presented in a way that was by no means seductive, and I had to think a great deal to reconcile myself to an entirely material thing which did not seem pleasant to me. Only, I had to smile when my grandmother talked to me about babies being found on cabbage leaves, and I remarked that my Ave Maria told me that they came in a very different manner."

The child was quick to take advantage of the opportunities for enlightenment offered by a perusal of the Bible. She even

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joked about it a little, at poor Grandmother Phlipon's expense. But in describing it later the woman was careful—a little too careful, perhaps—to insist that the enlightenment had only the proper result of prim disgust and no further curiosity.

Dear little Uncle Abbé Bimont was a charming man, but he had one cardinal fault. He was lazy. His good intentions and Manon's enthusiasm and progress could not keep alive the study of Latin, and finally it was abandoned. Still Manon congratulated herself on having studied it even a little, for she was sure that it was the foundation of the facility which she later displayed for modern languages.

Nor did she make much progress in designing. She had some aptitude for it, but her father merely amused himself and her with it and did not try to develop her talent to any great extent. Manon flattered herself that he was merely carrying out the wishes of Madame Phlipon on this point. She overheard her parents discussing the matter one day, and noted her mother's remark that she did not wish her to become an artist, since it would mean preoccupation with "public-school studies and undesirable liaisons." A good sound bourgeois point of view!

Nor did Madame Phlipon wish her daughter to devote all of her time to books and study. The wives and mothers of the *petite bourgeoisie* viewed life realistically, and practical accomplishments played a prominent rôle in the training of their daughters. The erudition of a Madame du Châtelet could be emulated, but a prudent mother made her daughter season it with a little salt of domesticity. Madame Phlipon was no exception to the rule. Her own skill in fine needlework, her own ability in the art of economical and appetizing cookery, were passed on to Manon. Each morning the two of them might be seen, simply dressed in plain, fresh gowns of muslin or linen, on their way

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to early mass. The homeward trip usually included a stop at the butcher's, to select the cut of meat for dinner, and a call at the grocer's to buy the vegetables and salad. If anything was forgotten, Madame Phlipon could send Manon back for it and be perfectly sure that the child would drive a good bargain with the tradesman.

"This little girl," Madame Roland complacently summarized her childhood training, "this little girl who read serious books, could explain the courses of the celestial spheres, handle the crayon and the graver, and at the age of eight was the best dancer of a number of young people older than herself assembled at a family merry-making, was often called to the kitchen to make an omelet, pick vegetables, or skim the pot. In no occupation am I at a loss. I can prepare my own dinner as handily as Philopæmen cut his wood."

It is good to know that family merry-makings sometimes interrupted the little prodigy's pursuit of knowledge and virtue. The touch of frivolity is welcome in this picture of a rather priggish young person humourlessly leading a painfully prim life. Another saving bit of folly comes when Madame Roland flings wide the doors of little Manon's clothes-press and tells how her mother, plain, even negligent, about her own attire, regarded her daughter as her doll, and for state occasions, "I had in my childhood a wardrobe that was elegant, rich even, beyond my station. Young people then wore what were called *corps de robes*. It was a dress made like a court robe, close fitting in the bodice, outlining the form very clearly, very ample at the bottom, with a long train, trimmed according to taste or fashion. Mine were of beautiful silk material, delicate in design and modest in colour, but in price and quality equal to the best dresses of my mother. My toilette cost me some suffering, for they often

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curled my hair with papers or hot irons and all the absurd and barbarous instruments which were used in those times. I had an extremely sensitive head, and the pulling which had to be endured was so painful that an elaborate *coiffure* always made me shed tears produced by suffering without being accompanied by complaints."

Graceful simplicity in clothes, for grown-ups and children alike, is fashion's keynote to-day, and the little girl of eight or nine, decked out with a long train of rustling silk, curled hair piled high on her head, seems slightly ridiculous. But the feminine vanity that caused her to endure the suffering of a grand toilette without making a single complaint remained with Madame Roland throughout her life. A Spartan simplicity of taste, of which, as she grew older, she was very proud and which she carefully cultivated, did not prevent her, even during those periods of her life when she was most occupied, from being always well and becomingly dressed. We like her better for it.

Manon's outer life, with its commingling of study, domestic tasks, family duties and pleasures, and religious observances, was serene and harmonious. Harmonious, too, was the inner life which gradually she was building for herself out of the thoughts and ideas gained from her wide reading—a fascinating life in which she freely associated with the heroes and the wits and the philosophers of past ages. Socrates, clutching the cup of hemlock, Aristides, crowned with the title of "the Just," Pericles, subtle and brilliant ruler of antiquity, Lycurgus, wise lawgiver—all these people were real to her. She understood them and she loved them. The closing of the latest eagerly devoured musty volume could never drive them from her mind. Harmonious, indeed, were her two lives, but the harmonies were in different keys. She began to weep that she had not been born in Athens, or Sparta, or ancient

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Rome. The transition from her real life to her romantic dream-life cost her nothing—but it was painful, indeed, after dwelling for several hours with heroism and nobility incarnate, to have to sit down to supper with her good-natured, rather vulgar father, her gay little uncle, and lively old Grandmother Phlipon. There was genuine grief in the thought that the bustling, matter-of-fact world of the Quai de l'Horloge offered no opportunities for emulating the bravery of Socrates or the wisdom of Lycurgus. Were these people, with their fine ideals and their worthy deeds, merely to be admired and then forgotten? How reconcile the splendour of all that they were teaching her with the pettiness of life on the Pont-Neuf? How fit a dull reality to a glowing dream? It was a knotty problem for a ten-year-old, and a knotty problem it always remained. The struggle for its solution epitomizes her whole life. She had just passed her eleventh birthday when she made her first attempt to find the answer to the riddle. The attempt, often repeated afterwards, and never quite successful, was a headlong flight from reality.

CHAPTER III  
*ESCAPING REALITY*

It was a commonplace enough incident which suddenly made life almost more than Manon could bear. Annoying and unpleasant of course it was, and any young girl would have found it so. But to a youngster of robust humour it would gradually have become unimportant, and after a lapse of almost thirty years would probably have been almost forgotten. Not so with Manon. The woman of thirty-nine was no wittier than the child of twelve; solemnity exuded from her every pore. She remembered the incident, and she decided that it was "too important in its influence upon my moral nature for me to pass over it in silence."

The writing of it was not easy. But had she ever, in her whole life, shirked anything simply because it was difficult? She would not begin now. Besides, how tempting was the luxury of self-revelation! She did experience a qualm or two.

"I am a little embarrassed at what I have to relate here, for I wish my writing to be chaste, since my person has not ceased to be, and what I must tell here is not too much so."

The delicacy which might have preserved unimpaired the charming candour of the memoirs died, alas, a-borning. With her bold recital of an episode interesting only because of its effect on her, she blotted her pages with shamed prudery. It is a painful thing to read. It must have been not a little so to write. Yet she obstinately went ahead with it.

Monsieur Phlipon had several boy apprentices working with him. The youngest, a lad of about fifteen or sixteen, had no

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relatives in Paris. His loneliness aroused the parental instincts of his employers, and their kindly, well-meaning eyes were constantly upon him. Sometimes during the long winter evenings Madame Philpon would invite him to spend an hour or two with the family. It was her pious conviction that these glimpses of tranquil domesticity would inspire him to stay quietly at home and avoid bad company. By the irony of fate, it was her young daughter who shattered this unworldly logic to pieces.

Naturally, Manon felt more at home with this lad than with the others. Whenever she needed a model or a crayon for her designing, it was usually to him that she appealed. One evening the two of them were alone in the studio, and half-playfully he took her hand. If she did not exactly like it, it did not occur to her to be afraid, for with him she felt "the ease and familiarity which are so much a part of innocence, and yet so dangerous to it." A moment later she stiffened in quick revulsion. In some manner that she could not fathom, her hand had come into contact with a very strange thing. The boy spoke soothingly to her, but her fright mounted to panic when, with a dexterity that was certainly never acquired during those long winter evenings spent in the intimacy of the family circle, he brought the source of her terror into view.

"Oh, monsieur, that is horrible!" she gasped.

"Why, mademoiselle, calm yourself! I am sorry to have displeased you. Pardon me, but what is wrong in letting you see the very same thing that your designs show you every day of the world?"

Innocence could find no answer to the question. Frantically breaking away, she ran wildly to her own room. Her head was in a whirl. What should she do? Tell her mother about it? How could she discuss this strange, awful thing with her?



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Instinctive repugnance sent her mind shuddering away from the thought. Her pale face, her distracted manner, did not escape Madame Phlipon's watchful eye. To all her anxious enquiries Manon was obstinately mute. At last she remarked, a little sullenly, that she was not feeling well, and with that her mother had to be satisfied.

Gradually her composure returned. Several days passed. The small concerns of normal life combined to restore her peace of mind, and she began to recover a sense of security, a feeling that she could forget the experience, and an earnest hope that the apprentice would do likewise. It was a foolish delusion. The enterprising youth, his adolescent masculinity whetted by her agonized resistance, was merely biding his time. When the inevitable second opportunity came, he was ready for it. This time horror and disgust, added to increased terror, destroyed her reluctance to confide in her mother. Her reserve utterly broken, she told everything that had happened.

Madame Phlipon, "desolated at seeing how nearly she had been robbed of the fruit of her cares, fearing perhaps that I was concealing something from her, put me to a thousand tortured questions, in order not to teach me more than I knew, and in order to assure herself that I did not know more than I said." She talked very seriously with her daughter, with the cruel result that Manon thought of herself, with utter sincerity, as "the guiltiest person in the universe."

The conclusion was not unnatural. As Madame Roland put it in her memoirs, her mother was "not neglectful of religion. She had piety, without being devout. She believed, or tried to believe, and she regulated her conduct according to the precepts of the Church, with the modesty, the regularity, of a person who, having the need to adopt grand principles, does not wish to fret

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about the details." The sober solemnity with which Madame Phlipon presented the first ideas of religion produced a profound effect upon Manon's impressionable mind. Even her growing reasoning power, sceptical about such points as the transformation of the devil into a serpent, did not prevent her from believing and adoring.

Some time before this experience she had been confirmed. She went through the ceremonial with "the composure of a mind which considers the importance of its actions and meditates upon its duties. They spoke of preparing me for my first communion. I felt myself penetrated with a mystical terror. I read books of devotion. I had to occupy myself with the great objects of eternal happiness or damnation. All my ideas turned involuntarily along that line."

In such a mood is it surprising that the serious talk with her mother produced an overwhelming sense of sin? Small wonder that the burden was too heavy for twelve-year-old shoulders to bear! Small wonder that books and study gave no further pleasure, that promenades in the Luxembourg Gardens were no longer enjoyable, that even a "grand toilette" yielded no more delight. In all the world and in all worldly things there was no peace for this pathetic little sinner. Not until she had been to confession did she feel washed clean of the wrong she had convinced herself that she had committed.

Looking back, Madame Roland found that from the moment of the apprentice's feeble attempt at seduction she had been dominated by religious ideas. She therefore felt under a moral compulsion to include the episode in her memoirs. If it is possible to justify the crude recital of an adolescent sex experience which she did not welcome and for which she was not responsible, moral grounds are as good as any, if not better. But one telltale sen-

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tence, slipped in at the end of her recital, reveals much to the discerning reader.

"Even at this moment," she wrote, "it has cost me as much to write about this as it must have cost Rousseau to put down the story of his stolen ribbon, with which, however, my story has no comparison."

This sings the melody of truth. A ghost hovered in Madame Roland's cell as she wrote her memoirs—the ghost of a man who, in a gauche, humourless way, had contrived to set a good many of the intellectual fashions which cast such fascinating colour over eighteenth-century thought. Profound, awkward, solemn Jean-Jacques had made frankness popular—the complete and devastating frankness that make his own *Confessions*, for all their tedium, so absorbing. But how difficult to copy it! Madame Roland was nearer the truth than she realized when she remarked that her story was not to be compared with Rousseau's. Rousseau, telling about the stolen ribbon, lashed only one person, and that was himself. Madame Roland caught up the lash of frankness only to lay it on the apprentice's bare back. Herself she spared from even the tiniest cut, and nine pages of "painful frankness" leave her modesty, her chastity, her prudery, inviolate. Rousseau's admission of his frailty, his courage in facing it, make the story of the stolen ribbon unforgettable. Madame Roland's bland conviction of her own virtue makes the story of the apprentice merely regrettable.

The criticism, of course, applies only to the woman who wrote of the incident. For the child who derived from it such an overwhelming sense of guilt there can be nothing but compassion. It is a melancholy picture—this one of a little girl who, instead of scampering about in the sunshine, was "reading books of devotion and concerning herself with the objects of eternal

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happiness and damnation." Heaven knows that the daily life in the Phlipon household was anything but worldly. Simple, even austere, it seems to modern eyes. But to the guilt-tortured little soul, desirous only of flight from reality's first rude shock, it seemed unbearably frivolous. She had another problem, too. She must be properly prepared for the solemn sacrament of first communion. How accomplish that in the cradle of her sin? It could not, she decided, be done. She had to get away, no matter what the cost, and the cost, separation from her mother, was a terrific one. She fought the problem out in her own mind, helping herself along by the secret practice of such austerities as her imagination could devise. Ashes, carefully gathered up from the fireplace, were lavishly sprinkled through her dish of the fragrant, steaming Sunday *pot-au-feu* when the sharp eyes of Madame Phlipon were turned elsewhere. In the quiet lonely hours after midnight, when her good mother and father were peacefully sleeping, she knelt on the bare, icy floor, her body shivering, her teeth chattering, as she muttered prayer after prayer. Thus she steeled herself for the sacrifice.

One evening after supper the Phlipons were astounded by the spectacle of their usually composed young daughter flinging herself at their feet. Amid torrents of tears she begged for their permission to spend a year in a convent. Gatién's reaction to her entreaty was characteristic. Pleased by her zeal—was it not touching in one so young?—he gave immediate assent. Madame Phlipon hesitated. Give up her darling for a whole year? It would be difficult. But she understood Manon and realized, perhaps, what it meant to her. Reluctantly she consented to the plan and began to look around for a suitable institution. It was through loquacious little Monsieur Cajon, Manon's singing-teacher, that they found the exactly right place. It was the Convent of the

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Ladies of the Congregation, rue Neuve-Sainte-Étienne, faubourg Saint-Marcel. Particularly was it desirable because there was no danger that its training would be "too austere." All arrangements were made, and on May 7, 1765, Manon bade her mother and father a weeping farewell, and retired from the world for her year of meditation.

The year that she spent with the gentle Ladies of the Congregation was a happy one. Here at last the "consoling peace of a celestial sojourn" was hers. There was no break in her normal life of busy occupation, for the cloister, though it did enshrine the peace that is not of this world, showed no tolerance towards idleness, and the rule of the sisters, though mild, exacted unquestioning obedience. The thirty-four young boarders under their charge were divided into two groups and given instruction which, if rather mediocre, was at least regular and systematic.

A glance at the list of accomplishments which were the proud boast of Mother Sainte-Sophie, the writing-teacher, reveals the quality of scholarship. The exceptional, the radiantly distinguished character of the convent, she had been driven to its refuge in middle age by unexpected reverses of fortune. She had worn the veil for twenty years, but long before she ever donned it, she had learned something of the world and its ways. The priceless advantage of a good education enabled her "to write a beautiful hand, embroider superbly, have some knowledge of orthography, and be not unfamiliar with history." Is it astonishing that her less gifted sisters regarded her with an awe unmixed with love and not untinged with envy?

The course of study was child's-play to Manon. It was plain to all that she had been better instructed at home than even the oldest of her companions. She was put without question in the higher class, and she led it effortlessly. "The regularity of a very

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full life, divided among varied exercises, appealed greatly to my activity as well as to my natural taste for order and application. I was among the first in everything, and still I had leisure, because I was diligent and did not lose an instant."

Little as the convent could do to aid Manon's education, it could and did satisfy one of her greatest needs—a yearning need of which, perhaps, she herself was not entirely conscious. It is pathetic to read her little remark that "at the hours devoted to the promenade or recreation I did not know how to run and joke with the crowd. I retired in solitude under the trees, to read or dream." What a lonely childhood she had had! Until her convent days, there is in the memoirs no mention of any companion of her own age. She had never had playmates. No wonder she did not know how to joke and laugh with the others, and that she could not bring herself to join the games which sped away the social hour beneath the pleasant, shady trees of the convent garden! No wonder that at first she remained shy and aloof from the other young girls, and that her hunger for companionship sought satisfaction among those older than herself, the sisters! Even the imposing Mother Sainte-Sophie was less of a puzzle to her than the friendliest of the boarders.

Among the lay sisters in the convent was a young girl named Angélique Boufflers. Sister Sainte-Agathe, as she was known, had been born dowerless, and at the age of seventeen she had taken the only respectable course open to her by entering the convent. A soul of rare quality, who did not need the adornment of accomplishments and worldly advantages, she became Manon's first friend. "Nature had formed her of sulphur and saltpetre," is the way Madame Roland described her. "Her repressed energy exalted to the highest degree the tenderness of her heart and the vivacity of her mind. Her lack of fortune had caused her

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to be placed among the lay sisters, with whom she had nothing in common except their rude tasks. There are minds that have no need of cultivation. Sainte-Agathe, without the help of education, was superior, not only to her companions, but to most of the Sisters of the Choir."

Poor Agathe was combination cook, waitress, chambermaid, and scrubwoman for the whole convent, but her day's drudgery never made her too weary to spend a few moments of each evening with Manon. Their friendship was no passing affair. Time and separation never quite obliterated the attachment, which remained a tender one until the day of Manon's death. No matter how great the distance separating them, no matter how occupied she was, Manon was never too busy to send a message or a little present to Sainte-Agathe. "*Cette colombe gémissante*," she called her, and although the dove-cot was laid low by the Revolutionary cyclone, the dove was still in Paris in 1793 and flitted in, every now and then, to lift the gloom from Madame Roland's cell.

The shy reserve towards all companions of her own age could not be maintained for ever. Manon's heart was too hungry. Sainte-Agathe possessed a lively mind and a tender heart. But more than that was needed. Only to mental qualities which matched and supplemented her own could Manon yield her entire devotion. Sooner or later Agathe was bound to have a rival.

Manon had not been long at the convent when thrilling news circulated among the boarders. Two sisters from Amiens were expected to arrive shortly. The whole convent was in a quiver of excitement at the prospect. Late one summer afternoon, at the hour of recreation, the cry of "There they are! There they are!" was raised, and every one, including Manon, rushed to the garden gate to inspect the Demoiselles Cannet.

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These girls were the daughters of a wealthy bourgeois family from Amiens. The elder, about eighteen, was striking-looking, and her expression of proud discontent only added to the fascination of her appearance. She seemed most unhappy, and this was understood when it was learned, a little later, that she had been packed off in order to keep her younger sister from getting homesick. Some remedy was clearly needed, for the younger girl was already bathed in tears, and her grief touched every one. Most especially was Manon touched, for had not she suffered untold agonies at her self-imposed separation from her adored mother? The little Cannet girl did not even have the poor consolation of self-inflicted martyrdom. She was just being sent into the convent by parents whose wisdom was beyond question, and she did not like it. Manon gazed at the sweet, tear-stained face, and her heart felt the first stir of passionate devotion.

No two sisters were ever more unlike than the Cannet girls. Henriette, the elder, was "frank, even brusque, impatient to irascibility, gay, often a madcap. She was subject to outbreaks of temper, which were always followed by most affectionate atonements. You could not help loving her even while you scolded her, yet it was difficult to live with her on pleasant and impossible on reasonable terms, for she was as volatile and flighty as she was witty and vivacious."

This temperamental creature never obtained the hold over Manon's affections that was yielded unquestioningly, from the moment they met, to her younger sister, Sophie. Yet there was genuine fondness between the two girls. Perhaps their common affection for the little Phlipon girl was the strongest bond the sisters had in common, for Sophie was Henriette's antithesis. She was "a tireless reasoner. She wished to analyse, to know, and to discuss everything. I talked much less than she did, and did



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not lay stress on anything but results. She enjoyed conversing with me, for I was a good listener, and when I did not think as she did, my opposition was so gentle, for fear of offending her, that in spite of all our differences of opinion we have never quarrelled. Three years older than I, and a little less humble, Sophie possessed an external advantage which I did not envy her. She talked prettily, whereas I could only answer."

It is hard to think of this sane, calm, well-balanced creature as the object of a violent passion—a passion which had no thought of itself, which asked only to give everything and to receive nothing, which, for thirteen years, was nourished and refreshed and renewed by weekly, and sometimes daily, outpourings of itself. Yet opposites attract, and Sophie, apparently without effort on her part, became the first and perhaps the richest passion of a passion-seeking life. There is more warmth to the picture of her which is painted in the extravagantly worshipping letters which Manon wrote to her from the time she left the convent until, in 1780, marriage with Roland gave her, if not a new passion, at least a new preoccupation. But even there Sophie emerges, cold, quiet, and sensible, an industrious student and loyal friend, possessed of none of Manon's sentimentality, but very firm and steadfast in her attachment. A friend to be treasured, the sort of person upon whom one could always count, and yet, somehow, endowed with so few of the qualities to inspire unreasoning adoration! Why did she receive it, especially from one to whom the humble worship of another, though sometimes she craved to bestow it, was not entirely natural? The truth is that Manon, an uncompromising egoist at bottom, was neither self-sufficient nor entirely self-contained. She needed some one to confide in—some one to be the mirror in which she could observe each graceful posture of her most impressive self.

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If Sophie did not volunteer this service, she at least never withheld it. "Her company was infinitely dear to me because I needed to confide in some one who understood the sentiments I felt, and which seemed to increase by being shared."

The peaceful subdued life in the convent pursued its quiet course. Manon read, studied, prayed, and walked, mused and dreamed. But she was solitary no longer. Everything—every book, every thought, every hope and aspiration—was now shared with Sophie. Even in the calm round of the cloister there was sometimes an emotional crisis for the two friends to face together. During that summer a novice took the veil. The ceremony meant days of careful, pious preparation for every one in the convent. The church and the altar had to be decorated lavishly. Beautiful flowers, shining candelabra, silken curtains, and gorgeous hangings transformed it from the everyday place of worship into a magnificent and mysterious temple. On the appointed day the outer church was filled with a large gathering, the young girl's friends and relatives. She was bidding farewell to every earthly tie and concern, yet they all seemed as cheerful as if they were attending her wedding. When the young victim appeared at the grating, dressed like a bride, a hush fell upon the spectators. Presently she laid aside her finery, to reappear covered with a white veil and crowned with roses. In a tremulous yet melodious voice that sent nervous thrills chasing up and down Manon's spine, she chanted the customary verses: "In this place have I chosen my abode and will establish it for ever." When her vows were pronounced, she lay on the ground, and a pall was flung over her. The symbolism was dreadfully suggestive of burial. Manon never forgot the solemn scene, and Madame Roland recorded her impressions as if she had experienced them only the day before. "I shuddered with terror. She was an image of

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the absolute rupture of every earthly tie, and the renunciation of all that was most dear to her. I was no longer myself. I was the novice. I thought that they were tearing me away from my mother and I shed floods of tears."

Imagination, emotion, passion—she was sure she had them all. Superficially it looks indeed as if she had. But do the plumbed depths yield the promised fulfilment? In an earlier passage she wrote: "I was quite mature. I loved to meditate. I was really trying to develop myself. That is to say, I studied the reactions of my soul, I sought to know myself. I commenced to feel that I had a destiny for which I must prepare."

Sheer feeling and unbridled imagination—are they concerned with studying the soul's reactions? Not usually—the stark power of analytical reasoning provides the equipment for that game. But the game itself is a fascinating one, and religion provides as good a stimulus for it as any. When it becomes exhausted, one can do as Manon did and substitute something else. Barely eleven years after she had left the convent, her letters to Sophie freely confess a change from religious devotion to complete scepticism. She was still studying the reactions of her soul—she had merely changed the conditions. The remarks on the Catholic religion which Madame Roland made in her memoirs show little of the emotion and imagination of the genuine mystic.

"We have to admit that the Catholic religion, ill suited as it is to a sane judgment, enlightened by knowledge and submitting the objects of belief to the test of reason, is very powerful in captivating the imagination, to which it appeals through what is grand and what is terrifying, at the same time that it intrigues the senses by mysterious ceremonies, which are alternately sweet and melancholy. . . . Philosophy has dissipated the illusions of a vain belief, but it has not annihilated the effect of certain ob-

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jects on my senses, or their associations with the ideas that they used to quicken. I can still attend divine service with pleasure if it be performed with solemnity. I forget the charlatanism of priests, their ridiculous fables and absurd mysteries, and I see only a group of weak men imploring the help of a Supreme Being. The wretchedness of mankind and the consoling hope of an omnipotent judge fill my thoughts. Light fancies fade away, the passions are calmed, the love of my duties is revived. If music form a part of the ceremony, I find myself transported to another world, and I come away a better woman from the place where the foolish and thoughtless crowd gathers to bow before a morsel of bread. . . . It is with religion as with many other human institutions. It does not change the disposition of the individual, but is assimilated by his nature and is exalted or debased with it. The mass of mankind thinks little, believes blindly, and acts by instinct, so that there exists a perpetual contradiction between the principles it professes and the conduct it pursues. Strong characters act differently. They demand consistency, and with them action is a faithful translation of belief. In my infancy I naturally received the creed that was presented to me. It was mine until I was sufficiently enlightened to examine it, but until then all my acts conformed to it. I was astonished at the levity of those who, professing a similar faith, acted in contradiction to it, as I now am indignant at the cowardice of men who, desirous of possessing a fatherland, value their lives when they are to be risked in its service."

The woman who wrote that was never the prey of her emotions or the victim of her imagination! Fine feelings and delicate sentiments were fashionable in the eighteenth century. People, especially if they plumed themselves on being intellectuals, then exhibited tender sensibilities—it made no great difference whether

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or not they possessed them—with as much skill as the present-day sophisticates flaunt their masks of callous disillusionment. But underneath all the conventional chatter about “*sensibilité*” (and Rousseau himself hardly chattered more about it than did Manon Phlipon Roland!) there sometimes lurked a recalcitrant egoism, just as to-day a soft heart is now and then caught hiding behind a pose of cynical indifference.

The good Phlipons had not produced and reared their child to become a nun. First communion had been received—and received as the neophyte wished it—with not one solemn detail of preparation neglected to make her acceptable in the eyes of the Lord. No further sacrifice was necessary. The Phlipons held family conclave. It was decided that Manon should leave the convent but not to return to the Quai de l’Horloge. First a year was to be spent with her Grandmother Phlipon and her Great-aunt Angélique, who lived together on the Island of Saint-Louis.

Time marched along inexorably, and the moment came. Farewell had to be said to the charming old garden and the gracious, quiet cloisters. The last hour of prayer and meditation in the dimly lighted chapel had to be spent. The last lessons had to be recited to the prodigiously learned Mother Sainte-Sophie. Sainte-Agathe’s Spartan cell, with its tiny collection of sacred books and its ironically cheerful singing canary, had to receive her for a last exchange of whispered confidences. Finally, most difficult and dreaded thing of all, Sophie, her adored, her idolized one, Sophie must be clasped in a last, tearful, clinging, passionate embrace. “Regretted, esteemed, and embraced by the whole sisterhood, and bedewed by the tears of Sophie and Agathe,” the little Phlipon turned her back upon a world of dreams and faced reality once more.

Of course it was not parting for ever. Her father would bring

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her back for Sunday afternoon visits. Every fête-day celebration would find her once more beneath the spreading lime-trees, her friends clustered round her. There were pictures and mementoes exchanged, pathetic hostages against the inevitable outcome of time and separation! And letters, yes, long and frequent letters would pass back and forth, but it was not the same. It would never be the same as when she and Sophie, Henriette, and Agathe slept under one roof, sat on the same benches, ate in the same refectory, and prayed at one altar. Protestations of deathless devotion made the anguish of parting just bearable, but in her heart of hearts she knew that henceforth everything would be different.

## CHAPTER IV

### *BEGINNING TO THINK*

GRANDMOTHER PHLIPON was a "gracious and sweet-tempered little woman, whose agreeable manners, polished language, winning smile and sprightly glances still hinted at some pretensions to please, or at least to remind us that she had once pleased. She was sixty-five or six years old. She took great pains with her dress, but it was appropriate to her age, for her knowledge and observance of decorum were a point of pride with her. She scarcely seemed old, for although she was very plump, she was light on her feet, carried herself well, and used her pretty little hands most gracefully. Her slightly sentimental conversation was spiced with gay but always delicate pleasantry. The society of young people, of whom she was very fond, pleased her, and she was rather proud of friendships with them."

This delightful portrait, one of the loveliest in the memoirs, is too mellow to have been sketched by any hand but that of time. In 1772, Grandmother, left alone by the death of her sister Angélique, came to live with her son and his family. Vanished then were the sweet temper, the winning smile, and the gay and delicate pleasantry. A letter to Sophie, written on May 21, 1773, paints Bonnemaman in anything but pastel shades. For the last six months they had lavished upon her "every care, every attention, every reverence, every favour. We are repaid by a disagreeable ill humour and a gloomy silence, which is never broken except by complaints and curt replies. Now to-day she wants to leave us and go to live by herself—that is, rent an apartment in

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her old neighbourhood, buy everything necessary to furnish it, take a servant, and all that on some five hundred livres of income. . . . The extreme sensitiveness of my dear mother makes all these squabbles very injurious to her health . . . and that is exactly the reason for my sadness and fears. . . . How can we be so badly rewarded for so many devoted services and such tender love? I am sorry for my mother, but as for me, my anger at my grandmother's action far outweighs my regret at her departure."

Which picture shows the old lady as she really was? Doubtless we should look a little at both of them. Children, still far removed from the arrogance which forecasts the advent of maturity, are generally closer to the very old than young girls and boys. Grandmother and grandfather often suffer this mysterious transformation from the doting favourite of childhood into the carping tyrant of youth. Besides, in 1793 Madame Roland, fleeing from her own tragic situation, fled, when she could, only into pleasant paths. Forgotten were the difficulties with Bonnemaman twenty years earlier, and the happy year spent in the little apartment on the Island of Saint-Louis was all that answered memory's call. A delightful year it was, with plenty of leisure for reading and dreaming, and a letter to Sophie, a stroll with Tante Angélique along the banks of the broadly flowing Seine, or a call from Tante Besnard as the most thrilling diversions.

Tante Angélique, several years younger than Bonnemaman, apparently found her niche in life as a foil to her somewhat exacting elder sister. "Asthmatic and devout, pure as an angel and simple as a child . . . the cares of the little *ménage* fell entirely on her shoulders. A day servant, who came in twice a day, performed the roughest tasks, but Angélique did everything else, even to reverently dressing her sister."



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Tante Besnard no more resembled the other two than they resembled each other. Possessed of neither Bonnemaman's sprightliness nor Angélique's meekness, she seemed, by contrast, cold and austere. She came to call upon them nearly every day. Her arrival was always a matter of great ceremony. When she had seated herself in the most comfortable arm-chair, Bonnemaman would embark upon a stream of merry chatter and spicy gossip, addressing her remarks chiefly to Manon, who sat round-eyed on the sofa. Tante Besnard's answers were a series of platitudes, delivered in brusque tones, and ending invariably with the gloomy warning: "You are spoiling the child to death, Marie-Geneviève!" Which was the signal for gentle Tante Angélique, from her inconspicuous corner by the fireplace, to sigh: "*Ab, cela, c'est impossible!*" In spite of her brusquerie Tante Besnard was greatly concerned because Manon had to sleep on a hard bed, and she gave Bonnemaman a sound scolding on the subject. When the child accidentally cut her little finger one morning, the good soul came in twice a day "to observe the progress of healing."

The little household was up and stirring every day with the sun, or very shortly after it, in order to attend early mass. This, which might have been a tedious strain for many children, exactly suited Manon, who was, at the time, flirting with the idea of taking the veil. She knew that she would have to wait until she had reached her majority, for was she not an only child? Impossible to imagine Gatien and his wife consenting to such a thing! Yet even as Jacob of old served seven years for Rachel, she could serve eleven for her heart's desire. She would spend them in preparation. Already she looked upon the nuns of the Visitation, the daughters of Saint Francis de Sales, as her future companions in the service of the Lord. The Manual of Saint Augustine, and the *Philotée*, or *Introduction to a Devout Life*, of

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her patron saint were always on her table, two well-thumbed little volumes. The controversial writings of Bossuet furnished more fuel to this religious fire. At the same time she found in them a subtle poison, the effect of which, try as she would, she could not entirely resist. "Favourable as they were to the cause which they defended, they sometimes stated the arguments against it, and thus started me to analysing my belief. That was the first step. It was very far from that to the scepticism to which I was finally led after some years, having been successively Jansenist, Cartesian, Stoic, and deist! What a long road to travel, to end at last with the patriotism which has resulted in my imprisonment!"

The reading of devotional works did not consume all of her leisure. Healthy and curious, Manon was by no means above moods of positive worldliness. In such a mood she found one day in Bonnemaman's tiny library a truly thrilling volume—a book to read and read again, to absorb, to dream of, and, whenever she took up her own pen to inscribe a letter to Sophie, to copy. The letters of Madame de Sévigné "helped to crystallize my taste. Her charming ease, her grace, her sprightliness, her tenderness, admitted me to her intimacy. I knew her society. I was as familiar with her surroundings as if I had lived with her." One of the liveliest chronicles of a gorgeously sophisticated age thus accomplished more than Saint Augustine and Saint Francis de Sales combined. Manon never had the feeling that she lived with them, and it did not take so very many years for the Manual to sink into unconscious memory, and for the dust to gather thick on the *Philotée*. But Madame de Sévigné was a different matter, and for years, whenever Manon sat at her desk to write a letter, the shade of that cultivated, polished letter-writer sat down with her. Indeed, it was only after she came under the spell of Jean-

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Jacques Rousseau that Manon's pen found a new guide, and Madame de Sévigné retired from the scene.

Sometimes when Tante Angélique and Manon went out for a walk, by some silent, common consent, they ended up at the convent. Then, "the news of my arrival in the parlour spreading throughout the entire house, I sometimes saw twenty people in an hour, but these visits were a poor substitute for the intimacy of every day and the confidences of friendship." Naturally, the visits became more and more infrequent, and she fell into the habit of writing letters, principally to Sophie. This was "the origin of my taste for writing, and one of the causes which have increased my facility."

It was generally more exciting, although not always so pleasant, to go out with Bonnemaman. That lady had some slight connexion with the world of fashion, for years ago, when she had been left a poverty-stricken young widow with a child to provide for, she had obtained employment as governess in a wealthy bourgeois family. A ceremonial call at least once a year upon her former benefactress, Madame de Boismorel, was no more to be neglected than attendance at Easter mass. This lady's wealth gave her the entrée into circles of high society, but neither by birth, breeding, nor character was she fitted to conduct herself there with grace or dignity. Manon was amazed at the stories told to her by Bonnemaman of Madame de Boismorel's egoism, her vulgarity, and her free conduct. Particularly shocking was a spicy account of how Madame's confessor, as well as other more worldly male visitors, would call on her while she was in bed, and with what blithe unconcern she would perform her toilette before the gentlemen. Manon could not understand how any lady could be so immodest, and it was with considerable curiosity that she made ready one day to accompany Bonnemaman on the an-

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nual duty call. The account of this experience furnishes some of the most amusing pages in the memoirs.

“We arrived at the rue Saint-Louis, in the Marais, about noon. As we came into the house, all the servants, headed by the porter, saluted Madame Phlipon with respect and affection, and she answered cordially and with dignity. So far, so good. But then her little grand-daughter was noticed, pointed out, and complimented. I began to feel a kind of uneasiness, difficult to explain, but it seemed to me that servants might look at me, but that it was not proper for them to pay me compliments. We pass on, a tall lackey calls our names, and we enter a salon where Madame de Boismorel is gravely working on some tapestry, seated, with her lap-dog beside her, on what was then called a *canapé*. Madame de Boismorel was about the age, height, and figure of my grandmamma, but her dress showed not so much good taste as a desire to advertise her wealth and social position, and her face, far from indicating a desire to please, plainly demanded consideration and expressed her consciousness of deserving it. A bit of rich lace puckered into the shape of a small cap with broad wings, pointed at the ends like a rabbit’s ears, perched on her head, showing hair that possibly was false, arranged with the coquettish severity becoming her sixty-odd years. Double layers of rouge gave her expressionless eyes a boldness that was more than enough to make me lower mine.

“‘Ah, good-morning, Mademoiselle Rotisset,’ Madame de Boismorel called out in a loud, hard voice, as she rose to greet us. (Mademoiselle! What, my grandmother is *Mademoiselle* in this house!) ‘Really, I am very glad to see you. And this fine child, your grandchild of course! She promises well. Come here, sweetheart, and sit down beside me. She is shy. How old is she, your grandchild, Mademoiselle Rotisset? She is rather dark, but her

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skin is fine—it will clear soon. She has a good figure. You ought to have a lucky hand, my little friend. Have you ever bought a lottery ticket?"

"'Never, madame. I do not like games of chance.'

"'I believe you. At your age we fancy that we have a sure game. What a voice, sweet and full, but how grave she is! Are you not rather pious?"

"'I know my duties, and I try to fulfil them.'

"'Good, good! You wish to become a nun, do you not?"

"'I do not know my future, so I do not attempt to settle it.'

"'How sententious she is! Your grand-daughter is fond of reading, Mademoiselle Rotisset?"

"'It is her greatest pleasure. She spends half the day at it.'

"'Oh, I can see that. Take care that she does not become a bluestocking. That would be a pity!"

"The talk then turned upon the family and friends of the mistress of the house. My grandmother asked for news of the uncle and the cousin, the daughter-in-law and the friend, for Abbé Langlois, the Marquise de Levi, Councillor Brion, and Monsieur Parent, the *curé*. They discussed the health of all these people, their pedigrees, and their eccentricities—for example, of Madame Roude, who, in spite of her great age, was proud of her neck and always exposed it except when she got in and out of her carriage; then she covered it with a large handkerchief which she always carried in her pocket for these emergencies, because, as she observed, 'such things were not made to be shown to lackeys.'

"During this conversation, Madame de Boismorel took a stitch or two in her work, caressed her little dog, and stared at me a great deal. I was careful not to meet her eyes, because I disliked them, but I looked around at the furniture and the decorations of the apartment, which were more pleasing than the lady. My

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blood ran faster, I felt my colour rise, my heart beat quickly, and my breathing was hard. I did not ask myself then why my grandmamma did not sit on the sofa, or why Madame de Boismorel always called her 'Mademoiselle Rotisset,' but I had the feeling that leads to such questions, and I looked upon the end of the visit as an end of punishment.

"'Ah, by the way, do not forget to buy me a lottery ticket, and have your grand-daughter choose the number, do you hear, Mademoiselle Rotisset? I want her beginner's luck. Kiss me; and you, my little sweetheart, don't lower your eyes so much. They're very pretty, those eyes, and not even a confessor would forbid you to open them. Ah, Mademoiselle Rotisset! She will have suitors a-plenty, and that before long, I promise you. Good-day, ladies!' And Madame de Boismorel rang her bell, ordered Lafleur to call in two days' time at Mademoiselle Rotisset's for the lottery ticket she was to send her, quieted her yelping dog, and was already back on the *canapé* before we were half-way out of the room."

Perhaps, when she and Bonnemaman got back home, Manon rushed to her table, to write Sophie a description of their visit. If she did, what a pity that the letter was lost! A description of the coarse, berouged old woman, done engagingly *à la* Madame de Sévigné, by this rather smug youngster—what gorgeous reading it would be! And how different its effect! This account, it must be remembered, was written by one of the leaders of republicanism while she was waiting in prison to die for her principles. Hence the certainty—just a shade too much certainty—that although the child did not ask herself why her grandmother did not sit on the sofa, or why Madame de Boismorel addressed her as Mademoiselle Rotisset, she had the feeling that leads to such questions.

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Another incident of Manon's girlhood, which occurred several years later, affords a perfect illustration of how, when time passes and circumstances change, one's point of view is shifted, too. This time Sophie received an account of the experience almost on the very day that it occurred. It is interesting to compare the letter to her with the studiously detached and balanced description of the same thing in the memoirs.

During the last days of September 1774 Manon was taken to Versailles in order to observe the King and the Court and get a glimpse of how royalty lived. This was a favourite sightseeing jaunt for the prosperous eighteenth-century bourgeois. He and his family thoroughly enjoyed a view of the novel splendours of the world's most luxurious court. Manon's party consisted of herself, her mother, the Abbé Bimont, and Mademoiselle d'Hannaches, relative and housekeeper of the abbé. She was a "great, dried-up, yellow horse of a woman, with a harsh voice, very conceited about her noble birth, tiring every one with her talents for economizing and her certificates of title." But she proved an excellent guide. Sustained by her collection of parchment pedigrees in a truly royal self-assurance, she was ready and able to push her party into front-row seats for every lengthy Court ceremony. Manon was more than willing to be pushed. Was not the trip a rare opportunity to collect a wealth of material for an entertaining letter to Sophie? No interesting detail was overlooked, and a few days after she returned home, a bulky packet was dispatched to Amiens.

"I was greatly amused during my stay at Versailles. It was a journey undertaken out of curiosity and for pleasure, and I, for my part, fully realized those objects. With a little imagination and taste, it is impossible not to be moved by the masterpieces of art. . . . And when one is affected by the general welfare, one

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necessarily interests oneself in the persons who have had so much influence upon it. Could I have written to you from there, I should myself have adopted that pleasant style with which you amuse yourself; the circumstances would have given me the proper spirit for it. . . . I cannot tell how what I saw makes me value my isolation and bless Heaven for having given me obscure rank. You perhaps think this sentiment founded upon the slight value I attribute to popularity and the disadvantages that accompany high station? Not at all. It is founded only on my character, which would be a nuisance to me and to the State if I were placed close to the throne, because I should be shocked by that extreme inequality which puts a barrier between one individual and millions of people of the same species. In my position, I love my Prince because I do not much feel my dependence. If I were too close to him, I should hate his grandeur. This disposition is not praiseworthy in a monarchy; when it appears in a person of rank and influence, it is dangerous. With me it is of no importance, because the education of one in my station teaches me what I owe to the powerful and makes me respect and cherish from a sense of duty and from reflection what I should not love naturally. Also, I think that if I were in a position to do so, I should follow my Prince with as much ardour as the most zealous Frenchman, although I should not have his blind devotion to the master. A beneficent king seems to me a being almost adorable, but if before being born I had been given my choice of a government, my character would have made me decide in favour of a republic. It is true that I should have wished it constituted like none that now exists in Europe. I am very difficult? It would then be necessary to change also the moment of my birth? The one would cost no more than the other. I think I see you laugh



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and count on your fingers the number of follies which this one makes when added to the others. . . .”

Was she disturbed about the corruption and vice of the Court? Did she feel that France's one salvation lay in the adoption of a republican form of government? No, indeed. Why think seriously of anything as purely theoretical as the republican form of government? Why be disturbed over the Court? Madame de Sévigné, the epitome of smooth sophistication, was never distressed over the Court of Louis XIV. To write wittily of the amusing aspects of her trip, to indulge in a little humorous philosophizing about her own character and private views, to insert one or two well-chosen platitudes, and to finish off the whole with a couple of half-fanciful queries—that was the young bluestocking's recipe for achieving the effect of subtle worldliness. Nothing could be more conventional—more in keeping with the spirit of the times. The times had changed in 1793. The visit to Versailles in 1774 no longer appeared to Madame Roland in an amusing light. She was not writing to entertain Sophie or anyone else. She was writing to defend her principles. There was a high moral purpose to be fulfilled. Under those circumstances it was impossible to discuss the little expedition to the Court of so many years ago as a mere pleasure jaunt.

“I was not at all insensible to the effect of a great show, but it made me indignant to think that it had for its object the exaltation of a few individuals in no way remarkable for themselves and already too powerful. I liked better to look at the statues in the gardens than at the people in the châteaux, and when my mother asked if I were content with my journey, ‘Yes,’ I replied, ‘provided it soon ends. A few more days and I shall detest the people I see to the point of not being able to contain my annoyance.’ ‘But what harm do they do you?’ ‘At every moment they

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make me feel injustice and contemplate absurdity.' I sighed to think of Athens, where I could have equally enjoyed the fine arts without being wounded by the spectacle of despotism. In imagination I walked in Greece, I viewed the Olympic games, and I grieved to find myself a Frenchwoman. Impressed with everything which would have been afforded me in the great age of the republics, I overlooked the troubles that disturbed them. I forgot the death of Socrates, the exile of Aristides, the condemnation of Phocion. I did not know that Heaven had destined me to be a witness of crimes similar to those of which they were the victims, and to participate in the glory of a persecution of the same kind, after having professed their principles. . . ."

The times have changed, indeed! To match the hot indignation of the last passage the first one offers only the quiet, although by no means unintelligent, acceptance of "things as they are." Young Manon Phlipon had far too good a mind to regard her world as the best of all possible worlds. She analysed it and criticized it, but, save for her own position in it, she accepted it with the confidence of one untouched by any vision of its destruction. When destruction came, chance enabled her to outwit her own obscurity by assigning to her a part in the show—small enough, it is true, but larger than any she had ever played before. No wonder that then the thought of her girlhood visit to Versailles was no longer an amusing one! Naturally, it was impossible for her to conceive of herself as having been anything but "wounded by the spectacle of despotism."

The two passages show strikingly the effect of fame and power upon the faculty of self-analysis. Manon Phlipon knew herself better in 1774 than Madame Roland did in 1793. The young girl, admitting that if she were too close to her Prince, she would hate his grandeur, went on to say that such a disposition was

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not praiseworthy in a monarchy, and if it appeared in a person of rank and influence, it was dangerous. Fortunately for her, she was humbly situated, and her education had taught her what she owed to the powerful and had made her respect and cherish from a sense of duty and from reflection what she would not love naturally. In a sense, her youthful predictions had been fulfilled. But did the woman realize it? If she did, she did not admit it. When Madame Roland achieved some power, she hated the power of the King, and she did what she could to hasten him to his doom. When the Mountain outwitted the Gironde and wrested from the brilliant, unsure hands of its members the power which had formerly been wielded by the monarchy, then she hated the Mountain even more bitterly than she had hated the King. The Mountain, like young Manon Phlipon back in 1774, regarded this disposition as "dangerous in a person of rank and influence" and forthwith decided that Madame Roland must die.

To return to the little girl whose feelings were shocked and whose dignity was a little upset by the formal call on Madame de Boismorel, it is pleasant to know that a more pleasing view of the family was obtained about a fortnight later, when Madame's son came to pay a call upon his old governess. This refined, gentle man of thirty-seven, who treated her grandmother with tender respect, and who gave her, young as she was, a regard entirely untinged with grown-up patronage, won Manon's heart completely. The feeling was reciprocal, and their friendship remained until the day of Monsieur de Boismorel's death as close a one as was possible between a married man moving in fashionable circles and a girl twenty-four years his junior, and several steps below him in the social scale.

After this first visit, he came several times to see her and Bonnemaman. Manon enjoyed sitting quietly in her corner, lis-

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tening to her grandmother talk to her old pupil about his family affairs. She learned about his wife, who was "charming, but a little too devout." She discovered that he viewed the frivolity of his mother with a distaste almost equal to her own, and she heard how worried he was over the education of his only son, who, poor boy, was pulled about between the pious mother and the giddy grandmother. Like a good child, Manon was seen and not heard during these visits, but the conversation gave her many things to ponder over.

"I began to suspect that there was one rule of conduct for the world and another for oneself. In other words, that there was a morality of practice and a morality of principle, and that these inconsistencies were the causes of the contradictions I observed; in short, that society calls any one who does not share its own follies a fool. Gradually I was beginning to learn how to think."

When the time came for Manon to leave Bonnemaman and return to the parental home, she must have had the feeling of entering another world. The Island of Saint-Louis was one of the quietest neighbourhoods in the city. The Pont-Neuf, with its adjoining quais, was the Times Square of eighteenth-century Paris. People passed back and forth there in such numbers that there was a saying to the effect that if one walked up and down there for an hour a day, he would meet every one that he wished to see. Marketwomen, trudging along with their huge hampers; wig-makers, curling-tongs in one hand, wig in the other; fine gentlemen, with swords swinging at their sides, hats carefully carried under their arms; confectioners' boys, carrying coffee and chocolate to furnished apartments; workmen, weighted with the tools of their trade; black-robed lawyers; fine ladies, carefully borne along in sedan-chairs by groaning footmen or mincing along through the mud for fear of soiling their white stockings and

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dainty shoes; priests, with their short capes and bands—all of these, and many more, could be observed at almost any hour of the day on the Pont-Neuf. In the centre of the bridge the heroic statue of Henry IV on horseback, which had been completed in 1635, surveyed this whirling panorama of the city which, according to Rousseau, was “perhaps the city in the world where fortunes are most unequal and where flaunting wealth and the most appalling poverty dwell together.”

It was in neither of these states that the Phlipons lived. Gatien had always owned his own shop and had made a decent if not a luxurious living. He was a man of ambition, too, vain, and fond of the good things of life, and when the returns from his own profession began to seem too small, and the quarters in the rue de la Lanterne, where Manon was born, too cramped, he did not hesitate to expand both profession and home. Good money could be picked up in trading diamonds and selling jewellery by any one who was not too artistic to scorn commerce, and Gatien was the last man in the world to be burdened with such scruples. Commerce, naturally, demands a good location, and what better was there in all Paris than the neighbourhood of the Pont-Neuf? In 1755 he took an apartment in a house at the corner of the Place Dauphine and the Quai de l’Horloge. While not spacious, the apartment was comfortable. Besides Gatien’s studio, there was a kitchen, a large bedroom, and an attractive salon, or *salle*. The latter boasted a big chimney-piece, between which and the house wall facing the quay was an oblong space. This space, partitioned off, made a cosy retreat for Manon. There was room for no more than a bed, a writing-table and chair, and some bookshelves, but a small casement-window, on the ledge of which Manon kept boxes of gaily blooming flowers, afforded a glorious view of the neighbouring quays and the Seine and lent an illusion of dis-

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tance. Here the greater part of Manon's life was lived, a life of which, as she wrote Sophie, "my violin, my pen, and my guitar are three parts."

The clatter and noise of the Pont-Neuf must have penetrated the Phlipon apartment, but it was not duplicated there. Their life went on as usual, calm and unexciting. But if outwardly it was uneventful, it afforded Manon plenty of opportunity for continuing her favourite game of "studying the reactions of her soul." She had her books and her lessons, her music and her flowers. The few little household tasks required by her mother, daily walks with her father, and weekly excursions to Meudon, or Saint-Cloud, or Vincennes, and now and then a family party were only pleasant breaks in the ample and satisfying leisure that was hers for study and meditation. Yes, and for writing, too, for must not even her smallest doings, even the most inconsequential fruits of her reflections, be chronicled for the benefit of "my queen, to whom I must account for what is hers"?

Friendship to-day shuns verbiage, and the long, sentimental effusions which Manon sent off to Amiens strike modern readers as rather amusing. "Everyone does not know how to love, and of those who might be capable of it, how many can find a second self? . . . Ah! Well do I know how precious you are to me. . . . It is so rare to find a perfect conformity in character, way of thinking, sentiments . . . that if I were deprived of the happiness of knowing you, and yet had the idea of a friendship such as ours, I should despair of ever finding any one else with whom I could ally myself so completely. . . . Adieu, give yourself up entirely to the assured pleasure of being loved as tenderly as possible by the sincerest and most sensitive friend who ever lived, who, in saying that she loves you, expresses naturally the senti-

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ments that entirely possess a heart belonging absolutely to you under the name of Phlipon."

Effusiveness run rampant, true enough! Yet is there any but a conventional difference between this and the careless "Well, good-bye, old dear. Be good to yourself" of to-day? The experience of sympathetic friendship is the same, in all places and all times, though it clothe itself in different phrasings. That experience was Manon's in its fullest sense. Of Sophie one cannot be so sure. Manon did not save her letters. Sophie preserved the long epistles from Paris, either because she herself treasured them, or because she felt bound to obey an injunction given her at least twice by her friend. On December 5, 1775, Manon wrote, "I am by no means of the opinion that we should burn our letters. I wager that if we did so, we should regret it in a few years." Again, on January 6, 1776, came the warning: "In any case, do not burn anything." Was that curious sense of a destiny for which she must prepare already warning her to see that posterity have a complete written record? Perhaps. Her one reference to the possible interest of future generations in her correspondence is disarmingly humorous. In a letter of December 20-1, 1776, she said: "So it would be if I placed any pretensions in my letters, and a secret desire for immortality made me believe that one fine day they would find an editor too sympathetic of the public good to rob it of such things. Happily, that folly is not numbered among mine, and if we save our chatterings, it is only to make us laugh when we no longer have teeth." But Sophie was the only one who could have laughed, for she did all the saving, a service for which history and psychology both owe her a debt of gratitude.

Precious as Manon's letters probably were, often Sophie did not reward them with a very prompt reply. Manon's frequent

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complaints of her silence show that sometimes weeks would go by without a letter from Amiens. "I am ashamed of your silence as of a fault which I had committed, and I wish that I could impute it to myself." Or again, describing the delight of Sophie's last letter, she writes that it was "even more ineffable because it was preceded by a period of waiting just a tiny bit long, which even commenced slightly to alarm my tenderness." Not, she hastened to add, that she was committing "the outrageous injury to friendship" of fearing any cooling in Sophie's ardour. It was merely that she began to fear that her darling might be ill, for "in such uncertainty a too sensitive heart can conceive the most afflicting ideas!"

Frequent as these complaints are, there is no dwelling on them. A few words, as gentle as they are reproachful, and Manon is off to one of the numerous more congenial topics that filled her mind. These long letters tell the history of her girlhood life. It is no history of thrilling events and exciting experiences that is unfolded, but the more fascinating story of the development of an unusual mind and character. Only by understanding it can the prisoner of 1793, whose ringing appeal to impartial posterity has never ceased echoing, be seen in her true light.



## CHAPTER V

### *A YOUNG BLUESTOCKING*

THE period prior to the outbreak of the French Revolution offered material a-plenty for hungry minds. New ideas, or at least new interpretations of old ones, were everywhere in the air. Where the credulous seventeenth century unquestioningly accepted all existing institutions and deeply revered the past, the sceptical eighteenth century analysed everything and held only the future sacred. Why this scepticism? Why was it that institutions—the monarchy, the Church, the nobility—which remained fundamentally unchanged from one century to the other, were accepted in the one and attacked in the next? The French peasant was miserable in the eighteenth century, but no more so, and quite possibly less so, than he had been in the preceding. He was hungry, but no hungrier than he had been for a hundred years. The labourer was poorly paid, but he had been poorly paid for generations and had borne his lot uncomplainingly. The privileges and exemptions of the nobility and the clergy were enormous, but they had always been so, and the condition had always been taken for granted. About the beginning of the eighteenth century this uncritical attitude towards existing conditions began to change. Intellectually the eighteenth century was a complete contrast to the seventeenth, but the transition between them was natural and not without a certain logic.

For France the end of the sixteenth century marked the close of a period of disorder and confusion. For nearly a hundred years she had been torn by civil and religious wars and internal con-

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flict. Above everything else she needed a period of quiet order and firm rule. The development of the seventeenth century arose from those conditions and that need. A group of strong rulers and statesmen, Henry IV, Sully, Richelieu, Mazarin, and Louis XIV, built up the political machinery best calculated to answer the need—a royal absolutism. For its closest ally this absolutism had the Church. For decorative Court, useless in itself and yet the symbol of royalty, there was the nobility, but it was a nobility stripped of the power which had so often embarrassed the crown in years past, yet kept out of mischief and kept contented by a generous provision of money and luxurious amusement. For firm foundation to support the elaborate structure there was tradition, carefully cultivated and steadily growing throughout the century. For example, Richelieu, seeing that the States-general, the historical representative body of France, might, if allowed to develop, stand in the way of the royal power, quietly ignored it. It had assembled in 1614. Richelieu, when he became Prime Minister, did not summon it, nor did his successors. Gradually the idea grew up that it was an outworn, useless bit of governmental machinery, rightly scrapped by the wise rulers of the country.

If tradition was the foundation of the seventeenth-century absolutism, its first storey was popularity. This is difficult for modern minds, schooled in very different political habits, to understand. But do not all political experiments illustrate the fact that even a bad government is popular as long as it gives the nation what it wants? For many years the absolutism gave France, not only what she needed, but what she wanted—power and prestige in Europe. The pinnacle was achieved in 1648 with the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia. France was the strongest nation in Europe. What a long, long hill she had climbed in the fifty years since Henry IV had ascended the throne! How strong

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were the winds that howled about the lofty crest to which she had struggled! Strongest of them all, buffeting her onward and blinding her eyes to the downward path beyond the hill-crest, was the wind of ambition. Louis XIV, the great Sun King, most glorious monarch of his time, gazed upon his realm and found it good, but not good enough. France must have more. Her frontiers must be pushed through the Low Countries to the Rhine, over the Pyrenees into Spain—everywhere. Were wars, costly and disastrous wars, too big a price to pay for realizing such a lofty ambition? Louis did not think so, and with wars he paid, and paid again. Four times over he paid, and the people paid with him. The end was failure. The last payment was exacted in 1715, when the Treaty of Utrecht closed the War of the Spanish Succession. It put Louis's grandson on the throne of Spain, but for France it was the shallowest kind of glory. "The Pyrenees exist no longer!" Louis had exclaimed exultantly. "Our sons, our wealth, our resources, exist no longer!" whispered the people sadly, and, though timidly at first, they began to wonder. Could not things be managed in a better way? It was the beginning of the end. The political and social institutions which the seventeenth century had developed were to remain for three-quarters of a century, but the tradition which had supported them, the popularity which had stayed them, gave way to a growing attitude of sceptical criticism. The body remained. The soul fled.

Several things served as intellectual preparation for the French people to accept the death of the seventeenth-century tradition. As a natural accompaniment to the history and politics of that period French literature had developed a belief in the superiority of the ancients. A truly superstitious admiration of the past held French thought in thrall until, about the close of the century, a reaction set in. Philosophers, then as now strange fellows for-

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ever flirting with novel ideas, began to dally with that most seductive one of progress. The amour led inevitably to dangerous questioning of the superiority of the ancients. Poets and artists, seeking fresh æsthetic inspiration, and sometimes, too, influenced by moral purposes, began to ask why the marvels of Christianity were not material quite as good as the marvels of paganism. Scholars began to wonder why French could not be as useful a tool for their work as Latin. This reaction has been dignified in literary history with the title of "the Quarrel between the Ancients and the Moderns." The details may be followed by the curious in any history of French literature. There were acrimonious exchanges between Boileau, outstanding literary critic of the period, and Charles Perrault, who had actually dared to read a poem before the French Academy in which he compared, and not unfavourably, the age of Louis XIV with that of Augustus. These two were reconciled, but other writers added fresh outbursts of argument, to end again in reconciliations, usually celebrated by drinking a toast to Homer! The details of this literary and philosophical quarrel are scarcely important, but its significance is immensely so. The effect on eighteenth-century thought was profound and far-reaching. The question of whether or not the moderns could achieve or surpass the excellence of the ancients was closely connected with the idea which was destined to be the chief intellectual preoccupation of the century—the idea of progress. Voltaire, Turgot, Rousseau, in fact the entire group of eighteenth-century rationalistic philosophers, showed no hesitation in following the way pointed out by Charles Perrault. Their votes were cast for the moderns. They were doing more than widening the realm of literary criticism and questioning the superiority of ancient writers. Indirectly they were attacking the prevailing system of education, for was it not largely based on

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the classic writers? Indirectly and subtly, but very surely, they were weakening the respect for tradition, and to do that was to attack in its most vital spot the whole existing political and social order which rested on that respect.

Of course there were other sources from which the eighteenth century gathered material for new ideas and stimulus for fresh points of view. The English philosopher John Locke, whose more than threescore years and ten of life had extended over the greater part of the seventeenth century, had advanced the proposition that human ideas are the product of experience. That is, man is born with not so much as the glimmer of an innate idea, but as a result of experience, of the effect produced upon him by his environment, or, if you will, by nature, ideas come to him. The century, already allured by the idea of progress, was prepared to give a hearty welcome to Locke's novel theory. Finally, Isaac Newton's discovery that the physical relationships of the universe are governed by fixed and ascertainable laws of nature came as the last necessary step in the creation of the Age of Enlightenment. For Newton's abstruse mathematics these eighteenth-century intellectuals cared not one whit more than we of the present care for Einstein's complicated demonstration of the theory of relativity. The all-important fact was that Newton had shown that definite laws hold the physical universe together, and that these laws can, by relatively simple processes, be conclusively determined. Nothing was easier and nothing more natural than to add Newton's discovery, or at least the thing his discovery symbolized, Locke's theory, and the idea of progress together. The result was a conclusion that would have astonished the grumpy English scientist, who, outside of his own particular field, showed no more enlightenment than did the most conservative seventeenth-century citizen. But that did not matter—the conclu-

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sion, generally accepted by the 1740's, was novel, and it fitted in with the spirit of the times. It was simply that human relationships, like the physical relationships of the universe, must be governed by laws of nature, and since progress must be more than an idle dream, these laws, like those which Isaac Newton had discovered, could also be discovered and ascertained. In that glorious quest the eighteenth century was to pour out its youth, its talent, its energy, and its vitality.

What has this to do with Manon Phlipon? She was born in 1754, a year before the death of Montesquieu, whose *Esprit des lois* was to become the handbook for the early part of the Revolution. That year, too, saw Jean-Jacques Rousseau present to a fascinated world his laboriously written *Discours sur l'inégalité*. The third volume of the great *Encyclopædia*, the universal compendium of human knowledge upon which Denis Diderot, the most herculean writer if not the most titanic thinker of his time, was to expend the greater part of his talent and labour, also made its bow to the public then. Voltaire, established at Ferney, continued to shout his battle-cry of "Écrasez l'infâme" and to make ceaseless and unwearied attacks upon superstition. During the following decade two things, neither of them realized at the time, happened. French thought got its brilliant running start along the lines marked out by these pioneers, lines which were logically to culminate in revolution. Most of those who, following the lead of these prophets, were to make the Revolution, were born. Brissot saw the light of day in 1754, and Mounier in 1758; 1759 ushered Robespierre, Vergniaud, and Danton into the world, and Camille Desmoulins opened bold and curious eyes in 1760. Sieyès and Mirabeau, born in 1748 and 1749 respectively, were also of the generation of disciples to follow the teachings of the masters of Enlightenment. Manon Phlipon, too, was to read what the others

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did, and finally, if a little suddenly, to join the ranks. She however, did more. She told posterity what she thought of the books and authors she devoured so eagerly. Scores of works, ancient and modern, good, bad, and indifferent, obscure and well known, were scanned by her tireless eyes. Often she was forced to depend on borrowed books, and since she could never bear the idea of returning a book without appropriating what seemed to her the best in it, she fell into the habit of copying long extracts into her note-book, and sometimes recopying them into her letters to Sophie.

Pluche, Rollin, Crevier, Père d'Orléans, Saint-Réal, the Abbé de Vertot, and Mézeray, the latter being "the driest of writers, but the historian of my country whom I wished to know"—these names, more or less meaningless to modern readers, were full of meaning for her. The poems of Voltaire, Nicole's *Essay on Morals*, and Bossuet's *Histoire universelle* claimed their share of attention. A translation of *Don Quixote* fell into her hands and was read with great interest. Whenever an unfamiliar work was cited in a book she happened to be reading, she tried to obtain it. In this way translations of ancient, classic historians, like Diodorus of Sicily, and other modern historians, like the Abbé Velly, became familiar to her. From these she turned to Pascal, Montesquieu, Locke, and Burlamaqui, whose *Elements of Natural Law* so fascinated her that she extracted almost all of it into her note-book. The range of her literary taste is shown by the fact that there was scarcely a French dramatist of first importance whose plays she did not know. The sole object of all this reading was to learn. Her health and happiness, she thought, were dependent on the constant exercise of her active mind. The result of this continuous intellectual activity is that the letters to Sophie read like academic lectures. If in one paragraph she is intent upon an

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analysis of her own character, in the next she is likely to be formulating a philosophy of history. Religious speculation may occupy her for several pages, and from that she may switch to an exposition of her views on the position of women. Theories of education, in which her interest was perennial and her faith limitless, always fascinated her, and she loved to philosophize on the vanities of society, the weaknesses of mankind, the beauties of nature, and the necessity of virtue. There was so much to think about! The long letters to Sophie are, in themselves, often dreary enough reading, but as the story of a lively mind's adventurous roving, they are not without fascination.

One striking characteristic of everything that Manon wrote is her intense preoccupation with herself. "One never knows oneself too well," she wrote, "and it is the most worth-while study of all." Rarely has even self-advice been taken more literally! The description of a fashionable ball at Amiens with which Sophie enlivened one of her letters merely served, for instance, as an excuse for developing her own opinions of social entertainments in general and balls in particular. The fact that she had never in her life attended such affairs did not in the least prevent her from forming strong prejudices against them. Her own character told her what to think. The reflection that "all men receive from nature, at the moment of their birth, a principal inclination which determines their course" instantly led her to the discussion of her own dominant penchant. It was, she thought, her supreme need of happiness—"the happiness secured in repose." Fame, wealth, the pleasures of society—for these things she disclaimed all desire. "Happy, a thousand times happy, is he who desires the praises of the world as little as he fears its scorn, and who has nothing but supreme indifference for both." Yet a flash of honesty compelled her to add that while she did not consider it difficult



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to rise above the censure of society, she did think it "almost impossible to be absolutely insensible to its praise." Fame was closer to her heart's desire than she realized, or perhaps than she would admit.

In another letter she undertook to analyse her faults. Man's three worst weaknesses, she thought, are pride, vanity, and ambition. From the last she absolved herself entirely, and from the second, too, she acquitted herself in large measure. "I have too much pride to be vain," was her curious comment. She abhorred unthinking praise. "Say that I am amiable, and I hardly care. Find me estimable, and I am a little pleased. Tell me that I am intelligent, and I am scarcely flattered. Believe that I have common sense, and I am satisfied." But such tributes from the ignorant, the stupid, the foolish, or the unprincipled merely aroused her contempt. To please her, admiration must come from those whom she herself admired. Then "it is one of my most cherished idols." It was a rare experience because she felt herself easy and yet difficult to know. "I am easy to know because I never disguise my thoughts. I am difficult to know because, speaking oftenest of vague things, and being, moreover, very timid, I never show myself wholly." It is not surprising that she who could write thus of herself at eighteen could insert in her memoirs, twenty-one years later, the following naïve comment: "Above everything else I need esteem and goodwill. One can admire me after that if he cares to, but I must first be singled out and cherished. Any one with common sense and a heart who sees me often can hardly fail to do so."

Such an exaggerated estimate of oneself is likely to lead to a very poor opinion of society. Madame Roland remarked in her memoirs that she found "the world very unjust and social institutions very extravagant." One time Sophie briefly sketched for



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Manon's benefit the society people whom she met at Amiens. In return Manon sent her trenchantly acid characterizations of the people with whom she customarily associated. For instance, there was Mademoiselle d'Hannaches. Her "noble lineage, of which she is very proud . . . unhappily does not give her the judgment she needs in order to be less inconsequential in her conversation." Then there was her friend Madame l'Épine, a singer in Rome in her early days, and married to an artist who was a pupil of the great Pigalle. One would think that at their home Manon would meet interesting and artistic people, but she told Sophie that she met only "society women—in other words, women with pretty faces and frivolous minds, whose conversation is only about trifles or about themselves"—and "politely insipid men, who only come to tell the women a thousand things of which they themselves believe not one word, and who only throw incense at the women's heads in order to enjoy it themselves, later mocking the fools who had believed them sincere." Madame l'Épine, who apparently had a kind heart and who could not have been aware of the unflattering opinion which young Mademoiselle Phlipon had of her and her associates, was extremely friendly. Not only did she frequently invite the young girl and her mother to her own home, but she sometimes took them with her to the homes of her friends. One of these friends was a writer, Monsieur Vasse, who every now and then varied his labours with the salty diversion of a *séance littéraire*. After spending an evening with him and his circle Manon decided that before attending such a function she should "take a good guide, listen to him attentively, reconnoitre the ground—that is, know the places where it is safe to step. In some places stop up your ears, in others close your eyes, almost everywhere hold your tongue, fortify yourself with prayer, confidence in God, and proper humility."

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Such reflections spring in luxuriant growth from the excessive seriousness of adolescence. Years later Madame Roland concluded that the narrow society of her youth was, if for no other reason than that her father associated chiefly with artists, of infinitely greater merit than that which held Sophie in a giddy whirl of pleasure. With not a trace of frivolity herself, she never cared for frivolous people, but after she had lived through part of the Revolution, her criticisms were concerned with more important issues. "These rich men, these pitiable newly-created nobles, these insolent military men, these poor magistrates, regarded themselves as the pillars of society and in reality enjoyed those privileges denied to merit. My pride made me conclude that all was better in a republic," she wrote in her memoirs. Under the circumstances, the feeling was natural enough. But in her girlhood she had no such certain conclusion. Then, with all her generation, she stood only at the beginning of the long process which was to end in the discovery of the sublime illusion that human nature could be changed by changing human institutions.

Surprisingly enough, in a youth given over to reading, she did not discover Rousseau until she was twenty-one. An earlier letter to Sophie, in which she happened to be talking about education, shows that she must have been familiar with *Émile*, at least through hearsay. But she did not begin to know Rousseau until she had read *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, and that was not until after her mother's death. Then a friend brought her a copy, hoping that Julie and Saint-Preux might help her to overcome her grief. The hope was realized beyond all expectation. "It was fortunate that I did not read him [Rousseau] earlier," she wrote in her memoirs. "He would have made me quite insane. I should not have wanted to read any one else." She already knew a great

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number of the world's best writers, philosophers, historians, and littérateurs, but, with the possible exception of Plutarch, she felt that none had had an effect on her comparable to that produced by Rousseau. "It seemed that he was the proper nourishment for me, and the interpreter of sentiments which I had had before, but which he alone knew how to explain to me. . . . Rousseau showed me the domestic happiness to which I might aspire, and the ineffable delights which I was capable of tasting."

This is scarcely surprising. Every great poet, every great novelist, has his train of female adorers, surrounding him, praising him, worshipping him, ready to sacrifice themselves completely for him. Rousseau, part poet, part novelist, and something more than both, boasted an enormous parade of these charming creatures, trailing after him throughout his life and scarcely dispersing for years after his death. Never were there louder cries of enthusiasm, never wilder waving of banners, than for this shy, awkward, almost boorish, but terribly earnest man. His unbridled passion, his excessive sentimentality, his worship of love, his glorification of domestic duties and virtues, his adoration of nature and (theoretically, at least!) of children, all these aroused the feelings and appealed to the emotions. That his thinking was neither thoroughly sound nor highly original made no difference when the ardour that he infused into his arguments, the fervour that he blended with his dogmatic assertions, brought tears to the eye. The man who can make women think and reason will be respected, but he who can make them weep will be loved. For one woman in eighteenth-century France who admired Voltaire, the apostle of ironic negation, ten thousand worshipped Rousseau, the apostle of passionate affirmation. Sainte-Beuve, nearly a century later, displayed both understand-

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ing and humour when he wrote of "Jean-Jacques's women."

Manon eagerly joined the parade. Less than a year after she first read *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, she was peppering her letters to Sophie with allusions to its author. Sophie (remember that she was a "tireless reasoner"!) was inexplicably immune from the infectious enthusiasm. Manon reeled off passionate propaganda by the page—the hero himself could have done no better. "I am almost astounded that you are astonished at my admiration for Rousseau. I regard him as the friend of humanity, its benefactor and mine. . . . His genius has warmed my soul. I have felt it inflame me, elevate me, ennoble me. . . . His *Héloïse* is a masterpiece of sentiment. The woman who reads it without finding herself better thereby, or at least without desiring to become so, has nothing but a soul filled with dirt and a mind filled with nothing. She would never be anything but common." There is no evidence that Sophie was converted, but Manon never lost her own ardour. To the end of her life she burned incense at Rousseau's shrine.

Long before Rousseau had "inflamed her, elevated her, ennobled her," her clear-cut intelligence had resolutely attacked some of life's most fundamental problems. At seventeen the formulation of a philosophy of life and history gave her no terrors. "Knowledge of oneself is, undoubtedly, the most useful of sciences, whether one pursues it for itself alone or for the advantages which it yields," she wrote confidently. "Everything impels us to relate to it that desire for knowledge which is born with us, which we seek to satisfy by the study of the past. I have found that this is by no means useless, when you know how to serve your purpose with it. To-day I read with very different aims from those which I had some years ago. I don't care as much about facts as I do about men. In the history of peoples

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and of empires I search for that of the human heart, and I believe that I find it there. Man is the abbreviation of his world. Its revolutions are merely the crude reflections of those of his soul. He is a state . . . at times governed by his reason, the legitimate ruler, and at times tyrannized over by his vanity, which is the first of the passions, I think, and the spring which releases all the others." Seventeen, then, was sententious and sure! And extremely conventional as well. It was platitudinous, in the Age of Rationalism, to describe man as a state governed by his reason. If, by the end of the letter, she was not quite so sure, she was still sententious, and still conventional. "Who can unravel the numerous intricacies of the human heart, if he wishes to do it completely?" she cried. "I frankly confess my own inability. . . . The infinity of perfection in God, the infinity of weakness in man, make of God a mystery which man cannot comprehend, and of man an enigma which only God can solve."

She had left the convent hugging close to her heart a secret desire to serve God by taking the veil. Four years had passed, and while she still adored and believed, she was beginning to find her Lord a mystery beyond human comprehension. A year later she wrote to Sophie that belief inevitably follows the knowledge that God has said a thing because "He is truth itself." Yet she could not be certain. Wide reading, accompanied by critical reflection, brought its inevitable aftermath. She might exclaim, as she did later in the same letter: "Oh proud reason, recognize your weakness! Will you dare question the Almighty?" It was of no use. Her reason, strong as it was proud, could not be so easily rebuked. Its voice, persistent and ever louder, would be heard. Puzzling, indeed, were the questions that it raised. How could a just god—and surely the Christian God was that!—sanction the damnation of all those who, through no fault of



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their own, had lived and died in ignorance of Him? How could the Church, advancing a dogma so patently absurd, be infallible? Manon could not presume to answer such questions for herself. She confided in no one, not even Sophie, but she took her doubts where they belonged—to her confessor. He was ready with succour for her failing faith, and volume after volume of the defenders of the Church passed from his library to her hands. She studied and analysed them and returned them to the *curé* with astonishing results. They were filled with marginal comments and criticisms that the good man could scarcely believe had been written by this well-mannered, gently smiling young girl. The volumes which he lent her supplied her with the names of those which most effectively attacked the Church and the *curé* would have been astonished indeed had he known that she forthwith obtained the forbidden works from any source she could. In that manner she was led to d'Holbach's *Système de la nature*, and Helvétius's *De l'esprit*, Voltaire's *Dictionnaire philosophique* and to the works of the Abbé Raynal, of d'Alembert, and of Diderot.

These studies had been pursued with increasing interest for some time before she spoke of them to Sophie. But in the spring of 1774 a letter from Amiens brought the news that although Sophie had taken Easter communion, terrifying doubts had tortured her mind and soul. This frankness moved Manon to write at once, confessing her own experience, and explaining that she had concealed it from her friend partly because she had not wished to discuss such a subject while they were separated and dependent on letters, and partly because she had feared to sow the dreadful seed of doubt in Sophie's mind. For months afterwards, religious arguments filled the letters. Manon's conceptions of God varied as her studies and reflections changed. Sometimes she thought

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that "although a little philosophy does lead one to atheism, a more profound study leads one back to religion." One day Sophie would be assured that mere contemplation of the wonderful order of the universe must bring conviction of God's existence. A few days or a few weeks later would find Manon supporting, skilfully and forcefully, the theory that God is merely man's invention. Never did her scepticism lead her completely to unbelief. She was always inclined to hold with Voltaire that even if God was man's creation, the creation was a necessary one. But her critical examination of the dogmas of the Church purged her mind completely of the superstitions attached to the creed in which she had been born. It did free her from much of the conventional cant about belief, and at the close of her life she could join with the best minds of her age in the acceptance of a deistic philosophy. In her memoirs she reduced the fundamental results, as she saw them, of these years of girlhood meditation and study to a few paragraphs. "Justice to ourselves is wisdom; justice to others is virtue," was her conclusion. As for the lovely idea of a Divine Creator, watching over the world, or the consoling one of the immortality of the soul, were these nothing more than beautiful illusions? The warning voice of reason prevented her from attempting to answer. Yet did it greatly matter if these things could not be proved? Was it not enough to feel them? "To me the atheist is not a man of bad faith," she added. "I can live with him as well as—even better than—with the devotee, for he reasons more, but yet he is lacking in a certain sense. . . . He is cold before an ineffably beautiful spectacle, and where I offer a thanksgiving, he searches for a syllogism."

The position of women, their capacities and education, were naturally absorbing topics to Manon. She could hardly be called a feminist, but that was, perhaps, because she happened

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to live and die in the days before women had even thought about trying to come into their own. When she was about eighteen years old, she happened to read a book that impressed her greatly. It bore the rather clumsy title of *Essay concerning the Spirit, the Manners, and the Character of Women during the Different Centuries*, and was the work of a certain Monsieur Thomas. He made no attempt to solve the much-debated question of the equality of the sexes, but Manon discovered, and of course wrote at once to Sophie, that he was a man of "much justice, discernment and taste . . . [his book] is the very thing to inspire women with the desire of realizing their possibilities. . . . It is neither a panegyric nor a satire. It is a collection of facts and reflections." Bolder by far than unassuming Monsieur Thomas, our young philosopher did not balk at the question which he had diplomatically left unanswered. Women, she thought, are more likely to be influenced by feelings, whereas men are dominated by ideas. Although the souls of women are sensitive and their imaginations lively, their physical make-up is more delicate than that of men, and their minds are less strong. Consequently they are less likely than men to succeed in the sciences of speculation, which demand long and intelligent study and constant and sustained application.

These trite reflections are followed by a surprising remark: "Poetry is better suited to women, because it merely demands imagination and sentiment in a sweet and tender style." The statement betrays the temper of her mind. Her reading was dictated by a love of ideas. It was not inspired by any passion for literature as an art. She could fill a note-book with extracts from de Paw's *Researches among the Chinese*, or Delolme's work on the English Constitution, and indeed she did fill several note-books and many letters in that manner. But except for one or

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two expressions of admiration for the didactic verses of Pope, and a mild enthusiasm for the moral sentiments of James Thomson, neither in letters nor memoirs did she reveal any perception of the sheer beauty of poetry as poetry. Greater love of it, wider reading in it, indeed, would have shown her that men, and not women, are its supreme creators. True, she did sometimes compose verses herself, but even one to whom the French language is an alien tongue can see their mediocrity, and they prove only that she had some facility in rhyming.

Her own eagerness for the very knowledge which she placed beyond women's capacities, and the ease with which she acquired it, made her most unsympathetic with men's ideas about the education of women. A frivolous education merely made women envious and incompetent, she thought, whereas a better education would make them "more docile wives, wiser mothers, and less imperious mistresses." Besides, she reasoned, since the dependence of men upon women is inevitable, would it not be better for the former if those to whom "their passions make them slaves" were more enlightened?

Like many people then and now, Manon regarded education as a panacea for almost every ill. It may have been that she looked upon her own case as illustrative. Or perhaps she was only following the fashion of the century that believed so implicitly in the perfectibility of man. Sophie, dissecting everything as usual, was rather sceptical. Could education accomplish everything, after all? Manon argued stoutly to convince her, quoting Rousseau as unanswerable authority. She had to admit that he said that "to try to change our characters is to try to change natures," but, she asked, if his *Emile* did not show his confidence in the influence of education, what, pray, did it show? As for herself, she was more and more inclined to believe

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that all the differences in people are simply differences in education.

Surely this intelligent young girl who theorized about education, philosophized about men, life, and history, analysed religion, and criticized society must have been a keen observer of contemporary political conditions. Surely she must have reflected deeply upon them. When Madame Roland searched her girlhood with the flickering light of memory's torch, she found that she had indeed done that very thing. "The education I received, the ideas I acquired from study and through experience of the world, combined to inspire me with republican enthusiasm, by enabling me to judge the absurdity and to feel the injustice of a mass of pre-eminences and distinctions. In my reading I sided passionately with the reformers of inequality. I was Ægis and Cleomenes at Sparta, I was Gracchus at Rome. . . . When I witnessed those spectacles which the capital often presented upon the entrance of the Queen or the princes . . . I sadly compared this Asiatic luxury, this insolent pomp, with the miseries and servility of the brutalized people. . . . The dissoluteness of the Court at the close of the reign of Louis XV, the disregard for morals which was spreading to all classes of society, filled me with indignation and astonishment. Not yet perceiving the germs of a revolution, I asked myself how things could continue in this way. In history I witnessed the decline and fall of every empire that had reached this degree of corruption, and I listened to the French laugh and grow merry over their own follies. . . ."

How, then, must she have rejoiced at the death of Louis XV! Doubtless she celebrated the event by writing a letter to Sophie filled with jubilation at the passing of the dissolute old tyrant! Not at all. She did write to her friend the day before the old King

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died, but the impending event inspired no speculations of a political nature. "The King received extreme unction Saturday morning. The bulletin of today gives little hope. The news of his sickness has made an impression upon me; I will tell you the reasons as well as I can in a letter. Although the obscurity of my birth, my name, my estate, would seem to keep me from being interested in the government, I feel, in spite of that, that the general good does concern me. My country does mean something to me. My attachment to it forms one of the sensitive bonds of my heart. How could it be indifferent to me? Nothing in the world is. I feel that I have rather a cosmopolitan soul. Humanity and sentiment unite me to everything which breathes. A Carib interests me. The fate of a Kaffir touches me. Alexander sighed for other worlds to conquer. I would sigh for others to love did I not know a Supreme Being who could absorb all my sentiments. Is such extreme sensibility an advantage? Does it not increase sorrow, to be approachable through so many channels?"

The future queen of the Girondins might indeed have appropriately asked herself "how things could continue this way," might have put more than one telling question to a government which showed itself to a wretched and "brutalized" people in the trappings of "Asiatic luxury" and "insolent pomp." The difficulty was that the future queen of the Girondins was not yet born. In her place there was only young Manon Phlipon, interested, to be sure, in questioning, not the government, but herself, and in questioning, not on the subject of politics, but on that perennially fascinating topic the "reactions of her soul." This, too, at a time when the death of the old King, and the ascent to the throne of a new and untried prince made the country, plunged into a state of desire, balance between hope and fear. Of course Manon was not entirely unaware of all this. A long letter to Sophie in July

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1774 which treated of almost everything under the sun except the state of the realm ended with the idle observation that the end of the old reign and the beginning of the new would have furnished material for several letters, and yet she had not said a word about them. "It is true," she added, "that those subjects, like many others, are better suited to conversation than to letters." What she meant was that those subjects did not happen to interest her. Otherwise the letters to Sophie would be crammed with them, for Manon never hesitated to write voluminously about any topic in which she was thoroughly absorbed.

After the new King's ascent to the throne the most exciting political question of the day was the attempt made by the Chancellor Maupeou to suppress the Parlements, particularly that of Paris, and to put in their place the jurisdiction of the King's council. The Parlements were really judicial in function and were an outgrowth of the courts over which the Capetian kings had presided and which had assisted them in the management of affairs. In the earlier days of faction and religious struggle in France, the Parlements had been a bulwark to the monarchy, but with the increase of its power, theirs had declined. For example, the principal Parlement, that of Paris, had the right of registering the royal decrees, and from that right it assumed the one of expressing its disapproval of any decree by refusing the registration. Yet the Parlement possessed no real power in the matter, and the King customarily obtained the registration by the simple process of holding a so-called *lit de justice* and ordering it. Nevertheless, the people were attached to the Parlements and, in the absence of other constitutional guarantees, regarded them as the one remaining check against royal absolutism. Hence Maupeou's attempted suppression of them met with such bitter popular opposition that it was abandoned, and they were restored.

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Madame Roland thought that she remembered how she felt at the time of this struggle. "When the court and the Parlements were quarrelling in 1771, my character and my opinions allied me with the latter party. I obtained copies of all their pamphlets, and the ones which expressed the plainest truths in the boldest style pleased me most." It is easy to imagine letters to Sophie packed with extracts from these pamphlets, interspersed with thoughts and reflections inspired by reading them. She who could fill pages with quotations from Rousseau, who could devote a whole letter to a review of Monsieur Thomas's admirable work on women, certainly could lavish space and time in discussing this topic of the day with Sophie, especially as the latter was apparently genuinely interested in it. Yet Manon had astonishingly little to say about it. "I have no news to tell you," she wrote in 1771, "since you are certainly no longer unaware of the suppression of the Parlement of Toulouse, and its re-creation, including several of its old members." When the fate of the Parlement of Paris was in the balance, Sophie wrote for details of all that was happening. "You speak to me of the Parlement. Its reopening is assured. The rooms of the Palais are prepared," replied Manon indifferently, and turned to more exciting matters. Sophie repeated her request for news, and when the Parlement was actually re-established, Manon went a little more into detail, although she was sure that she could give no information that was not already known at Amiens. Dutifully enough, she wrote a fairly full account of what had happened and she concluded with the following observations: "A Prince ascending the throne under such critical circumstances could not well avoid this necessary and desired re-establishment. Besides, what has he to fear from it? The Parlements are like ruined cities which we still venerate, but they are no longer a barrier to royal au-



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thority. Rather they are a cherished but impotent idol, which must be restored to its adorers, since its presence consoles them. . . ." A remark which proves that Manon, though not deeply interested in the matter, was not lacking in penetration. The reason for the vehement popular protest against the suppression of the powerless Parlements was never better expressed. "As for me," she continued, "I rejoice greatly. All universal sentiments affect me, and what is a pleasure for the general public should, I think, be a joy for the individual who finds his own happiness in that of others and of his country. . . . With enlightened and well-intentioned ministers, a young Prince desirous of doing good, and obedient to their counsels, an amiable and beneficent Queen, a prosperous, agreeable, and decent court, an honourable legislative body, a noble people wishing only to love its master, a kingdom full of resources—ah, we shall be happy! I love to hope so—I make a sweet image of the thought. . . ."

This was written fifteen years before the Revolution, and every year that passed seemed to push her sweet image of a prosperous and happy country further into the limbo of unrealizable dreams. It was barely a month after the above lines were sent to Sophie before the "honourable legislative body" was again at odds with the "enlightened and well-intentioned ministers" and the "docile young Prince." Manon took it very calmly. She briefly mentioned the details in one of her letters, and added: "As for me, I think power and intermediate ranks, as well as a depository body of law, are necessary in a monarchy, and, in the very nature of things, accord between the Parlement and the Prince is very difficult. You waxed very political in your last letter, and I have not paid you back in the same coin. The remarks of young girls upon such matters are scarcely important,

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but the ideas of a friend, whatever they are, are always interesting."

The reading and philosophizing, the writing and thinking, with which Manon dreamed away her girlhood resulted in—what? The development of an intelligence naturally strong, and the growth of an egotism naturally powerful. The little bourgeoisie of the Pont-Neuf is becoming a vigorous, dominating personality, but she will wait for an opportune moment to show herself in her true colours. It is no surprise to find her tacitly dropping her childhood project of becoming a nun. Talents and training such as hers are for exercise and display in the world, not in the cloister. In the mean time she waits contentedly in the pleasant home presided over by her dear mother and enlivened by her busy father, his artist friends, and the kind if rather commonplace relatives of the family. It is not exactly the life she is sure she deserves, but until a better one is offered, in it she will remain, without complaint. Although she is so sure that her emotions are superabundant, it is plain that, except when they spring from her egotism, they are sometimes a little sterile, and they are always kept in check. The "*sensibilité*" which she is for ever discussing, even occasionally bewailing, in her letters to Sophie, is never strong enough to cause her heart to run away with her head. As a pretty young girl, with a father who, if not rich, is at least comfortably well off, she is bound to attract the eyes of the marriageable males in the neighbourhood. More than one offer, some of them not to be despised, will come to put to a severe test her clear-eyed judgment of what she wants out of life. Can we doubt that she will pass every test with flying colours?

## CHAPTER VI

### DREAMING OF LOVE

ONLY in the privacy of her *petite cellule* did the dark-haired, rosy-cheeked Mademoiselle Phlipon give free rein to her passion for study and self-improvement. With feminine guile rarely displayed by so thorough a bluestocking, she concealed her accomplishments with as much art as a professional coquette employs in hiding some blemish of complexion or imperfection of the figure. An afternoon spent in solving problems of geometry or in mastering the principles of Cartesianism would find her ready, in the evening, to enter zestfully into a family merry-making, perhaps to celebrate the wedding of some relative with whom she had not a taste nor an idea in common. Grandmother Phlipon's birthday, or the wedding-anniversary of *Maman et Papa* naturally called for such innocent diversions as charades, or home-talent theatricals. Who but Manon planned the party, and if congratulatory verses were to be offered to the guests of honour, who but Manon composed and read them? She might later reflect that these pleasures, though harmless, were scarcely worth the time and trouble they demanded and the fatigue they produced, but to Sophie alone were such secret and heretical thoughts confided.

More enjoyable interruptions in the program of study came with the Sunday or holiday excursions which the Phlipons often made to one of the many parks or forests near the city. The only difficulty in arranging them lay in deciding where to go. Gatién, with that gregarious sociability which later proved his undoing, wished always to follow the crowd. Manon, more solitary in dis-

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position, asked nothing better than to enjoy the beauties of nature in secluded retreats.

“‘If the weather is good, where shall we go tomorrow?’ was my father’s smiling query, on a summer’s Saturday evening. ‘How about Saint-Cloud? The fountains are to play, and there will be a good crowd of people.’

“‘Oh, papa, I should much rather go to Meudon!’”

Gatien, if not always a congenial parent, was generally an indulgent one, so to Meudon they usually went. Early Sunday morning Manon would be ready, dressed in a plain fresh muslin gown, carrying a gauze veil as protection from the sun, and armed with the inevitable book. Their way led to Port Royal, from which they travelled in a tiny boat to Belleville. A hot, tiresome climb up very steep paths plunged them into the rewarding coolness of the forest of Meudon. They strolled through the woods, gathering wildflowers and exploring the park, until, tired and hungry, they came upon some forester’s cottage. Here they lunched ravenously on new-laid eggs, fresh vegetables, and warm, foamy milk. Manon’s parents, unblessed with her youthful energy, dozed away the afternoon on the beds of leaves which she had gathered together in some pretty clearing, while she read, dreamed, and invited her soul in a return to nature.

The public exhibitions of pictures and statues, the displays of industrial art, and the showings of antiquities, which were almost as numerous in eighteenth-century Paris as they are today, were not to be neglected by the family of an engraver with artistic and cultural pretensions. When Manon attended such exhibitions, the descriptions and criticisms of them that she wrote to Sophie show that she possessed discernment and taste. Monsieur Phlipon, too, had the entrée to more than one private studio in the city, and visits with him to view the work of his friends made some

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of the pleasantest experiences of Manon's girlhood. Her father was sufficiently intimate with the celebrated painter Greuze to allow her to make several visits to his studio. One time he showed her a charming painting of a child standing near the fountain where she had just broken her water-jug. Manon found it particularly interesting because Greuze had not used the grey colouring which was his usual medium. She told him that she had but one fault to find with it—he had not made the child sorry enough to prevent her from returning to the fountain of disaster—a criticism which greatly amused the artist.

The Besnards spent their summers at the château of Fonteney, one of the estates of Haudry de Soucy, the wealthy *fermier général* who employed Great-uncle Jacques. Visits with them were pleasant breaks in the monotony of Manon's life. Delightful, too, were her little trips to Vincennes, to spend a few days with dear little Uncle Bimont, who had been appointed canon of the Sainte-Chapelle there. At Fonteney she revelled in rural delights—"charming woods, beautiful meadows, and cool valleys." The one discordant note came from occasional condescensions offered by the Haudry family. A call upon them was a courtesy never neglected, and when it was followed by an invitation to dinner at the great château, the invitation was unquestioningly accepted. To Manon's chagrin, they were ushered in to dine, not with their host and hostess, but with the upper servants of the château, the ladies' maids, the butler, the cooks, and the footmen. Only time enabled her to view the slight with the humorous detachment that it deserved, and her memoirs contain a sprightly account of the incident, with the conclusion that it "opened a new world to me, in which I found faithfully copied the prejudices, the vices, and the follies of a world that seemed a little better, but was scarcely worth more." But one is scarcely so philo-

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sophical at twenty years, and the experience was a mortifying one for the young girl who placed so high a valuation upon herself and her talents.

No such embarrassments awaited her at Vincennes. In spite of the irritating pretensions of the aristocratic Mademoiselle d'Hannaches, between whom and Manon love was never lost, visiting Uncle Bimont was a thoroughly delightful experience. He had always adored his niece, and if Mademoiselle d'Hannaches showed a lamentable want of tact and delicacy by summarily interrupting the declamation of a moving scene from one of Voltaire's tragedies for the sake of dinner or some such mundane concern, the canon more than made up for it by the admiration with which he listened to Manon, and the warmth with which he read his own lines. The château at Vincennes, besides boasting a chapter of ecclesiastics, was a retreat for royal pensioners and retired army-officers and their families. The result was a society smacking of worldliness, and the pretty young guest at the canon's house was graciously welcomed at the balls, races, and receptions with which the superannuated hangers-on of royalty enlivened their humdrum days. Here Manon renewed an acquaintance already made at a *musicale* at the home of a friend in Paris. This was Madame de Puisieux, a lady interesting because of her former intimate association with Diderot, and slightly awesome because of her reputation as an authoress, a reputation springing from one slight volume. Manon was shocked to find that learning, to say nothing of the advantage of close communion with a superior man, had not made Madame de Puisieux less vain and silly, less coquettish and avid of admiration. What would have been difficult to tolerate in a young and beautiful woman was unpardonable in a creature with parchment skin, few teeth, and countless wrinkles. Vincennes, where

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gallant if ageing cavaliers were to be had for the asking, made Madame de Puisieux more kittenish than ever, and Manon was strengthened in a resolve already formed to avoid the folly of becoming an authoress.

The kind patronage with which, for her sake, Sophie's relatives in Paris treated Manon gave the girl an occasional glimpse into the world of the *petite noblesse*. She did not find it attractive. There was little pleasure to be derived from calling at the house of the Demoiselles la Motte and chatting with Sophie's stupid, ignorant old uncle, or being shown, as a special mark of favour, the bag, embroidered with the family coat-of-arms, which their mother had carried to church, and which her two maiden daughters treasured, but did not presume to use. Nor was it very exciting to talk with Mademoiselle d'Hangard, a young relative and protégée of the la Mottes, a "large, fresh-complexioned brunette, so robustly healthy that she was positively terrifying, whose provincial manners added nothing to her brusque character and ordinary mind." The crabbed old uncle, Monsieur Perdu, cast many sheep's glances at this young Hebe, but she languished, though in vain, after Sophie's brother Sélincourt, who, practising law in Paris, dropped in every now and then to pay his respects to his relatives.

The society frequenting the la Motte household was not stimulating. There was the Chevalier de Sales, who had won honourable wounds during service in Louisiana, and who was now enlivening his retirement by discreet philandering with an aged but very coy marquise. The magistrate de Vouglans, another regular caller, was very learned, but horribly intolerant, especially on the subject of his *idée fixe*, the torture of criminals. He had even dared to defend the practice to the renowned reformer Beccaria. It was in the la Motte drawing-room that

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a millionaire Cannet, illustrated perfectly for Manon the vulgarity of the point of view of commerce when he remarked, upon hearing of the financial success of a certain drama: "Why didn't my father have me taught to compose tragedies? I could have written them on Sundays!"

Manon always gladly exchanged the stuffy air of this house of snobbery for the pleasant spaces of one of the public parks, like the Luxembourg Gardens or the Jardin du Roi. It had always been Gatien's delight to take his little girl out walking, and his pleasure increased when she grew into a graceful young woman, with a brilliant complexion, sparkling eyes, and dimpled curves. He was proud as a peacock whenever he noticed, as he frequently did, the approving glances cast in her direction by the men strolling along the park paths. Manon, too, ever avid of admiration, was secretly pleased, and she often came home from her walks with a flush a shade too vivid to have been painted by mere exercise in the open air.

The only daughter of an apparently prosperous engraver was bound to receive tributes more substantial than admiring looks, tributes which would tickle her vanity and give her a delightful sense of self-importance. Manon no longer lowered her pretty eyes like a shy child, and the procession of suitors which began to form at Gatien's door-step was ample proof of their lure. They came from all over the quarter, these suitors, if we are to believe the memoirs and the letters to Sophie. The family butcher, recently widowed for the second time, decided that only in Mademoiselle Phlipon could he find solace for the cruel blow. After surprising that young lady by the alacrity with which he served her in his shop during the week, he astounded her on Sunday by appearing in his best suit, a symphony of the tailor's art in black and fine lace, to offer her his fortune (one not to be despised, by the way), his



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hand, and his heart. Her guitar-teacher, who had taught her all he could, but who still came occasionally to call on her parents and see her, dreamed longingly of a blissful stringed duo through life. Monsieur Mozon, her old dancing-teacher, was likewise smitten.

These unattractive aspirants kindly but firmly disposed of, Manon and Gatien turned their attention to more desirable ones. A promising young doctor came a-wooing. Monsieur Phlipon was charmed, but Mademoiselle, though at first not unfavourably impressed, wavered coyly, then sent him packing. Papa was upset. Only the offer of a well-to-do jeweller, a man who owned his own shop and who had a thriving trade among an aristocratic clientele, restored him to calm. His composure was rudely shattered when his daughter, finding diamonds even less seductive than medicine, dismissed the jeweller. The splendid education which the doting father had lavished on his wonderful child was bearing fruit. How could she, who daily communed with Plutarch and all the philosophers, be expected to thrill at the prospect of spending the rest of her life in the company of a mediocre physician or a stupid tradesman? Could the character of such men be anything but "incompatible with fine sentiments and lofty ideals"? These delicate and high-minded scruples were quite beyond the comprehension of the realistically inclined parent. The rejection of a penniless dancing-master or of a petty merchant won his hearty applause, but to refuse a wealthy, well-connected jeweller, a man who could support her in the manner to which she was accustomed, probably, indeed, in a manner beyond it—*quelle folie!* There was more than a hint of querulousness in his voice as he asked his daughter just what kind of man would suit her. Her answer was prompt, but unsatisfactory:

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"Only a man with whom I can discuss my thoughts, and who shares my feelings."

"And are there no such men among merchants?" asked her father, doubtfully.

"Now listen, papa! I have noticed too often that success in trade depends upon selling dearly what you have bought cheaply, and that a good deal of lying, to say nothing of oppression of the labourer, is mixed up with it. I could never approve such practices, and I could never respect a man who devotes his life to them. I want to be a good wife, and how could I be faithful to a man whom I did not admire, even admitting the possibility of my marrying such a one? Selling diamonds and selling pastry seem pretty much alike to me, except that the latter has a fixed price, requires less trickery, but soils the hands more. I do not like the one better than the other."

"You don't really believe that there are no honest people in business?" queried Gatién.

"I will not go so far as to say that, but it seems to me that there are very few, and even if they are honest, they do not possess what I require in a husband."

"There is no pleasing you! What if you do not find your ideal?"

"Then I will live and die an old maid."

"That may be a harsher fate than you think it is. Well, anyway, you will have time enough to think it over. But remember, ennui will come some day. The crowd will have gone, and you know the fable."

"In that case, I will revenge myself on fate by deserving the happiness that it denies me."

"Humph! There you go into the clouds again. It may be pleasant to rise to such heights, but I fear it is hard to remain there."

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Remember, too, that I should like some grandchildren before I am too old."

But Manon was obdurate, and her father, vainly fuming, had to copy out letter after letter of polite refusal, while his daughter unconcernedly retired to her room and composed long dissertations on matrimony for Sophie's sympathetic ear. Marriage, she decided, "is ordinarily the most bizarre thing in the world." While contracting it, one has next to no opportunity for reflection. A young girl binds herself by the "most sacred ties," and swears to a "tender, sincere, imperishable love"—for whom? A man whom generally she knows only superficially. Often she finds out too late that he is unworthy of the feeling which "duty obliges her to have for him." Manon did not find these reflections comforting. Besides, she had often noticed that all men have a kind of ferocity, and although social training masks it during courtship, the inevitable intimacies of married life must certainly reveal it. Hence wives must have some very painful moments. Moreover, the care of a household, the bearing and rearing of children, do not these things involve countless anxieties and trials? Like many of her twentieth-century successors, Manon looked ahead to a path which seemed bestrewn with many thorns and very few roses. Never, she decided, could she marry for pleasure, but reason, religion, or esteem for her prospective husband might beguile her into marrying.

If the daughter of the bourgeois enjoyed greater liberty in the selection of her husband than her high-born sister of the aristocracy, she had greater need for it. Marriage, to the young bourgeoisie, meant a life of much hard work, few rights, fewer pleasures, many duties, and manifold responsibilities. Much was expected of her. Generally she was not only her husband's wife and housekeeper and the mother of his children, but his unsal-

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aried business partner, guide, and counsellor as well. If their emotions were not welded together at the altar, their interests, their money, their property, their possessions were. The aristocrat might, and often did, resign his household and his children to the undisputed command of his wife, and if he did not exactly swing wide the door to unrestricted social pleasures, he at least never hid the key so that she could not find it. But the husband of the shopkeeper's daughter was head of his family with a vengeance. He was more than the lord of his wife's happiness. He was monarch of her purse and her possessions, and he held in the hollow of his hand, not only her life, but the lives of her children. He was the supreme arbiter of her worldly destiny, and in choosing him the wise maiden exercised every atom of care and caution that she possessed.

Manon Phlipon thoroughly understood the rôle she would have to play as a married woman. For many years she had watched her mother act it supremely well, and she had realized what a difficult part it was. Madame Phlipon was the epitome of wifely devotion, and her daughter saw all too clearly that in her case, virtue was its own reward. The vain, worldly Gatien was by no means a base creature at heart, but certain weaknesses marred what might have been a charming character. The passing years revealed more and more plainly how ill a little success sat upon his shoulders. His absences from home and workshop became more frequent, his work became more slipshod, his training of his apprentices more lax, as he spent a larger and larger share of his time in the cafés drinking, and playing cards. Naturally, trade fell off, and clientele diminished. This situation terrified his family, but it only increased Gatien's arrogance and vanity, his irritability and desire for pleasure. His wife's timid rebukes were crushed with angry retorts, or brushed aside with derisive mirth,

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and she, too gentle a woman to nag, subsided into suffering silence. The dignity with which she met a heart-breaking experience did not blind her daughter's eyes to the fact that a sensitive, idealistic, high-minded woman can never find happiness with a man who is her moral inferior. Determined that her own matrimonial venture should not be threatened by the same menace, Manon held firm to the ideal for a husband which, partly as a result of her reading, partly as a result of observing her own parents, she had long ago formed.

"From fourteen years to sixteen I dreamed of a man of culture. From sixteen to eighteen the beau gallant was my ideal. Since eighteen I have wished for a true philosopher," she wrote to Sophie, adding, with a little feminine grimace: "If this continues, by the time I am thirty nothing short of a humanized angel will satisfy me, and I shall never find anyone!"

Indeed, the Quai de l'Horloge and the Pont-Neuf scarcely seemed the likely habitat of "true philosophers." Nor did the prospects of meeting her ideal in the la Motte salon or even at the château of Vincennes seem much brighter. And certainly she never thought of searching for him at Madame l'Épine's *musicales*—the rendezvous of frivolous women and hypocritical men! Yet at one of those very *musicales*, in the autumn of 1773, the irony of fate brought Manon face to face with what she fancied was her ideal, in the small, homely person of one Mammès Claude Pahin de la Blancherie, a penniless young dilettante.

"He seems to be just and honourable, to love letters and sciences, and is apparently a man of spirit and knowledge. I confess that if he had a settled career, was older, had more judgment and stability, he would not displease me," she admitted to Sophie. The young man himself apparently was quite as favourably im-

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pressed with Mademoiselle Phlipon as she with him. He hastened to call at the family apartment. Ostensibly his purpose was to order some engraving work done. Actually, as the frequency of his visits evidenced, it was to enjoy the charming society of the daughter of the house.

Manon's interest grew rapidly. By spring, she confided to Sophie that she viewed his poverty with the keenest regret. "Every day I discover new similarities in our way of thinking. His soul seems to be the echo of my own. . . . I do not doubt that I love him." Just at this time, the good sisters of the Congregation, who had never forgotten their prize pupil of long ago, were trying to engineer a match between her and the brother of one of the present boarders, a young man of twenty-eight who possessed a fortune of forty thousand livres. Although he was "a sweet boy, of excellent character, and entirely capable of making a woman happy," Manon would have none of him. In love with la Blancherie, she could not bear to think of marrying another. No coquette, her heart desired only the adorer that she herself worshipped. Alas, she dared not hope! Gatien might squander his daughter's *dot*, and was, in fact, beginning to do so, but that was only another and better reason for him to frown upon a penniless son-in-law.

Before la Blancherie took advantage of any opportunities he may have had to invite Père Phlipon's icy refusal, family matters called him away to Orléans, and it was a year and a half before Manon saw him again. At first, absence exercised the proverbial magic of making the heart grow fonder. Only to Sophie could she pour out her tempestuous feelings, and pour them she did. Prose proving too colourless, she launched into abominable poetry.

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O youthful sage, O author shyly blushing,  
O friend of man, O lover loyal and true,  
O model of all virtues so entrancing,  
Can I refuse my loving heart to you?

Doubtless this did Manon good, and probably it would have pleased la Blancherie, but it seems very hard on poor Sophie.

Passion can exhaust itself in scaling such heights, particularly if it is left there without much nourishment. Her hero's prolonged absence and a new and terrifying kind of domestic anxiety combined to turn Manon's thoughts, for a time, into other channels. Madame Phlipon, possessed of little of her husband's robust vitality and worn out with the anxieties to which he subjected her, gradually began to fail. She suffered, although not badly and not even so that Manon always noticed it, all during the spring of 1775. The doctors recommended rest and a change of scene, and early in June she and her daughter took a short trip to Meudon. Both of them thoroughly enjoyed the little vacation, and when they returned to Paris, Madame Phlipon, though slightly tired from the journey, seemed greatly improved. The following day Manon went to spend the afternoon with Sainte-Agathe at the convent. Her mother, apparently well and in good spirits, bade her good-bye at three o'clock. When she returned at five, Madame Phlipon was in her death-agony. A sudden stroke of paralysis, complicated by an abscess in her head of which the doctors had not dreamed, killed her before midnight on the 7th of June, 1775.

The shock hurled Manon into a frenzy of fainting fits and fever. Only the devoted nursing of her Great-aunt Besnard, and the loving letters from Sophie, which arrived almost every day, restored her health and sanity, and it was weeks before she was

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herself again. It was not until the following October that Eros showed even faint signs of resuming his sway. Then only the casual remark in a letter to Sophie that she took the "man from Orléans" for dead, since she had not heard from him in such a long time, indicated that she had ever thrilled to the name of Pahin de la Blancherie.

The remark was prophetic. Less than a week later, the gentleman himself, very much alive, walked into her salon. Their reunion was touching. She told him of her recent bereavement, and his tears mingled with hers as he answered that he, too, had lost a mother—not through death, but in a way that can be equally agonizing, through a difference of opinion and lack of sympathy. Manon revelled in the bitter sweetness of retracing her sorrows in memory for a friend who understood and shared her grief. The air was heavy with "*sensibilité*" when Monsieur Phlipon suddenly walked into the room, accompanied by a friend. La Blancherie's composure equalled his courage. Nowise disconcerted by the stern parent's unexpected appearance, he promptly fell upon his neck and embraced him.

The young man had not been idle during his long sojourn in Orléans. A boyhood wild-goose chase to America, several years of study for the bar, adventurous wandering about France, and superficial meditation on the works of Rousseau—these varied occupations had provided him with the material for a book. An obliging publisher was presenting *Extracts from the Diary of My Travels, or the History of a Young Man for the Education of Fathers and Mothers* to a public that the author hoped would be eager. It was scarcely suitable reading for a *jeune fille*, but the irrepressible la Blancherie left the proof-sheets with Manon. The work held her spellbound until, the last sheet finished, she seized her pen to fire Sophie with her own enthusiasm. "His



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book . . . is my own soul over again. He is not a Rousseau, but he is never tiresome. . . . I dare not judge this young man, because we are too much alike, but I can say of him what I said to Greuze about his picture—that if I did not love virtue, he would give me a taste for it.” Unfortunately for la Blancherie, the fathers and mothers of France were not so easily led to virtue. They refused to be educated by a young man who combined moral platitudes filched from Rousseau with unblushingly frank recitals of his own lawless adventures, and the book, when it appeared, was a complete failure.

Meanwhile Manon was learning that true love never runs smooth. La Blancherie continued to call frequently at the Phlipon apartment, on the pretext of lending her books. His mental attainments, his moral principles, his wide cultivation, unaccompanied as they were by any visible means of support, did not impress Monsieur Phlipon. No young girl ever had a more vigilant chaperon than that graceless scamp turned out to be when his daughter was left motherless. Moments alone were rare indeed for the lovers. Eventually, however, Gatien became bored with his self-imposed task of sitting in the salon while Manon and la Blancherie discussed love and virtue. Thinking to bring the affair to a speedy conclusion, he called upon the young man one day, the last volume which Manon had borrowed under his arm, and stiffly announced that his daughter already had more books than she could read. The ruse was far too simple for the wily man from Orléans. Blandly taking the paternal call as a delicate compliment, he promptly returned it. Gatien, finding the ardent suitor so impervious to snubs, hurled the thunderbolts of his wrath upon Manon, who was in an agony of terror lest her lover be ordered from the house.

At this juncture Mignonne, the *bonne*, who viewed her mis-

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tress's amorous complications with an interested and sympathetic eye, offered a happy suggestion. Would it not be wise to warn the young man to make his visits less frequent? Indeed it would, thought Manon, but could she give him such a warning except at the cost of her own dignity? Mignonne, with the true serving-woman's love of intrigue, replied that what might lower her mistress in la Blancherie's eyes certainly could not lower her, and she gladly undertook the embarrassing commission. Manon gave a grateful assent.

Woe to the maiden who entrusts her heart's most delicate missions to the inept bungling of an intermediary! Mignonne, with the best intentions in the world, gave la Blancherie the impression that it was her mistress who desired him to come less often, not herself who advised him to adopt that policy. The difference was great. Manon, knowing nothing of her lover's feelings, but, womanlike, not hesitating to invest him with all of her own, tormented herself beyond all reason with the thought of what he must think of her now—to have given him such a message. And through the mouth of a servant, too! The relish with which the romantic maid described how the young man, "pale as death," promised to obey Mademoiselle's command was as salt upon a bleeding wound. Her only balm was to fill sheet after sheet of paper, and dispatch them in bulky packets to Amiens.

"My dear, you have no idea what I have suffered since that fatal moment. What will he think of me? . . . But surely he will understand my reason! . . . He must know that in warning him to call rarely, my love was only trying to save his right to call at all. . . . We have never said that we loved each other, but a thousand times, when my father was with us, we have read that tender message in each other's eyes. . . . Perhaps this blow is in-

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juring his health. Since he came back to Paris he had been improving. . . .”

The temptation to write to la Blancherie himself was almost beyond resistance, but “a thousand times I took up my pen—a thousand times I laid it down.” It was not, she explained, that she had any fear of committing an imprudent act, for she had supreme confidence in her lover. Rather, her hesitation came from her regard for the image of her that she knew he carried in his heart. “I feared to rob it of its austere beauty,” she wrote modestly.

Three weeks later, her composure nearly restored, she wrote: “I am reaping the fruits of that cruel order of separation, but I love him none the less. . . . I am sure that he loves me, and during this separation I know that he is working hard to deserve my esteem. If he finds a virtuous act to do, I know that he performs it with more ardour, in thinking that it is the sweetest and the only homage he can render me.” The momentary allaying of love’s sweet fever enabled her to read the Abbé Raynal’s *Histoire philosophique*. So great was her enjoyment of it that she finished it with regret, and she told Sophie that the book “is one likely to hasten the mental revolution which is operating, and it honours the philosophical century which has produced it.” Three more weeks and she became almost complacent at the happiness which, notwithstanding separation from la Blancherie, was hers. “Indeed, even in my own eyes, I am an extraordinary creature. I join together love and peace, incredulity and religion, and in all these contradictions I find happiness.”

This contentment is the more surprising because she had recently missed one of her lover’s now infrequent calls. She had been out when he came, and when she returned home, she found that he had left an engraving which was to appear in the title-page of his book. Women are perverse creatures. One might sup-

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pose that the sight of the engraving, still warm with the impress of love's hand, would inspire in her heart a tender fusion of pleasure and regret. Not at all. "I make nothing of it," she wrote to Sophie, "for if the book is printed, why have I not a copy of it, and if it is not printed, what do I care about an engraving which is to go with it?" So quick is loving woman's fancy to imagine some neglect, even where neglect does not exist. To do Manon justice, it must be admitted that la Blancherie did follow Mignonne's advice rather literally. Had she been less in love, her complaints would have been far more frequent and far more bitter. As it was, he himself could scarcely guess how great was the debt which he owed to his absence. With the actual man so rarely before her eyes, Manon's fancy slipped the leash of common sense and conjured up a gorgeous figure of romance whose charms shabby reality could never hope to match.

Two weeks after he had left that infuriating engraving, he ventured to appear again. It was a winter day, early in January, when Manon saw him for the first time since Mignonne blunderingly spoke the fatal words of separation. The moment was ill chosen. Not only was Monsieur Phlipon for once hugging his own fireside, but Manon's cousin, Monsieur Trude, was making a call. No relative bored and annoyed her more than this poor cousin, who was devoted to her in a faithful, jealous, tenacious fashion. A manufacturer of mirrors, he had nothing to offer intellectually to his philosophically minded relative, and the tediousness of his calls matched perfectly their monotonous regularity. The lovers, therefore, had no chance to talk together, but Manon, while keeping up a running fire of light chatter for the benefit of her father and the adoring Trude, noticed, with a sinking heart, that her hero looked sad, ill, and worn. How could she escape the conviction that she was the cause of his tragically altered appear-

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ance? When he took an agonized departure, she fled to her room, and, maidenly reserve swept away by the rising flood of her passion, she yielded at last to a temptation hitherto sternly resisted. She wrote him a letter. Then the fear of imprudence spoke to her in a still, small voice. With her heart in such a turmoil would it not be better to consult the calm, wise Sophie? She was sympathetic and disinterested, and she knew both Manon's state of mind and that of her lover. On the latter point Manon erred, as women in love are prone to err. She herself did not know la Blancherie's state of mind. Their prolonged separation, and the tempestuous beat of high romance's rhythm which her own sentimentality had infused into each one of their rare meetings, told her, not what he actually felt, but what she thought he felt. Fascinated by him, she desired him to be fascinated by her in the same way, and her wish readily fathered her thought. She forgot that he had never uttered the sweet words "I love you." Like all women in love, she was ready to speak them for him. Sophie knew by heart what Manon had persuaded herself that la Blancherie was feeling, but that was all.

So Manon enclosed her letter to the young man in another one to Amiens. Would Sophie please read it at once? If she judged it advisable, would she please post it? The burden of momentous decision slipped from her own shoulders, Manon breathed more easily. She was able, at least during intervals, to revive her ordinary interest in reading and study. The delirium of love pursues a jagged, uneven course. When the object of her affections had been away from her for some time, Manon even experienced moments of lucidity in which she could judge him with comparative detachment. "Once I am buried in philosophy, sciences, study, farewell to love . . . but a little too much yielding to myself, a certain visit—ah! my heart goes pit-a-pat, my imagination is in

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torments," she informed Sophie. "When I have ascended into philosophy, I sometimes find D. L. B. a bit small, but reverse the lens, and I go mad!"

Sophie read the letter to la Blancherie and, finding it a model of proper sentiment and delicate phrasing, posted it. Manon received the news with unashamed delight. "I have given to an honourable, sensitive, and afflicted soul that consolation which it was in my power to give without wounding either my virtue or my delicacy," she rejoiced. "I am bound, Sophie, and bound for ever," she continued, her love rashly ready to take all for granted. "D. L. B. has loved me for a long time. He now knows that I return his love, and if I cannot belong to him, I should never belong to anyone." The honest memory of her last letter intruded on these raptures and constrained her to add: "You will smile, reading this and yet recalling my last letter, especially my 'farewell to love when I am immersed in study!' But my studies are only an opiate to quiet the pains of my love. And I must confess that I have been unable to study much Latin recently, for my imagination steps beyond bounds when I try to conjugate the verb '*amo*'!"

In March the commemoration mass for Madame Phlipon was celebrated. Manon saw to it that her lover received an invitation. It is not recorded how her manœuvres in sending it escaped the eagle eyes of Monsieur Phlipon. The sight of the pale young man from Orléans kneeling in the cathedral to offer a prayer for her mother's sainted soul was an affecting one. "I blushed for the adulterous tears which flowed at the same time for my mother and my lover," she admitted to Sophie.

A few weeks later she was still sure that her attachment was neither an error nor a passing fancy. La Blancherie, while not a genius, seemed to her a "pure, simple, grand, noble soul." In

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him she found exactly what she needed, a worthy object upon which to lavish a wealth of Rousseauesque sentimentality. *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, read with transports and then read and re-read again, showed her the joys of mutual love and sacrifice. Julie's soul seemed but the faithful copy of her own, and the infrequency with which fate permitted her to gaze upon the plain, rather insignificant features of la Blancherie made it easy to transform an intelligent but shallow young man into a Saint-Preux. "I do not know whether heaven will reunite us some day, but this I do know," she vowed, "I will keep my feeling for him until my last breath, and I will never blush for it."

For two months longer she savoured the joys of a love-affair with a hero conceived in her mind and bred from her imagination. Then the bubble was pricked by one of those slight oddities which, suddenly observed in a lover, will loom up larger than his most splendid virtues and will extinguish a passion which the most insuperable obstacles have only made glow the more fiercely. Accompanied by Mademoiselle d'Hangard, Manon was taking a leisurely stroll in the Luxembourg Gardens one sunny day in June when she met la Blancherie. He made no sign of recognition, but that wound to her affections she could have forgiven, since he had a friend with him, had she not noticed that he was wearing a feather in his hat. "Ah! you cannot believe how that accursed feather torments me!" she moaned later to Sophie. For was it not to his philosophy, his simplicity, his idealistic way of thinking, that she had succumbed? And would such a man stoop to the frivolity of a feather in his hat? Nor did that complete her torture. It remained for Mademoiselle d'Hangard to give the final wrench that was to open her eyes to the unsuspected white patches of her *cygne noir*. Seeing her friend's interest in the young man, she made some scathing remark about

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his well-known habit of courting rich young girls. He had even been nicknamed the lover of the eleven thousand virgins! Mademoiselle d'Hangard's penchant for gossip, of which Manon was perfectly aware, did not prevent this information from making an impression on her as strong as it was painful. "I begin to believe that possibly I have thought him more estimable than he actually is," she confessed sadly. This desolating reflection effectually diminished her enthusiasm. "My reason profits by the pains of my heart, and the cult of Minerva is no longer interrupted by that of amorous hope."

A healthy mind is a wonderful nurse for a wounded heart, and abundant self-esteem can perform miracles of cure. Manon's mind was tough, and her self-esteem boundless. Her lacerations bled freely for a time. "When one has loved as I have, it is horrible to be no longer able to regard one's lover as the first of his kind." Yet even while she watched the blood flow, she reached for something to staunch it, and she found it in "the purity of my sentiments and the integrity of my conduct."

She discussed *la Blancherie* with various people, particularly with Madame l'Épine, and everything they told her corroborated Mademoiselle d'Hangard's information. Obviously he had won for himself a poor and shabby reputation. Manon emerged from her illusion with clarity enough to wish its object well, but with love vanished as completely as the sun on a stormy day. "I have gone back to the opinion I formerly held—that the meeting of two complementary souls, of two lovers united by virtue and pleasure, is the Elysium of the poets, the chimerical fancy of young, sensitive, and honourable hearts, the grand prize in the lottery of human happiness, which is bestowed scarcely once in a century."

Her disillusionment, once experienced, was complete. Six



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months after la Blancherie had been knocked from his paragon's pedestal by a feather and the careless words of a gossiping woman, he suddenly requested an interview with Mademoiselle Phlipon. His request was granted, for dead love does not mean dead curiosity. Mademoiselle's attitude was glacial. His protestations of affectionate regard, his explanations of a long silence—he had never even acknowledged her letter—his account of his illness, his disagreements with his mother, and the disappointments of all kinds which he had undergone were received with a judicial composure which was extremely disconcerting. The verdict, delivered in freezing tones, was that all this was really very interesting, but quite beside the point. La Blancherie returned to her letter. Was he not justified in regarding that as a mark of her esteem? Manon replied haughtily that while one might weep over one's mistakes, it was natural and pardonable to deceive oneself. He begged her to explain herself further, but she merely remarked that it had been profitable for her to reflect on the false judgments into which she had been led by appearances. La Blancherie continued to plead, but she, who less than a year ago would have swooned gratefully into his arms, was now immovable and chilly as marble. He begged for permission to correspond with her. He even suggested that she contribute to a literary journal which he hoped to establish. To every proposal she presented an adamant refusal. The conversation, which la Blancherie was courageous enough to prolong for nearly four hours, came to an end with the arrival, opportune for once, of Cousin Trude. It amused Manon to admit him through one door of her salon while the dethroned king of her affections entered into banishment through the other.

While her strong mind and her buoyant egotism healed the bruises to her heart and pride, her sense of philosophy helped her

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to understand the valuable lessons to be drawn from the affair. She decided that we need these experiences in order to show us how preference can blind us. "Now I believe him estimable," she remarked to Sophie, "but I used to believe him superior to all others. The difference is great."

La Blancherie pursued his adventurous career. Possessed of a fertile mind and an audacious, sensation-seeking temperament, which today would make him a valued reporter on any tabloid, he drifted from one enterprise to another, some of them fairly successful and all of them interesting. About 1777, styling himself "Agent General of Correspondences for the Sciences and the Arts," he established a sort of centre of information, where he held meetings, *musicales*, and exhibits devoted to the work of scholars, inventors, musicians, and artists of all ranks and all nationalities. In connexion with this establishment he edited a weekly journal. The idea was original enough to be widely copied and to subject its sponsor to the cruellest attacks. La Blancherie was forced to move three times, and constantly to struggle against his creditors, his landlords, his subscribers, against the academicians who wanted to close his salon, against the journalists who satirized him (Grimm was particularly malicious in his sneers), and against artists who promised their support and then refused to exhibit their works for fear of having them seized. He met every obstacle and faced every rebuff with admirable audacity, courage, and good humour. He travelled through France, England, Belgium, and Switzerland to recruit new subscribers, whose subscriptions he awaited as eagerly as "the Hebrews waited for manna from heaven." More than once his journal was suppressed, and each time, by sheer force of tenacity, he caused it to reappear. In spite of his misfortunes, his salon did not lack interest. Sébastien Érard, famous manu-

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facturer of musical instruments, displayed his first pianoforte there. Among the well-known painters who exhibited many times at la Blancherie's were Danloux, Fragonard, Greuze, La Tour and Madame Vigée-Lebrun. This patronage was apparently more distinguished than profitable, and at last the young man, his resources exhausted, had to close his doors and leave, the ironical jeers of the journalists ringing in his ears. He went to London, but he could not evade his unlucky star, and the salon which he established there had only a brief existence. In 1791, while he was residing at 49, Rathbone Place, the house in which Newton had lived, his flood of misfortunes unhinged his reason. He became obsessed with the delusion that he incarnated the soul of the great scientist, and henceforth he called himself Newton de la Blancherie. He even proposed that England should date its calendar, not from the era of Christ, but from that of Newton. The English government was heedless of the suggestion, but it did give him a small pension, on which he dragged out a wretched existence until his death, in 1811.

Thus ended the maiden voyage of Manon's heart, in the prosaic discovery that the soul of youth is callow and the mind of salad days can yield but unripe, bitter fruit. It is not surprising that her next explorations were on the deep, calm lakes of maturity, where, if sailing is less exciting than along the turbulent rivers of youthful passion, it is also often less dangerous. Not that her experience with the pauper whom she had impulsively endowed with a king's crown guarded her against other mistakes and errors of judgment and consequent suffering. But at least she never again made false steps quite so mortifyingly unjustified as those she made when the Midas touch of first desire transformed a youth of very common clay into an idol of shining gold.

## CHAPTER VII

### *CALCULATING ON MARRIAGE*

THE crash of her fool's paradise thrust Manon back to a reality more unendurable with each month that passed. Happiness had fled from the little home when gentle, gallant Madame Phlipon closed her eyes for ever. The sorrow which should have brought father and daughter closer together but drove them farther apart. With a chill at her heart, the girl listened to Gatien's unfeeling platitudes at his wife's death-bed. The loss, irreparable to her, should be faced, he felt, with reason and common sense. After all, does not Providence dispose for the best, even in sorrow? Madame Phlipon had achieved her work in life, Manon's education. If one parent had to die, was it not a blessing that Heaven had left her the one who could be most useful to her fortune? Manon heard his words in dumb horror. "I realized, for the first time, perhaps, the extent of the gulf between my father and myself."

This complete lack of sympathy between the two made the prospect of living alone together anything but a pleasant one. Manon faced it bravely and did her best to make of home so inviting a place that Gatien would never want to leave it. He, too, tried hard. But the games of piquet, the conversation about books, music, and philosophy, which were all his sad and serious young daughter had to offer as recreation, did not attract him. He was not a vicious man at heart—only a weak one, with something of youth's lawless demand for pleasure still clamouring in his blood. The conviviality of the cafés, the excitements of the

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gambling-halls, the lure of complaisant women—all these held for him an irresistible fascination. He made a few very dutiful attempts, and then, leaving Manon to read alone, or to write endless letters to Sophie, he rushed to more congenial company.

Gatien's desire for pleasure and excitement was not incomprehensible to his daughter. She realized that her father was still too young to be happy without a wife, or at least without women in his life. "I know that he loves me, and that is much," she confided to Sophie, "but is it sufficient to calm an imperious need in a being who is not superior?" His frivolity she could have endured. But the neglect of his work, the reckless spending of his moderate means—these things were a real cross. Moreover, she was haunted by a suspicion that her mother's tiny property, which should have been made over to her, was not secure from the gay spendthrift. Gatien put off the legal formality of an accounting, and when she grew bold enough to question him, his answers were evasive and irritated. Her relatives suspected what was going on without letting themselves think very much about it. For it was monstrous to suppose that a father would cheat his daughter! In this comfortable assurance they were encouraged by Manon's own stubborn pride, which could not bring itself to confess her fears and suspicions even to other members of the family. The only person with whom she could discuss such shame and sorrow was her dear Sophie.

This domestic gloom made la Blancherie's defection all the more serious a blow. The disappointment might well have turned Manon into a cynical enemy of the opposite sex. Her own strong individuality and egotism, as well as the fact that her own passion was less, actually, than she had thought, preserved her from such a fate. As it was, her eyes were opened to the limita-

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tions of callow youth, and she turned to an opposite type of man. The society of the middle-aged, experienced, cultivated man of the world proved a soothing balm for the wounds she had received, and gave her a taste of pleasure undreamed of in her affair with the half-baked la Blancherie.

One such friend was Monsieur de Boismorel. He and Manon had not met since the days with Bonnemaman Phlipon on the Island of Saint-Louis. A formal call of condolence which he made after Madame Phlipon's death was the occasion of their reunion. She found him as delightful as ever, and he was charmed with the pretty, intelligent girl who had blossomed from the shy quiet seedling he had known before. He soon repeated his call, but Manon was not at home, and entertainment of the guest devolved upon Monsieur Phlipon. He rose to the occasion in a manner that was as annoying to the girl as it was unexpected. Whether because he was carried away by Monsieur de Boismorel's praises of his daughter, or because he knew it would irritate her, he flung open the door and displayed her little study to the friendly but curious gaze of the visitor. Lying open on her table was the note-book in which, under the title of "*Œuvres de loisir et réflexions diverses,*" she recorded her thoughts, emotions, and experiences. A young lady who amused herself with her pen was a novelty to Monsieur de Boismorel. He expressed a desire to glance over her productions, and Gatien obligingly allowed him to take the note-book home. Manon raged and stormed when she discovered this "offence against liberty and propriety," but her anger melted at the receipt of a warm and flattering letter from Monsieur de Boismorel, expressing his pleasure in her manuscripts and offering to lend her books from his large and well-selected library.

Thus began a close friendship. By the end of the summer

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Manon was celebrating her "sage," as she called him, in very bad verses. Fortunately, maidenly reserve kept her from sending them to him, but poor Sophie, as usual, was flooded. The sensation of being understood and appreciated by a man for whom she had respect and admiration was a new one, and intoxicating. Association with him placed her in what she described as "the peaceful situation of friendship and confidence." It was exactly that, and nothing more. Monsieur de Boismorel, married, a father, and many years Manon's senior, observed the utmost discretion in his relations with her. She complained often to Sophie of how seldom she saw her "dear sage," and of how infrequent were his letters. But he never failed to supply her with books. Now and then, too, he would arrange some little literary treat for her pleasure. It was through his kindness that she was enabled to attend the open session of the French Academy held on August 25, 1775, and to hear La Harpe read his *L'Éloge de Catinat*. With him, too, she worshipfully visited Rousseau's Hermitage at Montmorency.

Naturally, this friendship called for an exchange of visits between Manon and the Boismorel ladies, mother and wife. Remembering the uncomfortable three-quarters of an hour she had once spent with Bonnemaman in old Madame de Boismorel's boudoir, she put off the necessary courtesy as long as possible. Only when further delay would have injured her good friend's feelings did she finally perform it. She found the mother less unpleasantly patronizing to a self-possessed young woman who had won the admiration of her son than she had been to a solemn and awkward child, while the wife, if too devout to be very interesting, was amiable and charming. The least attractive member of the family, Manon decided, was Monsieur de Boismorel's son Roberge, a stupid, lazy, and pleasure-loving boy of seven-

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teen. Yet it was on his behalf that, at his father's request, she undertook a rather extraordinary commission.

Loving admonitions from an anxious parent had not corrected Roberge's indolent habits nor reformed his frivolous tastes. With touching faith Monsieur de Boismorel thought that where he had failed, Manon and a dash of mystery might succeed. He suggested that she write an anonymous letter, gently but firmly scolding the young ne'er-do-well, and painting for him an enticing picture of the joys of an earnest life of serious purpose. She complied with his request and composed a didactic yet delicate little sermon in praise of virtue, unselfishness, work, and effort. Dispatched to Amiens, it was forwarded to Roberge by the trusted hand of Sophie. The boy's vanity was touched, his curiosity was aroused, and for a little while the innocent ruse seemed to have the effect hoped for by the distracted parent. Yet presently he slipped back into the old careless ways, and when, in September 1776, a sudden illness carried Monsieur de Boismorel to an untimely death and ended a friendship which had been a source of untold pleasure to Manon, what shocked her most was that the idolized but utterly worthless Roberge shed not a single tear. She herself was desolated. She had lost one of her best friends, and for days she could scarcely think of the "sage" without weeping.

Fortunately, there was someone else in her life ready, if not to fill the "sage's" place, at least to console her for its appalling emptiness. Early in 1776 a certain Monsieur de Sainte-Lette had called upon Monsieur Phlipon, armed with a letter of introduction from the latter's good friend Captain Démontchery of Pondicherry. Sainte-Lette had an official position in that distant post and had returned to Paris to spend a ten months' furlough. His life had not been without adventure. A youth



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squandered in riotous living had necessitated a middle age of hard work. As superintendent of the French trade with the Indians, he had passed thirteen strenuous and colourful years in Louisiana. From there he had gone to exchange the hardships of life in the New World for those of a life in the vastly older world of India. Dissipation and hard work had yet left him time, during his sixty years, for the cultivation of a naturally philosophical mind, and for acquainting himself, and not superficially, with the best of the world's literature and thought. Though disillusioned, he was not embittered, and the variety of his experiences and the extent of his knowledge of men and affairs contributed a mellowness to his character that Manon found most attractive. His temperament was more vigorous and his judgment more independent than that of the dear departed "sage," and while she derived no more pleasure from his companionship, she did, perhaps, discover therein a shade more piquancy. Madame Roland, recalling Monsieur de Sainte-Lette in her memoirs, described him as a man whom "I received with pleasure because he soon interested me. His society was very agreeable to me. . . . He had knowledge drawn from experience rather than from books. Less of a savant than of a philosopher, he reasoned according to the human heart, and he had kept from his youth a taste for light poetry, in which he had written many charming things." More warmly enthusiastic is the picture of her new-found friend which Manon immediately sent off to Amiens. "I admire the extent of his knowledge, the strength of his character, and all those worth-while qualities which an educated man who has travelled all over the world and has served four or five sovereigns can acquire. . . . I find in him an ardent admirer of Rousseau." Need anything more be added?

Monsieur Phlipon, infuriatingly omnipresent whenever young

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men called upon his daughter, loosened the bonds of his watchfulness for the quiet philosopher of sixty. Monsieur de Sainte-Lette was given the freedom of the household, and he devoted more and more of his vacation time to Manon. One day when he was invited to dine with the Philipons, he took the liberty of bringing with him his intimate friend Monsieur de Sévelinges, a collector of tobacco revenues at Soissons. The latter had recently experienced a melancholy bereavement in the death of his wife, and his good friend Sainte-Lette decided that no one could administer a little needed cheer and consolation more tactfully than charming Mademoiselle Philipon. The glimpse of the tender friendship between these two elderly men (Monsieur de Sévelinges was fifty-five) touched that young lady deeply. She could not help thinking of herself and Sophie! One of the subjects discussed at dinner was religion. Monsieur de Sévelinges was a believer, but Monsieur de Sainte-Lette frankly confessed his atheism. For this Manon, sceptic herself, esteemed him no less.

As the weeks sped by, her intimacy with the estimable atheist grew apace. He began to direct her studies and to suggest books for her to read. He advised her to study both Latin and Greek, and, convinced that she possessed real talent, he encouraged her taste for writing. To his suggestions of a career as author, Manon merely smiled and answered: "If I were a man, I would."

Monsieur de Sainte-Lette received the lion's share of her leisure hours, but he was by no means the only friend of intellect and cultivation which the young girl, poor, obscure, and tormented by family unhappiness as she was, managed to draw into her little salon. There was Moré, the Swiss watch-maker, who discussed the theories of republicanism with her, and who pleased and surprised her by presenting her with a set of Rousseau's complete works. He did more. He gave her a chance to view her

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idol in the flesh, for when he wished to transact a bit of business with the great man, he allowed her to undertake the errand for him.

Manon knew that she would not be received at Rousseau's flat, for he was living in complete retirement, guarded by that faithful but unprepossessing watch-dog of a woman Thérèse de Lavasseur. So she wrote him a letter, in which poor Moré's commission was swathed in veils of flowery verbiage, and announced that she would call in person for an answer. She did so, but Thérèse, who answered her ring, kept her hand on the lock of the door while she assured her that although her husband would like to be of service, he had given up everything and was in complete seclusion. Manon, not vouchsafed a glimpse of the man whom she regarded as the greatest in the world, was reduced to repeating her prettily turned compliments to Thérèse, who thanked her and still held on to the lock!

Manon believed Moré to be in love with her, although he does not seem to have made any open avowal of such sentiments, if he had them. She was in the habit of rather hastily attributing such unconfessed feelings to the elderly men with whom she "philosophized." When Monsieur de Sainte-Lette, after a spring and summer of close and delightful companionship, regretfully took his departure for Pondicherry, late in the fall of 1776, she wrote to Sophie: "I regret it singularly. It is lucky for me that that man is not ten years younger. I should love him more than I should wish. *Entre nous*, if I judge rightly, we are not at the same point, and his ardent soul has gone far beyond that."

One of the most interesting of her entire circle of girlhood friends was Monsieur François Pierre Pictet de Warambé, whom she met at the home of a neighbour, Madame Argens. Born at Geneva, of a family that was distinguished, even illustrious in

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the city, the year 1760 found him on friendly terms with Voltaire. It was that great man's favour which procured for him the interesting post of librarian and secretary to Russia's Great Catherine, a position which he held for more than ten years. He was in Paris during 1777 and '78, and it was then that Manon knew him. The fact that he had some claim to literary renown (two of his articles had been published in the *Journal des Dames*) lent stimulation to conversing with him. The Revolution drove Pictet de Warambé, who was of royalist sympathies, from France. Seeking refuge in England, he taught for a time in a girls' school at Reading. Then he threw himself into politics and accompanied Lord Arthur Fitz-Gerald to Switzerland when the latter tried to organize a counter-revolution. He wrote a political pamphlet, which was printed in London in 1793, under the title of *A Letter to a Foreign Nobleman on the Present Situation in France*. The work is remarkable for its prediction of the early outcome in France of a "rule of the sword under the head of a new Cromwell." The situation must have struck him as a mad one, if he had any inkling that the Madame Roland dragged to the guillotine in the fall of that year was the little Mademoiselle Phlipon who used to make such intelligent comments on the articles he wrote.

Manon did not relish the society of her stupid and well-meaning cousin Monsieur Trude, but it was to him that she was indebted for another pleasant acquaintance. He and his wife had a lodger, a young abbé named Bexon. He was of studious tastes and of a spiritual, *exalté* turn of mind, qualities to which Manon readily capitulated. He, too, could credit himself with a sum of literary accomplishment. He had collaborated with Buffon, for whose works he inspired Manon with an enthusiasm that endured

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until a more dictatorial mentor demolished it, and he himself was engaged in writing a history of Lorraine.

Moré, Pictet de Warambé and the Abbé Bexon, much as Manon enjoyed them and fond as she was of them, could not compensate for the lamented loss of Monsieur de Sainte-Lette. Only in his *alter ego* Monsieur de Sévelinges could she find adequate consolation. He did not allow the distance between Soissons and Paris to prevent him from coming often to mourn with her over the absence of their common friend. This led them to a discovery of their happy community of literary taste, and that formed the basis of a friendship that turned out to be as indiscreet as it was warm.

They exchanged manuscripts, criticized each other's style in writing, discussed art and philosophy, and read books together. The intervals between visits were filled with letters until Gatien, spendthrift himself, but holding Manon to strict economy, put his foot down upon the expenditure of several cents a day for postage stamps. She, who had found in Monsieur de Sévelinges's correspondence "complete finesse and delicacy of mind" and who ascribed to him a "sensibility, an elevation of soul, which renders him as estimable as he is distinguished," rebelled at losing what had become the greatest of the few pleasures left to her. So she wheedled accommodating Uncle Bimont into receiving Sévelinges's letters for her at Vincennes and forwarding hers from there. The correspondence continued throughout the following year, until Monsieur de Sévelinges fell timidly in love. The expression of his passion was rather ambiguous, but Manon remembered his love of coining phrases and interpreted it as a proposal of marriage.

She considered it very carefully. Here at last was her philosopher, at hand and at a most welcome moment. Her relations

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with her father were becoming worse every day. Some months before this, by disguising herself and calling upon the woman she had reason to suspect, she had obtained definite proof of his mistress, or at least of one of them. Meanwhile, he continued to postpone the necessary accounting of her mother's estate, and she could only sit by helplessly and watch him throw away their substance. Not one among her relatives knew definitely of her unhappy situation, and since she was convinced that none of them were strong enough to handle her father, she could see no use in telling them. At the beginning of the summer of 1777 she had reason to change this decision. The receipt of an anonymous letter, corroborating everything which she had confirmed or suspected about her father, led her to take counsel with two of her cousins, Mademoiselle Desportes and Monsieur Trude. Acting upon their advice, she had an interview with her father, showed him the letter, told him what she herself had discovered, and asked for an accounting of her mother's property. Their talk was calm and quiet, but Monsieur Phlipon did not take it seriously. Only the active interference of her relatives drove him to arrange for the accounting, and although he finally did so, he was so infuriated with Manon that he would scarcely speak to her. The accounting, made at last, revealed that her tiny property had shrunk to the vanishing point. She could not assume possession of what was left of it for another twenty months, since not until then would she attain her majority. But at least her father could not dispose of it during the interval. Manon weighing her deplorable situation with judicial calm, was tempted to follow the easy way out offered by Monsieur de Sévelinges. His fifty-five years, his two grown sons, the rather hesitating devotion that the caution of old age impelled him to offer her—none of these circumstances seemed in the least terrifying. Yet

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she was fair enough to realize that a second marriage on his part would require a sacrifice from his children. Moreover, she could not rid herself of an uncomfortable feeling that her elderly lover, to whom, of course, she had confided her perplexing family troubles, had an exaggerated idea of her fortune. These reflections led her to decline his proposal.

No sooner had she adjusted herself to the peace of this decision than she received another letter from the gentleman. She nearly died of astonishment when she read it. It seemed that she had misunderstood his proposal. He wanted a companion, a friend, a sister, someone to help him philosophize through his declining years. For the sake of convenience, and out of consideration for his sons, he was suggesting marriage with the idea that it should be purely nominal. Manon was quite unconventional enough in her views of life to consider the proposal, and it plunged her into a fine state of irresolution. Celibacy in marriage! The idea had for her all of the attraction of novelty. She would be immolating herself on the sacred altar of friendship, and she would be solacing and comforting an esteemed man of sensitive mind and heart with whom she had almost all tastes in common. Above all, she would be adopting a graceful and irreproachable solution of the thorny problem presented by her father. "How chimerical this idea would be for three-quarters of my fellow-beings!" she wrote to Sophie. "It seems to me that only Monsieur de Sévelinges and myself could have conceived it, and only to you could I have confided it. Its execution seems delicious to me. I can imagine nothing more flattering, nothing sweeter for delicacy and confidence than this absolute devotion to pure friendship." After long meditation, and pages upon pages to Sophie, she accepted Monsieur de Sévelinges's strange offer. Then, within two weeks, she received letters from the amazing old man

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which denied ever having made her a proposal of any kind, and the whole curious affair came to nothing.

Every detail is given in a tremendously long letter to Sophie, in which she included voluminous extracts from Monsieur de Sévelinges's letters to her as well as from her replies to him. She attributed her acceptance of the offer which he denied having made entirely to her "delicacy and generosity." Yet to Sophie she insisted that her confidence in the old man never had been complete! The truth is that neither Manon nor Sévelinges was sincere in the matter. He did not dare to marry her, nor did he dare the crudity of openly suggesting that she become his mistress. She was harassed and tormented by her domestic worries and was willing to clutch at any straw that seemed to promise a fairly happy and satisfactory conclusion to them. Meanwhile she could regard her correspondence with him as a delightful literary pastime, which offered an opportunity for the play of wit and the invention of happy phrases, while at the same time it threw a cheering ray of sunlight into a life that was becoming drearier and drearier.

The last chapter of this saga of quibbles was not without a touch of farce. The doddering Don Juan, thinking no doubt that a little spice of intrigue would be pleasing to a maiden who had suggested and arranged a clandestine correspondence, called at Gatien's shop one day in disguise. The gay proprietor being out, as usual, his daughter came to wait on the customer and took his order for an engraved seal. At the time she was struck by a trace of familiarity in gesture and voice, but it was not until she was alone that she realized, with mingled astonishment and resentment, the identity of the customer. Her cheeks burned at the disregard for his own dignity displayed by her aged admirer, as well as at the thought that obviously he had supposed such



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behaviour would be welcome to her. She forgot that her own clever arrangement for continuing their correspondence, to say nothing of the cordiality with which she had considered his unconventional views on marriage, might well be highly suggestive to one who could look back to some thirty years of philandering and intrigue!

Manon was learning that neither romance nor congenial companionship was to be had for the asking. She had deceived herself in regard to la Blancherie. She had been deprived of her good friends Boismorel and Sainte-Lette. Now the association with Sévelinges, which had at least given her intellectual pleasure, had turned out to be a mirage, leaving her with nothing but an uncomfortable sense of having made a fool of herself. Painful experience was destroying some of her early idealism, teaching her that there is a vast difference between professing a faith and living by it. Monsieur de Sévelinges, for all the cultivation of his mind and all the apparent delicacy of his character, did not, after all, differ fundamentally from her frivolous father, except that, unlike Gatien, he lacked the courage to take what he wanted. Manon, as she put in long mornings at her housework, longer afternoons sewing and reading, and, longest of all, evenings in which her studying and writing went on to an undercurrent of anxiety about her straying parent, determined that never again would she repeat the mistakes she had made in regard to Sévelinges. She was becoming better prepared to view stern reality realistically. She still knew what she wanted, and she was no less bent on getting it, but her next opportunity would find her more skilful in twisting circumstances to her purpose. The pure *mariage de convenance*, though tempting, could not be a fair exchange for the liberty which, even with unhappiness, she greatly prized. Such reflections helped her to refuse

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the proposal of a certain Monsieur Coquin, although her relatives had smiled upon the arrangement, and the suitor had every point of expediency in his favour. Manon, seeing her hope of a modest fortune swallowed up in the clouds of Gatien's dissipation, became more exacting as to the qualities of the husband she might choose. She decided that only to a man of distinguished merit could she consent to owe everything. Marriage for purely materialistic reasons was out of the question, she told herself, and yet in the next breath she wondered again if it would not be possible to satisfy her heart and her convenience at the same time.

A chance to answer the question came with the not unexpected reappearance in her life of a gentleman whom she had met more than two years before. Their introduction had occurred under auspicious circumstances. The gentleman, whose name was Monsieur Roland de la Platière, and who was an inspector of commerce and manufactures at Amiens, had come to the Phlipon household one day in January 1776 bearing a letter from Sophie. Manon had already heard much of this agreeable and interesting friend of the Cannet family. Sophie had painted him as an "enlightened man of blameless life" and had added that the only faults which one could find with him were his admiration of the past, his underrating of the present, and his fondness for talking about himself.

The afternoon that he called, Manon, comfortably and becomingly attired in *négligé*, with a short white skirt, her dark hair tucked beneath a ruffled cap, was busy with a letter to Sophie. When Mignonne announced that Monsieur de la Platière was in the salon, she hastened at once to greet him, never dreaming of keeping Sophie's friend waiting while she changed to a more formal costume. The man of some forty years, tall, thin, sallow, and already showing some tendency to baldness, who rose

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to meet her did not belie Sophie's description. His manner somehow combined formality with simplicity, and the smile which lighted up his rather cold features whenever he spoke saved him from an air of repelling gravity. His voice was deep, and although his speech showed the cultivation of the well-born man of the world, there was a grating harshness about his diction that Manon could not help noticing.

Her father came in almost immediately, and the conversation, which had naturally begun with Sophie, became general. They skimmed over, lightly and *en passant*, the Abbé Raynal, Rousseau, Voltaire, travel, Switzerland, and the government. Manon, "a little confused without being too timid," found it all vastly interesting, and when Monsieur de la Platière begged for permission to call again, she accorded it gladly. "We shall see if he will profit by it," she remarked to Sophie. "It is a pity," she added, "that he was not here at dinner the other day. I have rarely appeared to greater advantage." A pardonable touch of feminine vanity and regret, for was it not natural to wish to please her dearest friend's friend? There certainly could have been nothing more than that behind it, for Manon's eyes and mind and heart, during that winter of 1776, were full of no one but Pahin de la Blancherie.

Roland was flatteringly quick in availing himself of her permission to repeat his call. His second visit was less successful. Manon had a bad cold and was out of humour. Her irritability was increased by the fact that Gatien remained in the salon every moment, and, as she complained later to Sophie, what could *he* contribute to a conversation with so polished a man as Monsieur Roland? As for herself, in a frenzy of nervousness at her father's crudities, it seemed to her that she must have appeared very stupid. She was deeply chagrined, for although a man who

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"regards Buffon as a charlatan, who finds his style anything but good, and who thinks the Abbé Raynal's *Histoire philosophique* is not at all philosophical and is fit only to lay on ladies' dressing-tables" seemed singular to her (wasn't he, she asked, trying to hold unusual opinions?), she nevertheless thought him well worth knowing. In spite of herself, too, she had to confess that his views influenced her. The Abbé Raynal now seemed a little less admirable than before and she was beginning to detect flaws in Buffon.

The compass had veered in the opposite direction by the middle of the following month. Roland had called frequently, and since this was the time of the Sainte-Lette régime, he could scarcely escape comparison with the estimable atheist. The former, she decided, was entirely too partial to his own views and too sweeping in his conclusions. There was, for instance, his condemnation of the Abbé Raynal's book. That rankled in her mind, especially as she had learned that he had not read all of it! "When I compare him with Monsieur de Sainte-Lette," she announced to Sophie, "I find that after all he is nothing but a savant."

Savant or not, ten more days found her complaining that she had not seen more of him. In the following months of March and April she was to see nothing of him, for he had gone back to Amiens. His return to Paris, early in May, made her realize that she had learned to appreciate the soundness of his judgment, the depth of his knowledge, and the value of his conversation. She wrote and thanked Sophie again for having given her the friendship of such a charming man. June and July found him back at Amiens. July was the month of her supreme disillusionment concerning la Blancherie, but that pain was not too intense to keep her from thinking, now and then, of Roland and

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regretting his absence. He was back in Paris in August, but it was only to bid her another farewell. He was leaving for a long journey to Italy in connexion with his work as inspector of commerce and manufactures.

Roland took his work very seriously. For its sake he had already travelled over most of the Continent and had been to England. The information which he had amassed in these tours was taken down in notes. Some of it was incorporated later into monographs on various technical subjects, and some of it formed the basis of six small volumes describing his travels in Switzerland and Italy which he published in 1780. These manuscripts were very precious to him, and it was no slight compliment when, just before he left for Italy, he turned their care and the responsibility of disposing of them, should he never return, over to Manon. Two days before his departure, she gave a little farewell dinner-party, with him and Sainte-Lette as guests. She experienced a mild flutter when Monsieur Roland asked her father's permission to embrace her, and Sainte-Lette did not mend her confusion when he remarked to the inspector: "You are happy to leave, but hurry back in order to ask as much again."

The Italian trip kept Roland away for eighteen months—a long period during which Manon also lost Sainte-Lette, became more and more panic-stricken over the menacing future that stretched ahead of her, and initiated and carried on her absurd epistolary intrigue with Monsieur de Sévelinges. These preoccupations did not prevent her from devoting a considerable share of her leisure to perusing and studying the manuscripts left to her safe keeping. The inspector had neither edited nor arranged his papers before turning them over to her, and the collection presented a richly revealing portrait of this man who had become

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so interesting to her. Accounts of his travels were followed by outlines of work he planned to undertake in the future, which, in turn, were succeeded by personal reflections, observations on all conceivable subjects, incidents, and anecdotes. A discussion of flax-spinning or leather-tanning might end abruptly, and on the next page the indefatigable writer might turn to a consideration of ancient history, or an artless account of some sentimental interlude in his life, or a résumé of some family matter. The whole jumbled wilderness of notes and observations indicated that the author was a man of vigorous personality, robust character, and independent judgment; and, above all, that he loved work, loved it gluttonously and pursued it passionately.

Indeed, an account of Roland's career is an account of the patient performance of titanic labours. He was the youngest of five surviving brothers of a family of ten. Born in the *manoir* of Thézé he was baptized Jean-Marie on the 19th of February, 1724. The Rolands were a family of ancient lineage and could boast of their holdings in the Beaujolais region from the sixteenth century. Roland's father, Jean-Marie the elder, had married Damoiselle Thérèse Bessye de Montazan, whose family tree was even loftier and more wide-spreading than his own. She could claim a not too distant connexion with the illustrious and aristocratic Choiseuls. Damoiselle Thérèse did not find the presentation of ten children to her husband so strenuous an affair that it left her no time or strength for the indulgence of extravagant and pleasure-loving tastes. She was known as a reckless gambler and a hospitable hostess, and the effort to maintain this reputation cost the family *manoir* and domain of La Platière as well as the large town house at Villefranche. Jean-Marie the elder did not live to see the crash, but after his death his heir Dominique was compelled to sell these estates. The name of La Platière did not go with the

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domain. Dominique and his brothers clung to it and transferred it to the small property of the Clos of Thézé, which as recently as 1921 belonged to Madame Roland's descendants.

Dominique and his three younger brothers followed the usual course of the well-born overtaken by poverty and became churchmen. Young Jean-Marie refused to imitate them, and when it was suggested that he go into business, he announced his intention of studying manufactures. He went to Lyons, at that time a flourishing linen-trading centre, and there he spent two years. At the end of that period he planned a journey to the West Indies, but illness prevented him from undertaking it. The then inspector of manufactures at Rouen, Monsieur Godinot, was related to the Rolands, and when he offered young Jean-Marie a position there, his offer was accepted.

At Rouen he at once began to display the energy, enthusiasms, and capacity which soon attracted the attention of Trudaine, the *ministre du commerce*. He carried on technical studies, he worked in factories in order to gain first-hand knowledge of manufacturing methods, he took courses in chemistry, botany, mathematics, and drawing. One wonders how twenty-four hours made a long enough day for the energetic and ambitious young man to accomplish his manifold tasks. But he did more. At home in factory and workshop, he was no stranger to the drawing-room. Familiar with the latest technical monographs in his chosen work, he was equally familiar with the literature, history, and philosophy of his time. He found moments in which to study Latin and to learn a little Italian, and he developed an intelligent appreciation of the poetry of that language.

Even romance, which according to tradition is despised by the man of affairs, was allowed to elbow its way into his crowded life. His drudging days at Rouen were sweetened by a tender at-

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tachment with a Mademoiselle Malortie, and when she died, in 1773, he rechristened her Cléobuline and lamented her loss in prose and poetry. Henriette Cannel, who at twenty-seven was still the vivacious madcap she had been at eighteen, had sent coquettish glances in the inspector's direction for some time. It was not without anxious curiosity that she made inquiries, from time to time, about the development of his friendship with Manon. The embrace which that young lady had graciously accorded him as a farewell courtesy before he left for Italy did not keep his observant eye from resting upon a young widow at Leghorn, and his experience with her was judged worthy of several pages in the copious notes of his trip.

In 1764 Trudaine, well pleased with the young man's zeal and industry, sent him to Languedoc, where commerce and industry were in a "horrible state of ruin and commotion." Roland, who believed that an inspector's enthusiasm, like his knowledge, should be limited only by the amount of good to be accomplished, very nearly killed himself in Languedoc. He had been an earnest student at Rouen, but here his desire to learn, to observe, to change, to improve, to achieve, became a passion. Never before had he realized that this work which he had elected to do was bound up with every aspect of life. Agriculture, law, government, society, international relations—did they not all become, at some point or other, connected with commerce and manufactures?

His remarkable achievement of work was rewarded by the important post of inspector of Picardy, which he accepted in 1766. In spite of the fact that this province was in the prosperous position of being the third largest manufacturing district in France, it was then in the throes of an industrial war, the significance of which Roland, overcome with horror, at once grasped. The difficulty came from a short-sighted decree of 1762, which allowed



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home manufactures to peasants. The effect was to cut down on the consumption of factory products, and consequently the merchants and industrialists of Amiens were fighting it with every means in their power. The authorities could see no way of meeting this difficult situation except by granting an almost unlimited liberty to industry, with the result that labourers were unmercifully exploited by employers. Roland sought to change all this, and since his suggested reforms invariably were aimed at improving the conditions of the working classes, he won for himself many rich and influential enemies in Picardy. His efforts were not entirely successful, and the retirement of Trudaine in 1777 made further accomplishments impossible. The technical improvements which he initiated, changes in tools, machinery, and raw products, had happier results, for during his inspectorship the number of shops in Amiens increased threefold.

It was in gathering data and material for these technical improvements that the most interesting and the most strenuous parts of Roland's labours lay. The number and length of the trips he took for this purpose are astounding. Every industrial centre in France was visited. A trip to Paris, to inform himself of the latest scientific discovery or most recently advanced commercial theory, was a mere commonplace in his involved life. England, Flanders, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, most of Europe, in short, was visited, some points more than once. Wherever he went, he collected samples, tools, patterns, methods, processes, machines, notes, everything that could possibly offer suggestion and aid for the improvement of home products. He noted dimensions, prices, time, place, road, and transportation expenses, calculated the difference in foreign wages and money, and made comparative tables and charts of all these items. He was unsparring of his health and strength, and when travelling was ut-

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terly impervious to the hardships attending a journey in the eighteenth century. On his Italian tour, which included Malta and Sicily, he crossed the Alps three times and the Apennines three times and made nine voyages by ship. He slept on bare boards thirty nights and was eighty nights, twenty-two of them consecutively, without undressing, only occasionally changing his linen in the day-time. Rushing about, studying, observing, learning, writing, he bore the most incredible fatigue. His passion for seeing and learning supported him through these trials.

Roland's unswerving support of the working classes had made him hated by the wealthy employer class. His own temperament made him other enemies. Reformers are seldom popular, and Roland had all the dictatorial arrogance of one confident of making the world over according to his own ideas. His courage and his frankness were scarcely adequate balance for his exacting temper and utter want of tact. His poor health, the result of constant overwork, manifested itself in morose fits of irritability and peevishness. His associates were more likely to respect his achievements than to love him, and although they admitted the soundness of many of his views, they found him a person with whom it was always difficult and sometimes impossible to work. Yet his championship of the labourers, and his defence of the poorer and smaller producers, won him many friends, and the prosperity which Picardy enjoyed under his inspectorship was rightfully credited to him. His researches and the series of resulting monographs which he found time to publish also brought him honour. His writings were quoted and copied, and he was an honorary member, associate, and correspondent of scientific academies in Paris, Rome, Montpellier, and numerous other towns.

Such was the man whose return from Italy Manon awaited with some impatience. She could not but feel that his reappear-

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ance would aid her in answering that very puzzling question of how she was to satisfy at once her aspirations and her necessities. A subtle instinct warned her, too, that it might take some coaxing on her part. But for that her feminine guile, sharpened, if anything, by the Sévelinges episode, was more than equal. The game would be one requiring all her skill, but it would not be one in which she would be outmatched. She played her first card, and in a masterly fashion, when, some months before his scheduled return, she sent the weary wanderer a tender little note.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *A WOMAN COURTING*

ROLAND had proved anything but a good correspondent during his long absence in Italy. Two bundles of travel notes and one letter were all that Manon received in more than a year. Since she had looked forward to an exchange of letters, this silence was disappointing, and since she had rashly confided to Henriette Cannel her expectation of hearing from the traveller, it was embarrassing. For Henriette, always anxious for news of Roland, and always curious about his correspondence with Paris, made constant inquiries. Manon found it very awkward to have nothing to say. In another way, also, Henriette's insistence was annoying. Roland, worried at the advances he had made to that young lady before ever he laid eyes on Manon Phlipon, had pledged the latter to strictest secrecy regarding their growing friendship. Her thoughtless confidence to Henriette about the letters she hoped to receive strained, if it did not break, the pledge. This weighed heavily on Manon's conscience and, combined with Roland's silence, cast a restraint over her previously free and intimate correspondence with her friends in Amiens.

During the long winter of 1776 life was a dull round of domestic worries and tedious occupations. The household work, about which Manon was always conscientious, took up some of her time, and worry over her father filled some more. Most of her days, however, were passed in her habitual quiet routine of reading and study. Visits from her relations and a few friends occasionally broke the monotony. Now and then a new face would

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be found round the fireside, as one afternoon when Mademoiselle d'Hannaches brought in some relatives of hers who had recently arrived from Santo Domingo. Manon was mildly interested in their report of the American Revolution. They told her that most of the colonists supported the mother country. The Revolutionary troops were poorly disciplined, and the colonists had suffered heavy losses. The advantage apparently lay with England. "I am a little annoyed," commented the future revolutionist!

Studies, relatives, friends, and new acquaintances—these filled the time adequately enough. But Manon, who all her life had felt that she was not made for ordinary things, was growing very weary of this narrow circle. "In truth, I am very tired of being a woman," she burst out one day in a letter to Sophie. "I need another kind of soul, or another sex, or another country. I ought to have been born a Spartan or a Roman woman, or at least a French man. As such, I should choose for my fatherland the republic of letters, or one of those republics where one can be a man and obey nothing but the laws. My pique may seem foolish, but really I feel chained down in a class and in a life that is not my own." It was perfectly true. What poor consolation it was, in the face of the bitter, the ironic reality, to dream of how splendid she could be in the role of a Spartan. She was nothing but an obscure French bourgeoisie, condemned to spend her life in mediocre pursuits among mediocre people. If an interesting friend occasionally came into her life, did not fate invariably snatch him away, once the friendship had blossomed? Boismorel was dead, Sainte-Lette had gone back to India, la Blancherie never had been any good, Sévelinges was puzzlingly equivocal, and Roland, far away in Italy, was distressingly silent.

"I believe that everyone is going into that beautiful Italy, where Monsieur Roland travels, no doubt with profit," sighed

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the restless young shut-in to Sophie in February 1777. Three months later: "You say nothing to me about Monsieur Roland. What trials is he facing? Is he dead? I see everything in blackest colours." And in June: "I dreamed of Monsieur Roland. It annoys me to know nothing about him." Then in July, apparently after having received some news of him from the sisters, which only increased her curiosity: "How happy Monsieur Roland is to be travelling at his ease through glorious Italy! I am delighted to know that he is in good health. . . . Since his return is a question of August or October, I see that we can scarcely expect him before the latter month."

Manon was indeed piqued at receiving no news, but she was also genuinely anxious about the friend who seemed to have deserted her. Why was Roland so mysteriously silent? The notes of his travels, the correspondence between him and his brother Pierre, give two hints. It is in the former that Roland's sentimental interlude with the fascinating widow at Leghorn is revealed. The affair was absorbing and not without piquancy. Roland and his inamorata became very well acquainted indeed, and soon were sufficiently intimate to discuss such delicate questions as whether the seduction of a young girl was more criminal than an affair with a matron. Roland held the unconventional view that the latter was far more reprehensible—a conviction that may or may not have pleased the widow. The prior's letters show him busily engaged in trying to arrange an advantageous marriage for his brother. Neither of these matters came to anything, but for the moment they kept Roland sufficiently occupied so that he had neither time nor energy for writing letters to Manon Phlipon. Naturally she felt neglected, forgotten, and a little bit hurt. Therefore it was with surprise and pleasure that she received a letter from Roland, written at Villefranche

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on September 17th, several weeks after he had returned home, and while he was convalescing from a severe illness which had stricken him almost on the very day of his arrival.

Roland wrote in melancholy vein. He was far from well, and he had recently received news, first of the resignation, then of the death, of his friend and protector Trudaine. This was a blow to his most cherished hopes, for Trudaine had promised to promote him to a general inspectorship. He wrote Manon of his troubles, hinted forebodingly of suicide, and spoke of the consolation he might find in letters from a sympathetic and understanding friend. His appeal did not fall on deaf ears. Manon answered instantly. "Your letter has made me weep, and yet I am happier since receiving it." She, too, needed sympathy and friendship, for she was passing the saddest year she had known since her mother died. In fact, she had recently written to Sophie: "I pass my life indifferently, and I would lose it without sorrow." But that was only a melancholy expression, escaped in a moment of weakness. For was not friendship forcing her to change her language? Yes, by all means, she wanted to see the remainder of his notes on his trip. Finally, a word of warning. If he should answer her letters before he comes back to Paris, would he please say nothing about what she has told him of her unhappiness? *Le père terrible* would surely insist on a glimpse of his letter!

A relapse into sickness prevented Roland from replying directly, but he did ask his brother to inform Mademoiselle Phlipon of his illness. Manon found the news deeply afflicting. Her one consolation was that he was being cared for by those who loved him. She begged him to take time to recover, reminding him that he must think of his friends and realize that upon his own well-being depended theirs. Roland followed her advice,

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for it was not until after January 1778 that he returned to Paris. Meanwhile he forwarded the remainder of his manuscripts on Italy. Manon thus had an opportunity to read his description of his flirtation with the fascinating widow of Leghorn. It was that, perhaps, which caused her to assume, in the letter of acknowledgment, a markedly reserved tone. Interesting as the notes were, they had aroused reflections which added to her misanthropy. "I can see nothing estimable in the people of that beautiful Italy," she wrote. "One has to flee to the heart of Switzerland or the banks of the Thames to be reconciled with one's species." To these reflections she could not resist adding a little sermon. "I am very glad that you have survived a tempest, and I congratulate you whole-heartedly. It seems to me that every experience which tries the force of the soul also increases it. In that sense, misfortune is an advantage for those who know how to bear it. Therefore I cannot pity you at present."

This coolness was only temporary. When the sage himself arrived in Paris, he easily regained his pedestal, and the intimacy grew rapidly during the spring and summer. The situation was complicated in August when Sophie came to Paris for a visit with the la Mottes. Innocently enough, and yet doubtless with curiosity, too, she invited Manon and Roland to dine with her. The dissimulation necessitated by Roland's anxiety to conceal their intimacy from the Cannets worried Manon. The day before Sophie's dinner-party she wrote him a little note, protesting, though rather faintly, at this deceitful attitude towards her best and oldest friend.

To Roland, whose conscience smarted from his rather shabby treatment of Henriette, this secrecy was a vital matter. Early in the fall he went to Amiens, and remained there for three months. As he was departing on a business trip to Rouen, he wrote to



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Manon. "I left one of your friends in a state of illness which alarms her," he said. "She is afraid she is going to die. She is in a sad state; she spoke to me very frankly about it, but you know . . . and although I am sure that it means nothing, her brother has said and done certain things which plainly indicate that they still have hope—but she—she understands well that nothing—nothing—nothing—" he ended cryptically. Manon received this distressing news of her friend with admirable calm. "I am afflicted at the sad state of my friend," she replied. "I see with pain that her sensitiveness exasperates and perhaps increases her malady. The brother no longer thinks anything. I have seen him recently. He spoke of you with great esteem. He cleverly asked for news of you. I gave him none, except what I had from his younger sister, who wrote me that you were on the eve of your departure."

If the sharing of sorrows can, as Manon believed, strengthen friendship, the sharing of secrets can likewise cement it. Unlucky Henriette! Her disappointment but strengthened the bonds between her rival and Roland. By the middle of February 1779 Manon was writing to her sage that "it seems to me that the most laborious existence would still be sweet to me as long as I had good to do and friends to cherish. If this is an illusion, it owes something to you. No, you have made me believe rather that it is a sentiment founded in nature and in truth." Roland was in and out of Paris during the month, but it must have been some time between the 11th and the 21st that he told her that he loved her. For on the latter date she wrote him as a woman would write only to a declared lover. "It is not seven o'clock. I awaken and the first emotion I experience is a yearning for you. . . . I foresee and I await events without fear or rebellion. It would be a monstrous and contradictory thing to be your friend and lack cour-

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age. No, my friend, she whom you have deemed worthy of sharing your affections will not bow her head to misfortune. . . . Do not bother about sorrows whose impression you can efface. Enjoy the assurance that they are but short-lived. Be careful of your health and happiness. It would be unpardonable of you to trouble the felicity of those who cherish you." And, a few weeks later: "What are you doing now, my friend? Do you think of me? I love you, write to you, and wish only to forget with you all the tedious cares of the past day."

For some weeks this idyllic state of affairs endured. They read and studied together. Roland sent Manon more of his manuscripts. She read them and went into transports in describing their effect on her. He came to see her frequently, and his brief absences were punctuated with long epistles of sugary sentimentality. In sharp contrast to all this is the tone in which Roland was mentioned (and that only very rarely) in her letters to Sophie. "I see something of Monsieur Roland, who lives near me and who comes occasionally to spend part of his evenings with me. We talk, we read a little Italian, and the time passes pleasantly." Yet to Roland himself: "Away from you, I prefer solitude and work to all other company."

Among the manuscripts which he sent her was an elegy, which he had composed after the untimely death of his Cléobuline, years ago. "I do not wish to save the Elegy," she wrote in reply. "I had thought I would copy it, but I cannot read it any more without having my heart wounded and my eyes full of tears. I return it to you, while preserving in my heart for ever the impression it has made on me." This delicate suggestion that even his past could stir her jealousy must have given Roland at least a mild thrill of satisfaction.

The situation was indeed delightful, but for Manon it had

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many critical aspects. Roland had spoken and written much of his love—of marriage, that one and only practical escape from her miserable and uncertain life with her wayward father, he had said not a word. Ardent love-making was blended with infuriating caution, and the situation produced was, from Manon's point of view, an exceedingly difficult one. She met it with admirable skill. "Do not make me think that trouble, fear, and dangers are almost inseparable from the friendship, however sacred, formed by women with members of your sex," she wrote. "... I confess that your ardour intimidates me and frightens me. It robs our society of that happy assurance, that liberty, that noble and touching familiarity which is the fruit of virtue. It seems to me that friendship is not so ardent in its caresses. It is sweet, natural, without confusion. I recognize it no longer, and my heart recoils in fear. Why do you want to arouse trouble and anxiety in my simple soul? Leave me my happy peace, that I may love you always, always!"

At once the coy lover was wary and cautious. He dispatched a formal reply, couched in hurt and indignant tones. How could she think that his intentions were anything but innocent? Was it possible that she took him for a base seducer of maidenly hearts? He had believed that he was *sharing* feelings which she accused him of possessing. He did not analyse her principles, he did not look for hidden motives behind her actions. He respected her person. "You may make me unhappy, but I should rather die than insult you. I do not pretend that my happiness is anything to you. I only ask not to disturb yours, and if the strength of my emotion should ever make it necessary for me to see you no more, I will try to forestall the fatal moment, and I will leave you before you send me away."

The tactics were excellent. But Mademoiselle had better ones.

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His resignation before her threat of banishment must have given her something of a let-down feeling. Yet there is no hint of it in the tremendously long letter which Roland received in reply. With wearisome detail, but with admirable concentration, she devoted herself to the salient point of her problem—to telling her maddeningly cautious lover “once and for all what I am and wish to be always.” In his “strong, energetic, enlightened, and experienced mind” she had seen “the stuff for an ideal friend.” That had moved him, and his emotion in turn had aroused in her heart one against which she had believed herself “armed.” Hence her frankness in describing it. Would such frankness expect anything in return except generosity? Alas—instead of “sparing her weakness,” did he not daily become more enterprising? “Monsieur, I may become the victim of emotion, but the plaything of any man—never! . . . Brought up in retirement, I may be rustic and shy, but I lack the skill to make a game of love. For me it is a terrific passion, which would seize my whole being and sway me all my life. Give me back your friendship, or fear to force me to see you no more. . . .”

The feminine strategy was more than Roland could resist. Gone was his caution, gone his hesitancy and his wariness. “My friend, my sweet friend, forgive me. I bathe your letter with my tears. Let them wash out my fault. Forget my weakness. Think only of my remorse. I am in a horrible state. . . . I shall be until I know that you still love me, and that you love to love me. . . .” Does she not remember the proposal he has made to her? Will she not please answer it, clearly and in detail? Did she have any other reasons for her refusal than those she had already advanced?

Her reply was perfect. “If you had loved me less, you would not have been guilty,” she wrote. “The wrongs and errors of

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emotions may cause pain, but they never offend." So subtle a suggestion of an impetuosity never displayed was bound to flatter the most hesitating of lovers. "Do not ask me if I love you," she continued. "If I thought that you still doubted that, I should fear you would always doubt. . . . I cannot add new reasons to those I have already given you, because I have no others. I might perhaps wish to have stronger ones to see you overcome them. . . ."

This letter had to be brief. Poor Mignonne, the faithful *bonne*, was on her death-bed, and Manon was nursing her. A longer letter, written by the sick-bed at five o'clock the following morning, gave all the details about her lamentably fragile financial situation—a subject which was not touched upon until after Roland's capitulation. Mignonne realized the wish she had always had—"to die with you, mademoiselle"—before Roland replied, and Manon, worn out with the strain of caring for her old servant, went off for a few days' rest and change with Uncle Bimont at Vincennes. She did not return to Paris until the 6th of May, and she found Roland's letter, which "they had been cruel enough" not to forward to her, waiting for her. The details which she had sent him were satisfactory, but why could she not be a little more direct and clear in her answer to the one question that was vital? She had not yet promised to marry him, in so many words, he complained. How could he help feeling that his heart's desire was slipping from him in her clouds of confused and sentimental verbiage? "By all the rights which friendship can demand and obtain" he begged for a plain and simple answer—yes or no.

Such explicitness was quite beyond the powers of phrase-loving Manon. "I weep, I struggle to express myself, I stifle, I throw myself upon your bosom, there to remain, entirely thine. My pride equals my passion. Under any other circumstances, I would

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have offered myself to you. In mine, I have had to forgive your advantages. Why can I not send you this letter on the wings of the wind? Farewell, my dear, be happy and make me so as well." This effusion apparently satisfied Roland.

The struggle had been long and hard. Manon must have breathed a sigh of relief upon sighting the safe, the heavenly safe shelter of matrimony. Yet her battle, had she but known it, was only half over. There were yet many steep barriers to be scaled, and could she have foreseen them, even her stout heart might have quailed.

In the first place, Roland insisted, nay, commanded, that the silence which had enshrouded their friendship should now muffle their engagement. "I will guard your secret," replied Mademoiselle, in rapturous submission. "It is only necessary for me to see what you want in order to lay upon myself the obligation of doing it." Still, to one who prided herself upon her openness, the condition chafed. By way of compensation for silence in one direction, she rashly vociferated in another. Her letter to la Blancherie, her correspondence with Sévelinges, were sent to Roland for perusal. These documents had been in Sophie's possession—she had to send for them, and to invent a pretext for doing so. Sophie returned them, but she was plainly curious and vaguely suspicious. Then Roland, reading the letters, gave his fiancée's frankness but niggardly reward. In the letter to la Blancherie he was "not at all interested," but the Sévelinges correspondence was tinder for a dangerous conflagration of jealousy. "You were not capable of recognizing an uncertain, weak, inconsequent, and false mind. You could believe him, be his dupe, find him out, and then be fooled again, eulogize him, continue your correspondence, single him out among men; finally, place him above all others except me, to whom you say all this. If my

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esteem and my friendship are dear to you, as I believe they are, it is lucky that I have received this confidence from you. Your ingenuousness, your precious candour, will save us both from the dangers of having such a discovery made in any other way, and I love you a hundred times more because of it. . . .”

Jealousy, once admitted for the past, soon gnawed its way into the present. Roland presently found cause for complaint in Manon's indulgent attitude towards one of her father's apprentices. L. F., as he is usually called in the letters, lived with the Phlipons. His devotion to Manon took extravagant and romantic forms—he stormed and raged, he coaxed and pleaded, he attempted suicide and threatened to kill Roland. Manon treated him kindly, took care of him when he was ill, tried to keep him in a cheerful humour, told Roland all about him, and did not take him seriously. Yet, “Oh, my friend, how one loves at twenty!” she wrote—a thoughtless remark which jangled discordantly in Roland's forty-five-year-old ears. Nor did he find any comfort in the Besnards' well-meaning scheme of solving the Phlipons' domestic difficulties by a marriage between Manon and L. F. She, for her part, had to oppose her relatives' plan as “inept,” without being able to offer any objections which would strike their practical minds as valid.

Her path would have lost many of its thorns and gained a few roses could she have announced her engagement. But Roland, overworked, in poor health, short of funds, troubled at the thought of his disloyalty towards Henriette Cannel, and, above all, worried as to how his family would regard an alliance which connected it with the graceless Gatien Phlipon, kept her firmly to her promise. On March 18, 1779, she celebrated her twenty-fifth birthday and attained her legal majority. Common sense dictated that she make use of the right thus acquired and compel

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her father to sign over to her the tiny portion which remained of her mother's property. But this little inheritance was, in fact, her dowry, and how convince a father that one demanded a dowry for any other reason than the basest self-interest when no prospective husband was in sight? It was a perplexing problem, with which her fiancé allowed her to struggle for some weeks, while he made provision for the future by renting a house at Amiens. It was next door to the cloister and cemetery of Saint-Denis—a doleful setting for the start of married life. "But you can make a temple of it," he wrote optimistically, and Manon justified his faith by answering jubilantly: "Prepare our dwelling. It will be the asylum of fidelity and happiness, or those blessings will never inhabit the earth."

Other practical matters also possessed Roland's utilitarian mind. He could furnish household and personal linen for two years, table silver for eight people, and two soup-spoons. What could she furnish? And, particularly, what was she planning in regard to her trousseau? His wife must be well dressed. "Although I am sufficiently free from prejudices, I do regard certain conventions. I can be what I am, and it is enough for me to be what I wish, but you, my wife, must be what you ought to be. You understand me already, or you will understand me soon." Did Mademoiselle rebel at such high-handedness? No, indeed. Each command was answered with an eager readiness to obey, and generous slices of humble pie were cut and swallowed for good measure. "My friend, your tenderness, more generous in my behalf than nature has been, perhaps sees attractions in me which I do not possess. Shall I tell you something? The pleasure of being perfected by you appeals to me, flatters me, thrills me, while the feeling of my integrity, I might almost say of my dignity, gives me the confidence to make you my guide, to ac-



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cept everything which you wish to be, and to devote myself to you unreservedly." For all her self-esteem and pride, Manon was past-mistress of the feminine art of discounting her own merits as a sop to masculine vanity.

Meanwhile Gatien's dissipations continued and her worries multiplied. At last, acting on the advice of her relatives and guided by her own prudence, she gained possession of her dowry. Her father refused to believe that her motives were not of the basest, assumed an injured air, and stopped speaking to her. What he persisted in regarding as her unfilial ingratitude eventually determined him to drive her from his house. She was equally determined not to leave it except as Roland's wife. This trying situation certainly necessitated telling her father something, yet her lover had forbidden her to tell anyone anything. An appeal to Roland for advice was rewarded by the grudging permission to inform her father that she was engaged and planned to be married shortly. But under no circumstances must she mention the name of her fiancé. Monsieur Phlipon's natural curiosity on that point must be assuaged by the explanation that family and business reasons compelled his future son-in-law to preserve, for the moment, a strict anonymity. It was a ridiculous condition, and Manon rightly argued that Monsieur Phlipon would immediately guess her lover's identity. She had been friendly with no other man but Roland, and his assiduity during the past winter was the clearest indication of how things stood between them. Monsieur Phlipon was neither blind nor dumb. Roland, even before receiving this argument, had begun to regret the permission he had given her to tell half of their secret. He practically retracted it, but Manon, goaded by the desperation of her situation, took matters into her own hands, and his letter reached her too late.

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Mademoiselle Desportes, her cousin, was rather better than anyone else in the family at managing the giddy Gatien. Summoning that lady to her aid, Manon had her prepare him for the news in a tactful interview. At the psychological moment the door of the petite cabinet was flung wide, and the girl, sobbing, fell at her astounded father's feet.

"Crush me with your anger if I deserve it, but do not hate me!" she moaned.

This was Mademoiselle Desportes's cue to explain, but the amazed Gatien gave her no opportunity.

"Your actions are always very bizarre," he said, turning to Manon. "To want to stay with me, and yet to act as though you intended to leave me, is contradictory. All of your reasons do not convince me. If you had better ones, I should think differently, but in that case why should you conceal them?"

"If honour made me keep my reason a secret, would you consider that a crime?" parried his daughter.

"How could honour compel you to deceive your father?" asked Gatien severely.

"You yourself admit, father, that our settlement would be perfectly proper were I going to be married. That is exactly my secret. One whose affection honours me and flatters you has shown me his esteem by declaring his intentions. A delicate situation in his own family made it impossible for him to declare himself, even to you. He swore me to sacred secrecy. From that moment I felt that you and I should put our affairs in order, and I resolved to induce you to do so. With as much faith in his uprightness and generosity as in his other noble qualities, I made him an avowal which I expected you to confirm some day with as much joy as I gave it. You are probably aware of whom I speak—it is not necessary to name him."

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Gatien, relieved, melted, overwhelmed with joy, swept his daughter into his arms, where she shed "the sweetest tears of her life." He murmured Roland's name. Her silent blush confirmed his guess. Her choice, he expansively informed Mademoiselle Desportes, could not have been a better one. It was but one more proof of the sagacity she had always displayed. For Manon he had many consolations for the modesty of her dowry in the form of promises that everything he had would one day be hers.

Manon flew to her table to write the joyous tidings to Roland. "Kiss my letter, tremble with joy! My father is content. He respects you, he loves me. We are all going to be happy!" soared her melodious chant of jubilation. "My loving friend, I owe you all my happiness. How transported you must be! You restore all that is dear to me. You restore a father's love. You fill my heart with all the sweetness that nature, virtue, and love can bring to it. . . . And it is to you, whom I respect, whom I esteem, and whom I cherish more than anything else, that I owe these blessings. Surely one never dies of joy, since I feel all this and am still living."

Roland's reply to these transports must have been like a slap in the mouth. To be sure, he was "ravished" at her happiness, but that did not alter the unpleasant fact that his secret was revealed, his confidence violated. "Do not use up pages to justify or excuse what has already been done. I shall not think of it the less, and I will not speak of it again." Manon had the consummate patience to answer this tirade with phrases dripping honeyed sweetness and submission. "I give you my full confidence. I ask for wisdom and counsel. I promise docility." Yet she could not help reminding him that "if necessity forced me to disclose a part of your plans, I did not presume to arrogate to myself your

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right to reveal them, nor to hasten the time when you plan to do so."

"My good friend," replied her *bon ami*, "I do not wish to be either unjust or constrained with you. I love you as much as you desire. . . . But let us drop these endless discussions. They always end by throwing us into the situation which I most dread. Moreover, it would take a volume to reply to your letter, for we are not even in agreement as to the facts, notably concerning that one to which you always return, though I do not know why. For you have not consulted me, but have done just as you pleased." Manon, thus lacerated with her lover's petty pride and steely self-love, deserves all pity. Yet can Roland be blamed for this last cry? After all, that was the whole difficulty—and for him it boded future ills. She had done just exactly as she pleased.

The summer wore on. Gatien was in poor health—one more offence added to his vulgarity and dissipation, according to Roland—and Manon became sick-nurse as well as cook and dishwasher. Her drudgery was punctuated by outbursts of petulant pouting from her crusty fiancé, who, nursing his injured feelings in Amiens, became more exacting every day. To every whining question, to every querulous demand, she sent a gentle, loving answer. "All alone, worn out by work, you have such need of the charms and consolations of love!" was her tactful explanation of his irritability. Eventually she had her reward. Roland wrote to her father, asking plainly for her hand, but, alas! still insisting on secrecy.

Monsieur Phlipon was suspicious, and not unnaturally so. Had Desmoutiers, the jeweller, Gardane, the physician, Coquin, the merchant, pressed their suits in such furtive fashion? Manon pled, argued, stormed, coaxed, and teased. At last: "He is a man

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of merit, I admit. He suits you. Very well, let the thing take place. I will not interfere." What could one do with such a parent? Manon resumed her campaign, begging her father to write Roland a formal letter giving his consent. It was to no avail, until, her back to the wall, she used a desperate woman's final resource. She had a thoroughly frightening fit of hysterics, which accomplished the desired result of sending Gatien scurrying to his desk. Then, pen poised over the paper, he made the unexpected request to see all of her letters from Roland. When she had sufficiently recovered from her astonishment to ask him why he made such a demand, he answered lightly: "Oh, just a little whim of mine. If you refuse it, you can no longer count on me for anything." In short, she might marry if she liked, but not from his house and not with his blessing. Thus the situation would probably have remained for ever had not a relapse of his illness and the entreaties of kind-hearted Tante Besnard combined to soften his mood. On September 4th he condescended to address his daughter's fiancé.

"Sir:—Financial discussions surely cannot injure the matter in hand. Recently my daughter has taken care of these details, by using the rights she obtained in coming of age three months ago, to compel me to account for the property of her deceased mother before a notary. The matter is now irrevocably settled. You have honoured me, sir, by writing to me. I should have the honour of replying. But first having asked from my daughter certain things that she has very dryly—I may even say, very roughly—refused me, I have decided to tell you, with regret, that she can freely use the privilege of her majority to hasten the conclusion of this affair."

What a letter! Roland, reading it, felt that never before had he realized the baseness of Monsieur Phlipon's soul, the vulgarity

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of his mind, the vileness of his character. "I surrender to a feeling that makes me entirely yours," he wrote to his *belle amie*, "but your father, oh, my dear, your father! The very thought of him gnaws me. Black presentiments trouble and overwhelm me. His character, his conduct, will become living reproaches for my family and will change their tender affection into a vulture that will ceaselessly devour my heart."

Even this outburst failed to exhaust Manon's gentle patience. "Come, my friend, this is not the moment to lose courage. . . . Live, breathe, be at peace. I have no more strength, virtue, existence, and satisfaction except through you." But turning the other cheek to a man of Roland's stiff-necked pride was a thankless proceeding indeed. A second letter, dictated by his outraged self-esteem, merely drove the knife of his biting anger deeper into her wounds. Why was she so indulgent towards her unworthy parent? It reminded him of his own failure in duty towards his family. He remembered their loving care of him when he returned from Italy, ill and exhausted. And that love he had sought to repay by uniting them to Gatien Phlipon! Horrible thought! That and his concealment towards them weighed on his mind. To relieve his burden of care he had sent them a copy of Monsieur Phlipon's outrageous letter and explained the whole ghastly affair. The assurance that, out of regard for her, he had not mentioned her name, could scarcely have allayed the smart of Manon's wounds under this shower of venom-tipped arrows.

Though cruelly hurt, Manon yet saw clearly the one course open to her, and she was clever and brave enough to follow it. A long, noble, exalted, and resigned letter released her haughty lover from the engagement. She expressed her pleasure at having been the means of recalling him to his family duties and ad-

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vantages, approved of his conduct, and begged him to remain her friend for ever.

Roland seemed admirably resigned to this frustration of his hopes. He wrote his lost love letters of excellent advice. By all means, he told her, she must come to an understanding with her father either by conversation or in writing. Then she had better leave the impossible creature's house and take refuge either with one of her relatives or in a convent. No, he could not, for a moment, consider giving that wretch's unspeakably vile and insulting letter the honour of a reply. This made it awkward for Manon. Gatien took it for granted that she would be married before the winter set in. Having lost everything else, was she not entitled to the slight consideration of having him learn from Roland and from no one else that the marriage was not to be? This plea melted the stern lover's recalcitrancy to the extent of producing a letter addressed to Gatien, formally withdrawing his suit.

With nothing left but Roland's "friendship and esteem" Manon, who seemed satisfied with neither, spent September and October fretting, moping, yearning, and petting and scolding in turn the infuriating Gatien. The sobered conviction that she ought to leave this maddening and yet endearing parent fought in her mind and heart with her instinctive love for him. "I drift in spite of my efforts," she wailed to Roland. "Taste, inclination, duties, nature, friendship, prudence, disadvantages—everything conflicts and tears me. . . . I regard life with hatred, men with contempt, and the universe with horror." Gatien, seeing her unhappiness, and realizing, like the creature of impulse that he was, that he had caused it all, swallowed his pride and wrote a manly, straightforward letter of apology to Roland. The latter relaxed his haughtiness sufficiently to be concerned with Manon's welfare,

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but remained adamant in the decision that a marriage between them was impossible. Yet, like Manon, he prized the joys of a "firm and constant friendship." He continued the correspondence and thereby sealed his fate.

Gatien's flashes of remorse, his moods of compensatory tenderness, sincere though they were, could not make life with him anything but a desperately unhappy affair. He and Manon were poles apart in their tastes, their habits, their ways of thinking. Wisely, and yet not without a pang of regret, she left him and took refuge in a tiny apartment on the top floor of her old Convent of the Congregation. Here, cooking and preparing her own food—an ascetic diet of "beans, rice, and potatoes, cooked in salt and butter"—going out only twice a week, once to visit her relatives, once to cast a housewifely eye over her father's establishment, reading, studying, and writing, she passed whole days in a solitude broken only by an occasional visit from Sainte-Agathe or from one of the convent boarders. The influence of a friend secured her the offer of a post at court. It was a position dependent on the caprice of the Queen, and it had no purpose other than her amusement. Consequently Manon did not accept it, although "the desire to occupy myself usefully, and to have the means of satisfying my heart has made me give attention to the proposal."

Roland, forgetting that he had advised her to go into the convent, sent letters filled with recriminations. Had she carefully considered the probable results of her action? What was to prevent her father, removed from her restraining influence, from ruining himself completely? Yet, despite his scoldings, Roland was not without regrets and longing. "Where are you at this moment? How shall I be able to see you? That worries me, for I want to badly." Manon answered, judiciously mingling explana-



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tions of her reasons for leaving her father with declarations of her undying love for Roland. "Yes, I love you," admitted Roland in reply. "I want to see you, to listen to you, to talk to you. . . . I—I work like an unhappy man. I am dissatisfied with everything that I do. . . . I have never seen things in blacker colours nor been more disgusted with life." "Adieu, pride, reserve, observations," she carolled in reply. "I love you. I feel only that. I say it as a new thing."

All through November and December Roland's letters mixed scolding and yearning, nagging and longing. Manon, desiring marriage more than ever after a few weeks of convent life, met scolding and nagging with saintly meekness. Her lover's yearning and longing she intensified with all the varied and alluring declarations of her own love that her desire could devise. If he softened, she glowed, and when he glowed, she flamed. "When can I see you? Come; for ever be, under the name of friend, all that you can be to the most tender and most faithful heart." Occasionally her tender passionals were answered with intimate descriptions of Roland's last bilious attack, but as the weeks wore on, his fretfulness waned while his love waxed. He would have had to be hard indeed to have combated almost daily love-letters, and Roland, thorny and censorious though he was, was not made of marble.

Early in 1780 business brought him to Paris. He both longed and feared to see Manon, but all his fears could not keep him from yielding to the temptation. Ushered into the austere parlour of the convent, he saw her, tearful and unhappy, behind the grating. It was enough. "Triumph in your retreat, my friend!" was his bitter-sweet acknowledgment of defeat. He again offered her his hand, his brother Dom Pierre acting as intermediary, and a few days later, on February 4, 1780, they were quietly married

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at the Church of Saint-Barthélemy. Uncle Bimont read the service, and Sélincourt Cannel, apparently cherishing no grudge against the happy pair for the deceit they had employed towards his sisters, was one of the witnesses.

How did Manon feel when the prize for which she had worked so long and so passionately was at last firm within her grasp? Her long silence did not prevent her from sending the patient and long-suffering Sophie a pæan of joy when the storm-clouds finally burst and revealed their silver linings. "Intimately penetrated without being either intoxicated or stunned, I face my destiny with a peaceable and tender eye. Touching and numerous duties will fill my heart and my time. I shall no longer be an isolated human being, moaning over my uselessness, seeking to employ my energy in a way which would avoid the evil of an embittered sensibility. . . . The cherished wife of a man I respect and love, I shall find my happiness in the inexpressible charm of contributing to his."

They at last had what they wanted—Roland a wife, and Manon a home. As such arrangements go, it was satisfactory enough. Thirteen years of married life had the not surprising result of killing the skilfully created sentimentality with which, during the courtship, clever Manon had veiled her lack of passion. The account of her marriage which Madame Roland wrote in her memoirs is dry and matter-of-fact.

"Nearly five years [in reality, three] after I met him, Monsieur Roland declared his love. I was not indifferent, because I respected him above any man I had ever known, but I had noticed that both he and his family had a careful regard for appearances. I told him frankly that his suit honoured me and I could accept it gladly, but that I did not think that I was a good match for him. I explained our financial situation to him freely and fully.

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We were ruined. By asking for a settlement from my father at the peril of contracting his enmity, I had saved an annual income of five hundred livres. This, with my wardrobe, was all that remained of the seeming prosperity in which I had been brought up. My father was young. His indiscretions were likely to tempt him to contract debts, which his inability to pay would render shameful. He might make an ill-advised marriage and add to these troubles children who would bear my name in wretched poverty, etc. I was too proud to expose myself to the contempt of a family which would feel dishonoured by this union, or to depend on the generosity of a husband to whom I should bring only troubles. I advised Monsieur Roland, as if I were a third person, not to think of me. He persisted. I was touched and consented that he make the necessary declaration to my father, but as he preferred to do so in writing, it was decided that he should send a letter on his return home, and we saw each other daily during the balance of his stay in Paris. I regarded him as the man to whom I should unite my destiny, and I became attached to him. As soon as he returned to Amiens, he wrote my father to explain his plans and wishes.

“My father found the letter haughty. He did not like Monsieur Roland’s frigidity, and he did not wish as a son-in-law an austere man who would censor him. His reply was harsh and impertinent, and he showed it to me after he had sent it. I at once formed a resolution. I wrote to Monsieur Roland that the incident had justified only too well my fears in regard to my father, and that I would not cause him further embarrassment. I begged him to give up his plan. I told my father what his conduct had compelled me to do, adding that he need not be surprised if I began a new life and retired to a convent. But, since I knew he had some pressing debts, I left him my share of the silverware

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to satisfy them. I rented a small apartment at the convent, to which I withdrew, firmly determined to limit my wants by my means. I did so. . . . Monsieur Roland, surprised and hurt, continued to write like a man who still loved me, but who had been wounded by my father's behaviour. He came at the end of five or six months [actually, it was barely three months], grew ardent when he saw me behind the grille, where I still maintained the outward appearance of prosperity. He wanted me to leave the convent, again offered me his hand, urging me through his brother, the Benedictine monk, to accept it. I considered carefully what I should do. I did not delude myself that a man under forty-five would not have waited several months to try to make me change my mind, and I freely admitted that this had reduced my feelings to a point where nothing was left for illusion. On the other hand, I felt that his persistence, also the result of reflection, showed that I was appreciated, and that if he had overcome his fear of the incidental annoyances which marriage with me might mean, I should be so much the more convinced of his esteem, which I need be at no pains to justify. Finally, if marriage was, as I believed it to be, a stringent bond, a union in which usually the wife assumes responsibility for the happiness of two individuals, had I not better exert my capacities and my courage in this honourable work than in the isolation in which I lived?"

Her omission of Roland's reaction to her father's letter, her statement that she released him from the engagement before she knew of that reaction—is this disingenuousness or forgetfulness? Impossible to say. Madame Roland forgot much that Manon Phlipon thought and did, not only in the intricate game of securing a husband, but in most other crises of her life. Certainly she must, like all of us, have wished to forget even more. But

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it is scarcely probable that she held, even after thirteen years, no memory at all of the consummate skill with which Manon Philipon had overcome the reluctance of a man twenty years her senior. It was a difficult undertaking, and she accomplished it with complete success. It must have been womanly modesty that kept Madame Roland from revealing all of the masterly strokes of her game.

## CHAPTER IX

### *FOUR WALLS BOUND THE UNIVERSE*

FOR Manon, to whom a fanatical ardour about everything that she did was entirely natural, marriage meant a revolutionary change. The young girl, whose interest in literature, history, philosophy, morals, and religion had been so intense, disappeared, and in her place was the young matron who found the universe bounded by the four walls of her house. The preparation of a meal for her querulous and ailing husband was a matter of far greater moment than the latest book or article in the literary world. Mysteriously enough, copying and rewriting articles on sheep-raising, lace-making, or grain-transportation proved a satisfactory substitute for explaining, in her expansive and sentimental way, the reactions of her soul.

This change is evident in the letters written to her old friend Sophie during the first year after her marriage. Manon was conscious of it and, worse, knew that Sophie noticed it. It troubled her, and she explained it again and again, lamely and yet as well as she could. "At last, my dear Sophie, you see me peaceable, and solitary, taking up my pen for your benefit. I think of you—a usual thing. I love you as I always have. I repeat it to you, and that is what begins to become more rare than in the past. It is not that my new situation has changed my inclinations. . . . Maiden and free, I was, above all, your frank and devoted friend, always loving and sincere. I am a wife today. That relationship becomes the first, and you are no longer anything but second rank. My confidant, my friend, my guide, and my support is

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found at my side. Duty and inclination are united and made but one." Again: "It seems that you wish to avenge yourself, by a generosity of sentiment, for the change which you persist in seeing in me. Undoubtedly my soul has undergone the liveliest revolutions, and the state in which it finds itself is a new one for it, but the exposition of your ideas makes me know that you still judge me as different from what I really am. . . . I am far . . . from making the least complaint of you. I know what appearances can do and how they justify certain conclusions. My delay in writing to you after my marriage would seem to confirm the opinions which you came to on that subject. It is, however, very true that there have been indispensable occupations from which I could not take my time, but not, as you express it, little cares which I might set aside for you."

All this, of course, is simply telling Sophie, as tactfully as possible, that marriage has brought so many new and important interests and activities into her life that she has no time for the older ones. Indeed, her unkind silence during the period of her engagement, her many preoccupations since becoming Roland's wife, and Sophie's natural complaints of her neglect combined to create a painful situation which no amount of rationalizing could remedy. "You compare the present rarity of my communications with that frequency which had always characterized them, even in difficult times," she wrote to Sophie, "and you cannot imagine how the continual presence of a cherished object and ceaselessly recurring duties exercise the soul and consume time."

Manon, entering a new life and new experiences in which even Roland's crabbed censoriousness seemed paradise in comparison with her weathercock father's flightiness, was indeed busy and happy enough to have no further need of Sophie. With her marriage the friendship of so many years' standing, though con-

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tinued formally, practically came to an end. Even her residence in Amiens, of nearly four years, brought no revival of the old feeling. For this, Roland has been blamed, first by his wife, later by her biographers. It is true that he was an exacting, demanding, possessive husband. It is true that the thought of Henriette Cannet lay heavily on his conscience, and the less seen of her and her family, the better he was satisfied. Yet Manon was a strong-willed woman, who always obtained what she wanted at all costs. It is reasonable to suppose that she would have preserved the friendship in all its intimacy had she desired to do so. The fact was that marriage had made non-existent the need which for so many years Sophie alone had been able to fill. In her memoirs Madame Roland gave the truth of the matter without the embroidery of sentimentality.

"The first year of my marriage was spent entirely at Paris, where Roland had been called by the Intendants of Commerce, who wished to make new rulings in regard to manufactures, rulings which Roland fought with all his might, on account of the principles of liberty which he held above everything else. He was having the description which he had made of certain arts for the Academy printed, and he was revising his manuscripts on Italy. He made me his copyist and proof-reader. I filled the rôle with a humility which it amuses me now to recall and which seems almost inconsistent with a mind trained as mine was, but it came from my heart. My reverence for my husband was so great that I thought he knew everything better than I did, and I so dreaded to see a frown on his face and he was so set in his opinions that it was not until long afterwards that I gained enough courage to contradict him. I took a course in natural history and one in botany. This was the sole and not unlaborious recreation from my duties as secretary and housekeeper, for,



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living as we were in furnished rooms, since our residence, of course, was not at Paris, and seeing that my husband's delicate health could not accommodate itself to all kinds of cooking, I myself prepared the dishes which agreed with him."

Roland was indeed overworked. The continual defeat of his projects for the reform of the commerce and manufacturing of France did nothing to improve his naturally irascible disposition. No one could be more irritable when crossed than he was—and it was his fate to be crossed most of the time. He was an endless note-taker. But he had no sense of system about his notes, and his handwriting was all but illegible. A secretary to such a man had indeed a troublesome task, and Roland's stormy impatience multiplied the difficulties. Manon was not exactly a saint, but she did have a sort of stoical endurance and a capacity for idealizing the worst drudgery. Thus armed, she filled her trying rôle with such efficiency, with such an utter absence of complaint, that her husband soon came to depend upon her entirely. When she wrote her memoirs, Madame Roland could say proudly and truthfully: "For twelve years of my life I have worked with my husband just as I have eaten with him, because the one was as natural to me as the other."

These months of hard and uninteresting work in Paris left Manon and Roland little time for social diversions. The few friends they made were people to whom they were drawn through their professional interests. One of these was a young medical student, François-Xavier Lanthenas. The son of a wealthy wax merchant of Le Puy, he had been forced by his unsympathetic parent to enter business in Lyons. He became an agent for silks and laces and travelled through Holland, Germany, and Italy. It was in Naples, during the winter of 1776-7, that he met Roland, and the two, despite the twenty years' difference in their

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ages, became fast friends. Perhaps the ideas and principles which his newly-found companion revealed in their conversations helped to increase Lanthenas's dissatisfaction with a business career. At any rate, he went back to Lyons laden with books and engravings that bore not the slightest relation to silks and laces, and demonstrated that as a business man he was a first-class medical student. It was some time before he could reconcile his father to this change in his career. Even a visit to Le Puy, on which he was accompanied by Roland, failed to gain the desired permission to study medicine seriously. But at last the stern father relented, and in 1780 Lanthenas came to Paris to begin his training in earnest. He took a tiny room on the top floor of the Hôtel de Lyon, rue Saint-Jacques, where the Rolands were occupying a small but comfortable apartment. Lanthenas, shy, timid, and introspective, bold in thought and hesitant in action, suffering from the wounds dealt by an uncongenial and unsympathetic family, soon found himself delightfully at home with Manon and her husband. Roland's wise counsels and lofty ideals, Manon's vivacity and enthusiasm, both comforted and inspired him. To her he was "*le petit frère*," and he thought of her as his "*sorella*." Roland, always the classicist, regarded Lanthenas as "*le fidèle Achate*."

Manon's sole and "not unlaborious" recreation—the study of botany—was carried on through a course of lectures given by Jussieu at the Jardin des Plantes, or, as it was called in the pre-Revolutionary days, the Jardin du Roi. It was here that she met Louis Bosc d'Antic, the son of a Huguenot physician. Though then only twenty-one years old, he was a member of the Academy of Sciences and had already, through his own researches, made a not unenviable reputation for himself. A position in the Post Office (*Secrétaire de l'Intendance des Postes*) kept a roof over

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his head, clothes on his back, and food in his stomach, but his precious leisure time was devoted to scientific study, which he loved passionately. To Roland, with half a dozen monographs always in the process of writing, this young scientist was an invaluable acquaintance. Bosc, who joined to his studious tendencies a generous and open-hearted disposition, found the Rolands immensely congenial. He came almost daily to the little apartment in the Hôtel de Lyon, and verified facts and supplied information for Roland, exchanged theories of life with Manon, and introduced the diffident Lanthenas into a circle of interesting students. The two young men vied with each other in their devotion to the Rolands, and it was with them that most of Manon's meagre leisure hours were spent.

In September Roland decided that he and Manon needed a little vacation. It was high time that his mother made the acquaintance of her new daughter, so it was in Villefranche that they passed their holiday. To Manon, whose wanderings from Paris had been limited to jaunts to Meudon, Vincennes, and Fonteney, this journey was an event. Received in "the most touching manner" by Roland's mother, whose more than eighty years had not killed her joy in parties and entertaining, the young wife was charmed by her first glimpse of the little provincial town and society. After passing some time at Villefranche, Manon and Roland were sent off to the country estate, Le Clos, and here, in lovely autumn weather, they had a delightful, if belated, honeymoon. "I don't know how it happens, but I am learning that pleasure is a matter which takes up all your time, and leaves room for nothing else," she wrote to Sophie one lazy September day.

The two months' holiday passed all too quickly, and Manon returned to Paris, and to increased labours. On December 31,



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1780, Roland signed a contract with the publisher Panckoucke for a work in two volumes, the *Dictionnaire des manufactures, arts, et métiers*. He was to have three francs a page for what proved to be a heart-breaking and soul-trying task of research and writing. Diderot's famous *Encyclopædia* had not been in alphabetical order, and, despite the publication of a subject index in 1780, it was very difficult to use. Panckoucke, an optimistic and picturesquely visionary man of letters, and perhaps the first great modern publisher of France, was struck with the desirability of resetting the whole *Encyclopædia* according to alphabetical order, and incidentally of bringing all of the articles up to date. The *Dictionnaire* for which Roland contracted was to be a subdivision of this work. The two volumes were duly completed in 1785, and in that year Roland signed a contract for a third volume, upon which he and Manon laboured until 1792. Then the popularity of the preceding volumes and his increased reputation enabled him to make the much better terms of nine francs a page. Pages upon pages of Manon's letters to her husband during his frequent absences from home concern business matters, both in regard to his work as an inspector of commerce and manufactures, and in connexion with the *Dictionnaire*. She never hesitated to advise him as to the conduct of his business, and if on one page of her letters we find a résumé of a recent monograph on sheep-raising in England, on the following page we are likely to run across a wifely admonition: "You deal firmly with Panckoucke, and as he ought to be dealt with by a man of honour who does not resemble him." The *Dictionnaire* itself mirrored the faults and virtues of the man who wrote it. Prolix, wordy, and diffuse, bad in arrangement and lacking in style, it was yet a thorough, scholarly, painstaking production, based on sound research, the labour of love of an enthusiast up-

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held by his devotion to his ideals and his passion for work. It was, too, the *apologia pro vita sua*. Thwarted again and again in the practical application of his progressive theories, Roland found comfort in defending and justifying them in the *Dictionnaire*, and it is the record of his fruitless struggles, his bitter defeats, and his rare and sweetly savoured victories.

The contract with Panckoucke signed and sealed, the Rolands were at last free to turn their faces towards Amiens, their future home. Roland went directly there, but Manon made a round-about journey through Normandy, stopping at Rouen, where she visited the Demoiselles Malortie, the sisters of the lamented Cléobuline, and going on to Dieppe where she stayed with Roland's friends the Cousin-Despréaux family and attended to numerous details in connexion with the publication of his *Lettres d'Italie*, which were being printed in that city. Then she joined her husband in the large and not very cheerful house that he had rented in Amiens. It was his confident expectation that she would transform this gloomy dwelling into a temple of sunshine and happiness. The outlook for that was not promising, but Manon did her best. She worked feverishly, unpacking books, hanging Roland's engravings and pictures, arranging to advantage the odds and ends which he had acquired on his travels, and digging and weeding in the garden. Her efforts were rewarded. An atmosphere of coziness began to warm up the old mansion, and eventually flowers—"not beautiful ones, according to the common idea, but interesting ones, for the eyes of botanists"—appeared. Presently she conceived the happy idea of renting a *clavecin*. She had always loved music, and although a person so constantly busy with other things probably played only fairly well, the melodies which came trilling from her en-

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thusiastic if not perfectly trained fingers must have done much to make of a home a more cheerful place.

Roland was away during much of this period, but the young wife found herself too busy to be lonely. Many of the articles which he wrote for the *Dictionnaire* were rewritten and corrected by her. She did much to lighten his labours of research and carried on, in his behalf, a voluminous correspondence relative to scientific facts and technical details. Then, whenever possible, a half-hour or so was snatched for a letter to Bosc. The distance between Paris and Amiens had not broken the intimacy with him. He was a good person for Roland to keep in touch with, and since his position in the postal service enabled him to frank their letters, husband and wife customarily corresponded through him, even when the subjects they had to discuss were of the most intimate nature. Sometimes addressing her letters to him, sometimes to her husband, Manon rarely let a day lapse without writing a long account of everything she had done and thought. Bosc and Roland between them assumed the position of outlet for her pen that Sophie had filled for so many years.

Social duties too, although Manon performed them indifferently, consumed time and cut ruthlessly into the working-hours. Roland's friends, cultivated and charming, if rather provincial in their outlook, gave the young bride a cordial welcome. The families of the *grande bourgeoisie* of Amiens, like the de Brays, the de Chuignes, the Cannets, Monsieur and Madame d'Eu, and Monsieur de Vin, came to call, and their calls had to be returned. The d'Eus and Monsieur de Vin lived very near. Monsieur d'Eu was an interested student of science, and his friend, or, rather, his wife's friend, for Monsieur de Vin was the *cicisbeo, en tout bien*, of Madame d'Eu, was an amateur man of letters and the founder of the local Academy. They were, by Manon's own ad-



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mission, kind, neighbourly, and helpful, and yet her letters to Roland evince very little enthusiasm for their frequent visits. "I imagine that Madame d'Eu, going out today to bore herself with her grandparents, will presently come to bore both herself and me for a while. Great good it does her, and may Heaven grant that it won't be long!" "Madame d'Eu comes often with her faithful escort, saying that she would come oftener and for a longer time (Heaven guard me from that!) if she did not know that I was very busy. I reply politely, without insisting too much, and especially without altering her opinion." "The good Monsieur de Bray has not failed to make his little visit this evening, and told me that his wife wanted to see me. I replied with politeness and sensibility, but as one who is not anxious to receive." The attitude was not calculated to make the young wife very popular among her new neighbours. It is not surprising that when she and Roland left Amiens four years later, she left no strong attachments behind her.

It is true that she was absorbed, all during the summer of 1781, in making ready for a visit far more important than any she could have received from the *grande bourgeoisie* of Amiens. The hopes which its prospect kindled in her heart burned fiercely enough to consume every other impulse. And Roland—Roland and his family of bachelor brothers—how they were counting on its outcome! Already they were talking about attempting to have their ancient title restored, so that the expected son might be born noble. Already Canon Dominique, the head of the house, was hinting at his readiness, should their fond hopes be realized, to cede the domain and the Clos.

It was a crushing blow, then, when on October 4, 1781, a baby daughter was laid in Manon's arms. "Well, well, my dear brother, it is only a girl, and I make you my very humble apologies,"

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she wrote, breaking the news to the canon. "Also, I promise you that this small niece will love you so much that you will forgive her for poking her nose into a world where she has no business to come. With this assurance, and a promise to do better next time, I hope for your full forgiveness, and I hasten to beg for it, as I feel that you are really irritated. I know that this is a bitter pill for you. I realize that your position is a hard one. Now I have confessed fully, so do not let us discuss it any more."

They christened the child Marie-Thérèse Eudora. Loyal as always to her beloved Rousseau, Manon insisted, despite Roland's protests and the doctors' gloomy warnings, on nursing her baby herself. Eudora, who apparently did not inherit her mother's robust constitution, all but died under the regimen. Manon, her nerves shattered, her vitality exhausted, twice nearly lost her milk. The doctors pleaded with her to get a wet nurse. She obdurately refused, putting Eudora on a temporary diet of cow's milk diluted with barley-water, and submitting herself to heroic measures to replenish her own supply and regain her strength. Roland, away most of the time on dreary business errands which sent him splashing through the muddy winter roads of France, received long letters, filled with the details of her discouraging struggles. "What stories of drugs, and of food!" she wrote. "Would you ever have thought that you could read such things without disgust?"

Although she rarely digested any food that was given to her, Eudora was so greedy, at six weeks of age, that Manon decided that the story of Eve was not so stupid, and that gluttony must have been man's first sin. "You philosophers . . . who tell us that all vices are engendered in society by the passions which are thus excited, tell me why this infant of six weeks, whose imagination and instincts are yet dormant and disciplined, is no

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longer guided by the limits of necessity. [Philosophy] shows us man in a state of nature . . . always stopping after a need is satisfied, and I see my tiny new-born babe drink its milk with the avidity and the excess of gormandizing," Manon wrote despairingly. It was the closest she came to discovering that man is *not* perfectible!

She had not transmitted her own gift of perfect health to her child, but in other truly disconcerting ways Eudora was stamped as the offspring of her parents. Headstrong Manon and obstinate Roland looked at each other aghast when the baby's shrieks of temper resounded through the house. *Mon dieu!* How had they come to have such a child? She tyrannized over her mother and hectored her *bonne*. She domineered over Roland and bullied the cook. The whole household revolved round her and her wants and needs, and she ruled it with a rod of iron.

Consequently it was months before Manon recovered from her confinement. Her own weakness was almost as hard to bear as the anguish of Eudora's illness. Activity meant everything to her, and it was trying indeed to have to rest in idleness most of the day. It was distressing, too, when Eudora, petulant and ailing, found no comfort in her sick mother's trembling arms. The child cried for Fleury, the strong, capable *bonne*, and in spite of herself, and unreasonably, as she admitted, that cut Manon to the quick. It was a long, hard, depressing winter. There were many deaths and much sickness in Amiens, and nearly every morning Manon looked out of her bedroom windows to some newly-made grave in the adjoining cemetery of Saint-Denis. Is it any wonder that a chill paralysed her heart as she turned from the window to the cradle, in which Eudora, moaning with colic, lay wasting away?

With admirable patience, and with complete forgetfulness of

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herself, Manon fought to a successful finish the desperate battle to save her child's life and to regain her own health. Modern mothers should not read of her struggle unmoved. She had no one to help her but a kind and sturdy yet uneducated *bonne* and two or three well-intentioned but not greatly enlightened doctors. "Medicine," she decided, "is a purely conjectured art." There were no baby specialists, no trained children's nurses, in those good old days. Madame de Reboul's *Avis aux mères*, the forerunner of the huge library on the care and training of infants to which the young mother of today can turn, was the solitary guide. It was taken for granted that half of the babies born would die in infancy. Had Eudora Roland's mother been less doggedly persistent, less courageous and intelligent, the child would never have survived the winter after her birth.

Until the fierce fight to keep Eudora alive had been won, Manon allowed every other interest, save the daily letter to Roland whenever he was away from home, to go by the board. Her correspondence languished, notes for the *Dictionnaire* accumulated, and Madame d'Eu and Monsieur de Vin, faithfully continuing their calls, found her more abstracted than ever. But with Eudora's mending, and her own gradual recovery of health, she began to be more her real self. At last a day came when she could write to Roland: "Hurrah! I am feeling better. All my tastes have revived with the vivacity which they had in the happy days. I passed the entire day yesterday reading poetry and making music. Sophocles, Anacreon, Sappho, and other poets gave me a sweet delirium. I embarked into the brilliant illusions of mythology, and I was enraptured as on my first voyage. I am beginning to believe that sometimes it is good to be ill. These moments of languor which we think lost are moments of regeneration, of restoring slumber. We wake up with renewed life."

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With this rejuvenation she began to return a few of her friends' calls, and to attend mass on Sundays, although she privately remarked to Roland that her devotion was only "for the edification of the neighbours." She took up once more the tedious, dry work of making researches and compiling articles for the *Dictionnaire*. And when the fine weather came, Sunday afternoons nearly always found her in the woods and fields round Amiens, gathering specimens for her botany note-book, or digging slips for her garden. She even, in a rare burst of frivolity, went to the theatre, in a stage-box, where foot-warmer, work-bag, and informal toilet were permissible, and, thus ensconced, she wept her way through the declamatory scenes of *Mahomet* and *L'Orphelin de Chine*.

It was a busy life, but one of very narrow interest, that Manon Phlipon Roland led in Amiens. As a girl in Paris, she had looked upon the universe and thrilled to the sight. As a young provincial matron, her horizon was bounded by food and medicines, cooks and mending and baby's milk, and her flights into the world of the intellect extended, for the most part, only as far as the endless articles on soap and dyeing, weaving, tanning, and spinning that she patiently copied out for her husband. One might suppose that marriage to a man holding a government position would at least arouse an interest in political matters. But Roland was only a cog in the machinery of the Old Régime, and while his wife was, perhaps, more sensitive to the policy of the government as it affected him, more critical of its slowness and niggardliness in rewarding his long and faithful service, the affairs of the nation, in their broader aspects, just as in the days on the Pont-Neuf, left her entirely cold. "Apropos of being talkative," she remarked in one of her letters to her husband, "Monsieur de Vin came to see me yesterday for the express purpose of telling

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me about our success in America, and the victory won against Lord Cornwallis. On arriving he greeted me with that news, and I was obliged to listen to a long political dissertation which ended only with his departure. I cannot conceive what interest a private individual can take in the affairs of kings who are not fighting for us, and this interest is always as strange to me as it is tiresome." It was fortunate for the American colonists that not everyone in France was as lukewarm about their fate as Manon! A month later she wrote: "I have learned how to keep up with society chatterboxes and professional talkers as long as it is a question of neither war nor finances, for politics bore me to death, and all of these quarrels of princes who wrangle make me want to sleep."

Of course she read the newspapers, and she knew, in a general way, what was going on. But it was only in the most perfunctory manner that she mentioned political matters in her correspondence. Court gossip, such of it as she heard, was evidently less boring than the quarrels of princes, for she usually imparted it with some detail. "They say in these parts that the Queen is already pregnant. Deuce take it, these people go to it like princes! [An interesting comment, and thoroughly typical of the bourgeois point of view. It was quite in line with the feeling of moral superiority which characterized the middle class of eighteenth-century France for Manon thus to criticize the Queen.] . . . They write here from Versailles that Madame d'Artois is lost. The newspapers contradict it. Everything is a comedy, like the festivals they are supposed to give." But when de Vergennes was made Prime Minister, she merely noted the appointment in a letter to Roland and added: "I, who do not mix into great affairs, have given the young man the main extracts of the article on weaving to copy." And for the rest of the

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letter she went on about the multitudinous details of the *Dictionnaire*, which was certainly of far more concern to her. That was natural enough, of course, and is nothing for which to criticize her. Indeed, it would scarcely be worth noticing, had not Madame Roland, shut up in her prison-cell and appealing to impartial posterity, insisted so strenuously on her lifelong interest in politics.

In the spring of 1783 she found sudden relief from good Monsieur de Vin's political dissertations when he went to Paris for a sojourn. Gratitude for her deliverance may have been mixed with the friendly cordiality which inspired her to give him a letter of introduction to Bosc. But what would her neighbour have thought of the letter about him which she sent to her friend in Paris? "For my part, I reproach him for devoting himself entirely to political reading, which makes me tired, and for allowing to go to waste all his knowledge of beautiful literature, which I love. But each to his taste!"

And so the life at Amiens went on—a life of quiet little domestic trials and joys, set to the grind of work on the *Dictionnaire* and punctuated by Roland's frequent absences from home. For some time both he and Manon had felt that he was not obtaining sufficient recognition from the government for his long and conscientious service. He was no longer a young man. He had his old age to think of, and provision for his wife and child to make. But the government of France had given no indication that merit could count on anything but itself as a reward. To Roland, and in an even greater degree to his ambitious young wife, this seemed a most unjust state of affairs. "While others laugh at my fears, I see nothing [in society] inconsistent with the general egoism and indifference of everyone to all which does not concern him," she remarked in one of her letters. "Even the

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administration, which ought to desire the preservation of valuable citizens, gives to it neither interest nor care, because it is only a name designating the machinations of some people in power, more intriguing, certainly more egotistical, and probably almost more corrupt than all the others. . . . From the depths of my soul I hate a state and customs in which the virtuous man has to compete against vile creatures, often unworthy of his contempt. Monsieur Lanthenas, in my opinion, would be quite justified in fleeing to Pennsylvania. I wish I could be with you in those deserts."

Ah! How different everything would be in a government and society controlled only by enlightened, capable, virtuous men! Men, for instance, like Roland. But such a state of affairs would be the millennium indeed, and they, at least, would never live to see it. The best one could do, then, was to face the world as it was, face it from the shelter of a philosophy that bolstered up one's feelings of superiority so that one could feel that one's obscurity and lack of power were a loss to society rather than to oneself. "In a century where intriguers alone can advance, the virtuous man has done enough for his own glory when he has merited a higher place than he occupies," she reflected consolingly. "So much the worse for the State which does not know enough to appreciate him, but the happiness of a sage is not dependent on the caprices of a bad administration."

Long ago she had found refuge and comfort in the same philosophy. When Gatien had asked her what she would do if she did not find the husband of her dreams, had she not answered proudly: "I will revenge myself upon fate by deserving the happiness which it denies me"? After all, was not Roland wrapped in the capacious cloak of his undeniable superiority? What need had he of material recognition?



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Such lofty reflections are doubtless consoling to one convinced that fate has not rewarded one according to one's just deserts. Obviously Manon and Roland, cast by blind fate into a century and society in which only those born to power possessed it, and compelled to watch all the plums of life falling into the laps of those who, it seemed, were so much less able than themselves to appreciate and make good use of them, could do nothing about it. Society had always been that way. There was no reason for supposing that it would not always remain so. But what if Roland, by some sort of happy accident, could somehow manage to crowd his way up just one tiny rung of the ladder that led to a place in the sun? Would not that be better than their present obscurity? Of course no such happy accident would of itself occur, but if they did a little setting of the stage and pulled a few wires, what might not happen? After all, the Roland family was a good one. It even possessed documents to prove that in remote times of prosperity it had been of the nobility. With the downfall of the family fortunes these titles had lapsed. But what was to prevent their restoration? Roland's superiors could order it if they chose, and if his professional work, his literary activities, were but called to their attention in the right way, how could they help choosing? With new letters of nobility and a pension of retirement—ah, how sweet then would be the retreat of a sage and a philosopher! So it seemed to Roland—and as for his good wife, it was plainer than the nose on her face.

They discussed this seductive idea, off and on, even before the birth of Eudora. Many and many a time Roland had left Amiens for the capital fired with the determination to stand before his superiors like a man and boldly demand his just rewards. But always, before he had his courage quite screwed up

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to the point, something had happened. A misunderstanding in the Department of Commerce about the affairs of Picardy, a hasty retort from the hot-tempered Roland, a sharp rebuke from the Intendants—and back to Amiens he always came, confessing to Manon that the moment had not been propitious.

Meanwhile life in Amiens grew duller and duller. Eudora, victorious at last in the struggle to keep alive, was big and strong and no longer a constant preoccupation. The *Dictionnaire* articles were edited and copied, and as fast as one was finished, there was another to be done. Letters were written—to Bosc, to Roland, to Lanthenas—answers came, and more letters had to be written. Calls were received, which only meant that they had to be returned. The garden was dug and weeded—the flowers tended. They grew, and brightened the spring and summer. Fall and winter came, the flowers perished, and the garden had to be done over again. To Manon, her health restored, her vigour and energy once more overflowing, it all began to seem frightfully monotonous. Four walls had bounded her universe for four long years when suddenly she knew she could not stand it a moment longer. Something had to be done, and where Roland's quick temper and unbending pride had failed, could not her force of character and charm of personality succeed? She was sure that they could, and her husband agreed with her. A final conference—and the first days of March 1784 saw her off to Paris, to wrest from the Intendants of Commerce the prize which virtue so clearly merited.

## CHAPTER X

### *PULLING WIRES AND FLATTERING FAVOURITES*

BECAUSE she had no comprehension of the insurmountable obstacles before her, Manon began her undertaking with sadly unwarranted confidence. That perhaps was fortunate. Without it she might have lacked courage, and her business needed much of that. In the first place, a recommendation to the King from the Royal Council of Commerce was necessary for the granting of Roland's application for letters of nobility. And this Royal Council was composed of Roland's enemies, the Intendants, those gentlemen who had been so alarmed by his projected reform, which struck at monopolies and sinecures, so disturbed by his ceaseless activity, which poked into every corner of the department, and so outraged by his brutal frankness, which ignored the commonest rules of courtesy. Clearly, nothing could be expected from *Messieurs les Intendants!*

But Manon and Roland, talking things over in the quiet little study at Amiens, thought they saw a way out of this impasse. Surely the head of the Royal Council, Monsieur de Calonne, who since April 3, 1783, had been Contrôleur-général des Finances, could not be so stupid as to allow the petty jealousies of the Intendants to prejudice him against a hard-working, conscientious inspector! If his written approval of Roland's claim could be obtained, the opposition of the Intendants would be quashed before it could accomplish anything. To Manon and her husband, ignorant of the mazes of court intrigue, nothing seemed simpler

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than for her to go directly to Calonne, who, she was sure, could never resist her persuasive arguments and feminine charm.

It did not take her long to realize what a mistake they had made. Calonne was as hedged about by favourites, hangers-on, plots, intrigues, and ceremonies as the queen of a powerful sultan's harem. From the very beginning she was assured by everyone she saw of the impossibility of seeing him. Her one hope was to use the regulation method, and work through the Intendants. With characteristic thoroughness she decided to try both means—if one failed, the other surely would succeed. "I am determined to neglect nothing—to do the possible and even the impossible," she wrote Roland.

A good friend from Amiens, Monsieur Flesselles, happened to be in Paris at the same time. It was his hope that Calonne would give him a permit to introduce Arkwright's spinning-jenny into France. It seems absurd, and yet it is true, that Flesselle's mission involved almost as much careful wire-pulling as did Manon's affair. A commercial privilege was no light matter in eighteenth-century France—the secretary of this official had to approve—the favourite of that one had to be won—a word must be spoken to Madame So-and-so, and, above all, Comtesse This-and-That must be conciliated! Many of the people whom Flesselles had to interview were in a position to help Manon, and he was more than generous about giving her introductions and arranging appointments for her. He was fortunate in knowing one person at least who might be induced to put in an influential word for Manon where it would do most good. This person was the valet de chambre of the King's sister, Madame Elizabeth, and, properly approached, he might condescend to mention Roland's claim to Monsieur de Vaudreuil. If that gentleman ap-

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proved it, one could be fairly certain that it would be presented to Calonne in a favourable light.

Manon shook her head in perplexity. Monsieur de Vaudreuil! What had he to do with it? The question betrayed her provincial point of view. It was one of the many open secrets of Paris that Monsieur de Vaudreuil was the most powerful man in France. Was he not the lover of Madame de Polignac? And was not Madame de Polignac the favourite of Marie Antoinette, and did not the foolish Queen dance to whatever tune her favourite called? And all Paris could see how completely Louis XVI was under his beautiful wife's thumb! *Ergo*, Monsieur de Vaudreuil merely told Madame de Polignac what he desired. She told the Queen, who told the King—and it was done! Already Monsieur de Vaudreuil had filled two of the most important posts in France through this indirect but most effective method. His protégé Ségur was installed as the Minister of War, after Montbarrey, the former incumbent (who, in fact, had won the post at the demand of another of the Queen's favourites), had refused to lend de Vaudreuil money. And when the frivolous Queen and her extravagant friends wearied of the stingy Necker's economical régime, it was de Vaudreuil who picked a more satisfactory Contrôleur-général des Finances in the person of Calonne.

"The finances of France are in a wretched state," remarked the new minister to his friend Machault. "You may be certain that I should never have undertaken their management but for the frightful condition of my own!"

Almost his first step on coming into office was to borrow a hundred million francs, and in this golden stream he bathed himself and everyone else in the group which had put him in power. Marie Antoinette thought that she never had had so ex-

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cellent a treasurer. It was difficult for France to maintain her army, and certainly many workers of the Third Estate had scarcely enough to eat, but the first year of Calonne's office saw a hundred and thirty-six million livres roll merrily out of the treasury. There were the Queen's huge gambling-debts to be paid, her lavish wardrobe to be replenished constantly, and her passion for costly jewels to be gratified. Far more expensive than any of these were her friendships. Who loves royalty for itself alone? Madame de Polignac was but one among dozens, and she, like all the others, acted as paymaster for her husband, her lover, her brothers, her child, her sister, her friends, and her sister's husband, lover, and friends. Besides, there were the supplanted favourites, against whose jealous anger there was but one protection for the silly Queen. When royalty's Cræsus smile has been withdrawn, what consolation is there except an increased pension? The Princesse de Lamballe, superseded by Madame de Polignac, asked that question in no uncertain terms and was hastily answered by a present of a hundred and fifty thousand livres. Yet she was already drawing a lavish income from the royal treasury.

It was this world of hard glitter and relentless intrigue that Manon had hoped to bring to her feet by a policy of simple straightforwardness! For some days after her arrival in Paris she dallied with the idea of a personal interview with Calonne. If only she could see him and tell him everything "with that force of which I feel myself capable"! She fairly itched for the opportunity, and, characteristically, she did everything in her power at least to deserve it. The task, always tedious and often debasing, of flattering the favourites of favourites and conciliating the servants of servants of royalty was never performed with greater patience and humility. She spent endless hours in ante-rooms,

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exhausted herself in innumerable trips between Paris and Versailles (her carriage hire alone was a not inconsiderable item of expense), and daily submitted to an elaborate and trying hair-dressing. For appearance counts for so much in this business of favour-seeking!

"In awaiting the outcome, whatever it may be," she wrote encouragingly to the lonely watcher for news at Amiens, "take care of yourself and your health and be at peace. We can still enjoy everything that is necessary for happiness, in spite of all the Intendants in the world."

But the next day an interview on which she had depended for much turned out to be fruitless, and she found her courage slightly weakening. "In short, you can expect nothing from these people but injustices of all kinds. But we have to make up our minds to that, and I have confidence that your resolution is at least as firm as mine."

A few days later her spirit was revived by vague promises of help obtained from a certain Madame d'Arbouville, at Versailles, whose husband was associated with Calonne. "Time, patience, diplomacy, and courage will give us something or nothing," she was able to report to Roland.

So it went, day after day. For all her cheerful patience, for all her smiling flattery, nothing happened. Small wonder that she finally wrote to her husband: "Time and patience—it is surely necessary to lose the one and gain the other in order to do anything in this country." It was all so tiring and discouraging! Yet, in spite of everything, she rather liked it. For "I am completely a solicitor and intriguing," she confided in one of the long letters to Amiens. "It is indeed a foolish career, but, after all, I have assumed it whole-heartedly, for otherwise it would be quite useless to bother."

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The days passed, and wearily she returned each evening to the Hôtel de Lyon, with no progress to report from her monotonous round of calls. She might very soon have given up the whole thing had she not been among kind and sympathetic friends. Her father she did not see. The break between them was complete. Bonnemaman Phlipon had died shortly before Manon's arrival in Paris, and she heard the news only through Sainte-Agathe. But Roland's brother the Benedictine prior came often to see her and saw that she lacked nothing to make her comfortable. Bosc, although he was frantically worried over his father's serious illness, dropped in nearly every day, usually with an interesting book or two to help her while away inevitable hours of delay and waiting. Lanthenas, still studying medicine and still lodged high beneath the roof of the Hôtel de Lyon, was constantly at her service, overjoyed to run any errand, to escort her wherever she wished to go, or to brighten one of her dull evenings. Kind Monsieur Flesselles came in often, bearing new letters of introduction and offering valuable suggestions, and Mademoiselle de la Belouze, a cousin of Roland's who lived in Paris and who knew many influential people, did everything in her power.

Of course business did not consume all of her time. The very nature of her commission meant hours of forced waiting, and endless time to kill, and it was not in Manon's nature to do it in idleness. One day when no interviews with influential people could be secured, she made a pleasant little excursion out to Vincennes, to see Uncle Bimont. He and Sainte-Agathe were the only ones of her past with whom she had not broken after her marriage. "He received me with open arms," she wrote to Roland. "I am almost astonished to find a good relative again. . . . Good heavens!"



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Music, the theatres, and the art galleries occupied some of her long afternoons and evenings. Doubtless they would have filled more had she felt that she could afford free indulgence in such luxuries. One evening she went to a concert of sacred music and saw there, of all people, Pahin de la Blancherie! Although she looked at him long and hard he gave her no sign of recognition. Was it pride or indifference, or had he really forgotten the little girl of the Pont-Neuf? She went to the opera and heard Salieri's *Danaïdes*, which everyone attributed to Gluck. Manon was no wiser. A visit to the Duke of Orleans's gallery made her want to go back again and again to see all the beautiful things it contained. The first presentation of Beaumarchais's *Le Mariage de Figaro* took place at the Théâtre-Français on April 27, 1784, and the crowds were so enormous that Manon was unable to secure tickets for some days. By the fifth of May, Paris was filled with rumours that the production would be stopped because the Queen had pronounced it indecent. "Soon it will be the fashion for women not to go," she wrote to Roland. "Anyway, that is what Mademoiselle de la Belouze and certain people believe. The first time it is given again I shall try not to miss it." She succeeded in seeing it, but in none of her letters did she say what she thought of that most sparkling gem of French comedy.

The death of Bosc's father saddened her visit. For many days she interrupted and neglected her own affairs in order to give consolation to her distracted young friend. The inevitable problems that accompany bereavement were brought, with touching confidence, for her to settle. She did her best, and the deep bond of friendship between Bosc and the Rolands was strengthened by one more fibre of devotion.

Naturally, like every visitor from the provinces, she was allured

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by the city shops. She bought herself a new hat and replenished Eudora's wardrobe. But books were more tempting than clothes, and the details of the omnipresent *Dictionnaire* articles more pressing than questions of the latest modes. She spent much time attending to Roland's affairs with Panckoucke, but when he kindly invited her to dinner, she refused because she did not know his wife. No one could say that Roland's wife did not know how to observe the proprieties!

She read with great interest Lanthenas's copy of Lavater's newly-published work on physiognomy. She would dearly have loved to buy it for Roland, but the price, six louis, was prohibitive for one who had to spend so much money in carriage hire. At the moment Paris, and indeed all France, were in a furor over the magnetic cure advanced by the German-Austrian physician Franz Mesmer. It was the universal fad. Manon and Roland saw in it a hope of relief for his many ailments, and she wrote him all she could learn about it. Their interest met with no encouragement from Bosc, the son of a physician, and Lanthenas, himself studying medicine. They stood for the established order. Mesmer, the innovator, received the cold shoulder from the orthodox doctors of the time. A running fire of argument on the subject crackled through all of Manon's and Roland's letters, for Bosc and Lanthenas often added postscripts.

Eventually Manon began to realize how excellent had been the advice which everyone had given her from the very beginning. There was no hope of seeing Calonne. Everything depended on conciliating the Intendants, and it was to this delicate and difficult task she began to bend all her energies. Mademoiselle de la Belouze knew, and frankly told Manon, what opinions the Department of Commerce entertained about Roland. His colleagues were willing to admit that he was upright, capable, and deserving,

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but they knew, too, that he was egotistical, disagreeable, and difficult to manage. Also they hated and feared his habit of arrogating to himself rights and privileges which did not belong to him. In short, he was a man whom they would not be sorry to drop from the department. Mademoiselle de la Belouze told Manon that she must not dream of asking for a title of nobility without at the same time asking for retirement. Their eagerness to get rid of the disturber would naturally incline the all-powerful Intendants to grant his request. Besides, if they knew he wanted to retire, they would not jump to the fatal conclusion that his request for a title was merely the prelude to more pretentious ambitions. Manon and Roland had already considered this aspect of the situation. They had thought of asking for retirement, simply because they wanted it. But Mademoiselle de la Belouze's opinion convinced Manon that policy even more than desire necessitated the request.

Of all the Intendants the one who most bitterly hated Roland, the one whose opposition was most virulent, was Monsieur Tolozan. The others followed his lead. Manon decided to tackle him first, feeling that if she could clear this highest hurdle successfully, the others would not be so terrifying. It was with tense nerves and pounding heart that she went to keep the appointment which, after days of delay, she finally secured. The interview, which tested to the limit her patience, her tact, and her quick wit, was immediately reported to Roland.

"Last evening I received notice of an appointment for today, between ten and eleven o'clock. I have seen the bear. I have somewhat clipped his claws, but he growled a good bit. He has promised to help me. I could win nothing more from him. Now that I have put an end to your impatience by telling you the result, I will amuse you with the details.

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“When I entered Tolozan’s study, he was in his night-cap. Rising with a sullen nod, he pointed out the arm-chair that was ready for me. I began to thank him for giving me a little time in the midst of his work. An impatient ‘What’s it about?’ warned me to cut short my courtesies. I resolved not to lose my poise. I replied very composedly that I was there to explain your situation and your wishes; that I had come to him because his sagacity, as well as his integrity in business, was well known; that from him I expected an authoritative judgment and an equitable decision; that for thirty years you had given sufficient proof of your zeal, your talents, etc. But I had scarcely begun to blow your horn when he stood up and interrupted, with extraordinary vehemence: ‘Take care not to represent him to us as a superior man! It is his contention that he is, but we are far from regarding him as such!’ From then on I had to endure an outburst, but an outburst of which I cannot possibly give you an idea.”

Tolozan, pacing up and down the study, allowed himself free rein in the accusations which he poured upon poor Roland’s absent head. The man was a pedant, his pride was insufferable, he was actuated by a vulgar greed for glory, there was no limit to the absurd pretensions which he was constantly making. Could not his wife see that he was a poor politician, aspiring to run everything, contradicting everyone else, and quite incapable of co-operation? Did she not understand, too, that he was a bad writer? If she did not believe that, he, Tolozan, would merely mention that dull, tedious, unspeakably vile book—*Lettres d’Italie*! How could they suppose that the Department of Commerce would be proud of that puerile trash?

Manon replied to this tirade with admirable calm. Had not the Intendants been annoyed by her husband’s energy? After all, his opinions came only from his hard work and his experience.

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He often did express himself forcibly, she agreed, but that came merely from his conviction that it was his duty to speak the truth at any cost. Finally, could Monsieur Tolozan honestly deny the usefulness of Roland's work, the value of his suggestions? And exactly what proof did he have to offer in support of all these vague accusations?

Tolozan answered that, as far as Roland's work was concerned, "many inspectors who have published nothing send in memoirs of which we think quite as much as of his."

"We fought long and hard. It is impossible to describe all of the petty details. To sum up—you are a good inspector, nothing more—an honourable man with talent, but you always have to be in the first place." As a matter of fact, Tolozan added that Roland was scarcely a good inspector, because, never having learned how to obey, he was unfitted to command. Besides, if he were given a title, every other inspector in the department would come begging for one, and that, to Tolozan, was a final and conclusive argument against it. In advancing it he reckoned without the quick thinking of his opponent, who immediately asked him if the other inspectors had the same right to a title that her husband possessed—a family once noble, and published works. After all, was there not some distinction between the office of inspector and the writings and reforms which the indefatigable Roland had been so proud to make a part of it? The wary Tolozan refused to fall into her trap. He reminded her that to separate those things would merely mean that Roland should be given a title because he was a man of letters. And who had ever heard of a title being awarded on those grounds? "Why not?" asked Manon spiritedly. "One was awarded to a paper merchant who made a balloon." And Tolozan, in spite of himself, had to laugh.

The upshot of their interview was that the Intendant, agreeing

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that the distinction was one worthy of the aspirations of all inspectors, expressed his hope that Roland might attain it. Meanwhile, he advised the young woman to see the other Intendants and find out how they regarded the matter. With true gallantry he complimented Manon on the way she was serving her husband, adding that her enthusiasm, pleasant to observe and hear, did her great honour. "No, monsieur, it does honour to my husband. If it is true that no man is a hero to his valet, is it not curious that this man whom you censure for a disposition that makes you forget his ability, his work, and his enthusiasm should be to his wife the most distinguished and admirable of men?"

For this, Tolozan had a witty answer, but "I will tell you all that another day. . . . I feel that I have seen the crossest of them—the others cannot possibly say anything worse. Nevertheless, he warned me that Monsieur Blondel would say as much, and Monsieur Montaran a little more."

These gentlemen, when at last she was able to interview them, proved quite different from brusque, plain-spoken Monsieur Tolozan. True diplomats, they were suave, gentle, and courteous and, under pretext of listening to her arguments, made many observations and gave much sound advice on the necessity of yielding to circumstances, and the wisdom of respecting conventions in order not to offend anyone. Their talk did not fool Manon, and she left them with the conviction that Tolozan, for all his gruff rudeness, was the only one of the lot to be trusted. But she was not discouraged and she did not doubt her ability to wring some concession from them. Deep in her heart she knew that the title was a lost cause, but retirement and possibly a pension—were they such hopeless demands to make? She did not think so, and in the mean time her admiration for that dis-

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tinguished being her husband was not too great to prevent her from cleverly taking advantage of the Intendants' criticisms to preach him a badly needed sermon on the virtues of mildness and good manners.

"Finally, I can only tell you that if you are careful about your letters, if you are milder, or if you will let me write them for only six months, by that time a general inspectorship will be due, and I wish to have it. But, above all, as I warned you before leaving, do not betray anger in your correspondence, or else let me see your letters before you send them, for you must no longer offend these people. Your pride is known well enough—now it is time for good nature. . . . My good friend, these people are not such devils. They were irritated, and it is the rudeness of your style that has done all the damage, making them think that you had a dreadful disposition and insufferable pretensions. I assure you that they can be managed."

Yet days went by and nothing happened to warrant her note of confidence. Of course the Intendants had promised to consider her claim. But promises are very unsatisfying fare when no fulfilment follows. "As a matter of fact, we are too honest to succeed!" she wrote sadly to Roland, taking refuge in her favourite philosophy of superiority. Although she had nothing tangible to show for her hard work, the game of intrigue continued to fascinate her. It was giving her, in a small but nevertheless convincing way, an opportunity which she had always craved and never had had—an opportunity to display, even to exercise, the superior talents she was sure she possessed.

"If we resided in Paris and had an income of only fifteen thousand livres, and I devoted myself to affairs (I almost said to intrigue!), I should have no difficulty in accomplishing many things," she confided to Roland.

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In a certain sense it was true. Intelligent enough to simulate the meekness and patience that she did not naturally possess, clever enough to have an answer for every argument, a proof for every statement, an explanation for every act, and artful enough to present it all in her mellowest tones, graced by her sweetest smiles and her softest glances—Roland could not have had a better advocate. In spite of themselves the Intendants, who had remained cold before Roland's articles on cotton-dyeing and unmoved by his suggested improvements in the tanning industry, forgot their dislike of the man when they looked into the clear, beautiful eyes of his lovely young wife. Still, a personality that even those most bitterly opposed to her suit pronounced charming was not enough. A few more calls were made on the Intendants. A few more pointed questions were asked and answered. At last she understood that success smiles only on those possessed of unlimited wealth and influence. Eudora was never to face the world as the daughter of a nobleman. Roland was never to retire on a pension from the government to which he had devoted his whole life. Convinced that her goal was completely beyond her reach, Manon started her preparations for leaving Paris and began to make a round of farewell calls.

While thus occupied, she made an accidental and interesting discovery. Her first prize lost, she yet, with luck, might grasp another. Lazowsky, a young protégé of the Duc de Liancourt, had succeeded in winning the favour of Calonne. Room was to be made for him in the Department of Commerce, and the accomplishment of this delicate task (for the ignorant favourite must be shielded from the inevitable jealousies of older and more capable men) involved a general shifting of positions. She was given reason to think that Roland might have the inspectorship at Lyons, which was more important and commanded a larger



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salary than that at Amiens. It had the added advantage, too, of being near Villefranche, where they could spend summers and vacations with his family. There was no time to write and consult him. She had to make up her mind at once, and she decided to try for it. The prospects were very hopeful, for the Intendants, having refused to give her the moon, were more than willing to hand her a toy. She acted with such decision and they moved with such celerity that on May 22nd she was able to write to Roland: "Well, my good friend, it is an accomplished fact. We shall go to Lyons." So the two months of patient, time-consuming intrigue had not been in vain, after all. She had at least gained a little, if not all that she wanted. By the end of May she was out of Paris. Roland met her for the return journey to Amiens, and they made a little holiday of it, taking an excursion to Ermenonville, to shed sentimental tears at Rousseau's tomb.

Plunged into the political maelstrom of 1793, Roland was inevitably charged by his enemies with the crime of having once coveted for himself a title of nobility. Madame Roland, writing her memoirs after her arrest, naturally felt it incumbent upon herself to defend him. Since the one aim of her appeal to impartial posterity was the presentation of a consistent picture of herself and her husband as lifelong opponents of despotism and ardent lovers of liberty, she found it a sadly embarrassing thing to explain—this attempt, by people of pronounced republican views, to gain a title of nobility. The one justification that she could make must have seemed to her a pitifully weak one. After briefly outlining her two months' campaign, she wrote: "I do not know the man who at that period and in his [Roland's] position, would not have thought it a wise step to take."

She was entirely right. After all, 1784 was not 1793. At the time it was natural enough for Roland and his wife to look

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upon a title as suitable recognition of his many years of faithful service to the despotic government of France. No one would have criticized them for seeking one; no one would have thought their action at all extraordinary or inconsistent. And, in fact, it was neither. Rather, it was so thoroughly in keeping with the world which crashed in 1789 that only the extreme self-consciousness of her republicanism made it necessary for Madame Roland in 1793 to trouble to explain it.

Back in Amiens, the weeks flew by in a busy whirl of preparation for departure. The Rolands did not go directly to Lyons. Business affairs demanded that the inspector first make a brief trip to England, and he decided to take his wife with him. On July 1st, accompanied by Monsieur de Vin and Lanthenas, they set out—a little group of serious thinkers. Manon had never before been out of France, and for her the journey was an exciting adventure. She made short notes of her trip and, guided by the practical Roland, took pains to remark upon the flourishing crops, the well-fed sheep, the verdant meadows, the rosy-cheeked English maidens, and the stalwart youths. Even the poor people seemed contented and happy. Since, like most of her contemporaries, Manon had heard more about "Constitutional Monarchy," "House of Commons," and "Parliament" than she had about "Rotten Boroughs" and "Corruption," she attributed everything good that she saw in England to the magic influence of those sacred words and viewed the neighbouring island through rose-coloured spectacles.

"I will not discuss our trip, with which I am extremely satisfied," she wrote to Bosc when she had returned to Amiens. "We will soon talk together, and that will be much better. We employed our time as you can imagine . . . and I shall always remember with great interest that country whose constitution

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Delolme has already made me know and love, and where I have seen the happy results of that constitution. Fools may chatter, but believe me, in England there are people who have the right to laugh at us."

The last days in Amiens were clouded by a misunderstanding with Monsieur de Gomiecourt, Sophie Cannel's husband. He was many years her senior, but Sophie, fearing spinsterhood and urged to the joys of wedded life by Manon, had married him two years before. The breach is scarcely surprising, for Roland had never been sympathetic towards the old friendship, and Sophie's husband, too, was quite evidently a man with a will and purpose of his own. Manon felt bad, and yet, turning her restless, energetic eyes towards a new and, she hoped, more interesting life, she could scarcely regard this quarrel as any more than the tiniest fly in her ointment. It was with a light heart indeed that she packed up the books and engravings and superintended Roland in the business of cording the heavy boxes and closing the overflowing trunks.

Roland had purchased a cabriolet for their journey, and on August 23rd he stowed his wife, the baby, her *bonne*, and their numerous bundles and possessions within its capacious interior. Farewell to Amiens! Hail to Lyons, Villefranche, and Le Clos! They made their way circuitously, stopping at Rouen, to say good-bye to the Demoiselles Malortie; at Dieppe, for a last visit to the Cousin-Despréaux family; and at Paris, for a final glimpse of Bosc and Lanthenas and a few words with Panckoucke. Then on to Longpont, where they embraced the dear brother, the Benedictine prior, and at last they were headed, via Dijon, on the road to Villefranche. Rain-storms, heat-waves, break-downs, bad roads, sick horses, unreliable drivers—all of the vicissitudes of eighteenth-century travel marked their progress and at least

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broke the monotony of the long journey. At last Villefranche was reached, and, remaining there only one day, out of courtesy to Canon Dominique and the venerable Dame Thérèse Bessye, they pushed on to Le Clos. It was October 3rd, the season of grape-gathering and the time of the annual vintage festival. Could weary travellers find a lovelier spot or more delightful circumstances in which to rest?

## CHAPTER XI

### PROVINCIAL DULLNESS

ROLAND'S salary at Lyons was larger than at Amiens, but neither he nor Manon felt justified in establishing themselves in the city. It seemed foolish to take a house there when Villefranche, where she and Eudora could spend the winters with Canon Dominique and Mother Roland, was only a few miles away. And in the pleasant weather they would all be at Le Clos. So Roland very sensibly rented a tiny apartment for his business, where Manon could come occasionally and indulge in a week or two of city life, while she settled down with the family in Villefranche.

It was not, from her point of view, an ideal existence. Four years ago, seen through the indulgent eyes of a visitor, the provincial village had seemed attractive. Now, viewing it critically as a place of residence, Manon found little that was to her liking. "Here the great luxury is that of the table," she wrote to Bosc. "The smallest bourgeois household serves finer meals than the wealthiest families at Amiens and a good many well-to-do people in Paris. Shabby homes, luxurious tables, fine dress, and constant and reckless gambling—that is the style of the town, where the roofs are flat, and where the sewage is drained into the streets. On the other hand, they are not stupid here. They talk well, without accent or solecisms. The tone of society is courteous and agreeable, but the people are rather—in fact, a great deal—lacking in cultivation. Our counsellors are personages regarded as very important, our advocates are as haughty as

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those in Paris, and our solicitors as sharp and shady as anywhere. For the rest, here it is the opposite of Amiens, where the women in general are better than the men. Here, on the contrary it is the women who show the provincial manner more plainly."

These criticisms did not keep Manon from realizing what her position as a member of one of the town's most prominent families demanded. She was careful to return the calls that she received, to repay her social obligations, and in all ways to conduct herself in a manner becoming to the wife of a government official and the sister-in-law of a canon. Writing to Roland that she was very busy making calls on the ladies of Villefranche, she added: "It would have been indecent to present myself in public without paying off these debts, and next week (Easter) will be completely taken up with Church, where I shall have to show myself with the others."

Although they were genuinely fond of her, at times Manon found both the canon and her mother-in-law extremely trying. Dominique was a town councillor, a member of the local Academy, and director of the nuns at the hospital. In his small world he was an important and influential person. He shared the fondness for literature, gossip, and other worldly things that characterized most of the higher clergy of eighteenth-century France, but he also shared their narrow prejudices. His religion was that of a dogmatist, his politics those of a conservative, and his disposition that of a domestic tyrant. Manon treated him with a sort of friendly hypocrisy and managed thereby to get on very well with him. "I let him have the satisfaction of thinking that his dogmas seem as evident to me as they appear to him, and outwardly I conduct myself in a manner appropriate for the provincial mother of a family, who should set a good example

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to everyone," she confessed to Bosc. "Since I was very devout in my early youth, I know the Scriptures and even the church-services as well as I know my philosophers, and I willingly make use of this early learning, which greatly edifies him."

Far more difficult than the canon was Dame Thérèse Bessye, eighty-five years old, "venerable because of her age—terrible because of her temper." Pleasure-loving, thoughtless, and extravagant, her critical, complaining disposition and her sharp, disagreeable tongue gave Manon much unhappiness, until, reflecting that, after all, life cannot be perfect, she learned to take the old lady's tantrums philosophically. And when the atmosphere became too strained for philosophy, she would flee to the Clos, and send Bosc, whose sympathy helped her to bear all the family troubles, another little confession. "You see me still here, where I came for eight days and where I shall probably stay for two months. Economic considerations caused the first resolution—physical and moral well-being bring the change in plan. Our mother, it is true, lives during our absence at as great an expense as if we were all there; strangers take our place at table, but what can we do? Here we are in the asylum of peace and liberty. We no longer hear scolding from morning until night. We no longer see a stubborn countenance where, turn and turn about, insouciance and jealousy show themselves; where spite and anger, covered with irony, appear whenever we have some success or receive some marks of consideration. We breathe a pure air, we surrender ourselves to friendship, to confidence, without fearing to irritate, by their manifestations, a harsh soul who has never known them herself and who is offended at seeing them in others. In a word, we can go about, work or play, without the sad certainty that everything we do, whatever it is, will be blamed, criticized, and wrongly interpreted."

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The mundane cares of domestic life had been always time-consuming and sometimes boring at Amiens. At Villefranche they were more so. Dame Thérèse Bessye had the temperament of the hostess without the industry and good sense of the housewife. For many years her son Dominique had had to run the establishment as best he could, laying in the necessary provisions, overseeing the servants, and keeping his canonical eyes on everything from parlour to kitchen. Naturally, he had not enjoyed these responsibilities, and he was delighted to turn them over to his sister-in-law.

"This is the way I spend my time," she wrote to Bosc. "After rising I am busy with my husband and child. I have one of them read while I give them both their breakfast. Then I leave them together in the study, or the little one with her *bonne* if the papa is away, and I see to all the duties of the household, from cellar to attic. The fruits, the wine, the linen, and other details give me some new work every day. If there is time before dinner (and notice that we dine at noon, and we must be dressed, because we are likely to have company that the mamma loves to invite), I use it in the study, in the work I have always shared with my husband. After dinner we remain together for a while, and I am always with my mother-in-law until she has visitors. I sew during that interval. As soon as I am free, I go back to the study and begin or continue to write. When evening comes, my brother joins us. We read the newspapers, or something better. Occasionally several men come in. If I am not reading, I sew quietly while listening, and I am careful that the child does not interrupt us, for she never leaves us except during some formal meal, when, as I do not wish her to annoy anyone, or anyone to pay any attention to her, she stays in her room or goes out with her *bonne* and does not appear until dessert is over. I make only



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such calls as are absolutely necessary. Sometimes, though rarely until recently, I go out to walk in the afternoon with my husband and Eudora. With some differences in detail, each day sees me repeat the same circle. English, Italian, music—all these are left behind. They are tastes and acquirements that lie buried under the ashes, where I shall find them again to teach my Eudora as she develops.”

It was certainly not an exciting existence. On the whole, however, it was a happy one, in spite of monotony and a touch of austerity. Manon, philosophical except for occasional moods of restless rebellion, decided that it was the life “most favourable to the practice of virtue” and tried her best to congratulate herself on enjoying it. What matter that the canon was domineering and the old mother-in-law selfish and exasperating? What matter that Eudora was a frolicsome, indolent, thoughtless child whom Manon, remembering her own busy, studious girlhood, scarcely understood? What matter that Roland, more overworked than ever, grew more fretful and censorious with every year that passed? Did not her care and industry bring order and peace into everything that surrounded them? Was not Roland, for all his acidulous disposition, a “man of much merit,” whom she loved “infinitely”? She told Bosc so, often enough—perhaps too often. And did Manon have to understand Eudora in order to make the child’s interests her constant solicitude?

Eudora, alas, was much of a perplexity and something of a disappointment to her ambitious mother. She was not a stupid child, for she learned her letters quickly enough and was apt at picking up everything, even, to her mother’s horror, the gardener’s profanity. But she did not care for books or study, she was too fond of play and amusement, and she was frivolous and indolent. Manon, eager, like all parents, for her daughter to

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duplicate her own tastes, persisted in trying to teach Eudora to love reading as she did. Her efforts had no great success. "That little fool Eudora reads and writes very well, but none the less she scorns all books," the despairing mother wrote to Bosc. The child was as wilful and obstinate as she was lazy. Manon and Roland tried every kind of discipline—scoldings, whippings, bread-and-water suppers. It was of no avail. Eudora, unmindful, went serenely on her way, only sometimes "crying for three minutes." She was a sore trial to Manon, especially when Roland was away. "Your brother tells me that you were exactly like her when you were a child," she wrote, "just as insouciant and aggressive. Thus I am greatly reassured as to the future."

Not until the poor child was nearly seven did the Spartan mother see her rigorous training bring results. The picture that she drew of Eudora at that time in one of her letters to Bosc is by no means unattractive. It seemed that the child was now more amenable to discipline. She had, they thought, more dread of the sense of having done wrong than of the dry bread they gave her for punishment, and occasionally she was more pleased with having done right than with the piece of sugar won as a reward. She enjoyed writing and dancing "as long as those exercises do not tire her head. Reading amuses her when she knows of nothing better to do, which is not frequent, and she only endures stories which do not take more than half an hour to finish." Manon tried to teach her music, and Eudora rewarded her efforts by playing very well. She loved pretty clothes, and her favourite pastime was running and playing in the country. Her complexion was rather pale, but, like her mother, she blushed easily, especially when she was embarrassed. "She is very strong, and her temperament is like that of her father. . . . Although she plays a great

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deal with him she reveres her father, even to the point of asking me, as a very great favour, to conceal her little misdemeanours from him. She fears me less, and sometimes speaks to me lightly, but I am her confidante in all things, and she is greatly embarrassed when we are embroiled, for she no longer knows from whom to demand her pleasures, nor to whom to recount her follies."

Surely a baby of whom many mothers would have been proud! Manon loved Eudora—she had nothing for her but affection and tenderness—but the child's lack of enthusiasm for study and reading was a bitter blow to her pride. Like so many mothers, she was inclined to blame it on herself. Could she have devoted all of her time to Eudora's education, might not that indifferent indolence, so mortifying to a brilliant parent, have been overcome? But Manon was Roland's wife as well as Eudora's mother, and his work made first claim upon her time and strength. "In a library, between two desks, where close research is going on and silence is necessary, it is quite natural that the child should grow weary, especially when she is forbidden to sing or to chatter and cannot even talk with anyone." Manon turned to her beloved Rousseau for help with this problem and reread *La Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Émile*. But for once the master failed her. Julie, whose children were so happy, peaceable, and charming, was not, fortunately for her, helping her husband write the *Dictionnaire des manufactures, arts, et métiers*! But Manon resolved to do the best she could—to control her temper, to be just in the matter of punishments, and, if possible, to make Eudora feel happier with herself and Roland than with anyone else. She learned at last that if nature had not fitted the child for study, it was useless to insist. She could not suppress an occasional sigh of disappointment as she thought of how much she had counted on reading and studying with

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Eudora, on renewing all of her own accomplishments and interests for the child's inspiration and benefit; how— But it was not to be, and she could only make the best of it.

One reason, perhaps, why Manon was far happier at the Clos de la Platière than at Villefranche was that Eudora, away from books and lessons, and with the garden and orchard to run and play in, was at her best. Besides, the Clos gave Manon a chance to be mistress in her own household, for the irritating old mother-in-law never ventured from Villefranche, and Canon Dominique was only an occasional, and therefore welcome, visitor. It was to the Clos that Manon and Roland fled whenever his confining labours permitted him a brief vacation. They came to regard it as their very own, nourishing that feeling by the hope that some day Dominique would really deed it to them. He knew their desire, and, although he hesitated for several years, at last, in 1787, he yielded to it. Thenceforth Manon and Roland felt that there, at least, they had a home to call their own.

This manor, situated in the commune of Thézé, ten kilometres from Villefranche, was set in a beauty-spot among the foot-hills of the Beaujolais range. When Manon and Roland turned to its rural delights, they followed a road that for some distance led along the edge of a pleasant valley. The country, not so intensively cultivated as it is today, was divided into grain and pasture lands, interspersed with vineyards. Presently the road turned upwards, climbing and winding in and out among the hills, and each sharp curve brought the travellers an enchanting glimpse of the distant expanses of the valley far below. The tiny hamlet of Thézé, perched upon a low mountain ridge, boasted only one street, lined with houses beautifully fashioned of the native russet, terra-cotta, and greyish-purple stone. At the end of the street rose the high yellow wall which enclosed

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the red-roofed manor-house, outbuildings, orchard, vineyard, and gardens of the Clos.

The house itself, consisting of a main building with a pavilion at either end, was a spacious, dignified dwelling, with large, airy rooms. On the far side, overlooking the valley, was the flower-garden, bounded by a broad stone terrace. Here Manon had decorative tubs of orange and lemon trees, and here were the blossoming shrubs, the sweet-scented lilacs, and the fragrant Provence roses that she loved. To the right stretched the orchard and vineyard, and to the left lay the kitchen-garden, where Manon fought valiantly, aided by written directions from Bosc, to save the artichokes and other vegetables from plagues of devouring caterpillars. Behind the manor-house and facing the street that led through Thézé, were the outhouses, grouped round a grassy court.

It was in this lovely spot that Manon, far from the petty annoyances of Villefranche society, and safe from Dame Thérèse Bessye's carping criticisms, spent the happiest days of her life. They were laborious days, for then, as now, country life meant much hard work, indoors and out. But if she spent long hours making preserves, mulled wine, and bonbons, bleaching linen, shaking down walnuts, and gathering plums and pears to dry in the attic, she also had enchanting hours of relaxation on the terrace among her roses, or in the leafy woods near by. "In the country I pardon everything," she wrote to Bosc. "When you know I am there, you may, in your letters, show yourself to me exactly as you are. You may be eccentric, you may preach to me, you may even be cross, if you like. I have abundant indulgence, and my friendship tolerates every mood and harmonizes with every tone."

Often the Clos would resound with the friendly merriment of

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an informal house party. Manon and Roland were hospitable people, and the many friends that he made in his business enjoyed coming to the Clos for a taste of country life and a breath of country air. Lanthenas was there half the time. Bosc would have been could he have left his duties in the Post Office at Paris. Most of the visitors were men, although Madame Chevandier, an Italian lady "full of vivacity, charm, and talent," and Madame Braun, a German Protestant "who added to unusual goodness an extraordinary degree of learning," were occasional guests. The petty nobility and the clergymen of the neighbourhood dropped in to add to the sociability of the house parties. Luxury was unknown at the manor, and Roland and Manon provided only the simplest of entertainment for their friends. But a charming atmosphere of freedom pervaded the household, the food was wholesome, the water excellent, and the wine tolerable. There were beautiful drives and picturesque walks to be taken, and since the Rolands entertained only serious-minded people with cultivated tastes, the conversation was usually interesting. Most of the guests who had been there once were glad to come again.

There were many local festivals and fête-days, too, when the peasants from the neighbouring country-side would gather at the Clos for two or three days' merry-making. Fifes and violins would furnish music for dancing, and the master and mistress would provide simple but abundant refreshment. Thus was the annual vintage celebrated in the fall, and on Ascension Day, in May, the local fête of the commune was commemorated. The principal feature of this anniversary, which probably descended from some pagan sacrificial festival, was a solemn procession, headed by music, in which a huge *brioche*, or cake, was borne all over the premises. Afterwards the cake was cut and distributed, with much

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ceremony, and the fête ended with dancing and unrestrained fun-making.

It was something of a shock for city-bred Manon to see that these same peasants, ready as they always were for any kind of harmless merriment, led, for the most part, lives of unadulterated misery. "We are astonished and moved sometimes at the descriptions of hard and savage life among people far away, without reflecting that our peasants, for the most part, are a hundred times more miserable than the Caribs, the Greenlanders, or the Hottentots," she remarked in one of her letters to Roland. "Thus death seems a solace, both to the one who dies and to those who survive. I have just noticed a case of this with a woman of sixty years, who could have recovered had she been cared for in time, but these people suffer for months without stopping their work. They take to their beds without complaining . . . never thinking of the doctor, or fearing the expense of having him come, calling the *curé* in the last agony, and dying while thanking God for deliverance. However, evidences of interest in their fate astonish and touch them. They are ready to do everything directed by a person who they feel has no other end than that of helping them. There is no better school for the appreciation of all the social passions and the cares which they engender than the spectacle of the death of the poor. Yes, I feel that I could spend all my life in the country. . . . One can do good without being rich, and be human without too much pain."

Just how well country life suited her is shown again and again in the letters to Bosc. They are not long and introspective, like those she wrote to Sophie so many years before, but they possess a spontaneous joyousness that Manon's pen never reached before or after. If she was not completely happy at the Clos, she was

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at least happy enough. "Well, good-day, my friend! I have not written to you for a long time, but it is nearly a month since I have touched a pen. I am acquiring some of the tastes of the ass whose milk is restoring my health. I am becoming frightfully asinine, with all the little tasks of piggish country life. I am preserving pears, which will be delicious. We are drying grapes and plums. We are bleaching and making up linen. We lunch on white wine and then stretch out on the grass to sleep ourselves sober. We work at the vintage and then rest in the woods or the fields. We are shaking down the nuts. All the fruits for winter are gathered and spread out in the attic. . . . We make the doctor [Lanthenas] work, Heaven knows! Good-bye, we must have breakfast and then go in a crowd to gather almonds."

In Lyons, where she spent an occasional winter fortnight with Roland, Manon saw still another side of life. Here was leisure, freedom from rural or domestic cares, and a moderate amount of gaiety and luxury. Roland's little apartment, cheerful and sunny, had an attractive view of the Saône River. They went to the theatre—a dissipation unknown in stolid Villefranche—and Manon revelled in dinner-parties where conversation took the place of gambling as entertainment.

Sometimes, too, they spent an intellectual afternoon or evening at one of the Academy sessions. Roland was an enthusiastic member of fifteen different Academies, for there was no more effective way of establishing contact with the literary and scientific men of the time. Even poky little Villefranche, like busy Lyons, had its Academy, and Roland wrote for the one as industriously as for the other. These Academies, associations for the cultivation of sciences, literature, and the industrial arts, filled a valuable and honoured rôle in the cultural life of eighteenth-century France. They established prizes for the best essays on every



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conceivable subject, gave lecture courses, and sometimes even sponsored schools. Roland's papers, which are preserved today in the archives of the Academies at both Villefranche and Lyons, bear witness to the range and diversity of his interests. Material gathered for an article for the *Dictionnaire* would often, naturally, serve for an Academy paper as well, but he also wrote on such subjects as "The Population of the City of Lyons," and a "Discourse Concerning Women." These articles, revised, edited, and copied by Manon, broadened her field of interests, and until political quarrels divided and embroiled the members of the Academies, she derived as much pride and pleasure from the intellectual associations to which they led as did her husband.

In 1787 Roland took a brief vacation and, accompanied by Manon, Eudora, and brother Pierre, the prior of Longpont, made a little jaunt to Switzerland. It was no new experience for him, of course, but how he enjoyed conducting his little family round this interesting country and introducing them to the savants and scholars who were his friends! They visited Geneva, Bern, Lucerne, Zürich, Schaffhausen, Basel, Strasbourg and Mulhouse, and, late in July, returned home by way of Châlons and Besançon. As usual, Manon kept a journal, in which she noted with satisfaction the intelligence and industry of the Swiss people, and their apparent success with a popular form of government. This interested her, as it interested all of the intelligentsia of the Age of Enlightenment. She made many friends and met several well-known men, like Lavater, the famous physiognomist, who delighted her by making silhouettes of herself and Roland, and Albert Gosse, with whom she later kept up a correspondence.

A part of Manon's *Voyage en Suisse* was published in a Lyons magazine, *Le Conservateur*, and thus she became, in a way, a professional author. To do her justice, she would have scorned

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the name. Indeed, so great was her fear of "ever becoming like a woman author" that she insisted on her contribution's appearing anonymously. Perhaps she was thinking of silly Madame de Puisieux, who, years ago at Vincennes, had made such an impression on her youthful mind.

While Manon was working at her vintage, writing and studying with Roland, and accommodating herself to the dull society of Villefranche, storm-clouds of disaster were gathering on the national horizon. The foolish Calonne, who believed that by appearing rich one could become so, and who had applied the mad doctrine to the finances of France, had at last succeeded in killing the goose that laid the golden eggs. In 1787 France, her treasury empty, faced a deficit of one hundred and forty million livres. It was an emergency, and Calonne, whose mind was better at grasping the intricate figures of a minuet than at working out a sound financial policy, could think of no way to face it except by levying a new land-tax—preferably a measure under which all the property in France should be on equal terms before the tax-collector. The idea was not original with him. Necker, his unpopular predecessor, had advocated much the same step, a fact which Louis XVI pointed out to Calonne when the latter submitted his report. The imperturbable minister merely remarked that under the circumstances nothing more feasible could be suggested.

There were some obstacles in the way of his plan. It was extremely unlikely that the Parlement of Paris would register such a decree. Of course that body had behind it a long history of unsuccessful opposition to unpopular royal decrees, but in the present juncture could the monarchy afford to risk a quarrel and the inevitable stirring of public opinion that would accompany it? Calonne did not think so. Neither did Louis XVI. Therefore

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they decided to convoke an Assembly of Notables, with whom the King himself could discuss the plans for relieving the financial distress of the nation. It was an old idea, made novel by sudden revival, for the last such assembly had met in 1626. It was the deluded hope of Calonne and the King that the weighty authority of such an august body would be sufficient to quash the opposition of the Parlement and stifle the fears of the people. The plan came to nothing. The Assembly of Notables, composed of nobles and presided over by princes of the blood, ended its sitting on May 25, 1787, with a natural refusal to approve Calonne's plan. Why indeed should they, exempt from taxation and endowed with the right, from time immemorial, to tax others, surrender these desirable privileges? It was the end of everything for Calonne. Driven into a corner, he was compelled to confess the yawning deficit in the treasury and his inability to cope with the situation. He attributed his difficulties to Necker's poor management, but his excuses were in vain. He was dismissed and exiled to Lorraine.

His successor, Loménie de Brienne, chosen, alas, by the Queen and her friends, fared no better. The steadily increasing deficit drove him to propose not only a land-tax, but a stamp-tax to be levied universally as well. Naturally, the Parlement of Paris refused to register the decrees. Louis XVI indulged in a royal frown—the Parlement remained obdurate. Royal commands, followed by exile of the Parlement from Paris to Troyes and the arrest and imprisonment of its leaders, on May 6, 1788, only increased the recalcitrance of that body, now grown immensely popular for its defence of national rights.

While things were thus at a standstill, de Brienne did his best to fill the bottomless hole in the treasury by economies, especially in the royal household. He endeavoured to persuade the clergy

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to surrender their privileges, and he appropriated the funds of the hospitals. It was like fighting a conflagration with a watering-can, and he won nothing for his strenuous efforts but the enmity of the Queen's friends, who turned thumbs down on his proposed economies. Meanwhile the Parlement of Paris came out with the declaration that only the Estates-general, a representative assembly chosen by the whole nation, could pass legal financial measures, and in this opinion the provincial Parlements concurred. The question had become one of national importance.

De Brienne was at his wits' end, but the cunning of desperation enabled him to evolve a plan whereby the stubborn Parlement might be overridden and its authority nullified. If minor law-courts (*bailliages*) were established in which petty cases could be tried at less cost, the revenues of the Parlement would be curtailed, and if a plenary court, composed of twenty-one nobles, was set up to register de Brienne's financial decrees, the Parlement, for all its opposition, would be helpless. This plan, absurd and inept as it was, met with the approval of the Queen and her brother-in-law, the Comte d'Artois, to whom she had turned for consolation when her former friends, enraged by the threat of economy in her household, deserted her. It is doubtful if, even could the plan have been kept secret until after its execution, as de Brienne wished, anything could have been accomplished thereby. But news of it leaked out, spreading over an incensed country, and nothing came of it. The famous Plenary Court met once, and then, in response to violent popular protest, dissolved.

This humiliating failure convinced de Brienne that the one solution to the nightmare problem lay in yielding to the Parlement of Paris and summoning the Estates-general. Thus he advised the King. On August 8, 1788, a decree formally summoning

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that body to meet the following May was issued. The Estates-general, like the Assembly of Notables, had not appeared in French history for more than a century and a half. It was all very well to talk about it and to predict what it would accomplish, but the fact remained that no one, not even the members of the Parlement, had any but the vaguest idea of the composition, proceedings, and powers of this long-defunct body. Scholars began to conduct researches into its history, thinkers racked their brains on the subject, and a second Assembly of Notables was called, on November 6, 1788, to debate the question. France was deluged with a storm of pamphlets, and people began to talk about a constitution. Two questions were uppermost in all minds. First, to what representation was the Third Estate entitled? As much as the nobility, or the clergy, or as much as these two higher orders combined? Secondly, should the members vote individually or by group? The second question was the crux of the matter. If the voting was done by group, the two higher orders, nobility and clergy, would naturally combine to outvote the Third Estate. If, on the other hand, the individual members cast their votes separately, the Third Estate, to whom Louis XVI, on the advice of Necker (hastily recalled after de Brienne's failure), had conceded double representation, would control everything.

This vexatious question was skilfully side-stepped by the second Assembly of Notables, but on January 24, 1789, the election of representatives to the Estates-general began, and the people of France, district by district, began to prepare their *cabiers*. These were documents stating the grievances and sufferings of the French people, the remedies for which they hoped, the reforms they desired, and the compromises they would consider. They are at once the portrait and the indictment of the old régime in France. Groups of *cabiers* for certain regions have

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been carefully and exhaustively studied by leading French historians, and their authenticity has been conclusively established. For the most part the *cabiers* from the rural districts were drawn up by the peasants themselves. The information which they present has been tested as rigidly as could be by comparison with municipal archives and registers and other contemporary documents. Historians are agreed that the picture they paint of eighteenth-century France is an accurate one, and the accusation they level against the old régime a just one. Without some knowledge of the *cabiers* no one can hope to understand the cruel and subtle social and economic problems which weighed upon the French people at the eve of the Revolution.

The Estates-general assembled with imposing ceremony at Versailles on May 5, 1789. The weeks between then and July 14th, when the Paris mob triumphantly stormed the Bastille, are now a part of world history. Every schoolboy knows the story—how the Estates-general, once assembled, took up the business of verifying credentials, how the Third Estate quarrelled with the nobility and the clergy over this question, and how the representatives of the people resolutely stood their ground. The two privileged orders withdrew—the Third Estate refused to countenance such withdrawal. It demanded that all steps be taken by the whole Assembly as a body, acting together, and it determined that sittings should be public, with deliberations reported in the newspapers. When the nobility and the clergy ignored its demands, it proceeded alone to the verifying of its credentials, and on June 17th, overwhelmingly backed by popular will, it constituted itself “the National Assembly.” Meanwhile the lower clergy, realizing that their interests lay with the Third Estate rather than with the prelates, joined the group. On June 20th, finding their place of assembly locked, the

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deputies took refuge in the great building known as the Tennis-court, and there bound themselves in solemn oath not to disband until a new constitution, establishing the rights of the people, had been drawn up for France. Louis XVI, terrified at this unheard-of determination, feebly offered concessions, but accompanied them with a command to the three orders to vote separately. It was too late. The nobles and the higher clergy joined the Assembly, now a truly national body in deed as well as in name. The King, too frightened or perhaps too stupid to know when he had been beaten, yielded with apparent submissiveness to the popular will. But mysterious and foreboding gatherings of foreign troops occurred round Versailles and in the suburbs of the capital. The Comte d'Artois was heard to remark that the King would only have to pretend submission until his forces of foreign regiments—Swiss, Alsatian, and Walloons—were concentrated, and he added ominously that "many heads must fall." The secret dismissal of Necker, whose suspicions that King and Court were but waiting a favourable moment for a coup d'état made him too dangerous a person in the palace, crystallized, when it became known, the vague distrust of the people. The news reached Paris, the mob gathered, the foreign troops, never bound very securely to the tottering monarchy, melted away before it, and the thrilling days of July 14th and 15th saw the National Assembly saved by the people for the people. The two brief years after the first Assembly of Notables was summoned and dissolved saw more history made in France than the whole preceding century.

Naturally Manon, though she was far from Paris, buried in all the nullity and vacuity of the provinces, knew something of what had been going on for two years. What did she think about it all? For several years after they moved to Villefranche, her interest in politics continued to be perfunctory. The letters to Bosc

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inquire for news of the *littérateurs* and the scientists, for reports of the exhibitions, museums, and Academies—but on political matters they are silent, unless lively curiosity about the scandal of the Queen's diamond necklace and the resulting arrest of the Cardinal de Rohan be regarded as an interest in politics. When the first Assembly of Notables was summoned, in January 1787, Canon Dominique followed the affair with considerable interest. Manon was merely bored and, when she was absorbed in other matters, found it very trying to have to listen to her brother-in-law's political discussion. He had much to say about it one evening when she was waiting for the mail, full of eager expectation for a letter from Roland, and she wrote later to her husband that it was only with the greatest difficulty that she was able to answer him at random. The following day, she remarked in her letter to Bosc: "Tell Lanthenas that if he would be in favour with my brother, he should take care to intersperse his letters with political news. . . . If you were nice, you would send me a little, but I believe that you, like myself, yawn over the newspapers."

On May 19, 1788, she wrote to Bosc that she had been sick for a month, "but," she added, "why mention private ills when there are public ones?" The question referred to the struggle between Loménie de Brienne and the Parlement of Paris, but it is the question of a casual and indifferent spectator. During that same month Paris was stirred by the attack which Carra, who was later to become a well-known member of the National Convention, made upon Calonne. Manon questioned Bosc at some length concerning Carra. What kind of man was he? What had been the effect of his writings? Was her concern dictated by the fact that Carra was attacking the man who had done so much to hasten the ruin of her country? Not at all. Carra had stated that



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the spinning-jenny had been introduced into France by the Messieurs Miln. This denied the real introducers, Messieurs Flesselles and Martin, the honour which was their due. Roland burned to avenge his friends—a desire which of course he could realize by an article in the *Dictionnaire*. It was for that reason that Manon asked Bosc so many questions about Carra.

She approved, though mildly, as one who was not too much concerned about it, the resistance of the Parlement, and criticized, though reasonably and calmly, the establishment of Brienne's plenary court. "People here say that Necker's reply [to Calonne] is ready, but in order to publish it he would have to leave the kingdom. What are they saying in your world? We, who in spite of his character think him pretty much of a charlatan, doubt the existence of that reply, and its value if it is formulated. . . . All the little courts [the *bailliages* instituted by Brienne] are satisfied with the Revolution. It is only we plebeians, who stand to lose before anybody can cry 'Beware!', who do not find this business of registration and the formation of a plenary court subservient to the King very good. Then, the powers given to the lower judiciary seem to us too great. In small localities, where gossip and prejudices have so much influence, the fortune of almost all individuals lies at the discretion of judges who are easily deceived and mistaken." These criticisms were just, reasonable, and intelligent. But they were made by Manon Phlipon Roland in much the same manner that, as a young girl, she had written to Sophie of the attempt to suppress the Parlements in 1774. The fiery spirit of Madame Roland, revolutionist and Egeria of the Gironde, was yet waiting to be born.

Necker's recall did not please her, but in judging it her attitude was purely personal. Roland never had agreed with Necker's theories and policies, and Manon hoped that the re-

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instated minister would never see the bold notes of criticism that her husband had inserted in the *Dictionnaire*.

Her first mention of the summoning of the Estates-general was in a letter to Bosc, dated October 8, 1788. "That recall of the Estates of 1614, those pretensions, that tone and language, are very singular. We have only to learn whether we will vegetate sadly under the rule of a single tyrant, or tremble under the yoke of several united despots. The alternative is terrible and leaves no choice, for no one knows how to choose between two bad courses. If the debasement of the nation is less general in an aristocracy than under the despotism of an unbridled monarch, the condition of the people is sometimes harder, and it would be so among us, where privileges are everything, and the most numerous class counts for nothing. They say that high finance is leagued against Monsieur Necker. What is that minister doing, and is he still firm in his position?" Here again are the reasoned, intelligent comments of a disinterested observer. But what her remarks possess in justness they lack in warmth, and it is impossible to feel that Manon has any vital interest one way or another in what is happening to the nation.

Late in May 1789 Roland was stricken with a severe and dangerous illness. For nearly a fortnight Manon did not remove her clothes and scarcely slept. For nearly three months she was virtually chained to his bedside, nursing him through a tedious and worrisome convalescence. She wrote Bosc a brief note on June 9th, telling him of Roland's illness. Her next extant letter is dated July 26th. Any letters that she wrote during this interval have been lost. It is a great pity, for the letter of July 26th, seething with Revolutionary fervour, is in striking contrast to the detached and perfunctory communications which precede it.

"No, you are not free; no one is yet. The public confidence is

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betrayed; letters are intercepted. You complain of my silence. I write to you by every courier. It is true that I no longer converse with you very much about our personal affairs. What traitor has any affairs today except those of the nation? It is true that I have written you things more vigorous than you have done. . . . I have not received the letter from you that Lanthenas mentions. You give me no news, and news ought to be plentiful. You occupy yourselves with a municipality, and you are letting heads which are going to conjure up new horrors escape. You are only children. Your enthusiasm is a straw fire, and if the National Assembly does not bring two illustrious heads to justice, or that generous Decius does not fell them, you are all done for. If this letter does not reach you, may the cowards who read it blush in understanding that it is a woman's and tremble in thinking that she can make a hundred enthusiasts, who in turn will make a million others."

Here at last is Madame Roland, the Girondin republican. Here is no calm balance, no detached analysis, in conventional *philosophe* manner, of a situation that somewhat interested but did not vitally concern her. Here is fire, warmth, enthusiasm, here she is actively concerned with the conduct of her country's affairs.

What brought about the change? Did the popular movement of those famous July days make her realize that at last her stage was set, her moment come? The question cannot be answered with too much confidence, for there is that letterless period of nearly five weeks. Yet can it be doubted that the Madame Roland who made her first bow in this passionate letter to Bosc was the child of the Manon Phlipon who had always been conscious of the destiny for which she must prepare? Would she not naturally feel that here at last was the satisfaction of her agonized crav-

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ings for a rôle worthy of the capacities she knew she possessed? Those patient years of studying the reactions of her soul—ah, they could not have been in vain. Was not this their culmination? How could she—the obscure wife of an obscure provincial official—have any influence on the relentless trend of weighty public affairs? She could not have said in 1789, but from that moment she seemed to have found herself. She followed no more bypaths, but marched with a firm and joyous and elastic step along the road of the Revolution. She could not have known where that road was leading her, but she clung to it and did not falter—not even when she rounded the last corner and saw the scaffold, grim and real and final, waiting for her in the Place de la Revolution.

## CHAPTER XII

### *LIFE BECOMES THRILLING*

THE angrily sceptical tone of Madame Roland's letter to Bosc was amply justified. True, Louis XVI had ostensibly accepted the Revolution. On July 15th he had promised the National Assembly that the foreign troops would be sent away. Two days later he had yielded to their demand for the recall of Necker. On July 18th he had gone to Paris, where his presence at the Hôtel de Ville was taken as a sanction of the capital's insurrection. His acceptance of the new tricoloured cockade from the hands of Bailly, the mayor, had convinced the more optimistic among Frenchmen that he understood and admitted his own loss of authority, that, in short, he was submissive to the new order of things. But Madame Roland laboured under no such delusion. From the very beginning she mistrusted Louis's protestations of good faith. To her the King and the Revolution were hopelessly irreconcilable quantities. Events were soon to prove the soundness of her judgment. While Louis was posturing before the Parisian populace from behind the shelter of the cockade of liberty, his brothers were emigrating. The Polignacs, too, took flight, thereby inaugurating the widespread desertion of King and country which marred the record of the nobility in the national crisis. The King himself broke his promise to the Assembly and kept his foreign regiments undisbanded. These were fatal blunders. Already the nation was smarting from the disillusionment of discovering that the Estates-general, to which so many bright hopes had been pinned, had been enticed to

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Versailles by honeyed promises for the sole purpose of extorting more money from people long since bled dry. Louis's additional deeds of duplicity acted as a chemical reagent. Overnight the cloudy liquid of justified suspicion changed into the black precipitate of terrified panic.

Letters from their deputies, often printed in the journals as soon as they arrived, kept the people of the provinces closely in touch with events at Versailles and the capital. In Lyons, in Bordeaux, in Montpellier and Besançon, Valence and Tours, the people watched the struggle between the Third Estate and the privileged orders with anxious eyes and heavy hearts. The capture of the Bastille aroused the same triumphant enthusiasm in Dijon and Nîmes that swept through the streets of Paris. And everywhere it brought the same result. Fired by the example of the capital, the middle classes in the provincial towns armed themselves and boldly seized the municipal administrations. The crumbling old régime gave way before the vigour of their onslaught as a ship stranded on the rocks breaks under the relentless pounding of the surf.

The news of what was happening in the towns spread to the country districts as rapidly as the tidings from Paris had reached Marseilles. The righteous indignation of the city bourgeoisie placed weapons in the toil-worn hands of the peasants. The bourgeois delegates whom they had sent to the Estates-general had promised them that if only they were patient, the demands in their *cabiers* would be satisfied. They had been patient for nearly three months, and every week made the threat of famine more imminent. Their bourgeois leaders had been deceived and, uncovering the trickery of the King and Court, had taken matters into their own hands. Very well, the peasants could play that game, too. With the same sure instinct which had led

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their brothers in the town to gather, rifles in hand, before the Hôtel de Ville, the peasants took up their hunting-guns, their pitchforks, and their scythes and rushed in mobs to the manor-houses of their masters. Their demand was for the title-deeds by which the countless and burdensome feudal dues had been levied upon them for generations immemorial. When the lord, frightened at this unexpected burst of spirit from those who had heretofore been uncomplaining beasts of burden, yielded to the demand, the hated parchments were thrown into a great bonfire in the courtyard. If the landowner met resistance with resistance, if he attempted to defend himself and his household, he was likely to find his dwelling in flames and himself the object of a terribly wreaked vengeance. By July 26th all France was in the grip of *La Grande Peur*. Awful rumours floated through the country. Brigands were said to be at large everywhere, cutting down crops, taking lives, and destroying property.

Madame Roland, nursing her convalescent husband in Lyons, heard exaggerated and grotesque reports of the disorders in the country. Fearing for the Clos, she left the city on July 29th. She arrived at Thézé to discover that her years of kindly labour among the neighbouring peasants had borne fair fruit. Her hermitage was untouched. It was from there that she wrote, on August 8th, to her friend Albert Gosse. "There is always much excitement everywhere. Here and there the inhabitants of the country pillage and burn some châteaux. The aristocrats make a great noise about it. As a matter of fact, there is not much harm done, and when châteaux whose luxury has insulted their misery are destroyed by people free of a yoke borne for centuries, I do not see that it is anything to complain of from the point of view of the common weal, however grievous it may be for some individuals."

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She was back in Lyons by the middle of August. The following month Roland could be moved—first to Villefranche, then to the Clos—but the month of October was spent at Lyons. When he could, they worked at Volume III of the *Dictionnaire*, for that had to go on, regardless of what happened. But all through their labours and his illnesses they both followed, always with intense interest and sometimes with sharp dismay, the trend of events in France.

From the very beginning Madame Roland feared the National Assembly almost as much as she distrusted the King and the Court. "In the name of God," she wrote to her friend Brissot de Warville, the journalist, "keep yourself from declaring that the National Assembly can fix the Constitution irrevocably. It is enough if it fixes the outline of it, to be adopted, modified, and approved by all the constituents. The Assembly is only formed of representatives, who have not the right to determine our fate. That right belongs to the people, who can neither cede it nor delegate it." On the other hand she had little faith in the people. They were not yet prepared, she felt, to exercise their right. "I believe that the good Englishman [Robert Pigott, a common friend] is right," she wrote to Bosc, "and that we need a little civil war in order to be worth something. All these little quarrels and insurrections of the people seem inevitable to me. I do not imagine that it would ever be possible to issue from the bosom of corruption in order to elevate ourselves to liberty without somewhat violent convulsions. They are the salutary crises of a grave malady, and we need a terrible political fever in order to purify our bad humours."

Harsh words from the pen of a woman whose sensitiveness was her greatest pride! And in the next three years she was to write many harsher. Yet she was neither cruel nor bloodthirsty. But



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there is a hardness in the egoist turned fanatic, and that she possessed in full measure. It enabled her to gaze unmoved, even to rejoice when suffering came to those, whether Assembly, King, or people, whose acts she disapproved, whose ideas she scorned.

When the King and Queen, the latter bearing the young Dauphin in her arms, visited the Assembly, Madame Roland giped cynically. "The French are easily won by the beautiful appearance of their masters," she wrote Bosc, "and I am convinced that half of the Assembly has been stupid enough to be influenced by the sight of Antoinette commending her son to them. Heavens! They concern themselves with a child! It is a question of the safety of twenty million people. Everything is lost if we are not careful."

The outbreaks of violence and lawlessness which were rapidly turning France into chaos were not everywhere regarded with the complacency that sustained Madame Roland. However excellent it might be for the common weal to have châteaux burned, aristocrats slaughtered, and property destroyed, the National Assembly was alarmed, and of that body the noble members experienced the greatest fear. There were some deputies, even among the Third Estate, who favoured repressive measures towards the peasants. Had their advice been followed, the Revolution would have been lost. Louis XVI was still the King of France, and only through him could a policy of crushing repression be exercised. Not only would this have given him means to stop the Revolution, but it would have separated for ever the peasants and the middle classes. Civil war would have resulted, and behind that dangerous smoke-screen the old régime could have re-established itself permanently. Fortunately for the future of France, there were members of the Assembly more liberal in their political views, as well as more generous in their attitude to-

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wards the unhappy peasants. Perhaps because of their terror, perhaps because they were not without enlightenment, but at any rate to their great credit, the nobility led this politic movement. The Vicomte de Noailles, Lafayette's brother-in-law, proposed, during the night session of August 4th, that the nobles of France agree to sell their proprietary rights and renounce their personal rights over the peasants on their estates. The motion was enthusiastically seconded by the Duc d'Aiguillon, one of the largest landowners of the kingdom. There was some opposition, but the impetus had been given. As a matter of fact, the sacrifice was not so great as it seemed. Since the proprietary rights were to be sold—that is, redeemed for money payments—the nobles would continue to collect their rents, or the equivalent of them, and at the same time they would gain by the restoration of their popularity among the peasants. Seldom indeed does the game of politics give men such an opportunity for liberality and astuteness combined. The body of the Assembly quickly grasped the advantages of de Noailles's proposal, and the session was soon in a frenzy of enthusiasm. Clergy and nobles, provinces and towns vied with each other in sacrificing their ancient privileges "on the altar of the nation." The session lasted all night, an orgy of renunciation, and the dawn of August 5th saw the old régime destroyed and the new France born. The next logical step was a Declaration of Rights, and on August 6th the Assembly passed the famous Declaration of the Rights of Man. It was practically the last motion concerning which the deputies were in unanimous agreement, for the conflicting claims concerning the redemption of privileges which were raised by the generous and politic decrees of August 4th plunged the Assembly into snarling discord for the remainder of its existence.

All of this provided food for thought and material for dis-

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cussion for those who, like the Rolands, were eagerly following the unfolding of the exciting drama at Paris and Versailles. In many a home, from lord's manor to peasant's hut, the evening candles burned away while father disputed with son, and husband argued with wife. Canon Dominique quarrelled with his brother and sister-in-law over politics. It was more than a year before tense nerves were sufficiently relaxed for a reconciliation, and it might not have occurred even then had not the death of the venerable Dame Thérèse Bessye softened the hearts and soothed the angry moods of the family. Late September brought Madame Roland the sad news of the death of her "dear little Uncle Bimont." At any other time she would have plunged into mourning, for she had loved him sincerely, but public woes swallowed up private ones. Up at Versailles, Louis XVI was sliding from trickery to treachery. Once more mobilizing his foreign troops, he had given a great banquet on October 1st, and wine flowed freely into the soldiers' outstretched goblets. It was his hope, and that of the Court, that an attack on the people might thus be incited. The situation was tense. At any moment the members, or at least the leaders, of the National Assembly could expect arrest and imprisonment.

Madame Roland received the news of the feasting of the troops on October 6th. She flew to her desk, and her pen raced through an agitated and angry letter to Bosc. Curiously, the burden of her cry was a plea for what was then actually being done—the forcible removal of the King and the Assembly from Versailles to Paris. Almost at the moment she wrote, the starving Parisian women were marching, hot, dusty, and dishevelled, along the road to the capital, the state coach containing the royal family lumbering in their midst. Madame Roland's plan, however, included much more. "The first thing to do is to seize all

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the treasuries of Paris, and form a public treasury, for the administration of which should be named capable citizens—in a word, to fill the double object of depriving the Court of all gold, and of providing for the needs of the people. The second important point is to establish a committee for maintenance. The third is to form alliances with the provinces, in order to ensure provisions and aid of all kinds.”

It was not with Bosc alone that Madame Roland shared her enthusiasm for the Revolution. Her other friends responded quite as warmly to her ideas and suggestions, and the blasting fire of common devotion to *la Patrie* fused new acquaintances into close intimacies. Among these new-found friends were two professional journalists—a fortunate circumstance for one of Madame Roland’s pronounced opinions, for thereby her views obtained much wider dissemination than she, unaided by such publicity, could have given them. Luc-Antoine Donin de Rosière Champagneux, although born in the village of Bourgoin, department of Dauphiné, had come with his family to Lyons in 1785. He soon became acquainted with the Rolands, but it was not until 1789 that their relations became intimate. Champagneux rivalled the zeal of Madame herself in the Revolutionary cause, and as an able and respected lawyer of the city he had a share in drafting the *cabiers* of several of the Lyons corporations. On September 1, 1789, he established a newspaper, *Le Courrier de Lyons*. This did not help his law practice (“Since you have become a journalist, your name makes some people shudder,” one client remarked frankly), but the journal was extremely popular.

At five o’clock in the morning on May 30, 1790, Madame Roland rose from her bed to accompany Champagneux to the quays along the Rhône river, to watch the sixty thousand na-

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tional guards assembled from the neighbouring departments march in the festival of the Lyonnaise Federation. Such an affecting spectacle—so many thousands of men filing by, the provincial spites and petty jealousies of neighbouring towns and districts consumed in the purifying flame of mutual love for the fatherland—thrilled every patriot to the core. Madame Roland, her eyes brimming, her heart overflowing, watched the long procession and, returning home, poured her tumultuous emotions out in writing. Her impassioned description of the lovely civic festival was published, unsigned, in Champagneux's paper. They struck off more than sixty thousand copies, for every visiting soldier wanted one to carry home with him. Extracts from the article found their way into the journals of the capital. Madame Roland's friend Brissot de Warville printed part of it in his paper, *Le Patriote français*, and Camille Desmoulins copied it in his *Les Révolutions de France et de Brabant*.

Back in the humdrum days of 1787 Roland had received a mild thrill on learning that Brissot, publicist, journalist, student of revolutions, and man of letters, had made favourable citation of *Lettres d'Italie* and several of the *Dictionnaire* articles in his *Study of the American Revolution*. The praise was doubly welcome to one whose literary labours were oftener chilled by censure than warmed by appreciation, and a brief note of thanks was dispatched to the complimentary author. This was the beginning of a relationship destined to last until death, although the two men did not meet face to face until nearly four years later. The following year (1788) found Brissot in America, entrusted with the mission of negotiating with Congress for the French debt. On his return to Paris he founded *Le Patriote français*. The Rolands (or perhaps it would be more accurate to say Madame Roland, for, as usual, she appropriated her

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husband's place in the correspondence) were among his earliest and most faithful contributors. Her letters, filled with enthusiasm and stirring propaganda, made excellent editorial material. Brissot was glad to print them, and it must have been pleasant for her to leaf through the latest number of a prominent Parisian newspaper and find therein those lofty sentiments wrapped in flowery phrases that tumbled so readily from her tireless pen.

Political interests cemented these new friendships and strengthened ties with Bosc and Lanthenas. They played an even greater part in Madame Roland's relations with another new-found friend. Jean-Henri Bancal des Issarts was the youngest son of a prosperous silk merchant at Clermont-Ferrand. After studying at the local college he completed his education in law at the University of Orléans. In 1783 he came to Paris and purchased a notaryship. Chance brought him into close relations with the Rolands' most intimate friends. He happened to have lodgings near those of Bosc and his friend Creuzé-Latouche. Through Bosc he made the acquaintance of Lanthenas, who, in turn, introduced him to Brissot. When, in the early months of 1788, the latter founded the abolitionist club *Les Amis des Noirs*, both Bancal and Lanthenas were front-row members. Both young men, indeed, were enthusiastic joiners, and both worked tirelessly in the various secret societies that did so much to prepare France for the Revolution. Later on, Bancal was one of the founders of the *Jacobin Club*.

He had the mind of the innovator and the spirit of the reformer. As early as December 1788 he foresaw the trend of events. Freed from the duties of his notaryship, which he had sold two months before, he wrote a *Declaration of Rights* and toured Auvergne in order to spread the new political doctrines. He returned to Paris early in February 1789. His *Declaration*

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of Rights had been printed, and on April 20th he read the document before a large gathering assembled at Brissot's house. The publicity assured his choice as an elector for his district of Saint-Eustache. The exciting and critical days of July gave the electors plenty to do. Bancal shirked none of the responsibilities, and that brief period saw him constantly one of the small group occupying the centre of the stage. For these disinterested labours in the service of the new cause he confidently expected to be chosen a member of the Paris Commune. Woe to him who confides in the gratitude of voters! He was not elected. The seat of spectator has few attractions for one who has only yesterday occupied the position of leader, and Bancal soon undertook another journey to Auvergne, to continue the work which he had commenced there nearly a year before.

This time he had another commission. For some time the visionary Lanthenas had been playing with the idea of a plan for a community life to be carried out by a group of sympathetic minds and kindred souls. Brissot, Bosc, and the Rolands, as well as the English Quaker Robert Pigott, were all enthusiastic about the project, and Bancal, more of a dreamer than a doer, was ready to throw himself into it heart and soul. The decree of March 20th authorizing the sale of ecclesiastical lands seemed to offer the little group of idealists their opportunity made to order. Why not acquire some pleasant monastery or retired abbey, where they could work the fields, dividing the labour and sharing the profits, and devote their leisure hours to a feast of reason and a flow of the soul? On his rambling journey southward Bancal was to keep his weather eye out for any particularly desirable and especially cheap abbeys, priories, or monasteries.

Auvergne is just next door to the Lyonnais district—a circumstance which inspired Lanthenas with a happy suggestion.

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Could not Bancal drop in and visit that interesting couple<sup>1</sup> Monsieur and Madame de la Platière on his way? He would find them delightfully hospitable and would discover in the Revolution a bond of common interest. Bancal was only too glad to do so. He had never met his host and hostess, but the indefatigable Madame had already initiated a correspondence with him. On June 22, 1790, she had sent him a courteous letter, introducing herself and her husband as friends of his friends in Paris and inviting him to the Clos. "A friend of the Revolution," she wrote, "could not possibly be a stranger to any of those who love that Revolution and who desire to contribute to its full success."

Bancal met the Rolands in Lyons early in July and drove with them out to the Clos. Madame Roland had never known anyone quite like Bancal. He was older than either Lanthenas or Bosc, more experienced in the ways of the world than the former, more thoughtful than the latter. The suave consideration with which he treated his hostess was a refreshing contrast to her husband's biting though harmless brusquerie. As they sat on the terrace in the warm summer evenings, or wandered, of a drowsy afternoon, through the woods near by, Madame Roland experienced a sense of close companionship with this interesting man. He understood and appreciated her pet ideas, her abounding enthusiasms. His exaltation matched her own, his gentle melancholy found an echo in her subdued sadness. His sensitiveness, his idealism, his high-mindedness, put him planes above any other man she had ever known. To Bancal her vivacity, her sympathy, her radiance, were altogether charming. If only he could have prolonged his visit at the Clos! But work was waiting for him elsewhere, and the happy interlude had to end.

His departure brought a perfect deluge of letters. For many



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months Bancal held the post of the tireless writer's chief correspondent. Political commentary, local news and gossip, philosophical observations, and messages that began with friendliness and ended with affection consumed sheet upon sheet of paper.

The news of conditions in Lyons reflected the situation now more or less general throughout France. Many people were becoming discouraged with the Revolution, especially among the nobility, the clergy, and the higher bourgeoisie, who saw in the continued disturbances only the diabolical machinations of the supporters of the new order. The Patriots themselves, equally ready to see flames where they smelled smoke, made counter-accusations against the Royalists. Every provincial uprising, every isolated act of violence, was interpreted as an attempt on the part of the agents of the Court to create a pretext for terrorizing the people and crushing the Revolution by martial law. To make a complicated situation more complex, there was widespread dissatisfaction, in Patriot and Royalist camps alike, with the work of the National Assembly. It had been easy for that body to abolish the feudal régime with its decrees of the night of August 4th; creating the necessary legislation to carry those decrees into effect was quite another matter. The conflicting claims of noble and peasant, clergy and laity, town and artisan, rose to harass the Assembly. Delays were inevitable and compromises unavoidable.

In Lyons Roland's support of the artisans against the employers, and his whole-souled devotion to the entire Revolutionary program, won him many enemies, among all classes, and drew to his side comparatively few friends. He was accused of treachery to his own class and denounced as a restless agitator and unscrupulous demagogue. On July 11th the municipal

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government passed a measure abolishing the *octrois*, taxes which had burdened the working people for longer than man could remember. The joy among the poorer classes knew no limits. Roland, who had given the decree his unqualified support, was their champion and by that token seemed a traitor to the wealthy people and above all to the tax-farmers, who were firm in their opposition to the measure. So energetic was the latter group in sending in remonstrances to the Assembly that on July 13th the offending decree was rescinded and the *octrois* were restored. The working people promptly retaliated by staging an uprising, which was as promptly suppressed by the troops quartered in the town. To the fevered minds of the revolutionaries, the whole business savoured of aristocratic treachery.

The fact that, at the time, Roland was at the Clos did not save him from being accused of fomenting the riot at Lyons. At first he and his wife assumed an aloof attitude towards the venomous vituperation directed against them. "It [the disturbance] happened after our departure. Let it run its course. We are on our feet in order to reply to the first attack worthy of provoking us. We will not lower ourselves to run after calumny or pursue reptiles," she wrote to Bancal. And to Brissot she remarked: "As to us personally, we are so independent in our way of regarding both things and men that nothing in the world can make us deviate from the course which we believe we ought to follow." This philosophic detachment became more difficult and at last impossible to maintain, as Roland's accusers plastered their portrait of him with the vivid scarlet of libel and the murky black of slander. On August 4th Madame left the Clos for the city, resolved to investigate for herself the case against her husband. She ran comparatively small risk in her reconnoitring, for she was not widely known in Lyons.

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The city was under martial law, and she learned that foreign regiments were expected momentarily. The Royalists talked of the necessity of crushing the insurrection, while the Patriots hinted darkly of counter-revolutionary plots. "Two things are evident," wrote Madame Roland to Bancal. "The troubles of this city are the result of a project of counter-revolution, the beginning of its execution; and the municipality, by its conduct, has favoured it. . . . My friend, the Counter-Revolution has begun here. This is a lost country. It is incurable."

The situation at Lyons was but a sample of conditions that prevailed throughout the country. Madame Roland, reading her friends' letters and devouring the newspapers, had many moments of discouragement, but she never despaired. "The peaceful regeneration of an empire is an unheard-of phenomenon," she wrote to Bancal. "Doubtless it is a chimera. Adversity is the school of nations as of men, and I am convinced that we must be purified by it to be worth anything at all."

If only patriots and idealists could bind the happiness of future generations with a stronger cord than the frail thread spun by the vacillating and unsatisfactory National Assembly! Madame Roland, reading of that body's debates and quarrels, discussing and criticizing its measures with her friends, wondered again and again why it did not concentrate its prodigious activity upon important matters. Why did it pass a purely illusory and entirely Royalist decree like that which provided that war could be decided only by the Assembly on the proposal of the king, and yet do so little towards the necessary establishment of order in the national finances? Why was the Assembly so blind to the necessity for complete freedom of the press? "You discuss the liberty of the press in the same way that I think of it and in a way that very few people envisage it,"

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she informed Bancal. "People certainly do not appreciate its great importance, but everything depends upon it. No abuse can endure with that powerful corrective. Without it, all abuses can be established. I do not believe in our regeneration without it." As a matter of fact, Article XI of the Declaration of the Rights of Man proclaimed the liberty of the press, except in cases determined by law. No law had been made on the subject, and it was entirely neglected by every legislative body of France until April 16, 1796—a day which Madame Roland did not live to see.

The blunders of the Assembly, the stupidity of the people, the plots of the Royalists, kept her seething with scorn and indignation, but through it all her faith in the Revolution remained fair and untarnished. "Heaven has not willed that I be a witness of any of those grand spectacles of which Paris has been the theatre and with which I am ravished!" she sighed to Bancal. "I have compensated myself by yielding to all the sentiments which they inspire in healthy souls. I recall with rapture those moments of my youth in which, nourishing my heart in silence and retreat by the study of ancient history, I wept with chagrin that I had not been born a Spartan or a Roman. No longer must I envy the ancient republics. A day even purer enlightens us."

August 30th brought Bancal, this time accompanied by Lanthenas, back to the Clos for another visit. He found the "hermitage" even more delightful than before, and his hostess more charming than ever. As usual at the Clos, the program of entertainment was a simple one, offering nothing more exciting than a picnic in the woods, a friendly game of battledore and shuttlecock, or a political argument when the curé or some of the neighbouring gentry came to dinner. The mornings were

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sacred to writing and study *au solitaire* but in the afternoons and evenings the little group came together. Again and again their eager talk outlasted the sun in his course, as they mapped out the plan of action which the National Assembly ought to follow, or elaborated the plans for their future life in common. This fair dream was never to be realized. The growing absorption of each one of them in national problems kept life too busy and involved for Utopia. But for more than a year the idea was earnestly considered.

As summer glided into autumn, and the two friends lingered on at the Clos, Bancal's affection for Madame Roland deepened. First charmed by her sparkling vivacity, he was now held by her more solid attainments. Not even Lanthenas or Roland himself could talk of the crisis through which *la Patrie* was passing with more sympathy and greater intelligence than this woman whose eyes glowed, whose colour heightened, and whose voice broke when she was moved by the thought of some wrong to be righted or some ideal to be attained. And when lovely weather called a truce to politics and sent them all trooping through the fields and woods, none were more carefree, more spontaneous, more abandoned in their enjoyment of nature's beauties than she, who an hour before might have been giving sound opinions, and matured reflections on the financial problems of France. Bancal was entranced. To have a charming woman so sympathetically reflect his every mood was an exquisite pleasure. He savoured it to the full, regretful only that it could not last for ever.

And Madame Roland? Did the waxing passion of her fascinating guest strike a responsive note in her heart? For ten long years she had been wedded to sober, unalluring duty. Roland was an old man, gruff in manner and careless in dress, worthy

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of infinite respect, no doubt, but certainly not attractive, not even always pleasant as a companion from day's end to day's end. She was young; thirty-six years rested as lightly on her straight back and unbent shoulders as if they had been twenty-odd. And Bancal was attractive—suave, polished and courteous, a man of the world and in the prime of life. To remain unmoved by his infatuation would have been beyond the power of a heart as feminine as hers.

Bancal tore himself away from the Clos and temptation on October 2nd. Her first letter betrays dangerous emotion for one who prized virtue above all else. "I take my pen without knowing what it will trace, without deciding what I am going to write. My mind is taken up with a thousand ideas, which doubtless I could express more easily if they were accompanied by less agitating feelings. Why are my eyes blinded by tears, that fall only to rise again? My will is upright, my heart is pure, and yet I am not contented. You say that the affection which unites us will be the greatest charm of our lives, and that we shall not be useless to our fellow-men, and these consoling words have not brought back my peace. It is because I am not assured as to your happiness, and I should never forgive myself for having disturbed it. It is because I have believed that you have based it, in part at least, on a false promise, on a hope which I ought to forbid. . . . Why is it that this letter I am writing cannot be sent to you without secrecy? Why can I not reveal to all eyes what I would dare to offer to Divinity itself? Assuredly I can call Heaven to witness my vows and my intentions. I find it sweet to think that it sees me, hears me, and judges me. . . . When shall we see each other again? A question which I often ask myself and which I dare not answer. But why do we try to penetrate the future which nature conceals from us? . . . We have

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only one influence over it, undoubtedly a great one—to prepare our future happiness by a wise use of the present. . . . Thus the dearest friends can endure absence by consecrating every moment to cultivating virtues of which they can give each other an account. What duties are not made lovely by that charming obligation? What in the world can one complain of with a soul to appreciate this advantage? And ought I to have alarms and fears for you, who feel this so keenly? No, they are unjust to you. Forgive me for these worries which come from that tender anxiety too near the weakness of a sex whose courage even is not always firm. . . .”

Poor Bancal! Precious little consolation he must have derived from this *mélange* of emotion and reason, philosophy and sentiment, virtue and coquetry! Can he be blamed for his sudden decision to go to England, where new scenes, new faces, and new thoughts might soothe his troubled heart? Madame Roland received the news with a sort of reluctant, sad philosophy. She reminded him that if war should come, “our legislators will more than ever have need of good citizens to support them,” but added that “since destiny balances the pain of human beings against their pleasure, whoever can love and be useful cannot complain.” If Bancal felt that he could be useful in England, who was she to protest? “It is impossible, my friend, that we should ever cease to understand each other. Imagination wanders, reason deceives, even philosophy fools itself or us, sometimes, but a true heart turns always towards the truth.”

The truth to which their hearts turned during the winter months while Bancal was in England led them gradually but surely to a less tangled and more impersonal relationship. Just as in war a skilful retreat sometimes shows excellent tactics, so in love it may be the better part of discretion. A day was to

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come for Bancal, and for Madame Roland, too, that proved that he who loves and runs away will live to love another day.

After this brief, tempestuous interlude Madame Roland passed a quiet enough winter. Their increasing interest in politics, and Roland's labours on the *Dictionnaire*, to say nothing of his duties as inspector of manufactures, which, if not increasing, were certainly not lessening, furnished more than enough occupation for busy pens and tireless eyes. The labours of the study left scarcely an hour in the day for the cares of the household and diminished cruelly the time which should have been spent with Eudora. It was too much for one woman to be a permanent secretary to a man like Roland, a political observer and correspondent, and a mother besides. The old struggle of career versus motherhood was fought out over the Roland fireside and ended in a victory for career. On October 31st Eudora was placed to board in the Convent of the Visitation in Villefranche. The step was not taken without tears and pangs on the part of her mother, who poured out her anguish in an emotional letter to Bancal.

The situation at Lyons had in the mean time become less tense, and Roland had resumed his duties there. He and his wife spent most of the month of November in the city, and he was chosen as one of the municipal officers. Madame Roland was back at the Clos for nearly all of December, doubtless in connection with some matters relating to the farm, but three days after Christmas she again joined her husband. Lanthenas spent most of the fall and winter with them, dividing his time between Lyons, Villefranche, the Clos, and the neighbouring towns and hamlets. Wherever he went, he preached the Revolutionary evangelism, sometimes among the peasants, sometimes among the clubs in the various sections of the city.

Over in London, Bancal was doing very much the same sort



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of thing. His friends had been surprised at his sudden decision to leave France, and Lanthenas had been frankly disapproving. But Bancal's explanation that he wished to study English institutions and gain first-hand knowledge of the working of political freedom, as well as cement the *rapprochement* between the English society of Friends of the Revolution and the French patriots, was beyond question. In London he found many reformers and liberals, especially among the Quakers, the Unitarians, and the Deists. The interest in the Revolution was genuine and widespread, and Bancal had, if not a profitable time, at least a pleasant one.

The death of his father in December came as a terrific shock, and his self-reproach for his absence at the time was bitter and extravagant. Madame Roland, ever lavish with sympathy towards those for whom she cared, instantly, and somewhat indiscreetly, renewed the tender tone which for some months had been absent from her letters. She begged him to return to France, so that his grief could be assuaged in the bosom of his family. And, with rather unnecessary and certainly provocative coquetry, she remarked: "Some day I shall show you some things that will cause you little astonishment, but which will certainly please you. I have not passed the time of your absence without confiding to paper certain things meant for you. You will see them at the proper time, for I have had no thought that was not worthy of me to express and of you to hear." She even confided to him that during a sudden illness, when she believed her life to be in danger, she had arranged to have these papers sent to him.

Of course this was the age of sensibility. The free portrayal of one's emotions was considered good form. Yet it is difficult to see how Bancal could have interpreted these lines in any way





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except as a coy invitation for him to revive his dying hopes. We can imagine him starting a round of farewell calls on his English friends, packing his portmanteau, and preparing to leave Britannia's shores. A few brief days, and fond illusions were rudely shattered. Madame's next letter was a brief note, and then followed a longer communication—dictated not by sentiment, but by sentiment's maiden aunt, reason. She reminded him that there is more than one way of being useful, and that each individual is allowed to choose that for which he is most fitted. Lanthenas, she remarked, was unable to conceive of a true Frenchman being anywhere but among his brothers, or being occupied with anything but serving and enlightening them. For her part, while she applauded Lanthenas' conduct, which added to her esteem for him, she did not adopt his views exclusively. "And," she added consolingly, "you have not acted by chance, but have wished as much as anyone to serve your country."

It is not surprising that Bancal, after basking so recently in the sunshine of her coquetry, fell to shivering under this glacial reasoning, seized his pen, and underlined the above offending sentence. "*Wished!* What an expression!" is his savage marginal comment. "An active elector in 1789, member of the first permanent committee, exposed to all the dangers, all the miseries, of the Revolution, sitting continuously for two days and a night in a Committee of Subsistence that saved Paris from famine, has done more than *wished*. . . ." Any idea he may have had of returning to France was effectually blighted, and for some months he remained in England.

But what had caused Madame's sudden change of front? Before he came to the end of her letter, Bancal could discern her motive clearly enough. "I shall not have the false delicacy to conceal from you the fact that I am going to Paris, and I will push

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frankness to the point of admitting that this circumstance adds greatly to my scruples about having invited you to return. In our situation there is an infinite number of trifles and nuances that are keenly felt, although they cannot be expressed. But what is very clear, and what I can say frankly, is that I should never want to see you at the expense of the reason that ought to guide your conduct and that you had permitted to yield to a passing motive or a partial affection. Remember that if I have need of the happiness of my friends, that happiness is dependent, for those who feel as we do, upon absolute irreproachability."

The reasoning was as ingenious, and as complacent, as that with which she had vanquished Roland eleven years before. There was certainly no danger now that Bancal would misinterpret her previous insistence on his return to France. Not all of her exaltation, her idealism, her passion for virtue, not even her sudden interest in the virile game of politics, made one whit of difference in Madame Roland's coquetry. Quite instinctively she obeyed the feminine heart's first law and preserved the integrity of her own position. To her natural tingle of excitement at the prospect of at last going to Paris, the theatre of great events, must have been added a pleasing sense of satisfaction at the thought that with a few strokes of her pen she had put the most sophisticated man she had ever known very effectually in his place.

## CHAPTER XIII

### *IN THE THEATRE OF GREAT EVENTS*

IN November 1790 Roland was elected a municipal officer of Lyons and thus became one of the heads of a town government which, although not revolutionary, was distinctly democratic. It shared the weaknesses and confronted the problems which bedevilled all France, and, like every governing body, from the National Assembly down, found its chief difficulties in the realm of finance. A municipal debt of more than thirty-nine million livres harried Roland and his colleagues through anxious days and sleepless nights. How should it—indeed, how could it—be handled? The fact that it had been contracted under the ancient régime, mostly for the account of and by the order of the king, suggested a solution. Why not apply to the Assembly for nationalization? For what did that body exist if not for the express purpose of lifting from the nation's weary shoulders just such crushing burdens of the old régime? Besides, other towns had tried the thing with marked success. The plan was at least worth hazarding, and the municipality therefore ordered a certain Monsieur Blot to Paris to treat with the Assembly. Perhaps that gentleman's chief claims to fame are that he failed in his mission and that he was intensely disliked by Monsieur and Madame Roland de la Platière. Certainly when he returned to Lyons, reporting ignominious defeat, Roland was ready enough to be persuaded that he himself, and Monsieur Bret, procurer of the commune, would be a much happier combination. It does not seem to have occurred to him that there was anything pe-

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cular in the general willingness to sacrifice his presence at a time when the impending legislative elections made the political situation of the city a critical one. As a matter of fact the absence of one whose ardour and inflexibility could make him, at such times, quite as embarrassing to his friends as he was trying to his enemies was certainly not regarded as an unmixed calamity.

If Roland was willing to go to the capital, his wife was overjoyed at the prospect. For how many dreary months had she, imprisoned in her provincial obscurity, been sighing for Paris, "the theatre of great events"! How many, many times had her longing eyes fastened upon that enchanted stage where casual fate had set the lucky actors in history's supreme dream! How often, from her humble gallery seat, had she scanned their parts and conned their lines, thinking the while of what sincerity, what idealism, and what beauty she herself would bring to such rôles! Here at last was destiny, flinging wide, with one of her queenly, careless gestures, the door of a choice front box. After that, *qui peut savoir?*

They were in Paris before the end of February, and comfortably settled in furnished rooms which Bosc, following Manon's clear and detailed instructions, had secured for them at the Hôtel Britannique, rue Guénégaud. Immediately they plunged into a life of bustling activity. For Roland there were interviews and conferences, the preparation of reports, the presentation of those same reports to influential members of the Assembly, the meeting and conciliating of important people, and all of the time-consuming routine of the determined lobbyist. And in everything that Roland did, his wife had a share. Into all of her husband's pies she poked her inquisitive, energetic finger. There was a debate which he must hear on at the Assembly? Very well, she would go and hear it too. And go she did, pushing and

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scrambling her way into the best seat available in the visitors' gallery, where she sat for hour after hour, straining forward in her anxiety to catch all that was being said. There was an interesting meeting scheduled at one of the political clubs? She could not dream of missing it, particularly if it was at the dangerous and radical group, the Club de 1789, which believed in liberty, but not, alas, in equality! And whenever the Abbé Fauchet, who for a few weeks, until she discovered that he talked and thought "like a priest," commanded her respect, was addressing the Cercle Social, Madame Roland was sure to be present. What an admirable club was that! How suited to the cult of patriotism were its professions and principles! Were they really talking of establishing a branch in London? Excellent idea! She must write at once to Bancal about it. And what was that that Bosc was saying? He wished to introduce some of his friends? But certainly! He must bring them round at once, that very evening! For what had they taken furnished rooms, if not to be able to receive their friends and their friends' friends? In what better way could patriots employ their time than by exchanging ideas with those of like principles and similar sentiments? There was that worthy Brissot. She could scarcely wait to see him. And Robespierre, that timid, self-contained young man whose incorruptibility was even then beginning to impress all Paris. She must meet him!

Bosc brought them all, and they, in turn, brought their friends. So hospitable an atmosphere did Madame contrive to spread over her furnished apartment, so cordial were their host and hostess, that these men fell into the habit of dropping into the Hôtel Britannique three or four evenings a week. Here they could meet their friends and thresh out their ideas, with none of the stress and struggle of a debate on the floor of the Assembly,



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with none of the routine and red tape of a committee meeting. Here came Pétion, Buzot, and Robespierre, Brissot and his friend Clavières, Louis-Marie, Vicomte de Noailles, who had played so famous a part in the dramatic night of August 4th, and, of course, the perennial friends, Bosc and Lanthenas. There were others, but this little group formed the nucleus of what history has dignified with the title of "Madame Roland's First Salon." It was an arrangement that suited her perfectly. To have some of the best-known and most influential among the patriots regard her drawing-room as informal headquarters put her in exactly the element in which she had longed for months to be. "It kept me in touch with things in which I took a keen interest," she wrote later in her memoirs. "It favoured my taste for following political arguments and studying men. I know the rôle proper to my sex and I never abandoned it. The conferences were held in my presence without my taking any part in them. I had a table beyond, yet near, the group, and I sewed or wrote letters while they talked. Often I would write as many as ten letters, but I would never lose one word of the debate, and sometimes I would bite my lips to keep from interrupting."

How sore and raw those lips must often have been! To have strong opinions on every subject which interested her was characteristic, and to express herself with vigour and force was a fairly irresistible impulse. Reading over her letters, in which the firmest convictions on all political subjects are laid down in the most dogmatic terms, one wonders if she was always as much the silent spectator at these meetings as she insists. Particularly since, to judge from her correspondence and later from her memoirs, she became, as time went on, more and more dissatisfied with the work of the patriots. It was not that these men were unintelligent, or that their intentions were not of the best. But



A MINIATURE OF MADAME ROLAND  
WORN BY BUZOT



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they seemed to her utterly lacking in that tolerance and that spirit of co-operation which alone can make political action bear fruit. "I have had the opportunity of seeing, since my sojourn here, that it is much more difficult to do good than even reflecting men imagine," she wrote to Bancal after a few months in Paris. "It is impossible to do good in politics except by uniting efforts, and there is nothing so difficult as to unite different minds to work persistently for the same end. Everyone believes only in the efficacy of his own system and his own way. He is irritated and bored by that of another, and because he does not know how to bend to an idea a little different from his own, he ends by going alone without doing anything useful." These were just observations. Had every patriot in France agreed, there would have been no Revolution, and everything for which the Revolution stood would have been accomplished as if by the flourish of a magic wand. But in thus criticizing her fellow-patriots Madame Roland was throwing stones from the insecure shelter of a glass house. No one had less tolerance for another's ideas than she. Her disagreement might be gentle, but it was Gibraltar-like in its firmness. Sophie had found that out years ago, when she had attempted to keep the light of true faith burning in her friend's heart. Roland had learned it with the failure of his feeble efforts to preserve his family from the disgrace of a connexion with Gatién Phlipon. Later on, the Girondins were to discover it, when their chances of compromising with the Jacobins, and their inclinations to seize those chances, were all sacrificed, without the flutter of an eyelash, to Madame Roland's fierce and unreasoned dislike of Danton.

She found more than intolerance to criticize. She discovered that the French do not know how to deliberate, because they allow a certain frivolity to lead them from one subject to an-

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other, and because they do not know how to listen. Their attention is easily exhausted, the merest word produces an irresistible desire to laughter and the silliest jest upsets the finest logic. "What struck me particularly," she wrote in her memoirs, describing her drawing-room meetings, "and gave me especial concern is the kind of twaddle and frivolity with which men of good sense could spend three or four hours without deciding anything. Sometimes in my impatience I could have boxed the ears of these wise men, the honour of whose souls, the purity of whose intentions, I learned to esteem every day. They were excellent reasoners, good philosophers, and wise politicians in their discussions, but, understanding nothing of how to lead men, and consequently of how to influence them in an Assembly, for the most part all their knowledge and intelligence was a pure loss."

Soon she had reduced the number of "resolute men who dared to fight for principle" to three—Pétion, Buzot, and Robespierre. They flash in and out among the pages of the letters—Madame Roland's triumvirate. "Vigorous Robespierre," "wise Buzot," and "virtuous Pétion"—however bitterly she complained of others, upon them she bestowed the shining accolade of her complete approval. From the latter two she never withdrew it. They, especially Buzot, were steadfast in their admiration for the *Égérie* of the Girondins, and she was not the woman to let such loyalty go unrewarded. So in her memoirs Pétion's weakness and vacillations, his vanity and his lightness are only the whimsicalities of a character "too confiding and too peaceable." He was better fitted, she assured posterity, to "practise virtue in a republic than to create such a government among a corrupt people who first worshipped him as their idol and then rejoiced at his proscription as at that of an enemy." And for Buzot—he who

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“never failed to attack every system that was perverse and destructive to liberty” (and in doing so never failed to agree with Madame Roland!)—her praise was even more lavish, her satire against his enemies even more stinging. “Thus when the scum of a corrupt nation,” she wrote, “rising to the surface in the confusion of revolution, brings to the direction of affairs men who make patriotism consist in flattering the people in order to lead them, in destroying and levelling everything in order to accredit and enrich themselves, in slandering the laws in order to govern, in sanctioning licence in order to assure themselves of impunity . . . Buzot professes the morality of Socrates and the manners of Scipjo—the criminal! Thus, the upright Lacroix, the wise Chabot, the sweet Lindet, the reserved Thuriot, the scholarly Duroi, the humane Danton, and their imitators have declared him a traitor to the country. . . . I am only astonished that they have not decreed that everyone should forget his name.”

But for Robespierre, Madame Roland’s eloquent pen could voice no such appeal. Long before she began to plead her case to impartial posterity, her triumvirate of this tumultuous summer of ’91 had been broken. It was Robespierre himself who shattered it to bits. His desertion of the Girondins was a desertion of their queen, and she, quick to reward loyalty, was quicker to punish faithlessness. It is a Robespierre as barren of virtue as Pétion and Buzot were stripped of vice that lies within the pages of Madame Roland’s memoirs. She admitted that in 1791 he had seemed to her an honest man. In 1793 she was no longer deceived, for she had had ample opportunity to observe his enslavement to the popular favour for which he was already angling, even when he sat, awkward and silent, in the councils in the Hôtel Britannique. In one brief biting paragraph she exposed him as a shameless borrower of other men’s ideas and a cowardly

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barterer of political integrity for personal glory. The devil had not displayed his cloven hoof in '91, however, and more than once during that summer all the hope that Madame Roland held for France she pinned to Robespierre's splendid energy.

With Brissot she was far from satisfied. He had a way, inexplicable and dangerous in a journalist, she thought, of sitting on the fence at a time of crisis. For example, when Louis fled and was apprehended at Varennes, the *Patriote français*, to Madame Roland's disgust, simply chronicled the event. She herself fairly bristled with ideas as to what should be done with the guilty monarch. That her editor friend should be silent and indifferent on the subject was to her both baffling and infuriating. It was not astonishing in a man of Brissot's character. He forgot more about the game of politics in one month than Madame Roland learned in three years. Statesmanship in its highest and best manifestations was, it is true, beyond Brissot's powers. He was volatile and superficial, he lacked stability, and he was not too scrupulous in his choice of means and methods. He was probably no more intelligent than Madame Roland, but his mind was quicker and his imagination more versatile and less solemn. Compromise, which she urged upon others but never practised herself, he thoroughly understood. He knew better when to be unyielding, when to make concessions, and, above all, when to keep silent and await developments.

It did not take Madame Roland very long to make up her mind about the character of the National Assembly. Long before she had come to Paris, she had commented, scornfully and half-wonderingly, on the vacillating delays and the stupid weaknesses of that body. Why did it not attempt to solve the perplexing problems of finance? Why did it disregard the paramount question of freedom of the press? Why did it concern it-



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self with trifling and illusory measures? The answer to all these fretful questions she found after attending one session. "I have heard the subtle and captious Maury," she wrote to Bancal, "who is nothing but a sophist of considerable talent; the terrible Cazalès, often an orator, but often, also, a comedian and snarler; the ridiculous d'Eprémésnil, true mountebank, whose insolence and pettiness merely make people smile; the adroit Mirabeau, more amorous for applause than anxious for the public good; the seductive Lameth brothers, made to be the idols of the people and, unfortunately, to betray them, were they not closely watched; the little Barnave, of little voice and little reasons, as cold as a pumpkin fricasseed in snow, to employ the pleasing expression of a woman of another century; the exact Chapelier, clear and methodical, but often beside the point. What else do I know? The Assembly is weak and corrupt, the nobles united by complicity for their interests, and the patriots without cohesion, without a plan for the success of the good cause."

The succeeding weeks gave her no cause to modify this unfavourable impression. Her letters are filled with recriminations against the Assembly—its slowness, its disunion, and its weakness. Rumours of corruption among the members were rife in Paris. Madame Roland seized upon them as the explanation for the inept bungling of the financial problem and found her one ray of light in Robespierre's courageous but utterly useless opposition to the misappropriation of public funds. She could not understand how anyone could be at ease about the future of the country as long as this condition of affairs prevailed. Had not disorder in the public treasury started the Revolution in the first place? Why delude ourselves, she asked, that any good could be accomplished as long as this disorder remained? It was true that there was evidence that public opinion and sentiment

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were everywhere in favour of liberty, but what was the good of that when the Assembly's every action was designed to stifle that freedom towards which the eyes of patriots longingly gazed? How could intelligent citizens fail to see in what a fool's paradise they were living?

Early in April the Assembly began preliminary debates on the subject of choosing a new legislature. "They wish to terminate their uncompleted labours," remarked Madame Roland dryly. With her characteristic logic, she realized that the situation, as far as the people were concerned, resolved itself into a sorry choice. Was the Assembly to be ended with an unfinished Constitution, or prolonged at the risk of inducing further crises? Had that body been as strong as Hercules, as inviolate as Diana, it could have offered but a frail barrier against the dangers that threatened France. With the King and Court engineering counter-revolutionary plots as rapidly as secret letters could be sent to Austria, were the wisest people in the city wrong in believing the country on the verge of civil war? Madame Roland did not think so. From the King's attempted departure for Saint-Cloud, from Lafayette's order to the soldiers to fire on the people, she gloomily drew the logical inferences. It had been foolish to suppose that Louis XVI had ever taken the Civil Constitution of the Clergy to his heart, but it was sheer lunacy to believe that his desire to hear Easter mass from a non-juring priest outside of Paris was anything but the mask for an intention to desert the capital. And was Lafayette's action that of a man loyal to the Revolutionary cause?

No wonder Paris was in a ferment—a ferment that seethed and boiled as the price of gold mounted and reports of the insecurity at the frontiers came drifting in! Already the horrors of civil and religious war were desolating Avignon and other dis-

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tricts. Paris's turn was drawing near. The work of the popular societies—a bulwark against despair to more than one short-sighted patriot—brought no solace to Madame Roland. Like the Assembly itself, the clubs were ravished by intolerance and torn by disagreement. The fine enthusiasm of individual members gave promise of abundant fruit. The chilling frosts of disharmony blighted the harvest before it could spring into productive life.

Meanwhile the Assembly chose the critical days of later April to pass a decree upon the organization of the national guard. It provided that only active citizens were to be admitted. Madame Roland heard the debate, and came home cursing the Solons of her country for a pack of arrant fools. At a time when the embryonic Constitution needed all the devotion it could command, these blundering parliamentarians had legislated many of its most loyal supporters out of the privilege of bearing arms for it! Her angry letter to Brissot was printed in the April 30th issue of *Le Patriote français*. "Don't preach to us any more about peace and the courage of patience alone. The Court is playing with us—the Assembly is nothing but an instrument of corruption and tyranny. Civil war is no longer a disaster. It will regenerate us or it will destroy us, and as liberty is lost without it, we no longer have to fear it or avoid it. . . . My heart is lacerated. This morning I made a vow never to return to that abominable hole [the Assembly] where people smile at justice and humanity, where five or six courageous men are vilified by the factious mobs who wish to destroy us." This vow she sternly kept. The visitors' gallery saw no more of her.

On April 2, 1791, the death of Mirabeau plunged Paris into a frenzy of mourning. The people believed that they had lost their most ardent defender—the dead statesman was lamented as

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a national hero. To Madame Roland his passing was "premature as far as his age was concerned, but certainly not so if one considers the use which he made of his life. Surely," she added with a satirical glance at the sorrowing populace, "it is very apropos for his glory." In Mirabeau she saw something to admire, more to distrust, and everything to fear. She readily admitted that he had been able to recognize virtue—even to practise it—but did not his "contradictory speeches" and his "perfidious silences" show that he always did so with a corrupt heart? Could his eulogists point to any act in his career and say that at that moment he had forgotten his own glory to remember the good of *la Patrie*? "Such was his supreme art," she wrote to Bancal, "to develop good principles, then to apply them to circumstances in such a way that he appeared to be the champion of truth, then the moderator of the two parties and the dictator of the Assembly when actually he was nothing but his own idol and sacrificed the Republic to his reputation or to his particular interests."

If the throngs who lined the streets at Mirabeau's funeral were too hasty with their tears, Madame Roland was too quick and too confident with her judgment. Less perhaps than those of any other Revolutionary leader can the character and achievements of Mirabeau be summarily squeezed into a few terse sentences. At times a Titan of virtue, again a giant of evil—all the best and the worst of his era was symbolized in his warring spirit. If he deceived the Court and deluded the people, he victimized himself as well. Madame Roland, reading the journals during the week after his death, sputtered her vituperations at the fulsome praise with which most of the editors paid tribute to Mirabeau's genius. Because Brissot alone had "the wisdom to avoid idolatry with the prudence not to offend public opin-

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ion," he alone won her approval. As usual, reason conceived her judgment—emotion gave it birth. Forced by her intelligence to recognize Mirabeau's virtues, she was forbidden by her feeling to tolerate his weakness. It is neither to her pages nor to those of her friend Brissot that we turn today for the portrait of the Revolution's most paradoxical leader.

While Madame Roland lavished time and energy in telling anyone who would listen how to save the Revolution, what of her husband's business in Paris? It would be doing the indefatigable lady a grave injustice to suppose that she permitted it to languish in neglect. It was no easy task to persuade the Assembly to nationalize the Lyons debt. Roland, ever the strong man battling with adversity, met with every conceivable obstacle and delay. In the first place, there was his colleague, Monsieur Bret, to be considered. He and Bret were friends, but when did a friend ever find it easy to co-operate with Roland? Private business called Bret back to Lyons in July. He was doubtless glad to go, and the Rolands were frankly relieved. As Madame wrote to her friend Champagneux, the annoyances of a colleague had driven them nearly frantic. It had been maddening to have Roland's hands tied at every step until he had secured Bret's approval. Now that the latter was gone, no matter what happened, her husband would have the consolation of his own conscience. Roland alone with his conscience! Amid so much corruption and stupidity, it was a picture that she loved to paint.

Roland's second difficulty came with the Assembly itself. Skilful lobbying was needed to induce a legislative body already harassed by debts to assume an additional thirty-nine million livres. Much of that might have been done by the members from Lyons. One would scarcely think much persuasion necessary to convince them of the desirability of the plan. Probably they

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did favour it, but the man who fathered it was so intensely unpopular that, to his chagrin, he received only lukewarm support from his fellow-townsmen. Madame Roland must have realized as clearly as anyone that her husband was afflicted with a sadly tactless and undiplomatic disposition. But to admit it ran counter to her code of loyalty. Instead she scored the Lyons deputies for their stupidity and incompetence and peppered her correspondence with broad insinuations that Roland's troubles were entirely due to their jealousy.

The attitude of the citizens of Lyons multiplied the difficulties of the situation a hundredfold. Their willingness to entrust Roland with this delicate and important negotiation did not preclude their expecting him to give frequent and detailed accounts of his stewardship. Letters of impatient query and biting criticism poured in with every post. He and his wife answered them as carefully and calmly as they could, well knowing that silence would expose them to further criticism and worse rumour. As it was, an ill-natured report of his arrest was circulated by Roland's enemies at Lyons, and from there spread to Villefranche. "The rumour of our friend's arrest has greatly amused us," wrote Madame de Champagneux. "At Lyons they do him more honour than he has won at Paris."

All summer long, Madame Roland swung between exaltation and gloom. Her correspondence is a veritable fever chart of pain-racked France. She sat by the patient's bedside, listened to the ravings of delirium, took pulse and temperature, recorded everything, and ended by becoming infected herself. On the heights whenever she contemplated the ideal of true patriotism, she was in the depths whenever she gazed on the horrid reality of the Assembly. But even at her moments of darkest depression she never believed in the possibility of successful counter-

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revolution. Not that the leaders of the people were too patriotic to allow such a disaster, for on that score she thought them all open to suspicion. But "the firm determination of the people in the towns and country to preserve the advantage they have commenced to enjoy" seemed to her bulwark against any amount of corruption and treachery. History proved her right.

Madame Roland was certain that had the deputies in the Assembly possessed courage and integrity to match that of the people (did she use herself and Roland as the measure of the latter?), the Revolution could have been achieved overnight. But, weighing them in the scales of her own quick judgment, she concluded that "the best patriots seem to me more occupied with their own petty glory than with the grand interest of their country, and in truth they are all mediocre men, even in respect to their talents. They are not lacking in intellect, but in soul." This sweeping reflection, made in a letter to Bancal, was illustrated by detailed reports of the Assembly debates upon two recent decrees—one on the rule of black subjects by whites in the colonies, and one on the right of petition. Could not Bancal see what a picayune lot were those with whom rested the fate of France? Sporadic civil war in the Comtat district did not make the outlook any brighter, and the final touch of gloom was added by the proof that the attempted departure of Louis XVI for Saint-Cloud on the eighteenth of the last month was intended to be for the frontier. "I sigh for my hermitage and the joys of doing good in silence. I have had enough of Paris. It was lovely to see at the moment of Revolution. It afflicts me today—and I shall leave it without regret."

Reports of fair progress with the plans for the new legislative assembly acted on Madame Roland like a tonic. With the end of the despised Assembly in sight it was impossible to despair. The



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momentum of her revived enthusiasm carried her again, on June 12, 1791, into the pages of Brissot's journal. Under the title of "*Qui faut-il élire?*" she pled for the election of men fitted to perform the solemn business of creating a new constitution for France. "Choose only those known not to be the slaves of tyranny and corruption!" she implored the voters. But such stainless purity, when every Lucifer can borrow an angel's robes, defies discovery, and even Madame Roland had no sure talisman for its detection.

Barely ten days later the King's flight plunged Paris into chaos. It was not precisely unforeseen. Ever since the attempted journey to Saint-Cloud, people had been discussing the steps to be taken in such an event. But now that the possibility had become an actuality, and Louis and his family were gone, no one knew what to do about it. No one, that is, except Madame Roland, whose opinion, to her chagrin, was of no consequence. She could only pour out her feelings to Bancal. "You are too good a citizen, my friend," she wrote, "not to deserve information on everything that has happened here. I flatter myself, however, that I do not give you an exact account of all the facts so much as I explain to you what I think of the result of these events." Mere facts, of course, could never be so important to Madame Roland as what she thought of them was. "The King and his family are gone," she continued. "That is far from being a misfortune if we have good sense, energy, and union. The mass of the people of this capital feel that way, for the mass is sane and sees clearly. . . . The disposition of the public mind is excellent, the moment is happy, but what is the Assembly and what will it do?" Her question was soon answered. With the arrest of the fleeing monarch and his family at Varennes, the Assembly decreed that they should be brought back to Paris.

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Madame Roland was beside herself with excitement. "I cannot stay at home," she confessed to Bancal, to whom a long letter was dispatched almost daily during this time of crisis, "and I am going to see the brave people of my acquaintance in order to arouse them to the greatest measures."

The greatest measures! Had she had her way about it, Louis's shrift would have been short. In her opinion, the guilty monarch should be tried at once for treason. But that sensible course she knew the craven Assembly would never take. Besides, had not Danton, at a tumultuous session of the Jacobin Club, pronounced himself in favour of a regency? So Madame Roland dauntlessly tried to arouse her "brave friends" to the next best plan. Why not suspend the King? Then, when it was proved that the country could get along without him, a great step would have been taken towards the establishment of the Republic. Some, at least, of Madame Roland's friends were brave enough to follow her reasoning, and Buzot, who was beginning to realize that a strange community of sentiments and ideas linked him to the wife of the special deputy from Lyons, thought it excellent. But it was of no use. The tide of affairs was against them. More than a month dragged by while the deputies wrangled over what to do with the King. The sole triumph which the partisans of the "good cause" obtained was a decree that the Dauphin's tutor should be chosen from without the Assembly.

Madame Roland was in despair, her disgust at the Assembly equalled only by her scorn of the Jacobins. Now only bloodshed could save her unhappy country, she thought, for "a light character, frivolous and corrupt manners, are attributes incompatible with liberty and can be changed only by the frigidity of adversity." The growing power of Lafayette alarmed her. It was generally believed that he was implicated in the flight of the King,

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and therefore he was extremely unpopular. Yet the people clung to him, for they knew of no one to put in his place.

Madame Roland did not see how the situation could be worse. "We are about to pass by the most beautiful epoch for liberty without profiting by it with the wisdom and vigour desirable under the circumstances," she stormed to Bancal. "Meanwhile the future is pregnant with events. We are only beginning the Revolution, and we are still at the eve of a new crisis. The King is suspended and imprisoned in actual fact, but we have not dared to pronounce either." It was all very well for Madame Roland, shouting that a spade was a spade, to be so vigorous. In her impatience she forgot how deeply the French nation was attached to its King. For all his faults they loved him still. Perhaps it had little to do with Louis personally, but the idea of the kingship was firmly rooted in their hearts. For centuries it had symbolized, no matter in what contradiction to reality, a father's loving care for his people. France suffered much before she blamed her King, and though Madame Roland failed to grasp it, it was natural that he was actually imprisoned and suspended long before anyone dared to voice the awful truth.

The failure to dispose of the King as summarily as possible crushed, for the moment, all of Madame Roland's hopes. Her time during the remainder of her stay in Paris was chiefly employed in composing jeremiads and sending them to Bancal. "In truth, I do not know what to predict," she wailed. "The only thing which seems certain to me is that the impulse towards liberty is so strong and so widespread that it is inevitable that we win that liberty, even though through a sea of blood."

The month of July brought, if not a sea of blood, at least a rivulet. The atmosphere in Paris grew tense. The popular societies held feverish meetings, where emotional orators ha-

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ranged the audiences on what should be done with the King. The Assembly, demonstrating perfectly, according to Madame Roland, its supreme capacity for doing nothing, divided its time between fruitless debates on the same subject, and strenuous efforts to prolong its own life by forestalling the election of a new legislative body. On July 11th Brissot addressed the Jacobin Club. Reminding his audience how, a century before, their English neighbours had beheaded one king and dethroned another, he proved, at least to Madame Roland's satisfaction, that the timidity about trying Louis XVI for treason was both groundless and foolish. The enthusiastic reception of his speech revived her hopes for France. She forgot for the moment how readily revolutionary audiences cheered.

The celebration in honour of Voltaire, and the Festival of the Federation, which took place on the Champ de Mars, July 13-14, killed her new-born optimism. "To my sorrow," she wrote Bancal, "I believe the people were more eager for the spectacle, more influenced by frivolous curiosity, than inspired by the sentiments which form all the charm of such brilliant occasions." During that week, too, she experienced the sorry satisfaction of seeing her worst predictions about the Assembly come true. "The actual Assembly is not yet ready to revoke its decree of suspension. It wishes to rule—to settle everything before retiring. I have not ceased to say this for the last six months: It has become incapable of doing anything except to annul the Declaration of Rights by vicious laws. To preserve it is to maintain the instrument of our woes."

That her judgment had been sound was cold comfort indeed. Of what use was it to be right when she possessed not an iota of power over a situation that was all wrong? Bancal, puzzling, as usual, over where and how he could most effectively work

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for the good cause, for once found Madame Roland unable to advise him. "I should be at a loss to tell you where you would be most useful. In such confusion it is difficult to distinguish," she confessed. "However, I am, as always, convinced that it is by a great association of wisdom, cares, and actions that we can produce our effect rather than by the activity of scattered men, no matter how much talent and energy they have. Union and a plan are necessary. It is the lack of both of them that destroyed the patriots of the Assembly."

Then, like a sudden explosion, came the massacre of the Champ de Mars. All Paris shuddered with horror at the unwarranted firing upon citizens peacefully assembled for the innocent purpose of signing a petition. "Mourning and death are within our walls. Tyranny is mounted on a throne bathed in blood," moaned Madame Roland. To her it was conclusive proof that the majority of the Assembly was engineering a counter-revolution, and that Lafayette, at the head of the National Guard, was attempting to execute the plot. The fact that the petition demanded the nomination of deputies for the new legislature was in itself sufficient to drive her to that conclusion. It is true that every legal form had been complied with in arranging for the mass meeting. The crowd was orderly, and the only untoward incident was the discovery of two men concealed beneath the plank of the "Altar of the Country" whereon reposed the petition. Doubtless they were there for no more harmful reason than the gratification of vulgar curiosity. But the municipal authorities took alarm, and the result was the lamentable fusillade of cannon among the people. The act was later explained on the grounds that stones had been hurled at the soldiers guarding the entrance to the Champ de Mars. Madame Roland rightly denounced the excuse as a flimsy one. But these were trying days

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in the capital, and the municipal authorities, like everyone else, were tense and nervous.

For a week Paris was a madhouse. Prominent patriots were warned not to sleep at home, and Madame Roland felt honoured to give asylum for twenty-four hours to Monsieur and Madame Robert, friends of Robespierre, who had had a hand in framing the ill-fated petition. But she was sick at heart. "I am horribly disgusted here, and I wish only to depart. . . . I think no more of anything but a retreat, and my only ambition is to enjoy it." The terrific strain of the last three weeks had crushed her buoyant optimism. For the moment she was beaten, and foreboding fear possessed her mind as she contemplated the future. "What will come out of all this?" she asked moodily. "People talk about foreign war, which would be an excellent means of perpetuating it [the Assembly] and changing it into a Long Parliament. If that should happen, I do not know where one could seek a retreat. We see the aristocracy tightening up, the administrative corps sprinkled with intriguers, and true patriots exposed to a series of incalculable persecutions under the tyranny of the factious."

It was not the Assembly which had made the Revolution, but the force of circumstances, acting on public opinion. As long as the nation, ardent in its demand for justice, had developed that opinion with the greatest possible force, the Assembly had achieved grand and glorious things. But the people, tranquillized by their first victories, had relaxed vigilance over that body, with the result that it had fallen into languor and mediocrity, and now it could point to no accomplishment except the nullification of practically all the good that had come of the Revolution. Such was Madame Roland's analysis of the situation. Her remedy lacked the incisive intelligence of her diagnosis.

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"Yes, without doubt a new legislature is the great means of safety," she wrote Champagneux. A new legislature! A puny idea to come from so many months of scolding and railing at the National Assembly. What was to prevent a new body from repeating the mistakes of the old? She did not know, but she had faith in the future if only the electors chose men known to be above corruption.

Suddenly Madame Roland grew weary, even of her own harping criticisms. What was the good of so much discussing, analysing, theorizing? What was the use of the courageous but scattered efforts of men like Robespierre and Buzot? Nothing, absolutely nothing, was being accomplished. "I have now had quite enough of Paris, at least for this time," she wailed. "I have need of going to see my trees, after having seen so many stupid and frivolous people."

She had her wish, and very quickly. By the middle of August the question of the Lyons debt was satisfactorily settled. While it was pending, the Rolands had been bombarded with impatient letters. Now that it had been successfully concluded, not a single expression of gratitude came to them from the thankless city. Fortunately they were both blessed with temperaments to endure such indifference. It was with a gratifying inner sense of being unsung heroes that they prepared to leave the capital.

Shortly before their departure, Bosc introduced to them his dear friend Madame Sophie Grandchamp. The occasion was not without embarrassment. Madame Grandchamp, who must have been a thoroughly charming woman, had looked forward to meeting the Rolands long before they came to Paris. For days before their arrival Bosc had talked of nothing else. To her amazement, after they were actually in the city, he dropped the subject completely. No plans were made for the eagerly dis-

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cussed meeting. Sophie Grandchamp never learned the reason for this, but as months passed, and Bosc, all absorbed in his friends from Lyons, came to see her more and more infrequently, she was deeply wounded. Consequently she was amazed one day about the middle of August when he rushed into her apartment and invited her to accompany him and his friends to a meeting of the Jacobin Club. She hesitated, but in the end curiosity outweighed her injured pride and she went with him.

The introduction, which Bosc carried off with a flourish of true classicism, confused Sophie. "Here," he said, addressing Madame Roland, "is an Athenian, whom I present to a Spartan." Nor did the dazzling effect which the lady from Lyons made upon her do anything to put her more at ease. "I can still see that celebrated woman," she wrote in her memoirs, "seated by a small table, dressed in a riding-habit, her black hair cut short, her colour high, her eyes penetrating and sweet. She received me graciously, but, as I was obliged to leave, we could not talk. Seated by her side, I paid scant attention to the session. I wanted only to look at her, to listen to her. She spoke with a purity, a choice of expression, an energy, which the golden timbre of her voice made more remarkable. Dreamy and disturbed, I left her at eleven o'clock. Her departure actually gave me pain. I regretted having seen her, because I wanted to see her all the time."

At her first opportunity Sophie hurried to call at the Hôtel Britannique. Madame Roland was not at home. A second attempt was no more successful. But the third time she was lucky. She said all the affectionate things which her heart dictated, but, to her embarrassment, her goddess seemed cold and constrained, and Roland, whom she had scarcely noticed at the session of the Jacobin Club, retaliated with politely caustic disdain. It was an



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agonizing hour that she spent with them, and, humiliated and disappointed, she left vowing never to return. She believed that they had left the city when one morning Madame Roland appeared at her door alone. Throwing her arms round Sophie's neck, she cried, "You have condemned me. I know that everything has turned you against me. I have not had a chance to explain. This is the first moment I have had. I have come to justify myself, to let you know me. Our souls are *en rapport*. We ought to love each other."

It was like the working of magic. Sore humiliation and injured pride melted away, and Sophie found the hours spent with Madame Roland "delicious." She was so overflowing with warm friendliness. It was only their third meeting, but nothing would satisfy her except that Sophie accompany her home to Villefranche and the Clos. This abrupt invitation was somewhat startling, and Sophie at first demurred. She did not reckon with Madame Roland's sweeping energy, which brushed aside objections like cobwebs. She would not be leaving for a few days—surely her dear friend could fling a few things in a portmanteau and be ready in that time! Le Clos was such a glorious place at this season of the year! They would be entirely undisturbed, for Roland was remaining in Paris another three weeks. What an enchanting time they would have, alone in the country, pouring out heart and soul to each other! The goddess, planning, coaxing, pleading, insisting, had her way. Sophie, utterly captivated, meekly prepared to leave Paris. The memory of Roland's frigid austerity prompted her to seek his approval of her visit. To her astonishment, his cordiality towards the plan quite matched his wife's, and Sophie, marvelling at this extraordinary woman's power, took her place in the travelling-coach with a light heart.

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Their journey was delightful. Madame Roland was a fascinating companion. She told Sophie about her friends, described her life, revealed her innermost thoughts, touched upon her relations with her husband—all with such charming and confiding frankness that her hearer, deeply moved, began to wonder how this brilliant, unhappy woman could be made to taste happiness. She even began to feel that she herself would never again experience the sensation unless that strange look of smouldering sorrow could be driven from the grey eyes that gazed so intently into her own. This feeling deepened during the days they spent together at Le Clos. Buried in the solitude of the country, Sophie tasted to the full the joys of association with "the most seductive of women." Sharing her friend's daily life—the round of simple household duties, the work with the vintage and the harvest, and visits to the peasants' cottages—she experienced perfect contentment. Both were surprised—even a little frightened—at the headlong flight of time.

Into this untroubled paradise of feminine joy Roland came crashing like some uncouth being from the nether world. "He loved to have everyone absorbed in him and his work," explained Sophie in her memoirs. Gone were the happy, tranquil hours in intimacy *à deux*. It was apparently not enough for the irritable, perverse man to have his wife chained to her desk, copying out notes for his articles. Sophie, too, must share in the researches, must read, copy, criticize. A dangerous commission, that last, for Roland was that most exasperating type of writer who begs for honest criticism and then flies into a fury when he gets it.

Even more trying was his habit of cornering Sophie and begging her to do what she could to overcome his wife's repugnance to the life in Villefranche. He had determined to end his

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days there, in his own corner of the soil. His wife's evident restlessness and dissatisfaction, her constant talk of the life open to them in Paris, was maddening. Would not Sophie do what she could to drive such foolish ideas out of her head? It was an awkward request, for in this family quarrel, Sophie sided with the captive wife. She quite agreed that Madame's talents deserved the more glittering background of Paris and she shuddered at the thought of her poor friend condemned to live out her life in this poky, provincial village. Yet she scarcely had the courage to brave Roland's tantrums.

Naturally under these circumstances, Sophie soon grew bored with the country that a few weeks ago had so enticed her. Winter was coming on. She began to notice how arid and rocky the soil was, how lugubrious and sombre the mountains looked, swathed in their veils of autumn mist. Walks through the country intrigued no longer, and she became fretfully aware of the cramped quarters and inconvenient arrangements of the house. Madame Roland, not noticing her friend's increasing abstraction, spoke continually of how easily she could bear the monotony of her life, the tediousness of her work, could her darling Sophie only be with her for ever. To one in Sophie's mood such words brought positive terror. She began to remember that she had other—and dearer—associations in Paris. Although her friend shed heart-breaking tears and talked despairingly of how they were parting for ever, she finally managed to break away from Le Clos.

Sophie's departure increased Madame Roland's restlessness. It had begun almost before she was out of Paris. Forgetting how often during the summer, when things were going badly, she had written and spoken of her desire to leave the scenes of so much corruption and get back to the peaceful solitude of her

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farm, she had no sooner set her face towards home than she began to long again for the excitement of the capital. She even wrote to Roland before he joined her at Le Clos, saying: "I see that the great matters are not in the best hands in the world, and I should have welcomed on my own account the assurance of a sojourn in Paris. All the nullity of the provinces seems to fall on my head. I feel as if I were enveloped in vacuity and obscurity. I have thought of the effects on my child, whom I have chiefly in view, and I have been sad." She went on to urge him to settle his affairs, to try to arrange them so that they could at least make frequent visits to Paris. "It is not pleasures for which I am ambitious, but considering the stupidity of the only child we have, I can conceive no hope of developing her except by putting before her eyes so many objects that some one is bound to interest her." It was hardly fair, thus to shift the blame on to poor little Eudora! If her mother thought once of her, she thought twice of herself.

A few days later she wrote to Bancal: "It is not without pain that I see my husband thrown back into silence and obscurity. He is accustomed to a public life. It is more necessary to him than he himself thinks. His energy, his activity, become dangerous to his health when they are not employed according to his tastes." Womanlike, she was marshalling every conceivable plea and argument to win her point. This passage to Bancal was only the rehearsal of a debate planned to convince her husband.

Late that fall the inspectorships of commerce and manufactures were definitely abolished. The step had been rumoured for a long time. Almost a year before, hearing that it might be taken, Madame Roland had said that she would not care. Now that the suppression was actual fact, she rejoiced. It gave her one more argument—perhaps the best. Roland was out of a job.

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He would have to earn his living with his pen. Could not that be done more easily and more effectively in Paris than in remote Villefranche?

All during October and November she hammered away at the subject. Eudora's education, his career, his health, his talents, their need of money—did not everything point to the wisdom of moving to Paris? Of course she had her way. Roland had never been able to resist her in anything, and this time his capitulation came after what was for him only a brief struggle. December 15, 1791, saw them permanently settled in the capital, where Madame Roland, with the clairvoyance of overwhelming ambition, was certain that fame, and perhaps even fortune, awaited them.

## CHAPTER XIV

### *THE CENTRE OF THE STAGE*

BACK in the stimulating atmosphere of Paris, Madame Sophie Grandchamp found her thoughts continually returning to Villefranche. Away from the sombre landscape and dreary winter climate of the Beaujolais, away from Roland's irritable scolding, she realized anew her deep affection for his lovely wife. Naturally the two friends corresponded, and great was Sophie's rejoicing when she received news of the Rolands' impending arrival in Paris. She was with them in spirit all during their long journey northward, her emotions in a constant state of agitation and excitement. Madame Roland had asked her to secure an apartment for them at the Hôtel Britannique. The execution of this commission, the arrangement of every tiny detail for their comfort that occurred to her, kept her pleasurably occupied.

On the day of their arrival Sophie, hardly able to contain herself at the thought of once more clasping her dear friend in her arms, received a brief note from Madame Roland. It stiffly begged her not to try to see them that day, since Roland and Eudora were tired and in need of rest. Sophie was crushed. She, who had so constantly thought of them, longing to see them—she, who had been counting every moment until their arrival—was not, now that they were actually in Paris, wanted! It was unbelievable. She read the note again and again, seeking some explanation of its inexplicable message. For several hours her wounded pride struggled with her sentiment, but finally the latter prevailed, and she went round to the Hôtel Britannique. Entering

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the apartment which she had chosen and arranged with such loving care, she found Roland reading by the fireplace. He greeted her coldly, scarcely troubling to look up from his book. His wife, her eyes red, her voice trembling, welcomed her friend timidly, extended a cold hand, and breathed a deep sigh. Poor Sophie remained for a few agonizing minutes and then, cut to the quick, went home.

Her pride asserted itself. She would not tolerate such treatment from anyone—not even a man of Roland's years and dignity. Impulsively she wrote him a note, protesting against his rudeness, and declaring that she would not expose herself to it a second time. After sending this off by her *bonne*, she felt relieved.

Roland did not write a reply. Instead, suddenly gracious, he came in person to apologize. Irritation at her mild criticisms of his articles, criticisms which he himself had sought, had caused all the trouble, making him behave foolishly and childishly. He was sorry. Sophie accepted his apology, and from then on, things went smoothly. She even offered to take Madame's place as secretary, an offer which was gratefully accepted. Madame Roland's health was not good, the work with her husband was too dry and confining—there were a dozen excuses to veil her feeling, which Sophie shared, that she must have calm and freedom in which to employ her talents to more interesting ends. So every day, from eight until two, Sophie and Roland worked on *Dictionnaire* articles. The afternoons they spent with Madame Roland, and she and Sophie were alone every evening, except when the Jacobin Club was in session. To its meetings they had to accompany Roland, whether they felt like it or not. Bosc had introduced him as a member, and he was soon one of the club's most active workers, serving on the committee of correspondence, and acting as secretary.

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The Rolands soon found that three months had brought many changes in the Paris they had known during the summer. The hated National Assembly was no more. Its monument was the Constitution of 1791, under which the Legislative Assembly, composed of men utterly without practical legislative experience, struggled with the numerous problems left unsettled by the former body. The fall in the value of the *assignats*, the increased cost of living, the opposition to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, the continued uprisings of the peasants, the treacherous activities of the *émigrés*, the discontent of the city workers—no remedies had been found for these ills, which still harassed France.

Those friends who had passed so many summer evenings in the Rolands' drawing-room were now scattered. Some of them were away, like Buzot, who had become president of the criminal court at Evreux. Some of them had achieved prominence and distinction in Paris. Pétion had been elected mayor of the city in November, defeating Lafayette by an overwhelming majority. Brissot was a member of the Legislative Assembly, where he was establishing relations with such men as Condorcet, Vergniaud, Isnard, and Guadet—the nucleus of the group later called Girondin. Robespierre had become criminal prosecutor for the city of Paris. They were all absorbed in multitudinous activities, and most of them, it seemed, were too busy to pay much attention to the newly-arrived provincials. Roland, too proud, too conscious of his own superiority not to be irritated at this indifference, talked ceaselessly of returning to Villefranche. His wife, although she shared his mortification, was yet dismayed at the thought of leaving Paris before any of her dreams had come true. She begged Sophie to do something—anything—to persuade him to remain. The latter appealed desperately to Panckoucke, who



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obligingly presented a plan for a magazine of commercial and industrial arts under Roland's editorship. The idea appealed, and on the strength of it Roland signed the lease for the apartment at Number 51 rue de la Harpe.

To Sophie's astonishment, Madame Roland, now that she had won her point and was permanently settled in Paris, seemed anything but satisfied and happy. A strange languor had taken possession of her. She seemed consumed by some secret sorrow. Only partially did she unburden her soul to Sophie, but that faithful friend was appalled at her apathy and terrified at her vague threats of suicide. She tried every resource that loving affection could suggest, but in vain. Madame Roland continued to droop. Some vital interest was needed, something that could absorb and reanimate all her faculties, and rescue her from the melancholia that was increasing every day. Sophie was powerless to create such an outlet, but where she failed, chance and circumstance succeeded.

As the year 1791 drew to a close, Louis XVI, who of course had never sincerely supported constitutional government, became convinced that his aim of destroying the Revolution could best be served by war. He counted on France's defeat, which he regarded as inevitable, to demonstrate the failure of the new government. In that case to whom could the people look for salvation save him and his autocracy? Brissot and his friends the Girondins also favoured war, but not for Louis's reasons. They believed that the patriotic emotions thus engendered would fuse all factions in France and save the Revolution from failure on account of internal dissensions. Also it would reveal the actual position of the King. The Jacobins, or most of them, led by Robespierre and Marat, were opposed. They argued that France was unprepared for war and pointed out that defeat

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would result in the re-establishment of the throne and the destruction of the Constitution. These disagreements precipitated a bitter struggle in the Legislative Assembly. The Girondins won their point. Not only did Louis accept a cabinet of Girondin sympathies, but war with Austria was declared on April 20, 1792.

Lanthenas was not a member of the Legislative Assembly, but he was in close contact with some of the most influential men—Pétion, Brissot, Louvet, and other leaders. His disinterestedness and his zeal for liberty, rather than his abilities, which were mediocre, gave him some weight in informal councils. One day, discussing the impending appointment of a new cabinet with Sophie Grandchamp, he remarked that Roland would be an excellent choice, and added that he had mentioned his friend's name to various leaders. Sophie did not agree. She reminded him of how dangerous the violent prejudices and strong passions of both the Rolands would be were they given such influence and power, particularly in critical times. She spoke, too, of their provincialism, their lack of experience in dealing with people, their ignorance of court and political intrigue. Would not these qualities expose them to danger and unhappiness? Lanthenas appeared at length to be convinced.

One evening about a week later Sophie and Roland were conjecturing the probable personnel of the new ministry. "At any rate," laughed Roland, "my obscurity will save me from being chosen, and I am thankful for it." It was nine o'clock when he left her. At eleven she received a note from Madame Roland.

"Dumouriez has just left us. He came to tell us that the King has appointed my husband Minister of the Interior, and that tomorrow he will receive the portfolio from Cahier de Gerville.

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Roland has asked until ten o'clock to give his answer. You are the one who will decide. Come over as early as possible."

Sophie found this news extremely disturbing. She knew her friends only too well and knew that she could never dream of advising them to refuse. Had they not been chafing for weeks at their own obscurity? Had they not been galled to see in positions of power and prominence people whom they regarded as inferior to themselves? Had not these circumstances caused much of Madame Roland's unhappiness? Sophie, thinking everything over during a sleepless night, realized that nothing would induce them to refuse this heaven-sent opportunity. They would talk about wanting to aid the Revolutionary cause, and they sincerely did want to aid it, but the deciding factor would be, Sophie knew, these personal considerations, of which they themselves were not, perhaps, entirely conscious.

The Rolands were in bed when Sophie arrived early the following morning. Overcome with emotion, she could only sob: "I am losing you for ever! Forgive me if that thought makes me overlook the honours now thrust upon you!"

Roland protested. How could she think such a thing? He had determined to accept the appointment only on condition that she would remain with them and share their work. There were countless ways in which she could help. Instinct assured Sophie that he spoke impulsively. She was silent. Her friends reproached her so bitterly for her hesitation that at last, swayed by their pleading, she promised to do all she could.

For that day at least she was very busy. Friends poured into the apartment to congratulate the new minister. Delegations from all sorts of organizations arrived to express popular approval of his appointment. Curiosity-seekers and favour-hunters added to the confusion. Sophie helped to receive all this motley

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crowd. By some she was even taken for the wife of the minister. Later in the day she went out with a long list of errands. Purchases must be made, messages left, people interviewed. At seven in the evening, exhausted from running all over the city, she returned. She could scarcely believe her eyes. Madame Roland, who only the day before had been weak, languorous, and unhappy, had now recovered her strength and animation. A throng of people pressed round her, murmuring congratulations, praises, and compliments. Roland shared in the flattery and seemed satisfied. All the ministers, all the important members of the Legislative Assembly, the most influential men in Paris, were there. Two footmen guarded the doors of the salon, preserving etiquette by ushering people into the ministerial presence strictly in accordance with rank. Twenty-four hours had indeed brought sweeping changes! Sophie, unnoticed, watched it all from an inconspicuous corner and asked herself if the thing was really serious. She resolved not to keep her rash promise of the morning. After all, she knew, there would be no necessity for it.

Naturally, their tiny apartment could not serve as the headquarters of an important department of state, and soon the Rolands were installed in the large and luxurious Hôtel of the Controller-General, rue Neuve-des-Petits-Champs. Their mode of living remained substantially the same. Madame Roland made it a rule neither to make nor to receive calls and never to invite any women to dinner. This imposed no sacrifice. Her circle of friends was small, society never had allured her, and her tastes were sober and studious. She had always shared her husband's work, as inspector, as writer, as editor. It was natural for her to continue sharing it when he became a cabinet minister. The fact did not escape the notice of their political enemies, who frequently charged Madame Roland with usurping her husband's

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place in the Department of the Interior. Many times in her memoirs she attempted to deny this, yet even her own words show on what a basis of truth the charge rested. Twice a week she entertained, at a simple, informal dinner, ministers, deputies, and other persons whom her husband wished to see.

"They discussed affairs before me because I had neither the mania for joining the discussion nor the kind of associations which would inspire mistrust. Out of all the rooms of a huge establishment I had chosen the smallest for my little study, where I had my books and a desk. It often happened that friends or colleagues, wishing to speak to my husband confidentially, would come to me and ask me to summon him. Thus I was in touch with things without intrigue or vain curiosity. Roland had the agreeable habit of discussing various matters with me with that confidence that has always been between us, and that has made our knowledge and our opinions things held in common. Sometimes friends who only had an opinion to give or a word to speak would ask me to transmit their messages to him."

Relations between the King and his new ministers were anything but smooth. Louis's policy was to procrastinate until the failure of the war gave him an opportunity to restore despotism in France, meanwhile pretending to uphold the new government. The Girondins, also awaiting the outcome of the war, tried their best to have faith in the faithless monarch. Roland and his friend Servan, who on May 8th had replaced de Grave as Minister of War, almost did believe in the King's sincerity. Madame Roland taunted them for their gullibility, reminding them that despite all of Louis's promises, nothing was ever done. For her part, she told them, she had never been able to believe in "the vocation for constitutionalism of a man born under despotism, brought up for it, and accustomed to exercise it."

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The war was going very badly. The French, as Robespierre had insisted, were unprepared. The campaign against the Austrian Netherlands ended in an ignominious and disastrous retreat. The news reached a Paris tense with anxiety and fear. Very little was needed to produce a crisis. That little the King supplied by refusing to sanction two decrees passed by the Legislative Assembly, one of them directed against those priests (non-juring) who refused to uphold the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, and the other one providing for a camp of twenty thousand men to be established near Paris. Louis was entirely within his rights, but this exercise of his veto, in the face of a people aroused, terrified and suspicious of his every move, was at least impolitic. So Madame Roland reminded him, in an angry and rather impertinent letter which, under his own signature of course, Roland submitted. The King's reply was the prompt dismissal of the entire cabinet except Dumouriez, who resigned in a few days. Madame Roland expressed her gratification at this outcome characteristically interpreting the dismissal as indisputable proof of her husband's, and of course her own, merit and superiority.

The events of the summer proved the short-sightedness of Louis's policy of duplicity. As long as Paris held an easily excited mob, successful counter-revolution was impossible. The popular demonstration of June 20th, which, if not actually planned by the Girondins, was at least not displeasing to them, wrested no promise from Louis to sanction the decrees, but it showed the temper of the mob—a temper that prevailed throughout July and the early days of August. Again and again the Legislative Assembly was warned by petition that unless some definite action was taken against the King, the people would take matters into their own hands. The Assembly was divided. The Jacobins were inclined to regard the Brunswick Manifesto,

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which had just been issued, as provocation for dethronement. Robespierre made a bold address before the club in that strain, and the radical sections of the city applauded loudly. The Girondins, alarmed at the actual prospect of the Republic which they admired theoretically, once again began negotiations with the King. The Assembly might thus have wrangled indefinitely had not the successful storming of the Tuileries, on August 10th, proved the need of some decisive stand. The demonstration, planned and carried out by Jacobin influence, was but the first in the long series of events marking the bitter struggle of the two parties. The crisis itself opened the way for the Revolution either to go backward or forward. The Girondins, unallied either by sentiment or circumstance with the Paris populace, could go either way. But the Jacobins had no such freedom of choice. Although they were a minority in the Assembly, twenty-five of them were from Paris, chosen by Paris constituencies to whom they were responsible. They and the Paris populace made the crisis of August 10th. Should a reaction come, would not the Jacobins be the chief sufferers? Hence their only choice was to drive first the Assembly and then the Convention along, and eventually to get the legislative authority in France committed to more extreme and more radical acts than even the 10th of August had been.

Very different was the position of the Girondins. They, torn between their emotional anti-Royalism and their theoretical admiration of republican freedom on the one hand, and their timid desire not to do anything which would close all doors of retreat on the other, inevitably were beaten and victimized by the group which circumstance had allied with the populace of Paris.

Although Vergniaud, as President, had assured the King and Queen on August 10th when they had taken refuge in the *Manège*

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that they might rely upon the firmness of the Assembly, that body finally voted for deposition. A Provisional Executive Council was established in place of the King's royalist ministry. About this there had to be some sort of compromise. The Girondins were uppermost in the Assembly, but the sections and the Commune were under control of Robespierre and the more radical Jacobins. Every member of the new Executive Council was a Girondin save one. Danton, that popular leader of the people, formerly substitute procurer of the Paris Commune, became Minister of Justice. Thus what the Jacobins lacked in numbers they gained in strength. More of a practical and constructive statesman than perhaps any other Revolutionary leader, Danton virtually assumed entire control of the government.

After Roland's dismissal he and his wife had returned to the rue de la Harpe. In her memoirs Madame Roland emphasized the extreme quiet of their life for the next two months, their aloofness from all political embroilments. One would conclude from her account that they were even unaware of the approach of the crisis of August 10th. It is difficult to imagine Madame Roland resigned to such absolute retirement, and as a matter of fact their seclusion was by no means complete. They remained in close touch with their Girondin friends. Barbaroux, Pétion, and the others came to see them frequently, and Lanthenas, who was to carry messages for Pétion from the Mairie to the Hôtel de Ville on August 10th, was practically a member of the household. Letters which Madame Roland wrote to Bancal, who was in and out of Paris during that summer, show her following the trend of affairs with her usual keen interest. She was particularly incensed over the Girondin tendency to continue dealing with the King. Indeed, she never forgave Vergniaud for his brilliant address to the Assembly of July 3rd, in which he left the way



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open for a reconciliation between his party and the Court. But the best proof that for the Rolands their enforced retirement meant anything but dissociation from political events lies in the fact that when the Provisional Executive Council was formed, Roland was invited to his old post of Minister of the Interior.

The war had continued to go badly for the French. Longwy fell before a Prussian attack, and on September 2nd Verdun succumbed. Paris was panic-stricken, fearing that its turn was next. Before the Assembly Danton pleaded for courage and union. Marat continued his urging for extreme measures against the counter-revolutionaries. Wild rumours floated around the city, to the effect that the Royalists who had been arrested were plotting to escape from their prisons. A vague suspicion had grown up that the events of August 10th were only a cloak for some dastardly machinations of the King and his followers. A Revolutionary tribunal had been established to try suspected Royalists, but its judgments were entirely too lenient to satisfy popular feeling, which was running high. Under these circumstances the prison massacres of September 2nd, in which a thousand people were savagely slaughtered, are understandable, although responsibility for them is difficult, perhaps impossible, to fix. Certainly neither the Committee of Police and Surveillance, nor the Girondin mayor, Pétion, nor the Girondin Minister of the Interior, Roland, made any effort to stop the massacres once they had begun. The latter even referred to them on the following day in phrases that are not entirely disapproving. "Yesterday is a day over the events of which we must perhaps draw a veil. But I know that the People, terrible as its vengeance is, has yet tempered it with a kind of justice." Later Roland made as great an effort as any of the Girondins to throw the blame for this outbreak of savagery on Jacobin shoulders. Strategically speaking,

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this was, of course, all that the Girondins could do. Yet it was only one more step toward their doom. They were pushed even farther with the King's trial and the military reverses of 1793.

The 20th of September saw the end of the Legislative Assembly and the beginning of the National Convention. This body faced the problem of creating a new constitution for France, but before that could be done, two important matters had to be settled. The fate of the King had to be determined and the military policy decided. Upon both of these questions the Girondins and the Jacobins were divided, and to these disagreements were added their quarrels over the position of Paris in the government. The Girondins, provincials for the most part, were developing a healthy fear of the power of the capital. At the moment they controlled the Convention, but the issues between the two parties were clearly drawn, and the next fourteen months were to witness that fierce and bitter struggle which ended in victory for the Jacobins. The differences between the two groups were at once superficial and irreconcilable. Both, for instance, agreed that the deposed Louis could not be set at large. As a private citizen he would be too dangerous. But while the Girondins favoured life imprisonment, the Jacobins insisted upon the capital penalty. Both parties were in accord in feeling that the war, now that it had been started, should be pushed to victory. But they were hopelessly divided as to the method of accomplishing that end.

The execution of the King, although not precisely a Jacobin victory, since the Convention was not organized strictly along party lines, was nevertheless something of a triumph for Jacobin sentiment. Its immediate result was that England, Holland, Spain, and Sardinia joined the coalition of Austria and Prussia against France and the Revolution. Monarchism prepared to avenge its own. This gathering of outside forces did little or

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nothing to allay the internal dissensions which tore France. Girondins and Jacobins continued to claw at each other's throats. The efforts of a few isolated leaders, like Anacharsis Clootz, to bring about unity were futile. Not even Danton had any effect. As Minister of Justice and virtual head of the government he did his best to achieve a working agreement between the two hostile groups. He might, perhaps, had made some headway with the Girondin men. But he could do nothing with Madame Roland, who had conceived a violent and unreasoning antipathy to him. Her prejudices, like her enthusiasms, were inevitably reflected among the Girondins. She spoke in her memoirs of Danton's many attempts to conciliate her. There is no reason to doubt her word. Danton was far too intelligent to scorn compromise if it could be effected. But those same memoirs show the hopelessness of his efforts in the face of her wildly passionate prejudices. "I regarded that repulsive and atrocious face," wrote Madame Roland, "and although I told myself that a man should be judged only on his words, that I was certain of nothing against him, that even the most honourable of men necessarily has two reputations in times of party strife, that, in short, we should disregard appearances, nevertheless I could not reconcile the idea of a good man with that face. I have never seen anyone who so perfectly characterizes the excess of brutal passions. . . . My lively imagination . . . has often made me depict Danton, a poignard in his hand, exciting by voice and gesture a band of assassins more timid or less ferocious than himself. . . . Assuredly I defy a skilled painter not to find, in the person of Danton, all of the characteristics desirable for such a composition."

Even had the advocate been more pleasing to her, it is doubtful if the cause for which Danton pleaded would have won

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Madame Roland. Compromise! She had scorned it all her life, supported by an unflinching conviction of the absolute and ultimate rightness of her own judgment. To her, and of course to her husband, the conversion of the French people to Girondin principles was of far greater moment than sordid, even though politically advantageous, compromise with the hated Jacobins. They were simply incapable of visualizing the critical situation of the Revolution and France from a practical point of view.

Much of their time and energy, therefore, were devoted to work that was frankly propagandist. In theory it was not unadmirable, but little was achieved in the way of practical results. There had been little opportunity for such activities during the first brief period of office, for the employees of each department had held their appointments from the King. With the creation of the Provisional Executive Council, the Legislative Assembly had decreed that each minister could make in his own department such changes as seemed necessary. Thus Roland could surround himself with men of his own choosing—Champagneux, Lanthenas, and Lecamus. According to Madame Roland, they were "hard-working men, intelligent and devoted to the common good." In her opinion, had Roland done nothing else, France would still owe him a debt of gratitude for the salutary changes he made in the organization of the Department of the Interior. But he did much more. He caused departmental letters to be sent to every district in France. Steady communication was maintained with every provincial branch of the important popular societies. Under Roland's zealous direction the Department of the Interior became one vast correspondence bureau for the dissemination of Girondin principles.

The Convention had allotted funds for publicity work. The Rolands, convinced of its value, as well as of their own supreme

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fitness to direct it, used these funds lavishly. At least one journal, the *Sentinelle*, under the editorship of Louvet, was more or less openly subsidized, and money was spent freely for the printing of pamphlets and articles. Thus a basis was created for the charge of treason upon which Madame Roland was tried and condemned. Naturally, the Jacobins accused the Rolands of having used their official position for the dissemination of ideas subversive of the safety of France and the Revolution.

Not even among their own friends and allies did the ardent propagandists meet with unqualified support and approval. The Girondins, robbed of much of their prestige by the failure of their war policy and the treason of Dumouriez, found it increasingly difficult to maintain a united front in face of the fiercely concerted attacks of the Jacobins. They made a gallant effort, but on every decisive event, political strategy forced them to take the wrong stand. Actually, the Jacobins were no more sympathetic with the spirit of the Parisian mob than were the Girondins. Lawyers like Danton and Robespierre, doctors like Marat, conservative, middle-class, bourgeois, were they men to support violent radicalism? But political circumstance had made their power dependent on the thoughtless, lawless Paris populace. They had to yield to it to preserve their own position. Can they be blamed for following its lead, and scorning the Girondins for their hesitancy over the King's execution, then blaming them for the failure of the military campaign? The mere presence of the Girondins in the Convention was a menace to the Jacobins. No slip on the part of the former was too slight to be seized upon by the latter. Every Girondin mistake—in other words, every point at which the Girondins differed from Parisian public opinion was, to the Jacobins, but one more justification for their ultimate victory—the expulsion of the Girondins from the Convention.

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Meanwhile, the Girondins greatly multiplied the dangers of their position by internal quarrelling and dissension—a fault perhaps not unnatural in a group as individualistic as it was brilliant. Too many of the Girondins shared Madame Roland's weakness—a total inability to forget personal considerations. All during his second period of office Roland found himself in the disconcerting position of being attacked by his enemies without always being aided by his friends. For nearly five months he endured it with admirable patience and control. But in January 1793, with a suddenness that startled friends and foes alike, he resigned from office.

Had the failure of the Girondin policies, the hopelessness of his own situation, the treachery, as he regarded it, of his friends, proved more than he could bear? Certainly these things contributed to his disillusion and embitterment; certainly they helped to rob his public life of joy and savour. But there was a greater sorrow than any of these for the tired old man to face. His wife chose this period of public discouragement and defeat to make him an appalling confession. She had fallen desperately in love with another man—with Buzot—and he returned her feelings.

These two had been separated for a year, for when Madame Roland returned to Paris in December 1791, Buzot had gone to Évreux. But the following year he was elected a deputy to the National Convention, and thus he came back to the capital. During the interval he and Madame Roland had corresponded. The letters have disappeared, but it is easy to imagine how she must have written. First, her impressions of passing affairs, mingled with family news; then, in March, triumphant word of the entry into the ministry; during the summer, recriminations against the King and Court; and finally, in September, cries of

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indignation against the growing Jacobin tyranny, mingled with moving appeals to him, as one of the "pure" members of the newly-elected Convention, to hasten his return to Paris. In 1791 Madame Roland and Buzot had discovered many common sympathies, many mutual interests. It was easy to find others when they were together once more. So many of Madame Roland's friends had disappointed her! Robespierre was completely alienated. She knew only too well Pétion's light and frivolous character. Brissot—an estimable man, of course, but, after all, was he anything but mediocre? Bancal, indeed, had once seemed exceptional, but she was more experienced now, and she could only regard him as ordinary. Lanthenas and Bosc were an old story, good friends, but scarcely stimulating. To all of these impressions were added political differences—minor ones for the most part, but nevertheless irritating.

Then came Buzot. He alone thought and felt exactly as she did. When she and Roland were attacked in the Convention, he alone defended them with absolute disinterestedness. If Madame Roland favoured a certain measure, Buzot alone, it seemed to her, fought for it heart and soul. Her liking soon smouldered into admiration, and admiration blazed into love.

Roland suspected nothing. But Lanthenas, who for years had romantically worshipped his "*sorella*," and who, knowing that he had no hope, had never betrayed his feelings, realized all too well what was happening. He had never been disturbed over Bosc or Bancal, but he knew at once that Buzot was different. He ventured to speak to Madame Roland—with disastrous results. The long friendship, which political disagreement had already strained, was inexorably broken. Eleven frigid, formal notes addressed to "Monsieur," and several bitterly venomous

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passages in Madame Roland's memoirs mark the melancholy ending of her "*petit frère*."

Madame Roland had no intention of becoming Buzot's mistress. He was married, and she was determined never to forget her duty to Roland. Why, then, did she deal the poor old man the staggering blow of such a confession? Neither he nor Buzot could possibly receive any good from it, and for him it meant the cruellest suffering. But Madame Roland benefited by it, for to the relief of unburdening her soul was added the assurance that her husband must for ever worship her honesty and her purity.

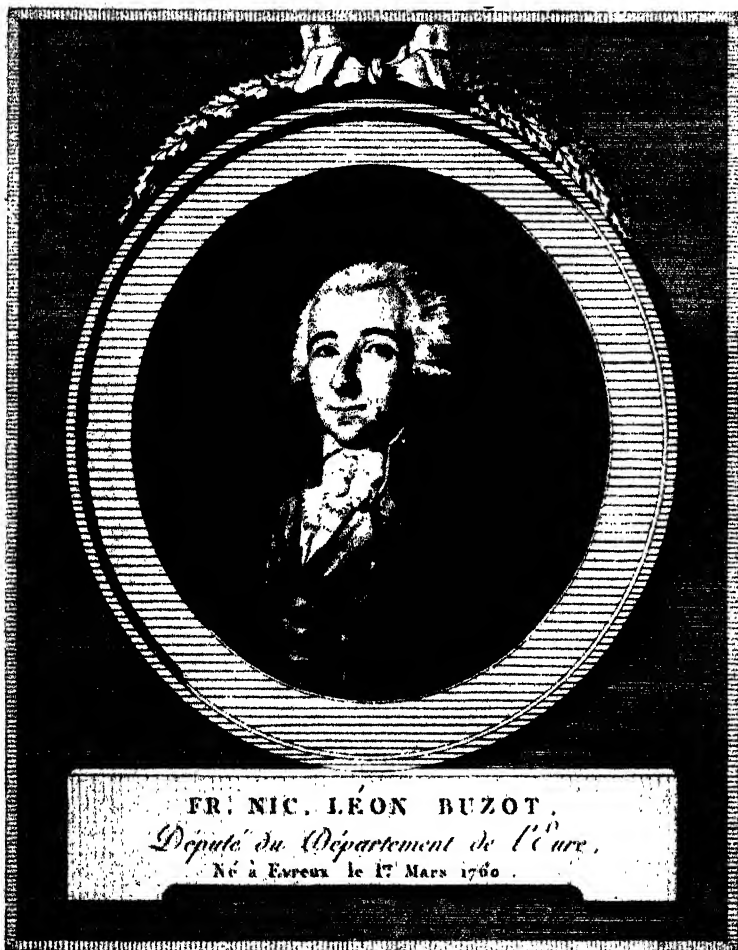
"I honour, I cherish, my husband as a sensitive daughter adores a virtuous father to whom she would sacrifice even her lover," she wrote in her memoirs. "But I have found the man who could be that lover, and, while remaining faithful to my duties, my ingenuousness has not known how to conceal the sentiments which I subdue to them. My husband, extremely sensitive, affectionate and proud, could not endure the least alteration in his empire; his imagination darkened and his jealousies irritated me. Contentment fled from us. He adored me, I sacrificed myself to him, and we were unhappy."

Poor Roland! For thirteen years he had been given to believe that the devotion, the companionship, the affection of this woman were entirely his and would be his for ever. He depended upon her. She had become indispensable to him. Now suddenly everything was destroyed. The happy confidence, the peaceful intimacy that made up all the joy of his home, were gone for ever. To cast such grief upon him in his declining years was indeed a heartless and unnecessary piece of cruelty. But a nature fundamentally hard and egotistic, bent only upon its own glorification, stops at nothing.



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Madame Roland wrote of herself as having, during this unhappy autumn and winter, no ambition except "to keep my soul pure and to see the glory of my husband intact." It was an ambitious program—to remain pure and serve Roland's glory while loving Buzot. In the words of the late Monsieur Claude Perroud, the painstaking editor of Madame Roland's letters and memoirs, and perhaps the most penetrating commentator on her life and character, "The scaffold permitted her to remain faithful to it."



LÉON BUZOT



## THE PERFECT ENDING

WITH admirable courage and resource Madame Roland adapted herself to prison life. After all, it was not so bad. The long hours alone were no great hardship—early in life she had learned how to employ solitude. She could read and write. She could, with the approval of Lavacquerie, the jailer, receive an occasional visitor. Monsieur Grandpré, inspector of prisons and, incidentally, Sophie Grandchamp's lover, owed his position to Roland—a circumstance that operated to soften the rigours of Madame Roland's confinement. Finally, with characteristic philosophy, she reminded herself that the peace and quiet of her prison-cell were infinitely preferable to the storm and unhappiness of her last few months at home. Free, she had been bound to her duty to Roland. Imprisoned, she was free to love Buzot.

Fleury, the devoted *bonne*, grief-stricken over her mistress's arrest, was allowed to visit the prison regularly. Champagneux, who still worked at the Department of the Interior, under Garat, Roland's successor, came as often as he could. He and Grandpré, whose duties as inspector made it easy for him to see Madame Roland, helped and advised her with the letters which she wrote to the Convention, to the ministers, and to some of the deputies, protesting against her arbitrary arrest. Bosc brought flowers from the Jardin des Plantes to brighten the dreariness of her cell. Sophie Grandchamp, generously forgetting the way she had been ignored during the Rolands' brief period of fame, came nearly every day, bringing books and pictures and everything

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she could think of that might lessen the tedium of prison life. Best of all, these friends brought news of the outside world and kept her in touch with what was happening. Often they had messages from those who could not come. And her letters and the closely written sheets of her memoirs were smuggled out of the prison by their faithful hands.

Madame Roland had not been confined for a day when her mind was set at rest about Eudora. Bosc had taken the child to his friends Monsieur and Madame Creuzé-Latouche, and these good people gladly gave her a temporary home. A few days later the good news came that Roland had successfully reached Rouen and had there found shelter with his old friends the Malortie sisters. But of Buzot, who had fled Paris during the fatal night of May 31st, there was no word for three agonizing weeks. Then, on June 22nd, when she was nearly beside herself with anxiety, she was visited unexpectedly by a Madame Goussard, a friend of Pétion, Brissot, and other Girondins, and she nearly fainted with joy when that lady handed her a packet of letters from the fugitive.

Buzot had gone to Évreux, and from there made his way to Caen. Barbaroux, Guadet, Louvet, Gorsas, and other fugitive Girondins were with him. A few days later they were joined by Pétion, who had succeeded, with the aid of the courageous Madame Goussard, in escaping from the capital. They hoped to arouse the department of Calvados against the Jacobins, and from that base accomplish a successful coup d'état to regain their own power.

Madame Roland, assured of Buzot's safety and a means of communicating with him, penned what was probably her first love-letter. Buzot received none of the flowery sentimentality that had been sent to Roland thirteen years before, and none of

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the teasing, half-hypocritical coquetry that had fascinated Bancal. To Buzot, her beloved, Madame Roland wrote simply, naturally, straight from her heart. "How I have read and reread your letters! I press them to my heart, I cover them with my kisses. I had given up hope of receiving them!" She wrote a full account of everything that had happened to her, carefully including every detail that might allay her lover's anxiety. Then, "I can say it only to you, and you are the only person in the world who can appreciate it. I was not sorry to be arrested. . . . For do you not see that in thus being alone, I live with you? Thus, in my captivity, I sacrifice myself for my husband and save myself for my lover, and I owe it to my tormentors that I can reconcile duty and love. I do not complain!"

Yet Madame Roland had not accepted imprisonment with complete resignation. She had never been very practised in the exercise of that quality, and the arbitrary nature of her arrest was not calculated to develop such skill. She wrote to the Convention on June 1st, to the Minister of the Interior on June 2nd, to her section (Beaurepaire) on the 4th, to the deputy Lauze-Deperret on the 6th, to the Minister of Justice and again to the Minister of the Interior on June 8th, and to the deputy Dulaure, editor of the *Thermomètre du jour*, on the 9th. In all of these letters she emphasized and reiterated the fact that her imprisonment was nothing but a series of illegalities. By what authority had she been arrested? Neither the Commune nor the Revolutionary Committee possessed the legal power to jail people indiscriminately. Moreover, she had been dragged to prison during the night—a flagrant defiance of the law of September 20, 1792, which declared the homes of citizens inviolable after dark. Then, the orders both of the Commune and of the Revolutionary Committee omitted mention of the cause of arrest—another illegality!

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Finally, several days had passed and she had not been questioned, although the law provided for the examination of prisoners within twenty-four hours. These protests achieved little, although on June 12th Louvet and Baudrais, two police administrators, did go through the formality of cursorily examining the prisoner. Immediately she wrote down the questions and her answers from memory and sent a copy to Dulaure, who courageously published it in his journal.

At the moment public opinion was crushed to earth by Jacobin tyranny, but this made it rise sufficiently to convince the Committee of Public Safety that Madame Roland's imprisonment should be legalized. To accomplish that end they adopted a cruel expedient. On June 24th an order of the Commune of Paris set the prisoner free. Joyously she gathered up her few belongings, hastened from l'Abbaye, hailed a passing carriage, and drove to the rue de la Harpe. She was re-arrested at the door of the apartment, before she had even started up the stairway.

This time the committee had taken good care to have every detail conform to the law. The mandate was signed by four police administrators; it stated the cause of arrest (Madame Roland was "*suspecte*"); it referred twice to the law; and it was executed at midday! Madame Roland was taken, not back to l'Abbaye, but to the prison of Sainte-Pélagie. The former prison was crowded, so great was the number of arrests made every day. By a curious coincidence Brissot, arrested on June 23rd, was placed the following day in the cell that Madame Roland had vacated so blithely. They had spent a night under the same roof without knowing it.

Madame Roland, settled in her new prison, continued to protest. They had not examined her within twenty-four hours. The mandate, with its vague reference to her as a "suspected per-

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son," did not show sufficient cause for arrest. The fruitlessness of her efforts at last made her resign herself. She gave up all hope of being saved except through the victory of her friends in Calvados. The letters that she wrote to Buzot early in July are so mixed with hope and despair, and yet so filled with encouragement to him and his companions, that it almost seems as if she were holding her breath until their little battalion marched victoriously on Paris.

Thus the month of July passed. Madame Roland worked feverishly at her memoirs. She read—sober, serious things, suitable for prison meditation—Thomson's poems, Shaftesbury's *Inquiry Concerning Virtue*, Plutarch's *Lives*, and Tacitus. She studied English. Sophie Grandchamp had managed to procure a piano for her, and it helped to pass many dull hours. Even her childhood interest in designing was revived. Again it was Sophie who saw that she had the necessary materials. Many long hours were spent, too, thinking of Buzot, gazing at his miniature, which she wore next to her heart, writing him endless letters, and praying for his success in Calvados. Her devoted friends continued to come whenever they could. Champagneux snatched every moment possible from his work and divided his leisure between Brissot at l'Abbaye, and Madame Roland at Sainte-Pélagie. During July, too, she had one unexpected and rather dramatic visit. Her old friend Henriette Cannet, generous and impulsive as ever, came to offer her a chance to escape. Could they not exchange garments? Madame Roland, deeply touched, smiled and refused.

So August came—a month of disappointment and disillusionment. News arrived that Buzot and the fugitive Girondins, far from arousing Calvados to their cause, had had to flee from Brittany and go into hiding near Quimper. Calvados was firmly



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pro-Convention and pro-Jacobin. Champagneux was arrested and imprisoned at La Force on August 4th. Bosc, suspected of Girondin sympathies, deemed it prudent to hide at Sainte-Radegonde, on the outskirts of the city, and hence had practically to cease his visits. Even Grandpré, threatened, watched, suspected, was forced to number his calls on Madame Roland. Only Sophie Grandchamp seemed able to continue her visits without risk. But Madame Roland found company in the prison. Pétion's wife had fled to Normandy with her small son, but the Committee of Public Safety possessed a long arm. She was arrested there, brought back to Paris, and on August 9th incarcerated in Sainte-Pélagie. She and Madame Roland found a bitter-sweet solace in exchanging reminiscences of their ephemeral happiness of 1792.

In September an old but not particularly intimate friend suddenly appeared at Madame Roland's service. Edmé Mentelle, a teacher of geography, was a good friend of Brissot. Madame Roland had known him slightly in 1780—then had lost track of him. In 1792, probably at Brissot's suggestion, she had used her influence to obtain for Mentelle an apartment in the Louvre. He was known as a scholar, a man of quiet life, and thus had been able to visit Brissot at l'Abbaye without arousing suspicion. Pity, as well as gratitude for her past kindness to him, moved him to come and see Madame Roland, to offer her his services as intermediary for her letters, and to accept the dangerous commission of receiving and hiding her manuscripts. During September and October, Jany, as Madame Roland called him, did all for her that he could. His sympathy and help were doubly appreciated, coming as they did at a time when most of her other friends were compelled to withdraw. Through him she was able to communicate with Bosc, with Brissot, and with Eudora.

Meanwhile the trial of the Girondins began. On October 3rd

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the Convention formally outlawed the twenty—Buzot, Pétion, Louvet, and their companions—who had fled. Those of the others who had not already been arrested were seized and imprisoned. It was the proscription of the Girondin party *en masse*. It was then that Madame Roland resolved to die of starvation. She continued a hunger strike for at least eleven days—on October 14th she was weak and ill enough to be in the prison infirmary—when it suddenly occurred to her that she might be called as a witness in the trial of the Girondins. The opportunity she would thus have of denouncing her persecutors seemed well worth living for.

There was little else to make her cling to life. News even of her friends in Paris was scarce, for she was far more closely watched than she had been at first. Of Buzot she knew practically nothing—only that he and his friends were trying to reach Bordeaux. It was perhaps fortunate that she was mercifully ignorant of her lover's sufferings. The little band of fugitives did reach Bordeaux, only to learn that six days earlier the stronghold of Girondism had capitulated to the Convention. Buzot and his friends pushed on to Saint-Émilion. Here a courageous sympathizer concealed them in the cellar of his house, and there he, Louvet, Pétion, Barbaroux, Salles, and Valady remained hidden for some weeks. Buzot learned of Madame Roland's death on the 13th of November. The news was devastating; for several days his companions feared for his reason. "She is gone!" he wrote to one of his friends at Évreux. "She is gone, my friend! The criminals have assassinated her. Tell me what I now have left to regret in this life!" During that winter Buzot and his friends, outlawed and fugitive, wandered about in the environs of Bordeaux, hiding here and there, now separating, now meeting again. Buzot dragged out this wretched existence like a man

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bereft of everything. On June 26, 1794, his mutilated body was found in an open field near Saint-Émilion.

The trial of the twenty-one accused Girondins was hurried through in summary fashion. It began on October 24th and sentence was pronounced on the 30th. Madame Roland, to her bitter disappointment, was given no chance to testify. She was named as a witness, and on the 24th she was taken to the Palais de Justice. But she was not called to the stand. At noon on October 31st the condemned Girondins were taken from the Conciergerie to the guillotine.

A few hours later Madame Roland was transferred to the Conciergerie. Her turn had come. Her trial, like all Reign of Terror trials, was quick and superficial—the judgment a foregone conclusion. The prisoner was briefly interrogated twice, on the 1st and the 3rd of November. The questions centred chiefly on the propagandist activities of the Rolands during their term of office, their relations with the other Girondins, and Madame Roland's efforts to communicate with the fugitives after she was imprisoned. A letter which she had written to the deputy Lauze-Deperret in June had been seized. It was regarded by the committee as most incriminating, since she had mentioned Buzot and Barbaroux. Madame Roland answered the questions clearly and straightforwardly, only wording her replies in such a way as to shield her feelings for Buzot.

On November 7th the Revolutionary Tribunal examined Madame Roland's servants. She had nothing to fear from the testimony of Fleury, or from that of her man-servant, Louis Lecocq. But Eudora's former governess, Mademoiselle Mignot, falsified her answers in such a way as to give a most damaging impression. The necessity for economy had led Roland to discharge her when he resigned from office, and she desired to re-

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venge herself. She might have saved herself the trouble. The public prosecutor based his case only on the incontestable evidence, furnished by the letter to Lauze-Deperret, of Madame Roland's communication with the fugitive Girondins. Sentence was pronounced on Friday, November 8th, in the morning, and the execution was ordered for that afternoon.

During Sophie Grandchamp's last visit to Madame Roland at Saint-Pélagie, the latter made a strange and terrifying request. "Have you the courage," she asked, "to be present at my last moments, in order to give authentic evidence of them?" Sophie shuddered, but she assured her friend that if this would in any way contribute to her peace and repose, she would do it. Her face must have betrayed her horror, for Madame Roland suddenly cried: "Ah! It is frightful! My own demand terrifies me!" Then, growing calmer, she continued: "Only promise to watch me pass. Your presence will diminish my terror. I shall at least be sure that one worthy being will render homage to the firmness which will not desert me even in that dreadful moment. You will be satisfied with me, I promise you." Sophie promised to obey, and Madame Roland asked her to stand at the end of the Pont-Neuf.

Sophie could not see her friend at the Conciergerie. She would scarcely have been able to go, anyway, for she was half sick with the horror of it all. But Grandpré, from whom, knowing that he would never permit her to fulfil it, she had concealed her promise to Madame Roland, kept her informed of her friend's last days. Madame Roland was quiet and calm throughout that final week. Her fresh complexion, her steady eyes, her peaceful smile, showed that her mind and soul were in repose. On the morning of November 8th, certain of her fate, she dressed carefully in a white gown which she had been saving for the oc-

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casation. Thus robed as for a sacrifice, she went to hear her sentence, which she received with courage and dignity. At luncheon, which she shared with a fellow-victim, a forger of *assignats* named La Marche, she was gay and natural. She even made her companion, who was blanched with terror, smile several times at her light banter. After luncheon, before leaving for the Place de la Révolution, the prisoner's hair was cut. Madame Roland, closely regarding the trembling La Marche, remarked: "It suits you to perfection. You really have an antique head." He and she were assigned to the same tumbrel. The terrified forger stepped in front of her in order to get in, and she teasingly rebuked him. "You are not gallant, La Marche. A Frenchman should never forget what is due to women."

Sophie Grandchamp spent the fatal morning in fortifying herself for the ordeal by meditating on "the grand lessons of philosophy with which I had nourished my soul." She left her home an hour before the scheduled departure from the Conciergerie in order to be at the appointed place in good time. Arriving at the Pont-Neuf, she found there a huge crowd. She saw many people whom she knew, and suddenly her courage weakened. She felt as if her legs would give way beneath her. Everyone had known of her relations with Madame Roland. The latter's unfair treatment of her had been a matter of common gossip. What would people think to see her among the crowd through which the tumbrel must pass? Would it not look as if she were there in order to gloat over her friend's fate?

The cry of "Here they come! Here they come!" suddenly smote her ears, and at sight of the tumbrel Sophie's firmness returned. Her eyes sought out Madame Roland and clung to the proud and majestic figure. "She was fresh, calm, and smiling," wrote Sophie later. "I could see that she was trying to infuse some

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courage into her unhappy companion, whose pallor and weakness made a striking contrast to her own firm bearing and brilliant colouring. As the cart came near the bridge, she looked for me. I read in her face her satisfaction at seeing me at this last, this ineffaceable, rendezvous. As she passed beside me, a movement of her eyes, accompanied by a smile, showed me that she was happy to have obtained her desire."

Sophie watched the tumbrel out of sight. Then, nearly fainting from emotion, she turned homewards, but how she reached there she never knew. Presently Mentelle arrived. Together they wept over the sad fate of their friend and talked, in hushed tones, of Roland's agony when he should learn the dreadful news. Suddenly Bosc, whose anxiety for Madame Roland had made him risk leaving his retreat at Sainte-Radegonde, entered the room. It needed only a glance at their tearful faces to tell him what had happened. He, too, broke down and wept silently.

The thought of the unhappy Roland family helped to restore their calm. They were certain that he would never survive the loss of a wife who, he believed, had perished in order to save him. It seemed to them too cruel for him to learn of his sorrow through the newspapers, so they wrote him a letter, hoping that the affectionate sympathy of loving friendship might help to soften the blow.

Roland received their letter two days later, at the home of the Malortie sisters in Rouen. These good friends had sheltered him at the peril of their lives. He concealed his grief as best he could and spent the day quietly burning his papers, so that he would leave behind him nothing to incriminate his hostesses. That evening he bade them farewell, explaining that he could no longer expose them to such grave danger, and giving them the impression that he would seek another asylum. The following

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morning, three leagues distant on the road to Paris, his body was discovered beneath a tree, at the entrance to a park. There was a touch of pathos in the fact that the sword which pierced his heart had been Bosc's present to him when he had been appointed to the ministry.

Sophie left Madame Roland at the Pont-Neuf, beneath the windows of the house where Manon Phlipon had sighed away her girlhood, dreaming regretfully of how nobly she might have played the rôle of a martyred Spartan or persecuted Roman. There is no indisputably authentic account of the sad journey's end at the Place de la Révolution. But legend and hearsay have re-created the scene. There is no reason to doubt their testimony that Madame Roland, proud, courageous, superior to the very last, marred by no mean gesture, no craven word, the faultlessness of her peculiarly appropriate end. She mounted the scaffold with a firm, elastic step and there stood, gazing with disdain upon the howling mob below. As the executioner bound her hands and made ready for his grisly task, her eyes rested on the huge plaster statue of Liberty which Revolutionary fervour had erected opposite the guillotine. There was no weakness or faltering, no sadness, no regret. Calm, strong, confident and sure of herself as ever, her last words were one supreme defiance of inexorable fate. "O Liberty!" she murmured, "how many crimes are committed in thy name!"

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

THE sources for a biography of Madame Roland consist of her letters and her memoirs. Of the first, many collections have been published. The first published volume included the correspondence with Bancal des Issarts (*Lettres autographes, adressées à Bancal des Issarts*) and was published in 1835. Two small volumes of the letters to the Cannet sisters (*Lettres inédites de Mlle Phlipon, adressées aux Demoiselles Cannet*) appeared in 1841. Additional letters were published by Dauban in 1864, in his *Étude sur Madame Roland et son temps, suivie de lettres de Madame Roland à Buçot et d'autres documents inédits*, and again in 1867, when he published two volumes of correspondence, *Lettres en partie inédites de Madame Roland aux Demoiselles Cannet, suivie de lettres de Madame Roland à Bosc, Servan, Lantbenas, et Robespierre*. In 1896 Join-Lambert published the letters exchanged by Marie Phlipon and Roland prior to their marriage—*Le Mariage de Madame Roland: trois années de correspondance amoureuse, 1777-1780*. These earlier collections have been superseded by the relatively complete edition of the correspondence which M. Claude Perroud prepared for the *Collection de documents inédits*. These four volumes (*Lettres de Madame Roland, 1780-1793*, two volumes, Paris, 1900-2, and *Lettres de Madame Roland, nouvelle série, 1767-1780*, two volumes, Paris, 1913-15), together with Perroud's edition of the pre-marriage correspondence (*Roland et Marie Phlipon, lettres d'amour*, Paris, 1909), contain practically all of the letters of Madame Roland. There are approximately one thousand letters, or an average of



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one letter each week for the twenty-three years from 1770 to 1793. Some of the letters are very long indeed, and the whole collection is practically an equivalent to a day-to-day journal of Madame Roland's life during that period.

Many editions of Madame Roland's *Mémoires* have been published. The first was published in Paris by her good friend Bosc, in 1795, under the elaborate title of *Appel à l'impartiale postérité par la Citoyenne Roland, femme du Ministre de l'Intérieur, ou recueil des écrits qu'elle a rédigés pendant sa détention aux prisons de l'Abbaye et de Sainte-Pélagie, imprimé au profit de sa fille unique, privée de la fortune de ses père et mère, dont les biens sont toujours séquestrés*. The following year a translation of Bosc's edition was printed in London, under the title of *An Appeal to Impartial Posterity*. In 1800 three volumes of the writings of Jeanne-Marie Phlipon Roland were published in Paris, with an introduction by L. A. Champagneux. This was Madame Roland's old friend of Lyons, who had served under Roland in the Department of the Interior. Eudora Roland married his son. In 1803 this edition was translated into English, under the title of *Works of J. M. Phlipon Roland*, and was published in London. Subsequent editions of the *Mémoires* of Madame Roland appeared in 1820, 1823, 1840, 1855, 1864, 1884, and 1886. The best-known of these editions are the two that appeared in 1864, one edited by C. A. Dauban, and the other by M. P. Faugère. But, as in the case of the letters, it remained for M. Claude Perroud to prepare the final and authoritative edition, *Mémoires de Madame Roland*, two volumes, Paris, 1905. M. Perroud's work on the letters and the memoirs of Madame Roland represents a lifetime of careful, painstaking research, and merits the admiration of all students of the French Revolution. In notes and appendices he has included much valu-

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able information, not only about Madame Roland and her family, but about all of her friends and associates.

One has to search long and carefully for mention of Madame Roland in contemporary writings. The *Mémoires* of her friend Sophie Grandchamp are published as an appendix to Perroud's edition of Madame Roland's *Mémoires*. So also is the scurrilous number of *Le Père Duchesne*, reviling Madame Roland as the evil spirit of the Girondin party, which was hawked beneath the windows of l'Abbaye. Madame Roland's friends Buzot, Barbaroux, and Pétion all left fragmentary memoirs. The three were edited by C. A. Dauban and published in Paris in 1866. But their brief mention of Madame Roland reveals nothing of importance. *La Vie et les mémoires de Dumouriez*, published in Paris in 1832, includes a fairly comprehensive sketch of her character as estimated by that worldly gentleman, and Comte de Beugnot, who observed her behaviour in the prison of Sainte-Pélagie, had something to say of her in his *Mémoires*, published in Paris in 1868. Étienne Dumont, in his *Recollections of Mirabeau and the First Two Legislative Assemblies of France*, published in London in 1832, commented on Madame Roland and her interest in politics, and there is a scathing paragraph or two about her in Mallet du Pan's *Mercurie britannique, ou notices historiques et critiques sur les affaires du temps*, published in London from October 10, 1798, to March 25, 1800. The Englishman Arthur Young mentions meeting Madame Roland in his *Travels in France, 1787-1789*. The scarcity of contemporary comment about Madame Roland is probably accounted for by the fact that her enemies, wishing to belittle her, scorned to mention her except with what would have impressed her as insulting brevity, while her friends, who knew all about her and who could have revealed much, were held silent through fear. The

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most complete account of her political career and of her death, that in the *Mémoires* of Madame Sophie Grandchamp, was not written until several years later.

Apart from her few brief months of revolutionary experience, and their fatal culmination, Madame Roland led a humdrum life. Neither her memoirs nor her letters, therefore, are valuable as records of events. But as the record of the processes of a mind that was thoroughly representative of the period, and well above the average in capacity, they are unique.

It is a curious fact that, although French historians and critics have been, from the Revolution to the present time, pre-occupied with Madame Roland, there is as yet no adequate biography of her in French. The various editions of her memoirs and letters contain, of course, introductions by their editors. The appearance of some of these editions provided the opportunity for some brilliant short estimates by French critics. Sainte-Beuve wrote five articles on Madame Roland (*Portraits de femmes*, pp. 165, 194, and *Nouveaux Lundis*, Vol. VIII, p. 190), one of which appeared as an introduction to the volume of letters published in 1835. Edmond Schérer included a brief sketch of Madame Roland in his *Études sur la littérature contemporaine* (Paris, 1886). In 1896 René Doumic wrote a brief review of Join-Lambert's edition of the pre-marriage correspondence, and M. Join-Lambert's own introduction to the volume is perhaps the most incisive analysis of Madame Roland's personality that exists. E. Caro, in his *La Fin du dix-huitième siècle* (Paris, 1881), made an interesting comparison between Madame Roland and Madame du Deffand. Arthur Chuquet wrote a study of the relations of Buzot and Madame Roland (Institut de France, Académie des sciences morales et politiques, *Séances et travaux*, n.s., Vol. LXXIII, pp. 732-63). Camille Marbo contributed an article, "*Le Mariage de*

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The innumerable works on the Revolution, those written by American and English scholars as well as those written by French, all contain at least a few lines about Madame Roland, and there are certain works on special subjects that contain brief accounts of her life. For example, Goncourt's *La Femme au dix-huitième siècle*, Gaudet's *Les Girondins*, Vatel's *Charlotte Corday et les Girondins*, Michelet's *Les Femmes de la Révolution*, and Aulard's *Études et leçons sur la Révolution française* all have more or less to say about Madame Roland.

There have been numerous short brochures and pamphlets in French on various aspects of Madame Roland's life. The latest of these to appear is J. Calemard's *Manon Roland chez elle* (Paris, 1929), which proves conclusively that the house in which Manon Phlipon spent her girlhood days is 37 Quai de l'Horloge. There are also numerous brief biographies, such as Madeleine Clemenceau-Jacquemaire's *Madame Roland* (Paris, 1927). Madame Clemenceau-Jacquemaire is at present engaged on a two-volume life of the Girondin heroine, and when it is published, it will be the first full-length biography in French.

Whereas the French writers have largely confined themselves to brief sketches, estimates, and critiques, the English and American writers have found in Madame Roland a good subject for biography. Except for Carl Becker's article "The Letters and the Memoirs of Madame Roland," published in the *American Historical Review*, July 1928, there is nothing in English comparable

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to the mass of short articles in French. However, there have been half a dozen biographies of Madame Roland in English. The earliest to appear was John S. C. Abbott's *Madame Roland* in the *Makers of History* series (New York, 1878). Mathilde Blind's *Madame Roland* appeared eight years later (Boston, 1886). Ida Tarbell wrote a biography, entitled *Madame Roland* (New York, 1896), which made use of letters and papers then unpublished and which consequently superseded these earlier, briefer works. A very brief study, written without research and published without fear, appeared twenty-one years later—*Madame Roland, a Biographical Study*, by Gerald Tate (New York, 1917). The two most recent biographies, Una Pope-Hennessy's *Madame Roland* (New York, 1918) and Evangeline Wilbour Blashfield's *Manon Pblipon Roland: Early Years* (New York, 1922), are the best of the works in English. Mrs. Blashfield planned to write a two-volume life of Madame Roland, but unfortunately only the first volume had been completed at the time of her death.

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