

**GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, GEORGE
SAND**

**THE GEORGE
SAND-GUSTAVE
FLAUBERT
LETTERS**

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Gustave Flaubert
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Gustave Flaubert, George Sand The George Sand- Gustave Flaubert Letters

PREFATORY NOTE

This translation of the correspondence between George Sand and Gustave Flaubert was undertaken in consequence of a suggestion by Professor Stuart P. Sherman. The translator desires to acknowledge valuable criticism given by Professor Sherman, Ruth M. Sherman, and Professor Kenneth McKenzie, all of whom have generously assisted in revising the manuscript.

A. L. McKenzie

INTRODUCTION

The correspondence of George Sand and Gustave Flaubert, if approached merely as a chapter in the biographies of these heroes of nineteenth century letters, is sufficiently rewarding. In a relationship extending over twelve years, including the trying period of the Franco-Prussian War and the Commune, these extraordinary personalities disclose the aspects of their diverse natures which are best worth the remembrance of posterity. However her passionate and erratic youth may have captivated our grandfathers, George Sand in the mellow autumn of her life is for us at her most attractive phase. The storms and anguish and hazardous adventures that attended the defiant unfolding of her spirit are over. In her final retreat at Nohant, surrounded by her affectionate children and grandchildren, diligently writing, botanizing, bathing in her little river, visited by her friends and undistracted by the fiery lovers of the old time, she shows an unguessed wealth of maternal virtue, swift, comprehending sympathy, fortitude, sunny resignation, and a goodness of heart that has ripened into wisdom. For Flaubert, too, though he was seventeen years her junior, the flamboyance of youth was long since past; in 1862, when the correspondence begins, he was firmly settled, a shy, proud, grumpy toiling hermit of forty, in his family seat at Croisset, beginning his seven years' labor at *L'Education Sentimentale*, master of his art, hardening in

his convictions, and conscious of increasing estrangement from the spirit of his age. He, with his craving for sympathy, and she, with her inexhaustible supply of it, meet; he pours out his bitterness, she her consolation; and so with equal candor of self-revelation they beautifully draw out and strengthen each the other's characteristics, and help one another grow old.

But there is more in these letters than a satisfaction for the biographical appetite, which, indeed, finds ITS account rather in the earlier chapters of the correspondents' history. What impresses us here is the banquet spread for the reflective and critical faculties in this intercourse of natural antagonists. As M. Faguet observes in a striking paragraph of his study of Flaubert:

"It is a curious thing, which does honor to them both, that Flaubert and George Sand should have become loving friends towards the end of their lives. At the beginning, Flaubert might have been looked upon by George Sand as a furious enemy. Emma [Madame Bovary] is George Sand's heroine with all the poetry turned into ridicule. Flaubert seems to say in every page of his work: 'Do you want to know what is the real Valentine, the real Indiana, the real Lelia? Here she is, it is Emma Roualt.' 'And do you want to know what becomes of a woman whose education has consisted in George Sand's books? Here she is, Emma Roualt.' So that the terrible mocker of the bourgeois has written a book which is directly inspired by the spirit of the 1840 bourgeois. Their recriminations against romanticism 'which rehabilitates and poetises the courtesan,' against George

Sand, the Muse of Adultery, are to be found in acts and facts in Madame Bovary."

Now, the largest interest of this correspondence depends precisely upon the continuance, beneath an affectionate personal relationship, of a fundamental antagonism of interests and beliefs, resolutely maintained on both sides. George Sand, with her lifelong passion for propaganda and reformation, labors earnestly to bring Flaubert to her point of view, to remould him nearer to her heart's desire. He, with a playful deference to the sex and years of his friend, addresses her in his letters as "Dear Master." Yet in the essentials of the conflict, though she never gives over her effort, he never budes a jot; he has taken his ground, and in his last unfinished work, Bouvard and Pecuchet, he dies stubbornly fortifying his position. To the last she speaks from a temperament lyrical, sanguine, imaginative, optimistic and sympathetic; he from a temperament dramatic, melancholy, observing, cynical, and satirical. She insists upon natural goodness; he, upon innate depravity. She urges her faith in social regeneration; he vents his splenetic contempt for the mob. Through all the successive shocks of disillusioning experience, she expects the renovation of humanity by some religious, some semi-mystical, amelioration of its heart; he grimly concedes the greater part of humanity to the devil, and can see no escape for the remnant save in science and aristocratic organization. For her, finally, the literary art is an instrument of social salvation – it is her means of touching the world with

her ideals, her love, her aspiration; for him the literary art is the avenue of escape from the meaningless chaos of existence – it is his subtly critical condemnation of the world.

The origins of these unreconciled antipathies lie deep beneath the personal relationship of George Sand and Gustave Flaubert, lie deep beneath their successors, who with more or less of amenity in their manners are still debating the same questions today. The main currents of the nineteenth century, with fluent and refluxing tides, clash beneath the controversy; and as soon as one hears its "long withdrawing roar," and thinks it is dying away, and is become a part of ancient history, it begins again, and will be heard, no doubt, by the last man as a solemn accompaniment to his final contention with his last adversary.

George Sand was, on the whole, a natural and filial daughter of the French Revolution. The royal blood which she received from her father's line mingled in her veins with that of the Parisian milliner, her mother, and predestined her for a leveller by preparing in her an instinctive ground of revolt against all those inherited prejudices which divided the families of her parents. As a young girl wildly romping with the peasant children at Nohant she discovered a joy in untrammelled rural life which was only to increase with years. At the proper age for beginning to fashion a conventional young lady, the hoyden was put in a convent, where she underwent some exalting religious experiences; and in 1822 she was assigned to her place in the "established social order" by her marriage at seventeen to M. Dudevant. After a

few years of rather humdrum domestic life in the country, she became aware that this gentleman, her husband, was behaving as we used to be taught that all French husbands ultimately behave; he was, in fact, turning from her to her maids. The young couple had never been strongly united – the impetuous dreamy girl and her coarse hunting mate; and they had grown wide apart. She should, of course, have adjusted herself quietly to the altered situation and have kept up appearances. But this young wife had gradually become an "intellectual"; she had been reading philosophy and poetry; she was saturated with the writings of Rousseau, of Chateaubriand, of Byron. None of the spiritual masters of her generation counselled acquiescence in servitude or silence in misery. Every eloquent tongue of the time-spirit urged self-expression and revolt. And she, obedient to the deepest impulses of her blood and her time, revolted.

At the period when Madame Dudevant withdrew her neck from the conjugal yoke and plunged into her literary career in Paris, the doctrine that men are created for freedom, equality and fraternity was already somewhat hackneyed. She, with an impetus from her own private fortunes, was to give the doctrine a recrudescence of interest by resolutely applying it to the status of women. We cannot follow her in detail from the point where she abandons the domestic sewing-basket to reappear smoking black cigars in the Latin Quarter. We find her, at about 1831, entering into competition with the brilliant literary generation of Balzac, Hugo, Alfred de Musset, Merimee, Stendhal, and Sainte-

Beuve. To signalize her equality with her brothers in talent, she adopts male attire: "I had a sentry-box coat made, of rough grey cloth, with trousers and waist-coat to match. With a grey hat and a huge cravat of woolen material, I looked exactly like a first-year student." In the freedom of this rather unalluring garb she entered into relations Platonic, fraternal, or tempestuously passionate with perhaps the most distinguished series of friends and lovers that ever fluttered about one flame. There was Aurelien de Seze; Jules Sandeau, her first collaborator, who "reconciled her to life" and gave her a nom de guerre; the inscrutable Merimee, who made no one happy; Musset – an encounter from which both tiger-moths escaped with singed wings; the odd transitional figure of Pagello; Michel Euraed; Liszt; Chopin, whom she loved and nursed for eight years; her master Lamennais; her master Pierre Leroux; her father-confessor Sainte-Beuve; and Gustave Flaubert, the querulous friend of her last decade.

As we have compressed the long and complex story of her personal relationships, so we must compress the intimately related history of her works and her ideas. When under the inspiration of Rousseau, the emancipated George Sand began to write, her purposes were but vaguely defined. She conceived of life as primarily an opportunity for unlimited self-expansion, and of literature as an opportunity for unrestricted self-expression. "Nevertheless," she declares, "my instincts have formed, without my privity, the theory I am about to set down, – a theory which

I have generally followed unconsciously. ... According to this theory, the novel is as much a work of poetry as of analysis. It demands true situations, and characters not only true but real, grouped about a type intended to epitomize the sentiment or the main conceptions of the book. This type generally represents the passion of love, since almost all novels are love-stories. According to this theory (and it is here that it begins) the writer must idealize this love, and consequently this type, – and must not fear to attribute to it all the powers to which he inwardly aspires, or all the sorrows whose pangs he has observed or felt. This type must in no wise, however, become degraded by the vicissitude of events; it must either die or triumph."

In 1831, when her pen began its fluent course through the lyrical works of her first period – *Indiana*, *Valentine*, *Lelia*, *Jacques*, and the rest – we conceive George Sand's culture, temper, and point of view to have been fairly comparable with those of the young Shelley when, fifteen years earlier, he with Mary Godwin joined Byron and Jane Clairmont in Switzerland – young revoltes, all of them, nourished on eighteenth century revolutionary philosophy and Gothic novels. Both these eighteenth century currents meet in the work of the new romantic group in England and in France. The innermost origin of the early long poems of Shelley and the early works of George Sand is in personal passion, in the commotion of a romantic spirit beating its wings against the cage of custom and circumstance and institutions. The external form of the

plot, whatever is fantastic and wilful in its setting and its adventures, is due to the school of Ann Radcliffe. But the quality in Shelley and in George Sand which bewitched even the austere Matthew Arnold in his green and salad days is the poetising of that liberative eighteenth century philosophy into "beautiful idealisms" of a love emancipated from human limitations, a love exalted to the height of its gamut by the influences of nature, triumphantly seeking its own or shattered in magnificent despair. In her novels of the first period, George Sand takes her Byronic revenge upon M. Dudevant. In *Indiana* and its immediate successors, consciously or unconsciously, she declares to the world what a beautiful soul M. Dudevant condemned to sewing on buttons; in *Jacques* she paints the man who might fitly have matched her spirit; and by the entire series, which now impresses us as fantastic in sentiment no less than in plot, she won her early reputation as the apologist for free love, the adversary of marriage.

In her middle period – say from 1838 to 1848 – of which *The Miller of Aginbault*, *Consuelo*, and *The Countess of Rudolstadt* are representative works, there is a marked subsidence of her personal emotion, and, in compensation, a rising tide of humanitarian enthusiasm. Gradually satiated with erotic passion, gradually convinced that it is rather a mischief-maker than a reconstructive force in a decrepit society, she is groping, indeed, between her successive liaisons for an elusive felicity, for a larger mission than inspiring Musset's Alexandrines or

Chopin's nocturnes. It is somewhat amusing, and at the same time indicative of her vague but deep-seated moral yearnings, to find her writing rebukingly to Sainte-Beuve, as early as 1834, apropos of his epicurean *Volupte*: "Let the rest do as they like; but you, dear friend, you must produce a book which will change and better mankind, do you see? You can, and therefore should. Oh, if poor I could do it! I should lift my head again and my heart would no longer be broken; but in vain I seek a religion: Shall it be God, shall it be love, friendship, the public welfare? Alas, it seems to me that my soul is framed to receive all these impressions, without one effacing another ... Who shall paint justice as it should, as it may, be in our modern society?"

To Sainte-Beuve, himself an unscathed intellectual Odysseus, she declares herself greatly indebted intellectually; but on the whole his influence seems to have been tranquillizing. The material for the radical program, economic, political, and religious, which, like a spiritual ancestor of H. G. Wells, she eagerly sought to popularize by the novels of her middle years, was supplied mainly by Saint-Simon, Lamennais, and Leroux. Her new "religion of humanity," a kind of theosophical socialism, is too fantastically garbed to charm the sober spirits of our age. And yet from the ruins of that time and from the emotional extravagance of books grown tedious, which she has left behind her, George Sand emerges for us with one radiant perception which must be included in whatever religion animates a democratic society: "Everyone must be happy, so that the

happiness of a few may not be criminal and cursed by God."

One of George Sand's French critics, M. Caro, a member of the Academy, who deals somewhat austere with her religious enthusiasms and with her Utopian projects for social reformation, remarks gravely and not without tenderness:

"The one thing needful to this soul, so strong, so rich in enthusiasm, is a humble moral quality that she disdains, and when she has occasion to speak of it, even slanders, – namely resignation. This is not, as she seems to think, the sluggish virtue of base souls, who, in their superstitious servitude to force, hasten to crouch beneath every yoke. That is a false and degrading resignation; genuine resignation grows out of the conception of the universal order, weighed against which individual sufferings, without ceasing to be a ground of merit, cease to constitute a right of revolt. ... Resignation, in the true, the philosophical, the Christian sense, is a manly acceptance of moral law and also of the laws essential to the social order; it is a free adherence to order, a sacrifice approved by reason of a part of one's private good and of one's personal freedom, not to might nor to the tyranny of a human caprice, but to the exigencies of the common weal, which subsists only by the concord of individual liberty with obedient passions."

Well, resigned in the sense of defeated, George Sand never became; nor did she, perhaps, ever wholly acquiesce in that scheme of things which M. Caro impressively designates as "the universal order." Yet with the abandonment of many

distractions, the retreat to Nohant, the consolations of nature, and her occupation with tales of pastoral life, beginning with *La Mare au Diable*, there develops within her, there diffuses itself around her, there appears in her work a charm like that which falls upon green fields from the level rays of the evening sun after a day of storms. It is not the charm, precisely, of resignation; it is the charm of serenity – the serenity of an old revolutionist who no longer expects victory in the morning yet is secure in her confidence of a final triumph, and still more secure in the goodness of her cause. "A hundred times in life," she declares, "the good that one does seems to serve no immediate purpose; yet it maintains in one way and another the tradition of well wishing and well doing, without which all would perish." At the outset of her career we compared her with Shelley. In her last phase, she reminds us rather of the authors of *Far from the Madding Crowd* and *The Mill on the Floss*, and of Wordsworth, once, too, a torch of revolution, turning to his Michaels and his leech-gatherers and his Peter Bells. Her exquisite pictures of pastoral life are idealizations of it; her representations of the peasant are not corroborated by Zola's; to the last she approaches the shield of human nature from the golden side. But for herself at least she has found a real secret of happiness in country life, tranquil work, and a right direction given to her own heart and conscience.

It is at about this point in her spiritual development that she turns towards Gustave Flaubert – perhaps a little suspiciously

at first, yet resolved from the first, according to her natural instinct and her now fixed principles, to stimulate by believing in his admirable qualities. Writing from Nohant in 1866 to him at Croisset, she epitomises her distinction as a woman and as an author in this playful sally: "Sainte-Beuve, who loves you nevertheless, pretends that you are dreadfully vicious. But perhaps he sees with eyes a bit dirty, like that learned botanist who pretends that the germander is of a DIRTY yellow. The observation was so false that I could not help writing on the margin of his book: 'IT IS YOU, WHOSE EYES ARE DIRTY.'"

We have spoken of George Sand as a faithful daughter of the French Revolution; and by way of contrast we may speak of Flaubert as a disgruntled son of the Second Empire. Between his literary advent and hers there is an interval of a generation, during which the proud expansive spirit and the grandiose aspirations imparted to the nation by the first Napoleon dwindled to a spirit of mediocrity and bourgeois smugness under a Napoleon who had inherited nothing great of his predecessor but his name. This change in the time-spirit may help to explain the most significant difference between Flaubert and George Sand. He inherited the tastes and imagination of the great romantic generation; but he inherited none of its social and political enthusiasm. He was disciplined by the romantic writers; yet his reaction to the literary culture of his youth is not ethical but aesthetic; he finds his inspiration less in Rousseau than in Chateaubriand. He is bred to an admiration of eloquence, the poetic phrase,

the splendid picture, life in the grand style; with increasing disgust he finds himself entering a society which, he feels, neither understands nor values any of these things, and which threatens their destruction. Consequently, we find him actuated as a writer by two complementary passions – the love of splendor and the hatred of mediocrity – two passions, of which the second sometimes alternates with the first, sometimes inseparably fuses with it, and ultimately almost extinguishes it.

The son of an eminent surgeon of Rouen, Gustave Flaubert may have acquired from his father something of that scientific precision of observation and that cutting accuracy of expression, by which he gained his place at the head of modern French realism and won the discipleship of the Goncourts, Daudet, Zola, and Maupassant and the applause of such connoisseurs of technique as Walter Pater and Henry James. From his mother's Norman ancestry he inherited the physique of a giant, tainted with epilepsy; a Viking countenance, strong-featured with leonine moustaches; and a barbaric temper, habitually somewhat lethargic but irritable, and, when roused, violent and intolerant of opposition. He had a private education at Rouen, with wide desultory reading; went to Paris, which he hated, to study law, which he also hated; frequented the theatres and studios; travelled in Corsica, the Pyrenees, and the East, which he adored, seeing Egypt, Palestine, Constantinople, and Greece; and he had one, and only one, important love-affair, extending from 1846 to 1854 – that with Mme. Louise Colet, a woman of letters, whose

difficult relations with Flaubert are sympathetically touched upon in Pater's celebrated essay on "Style." When by the death of his father, in 1845, he succeeded to the family-seat at Croisset, near Rouen, he settled himself in a studious solitude to the pursuit of letters, which he followed for thirty-four years with anguish of spirit and dogged persistence.

Flaubert probably loved glory as much as any man; but he desired to receive it only on his own terms. He profoundly appeals to writers endowed with "the artistic conscience" as "the martyr of literary style." In morals something of a libertine, in matters of art he exhibited the intolerance of weakness in others and the remorseless self-examination and self-torment commonly attributed to the Puritan. His friend Maxime Du Camp, who tried to bring him out and teach him the arts of popularity, he rebuffed with deliberate insult. He developed an aversion to any interruption of his work, and such tension and excitability of nerves that he shunned a day's outing or a chat with an old companion, lest it distract him for a month afterward. His mistress he seems to have estranged by an ill-concealed preference to her of his exacting Muse. To illustrate his "monkish" consecration to his craft we cannot do better than reproduce a passage, quoted by Pater, from his letters to Madame Colet:

"I must scold you for one thing, which shocks, scandalises me, the small concern, namely, you show for art just now. As regards glory be it so – there I approve. But for art! – the one thing in

life that is good and real – can you compare with it an earthly love? – prefer the adoration of a relative beauty to the cultus of the true beauty? Well! I tell you the truth. That is the one thing good in me: the one thing I have, to me estimable. For yourself, you blend with the beautiful a heap of alien things, the useful, the agreeable, what not?

"The only way not to be unhappy is to shut yourself up in art, and count everything else as nothing. Pride takes the place of all beside when it is established on a large basis. Work! God wills it. That, it seems to me, is clear.

"I am reading over again the Aeneid, certain verses of which I repeat to myself to satiety. There are phrases there which stay in one's head, by which I find myself beset, as with those musical airs which are forever returning, and cause you pain, you love them so much. I observe that I no longer laugh much, and am no longer depressed. I am ripe, you talk of my serenity, and envy me. It may well surprise you. Sick, irritated, the prey a thousand times a day of cruel pain, I continue my labour like a true working-man, who, with sleeves turned up, in the sweat of his brow, beats away at his anvil, never troubling himself whether it rains or blows, for hail or thunder. I was not like that formerly."

The half-dozen works which Flaubert beat out on his "anvil," with an average expenditure of half-a-dozen years to each, were composed on a theory of which the prime distinguishing feature was the great doctrine of "impersonality." George Sand's fluent improvisations ordinarily originated, as we have noted, in an

impulse of her lyrical idealism; she began with an aspiration of her heart, to execute which she invented characters and plot so that she is always on the inside of her story. According to Flaubert's theory, the novel should originate in a desire to present a certain segment of observed life. The author is to take and rigorously maintain a position outside his work. The organ with which he collects his materials is not his heart but his eyes, supplemented by the other senses. Life, so far as the scientific observer can be sure of it, and so far as the artist can control it for representation, is a picture or series of pictures, a dramatic scene or a concatenation of dramatic scenes. Let the novelist first, therefore, with scrupulous fidelity and with minute regard for the possible significance of every observable detail, fill his notebooks, amass his materials, master his subject. After Flaubert, a first-rate sociological investigator is three-fourths of a novelist. The rest of the task is to arrange and set forth these facts so that they shall tell the truth about life impressively, in scene and dramatic spectacle, the meaning of which shall be implicit in the plot and shall reach the reader's consciousness through his senses.

Critics have spent much time in discussing the conflict of "romantic" and "realistic" tendencies in Flaubert's works. And it is obviously easy, so far as subject-matter is concerned, to group his books in two divisions: on the one hand, *The Temptation of St. Anthony*, *Salamambo*, and two of the *Trois Contes*; on the other hand, *Madame Bovary*, *L'Education Sentimentale*, and the

incomplete Bouvard and Pecuchet. We may call the tales in the first group romantic, because the subject-matter is remote in time and place, and because in them Flaubert indulges his passion for splendor – for oriental scenery, for barbaric characters, the pomp of savage war and more savage religion, events strange, terrible, atrocious. We may call the stories in the other group realistic, because the subject-matter is contemporary life in Paris and the provinces, and because in them Flaubert indulges his hatred for mediocrity – for the humdrum existence of the country doctor, the apothecary, the insipid clerk, the vapid sentimental woman, and the charlatans of science. But as a matter of fact, ALL his books are essentially constructed on the same theory: all are just as "realistic" as Flaubert could make them.

Henry James called *Madame Bovary* a brilliantly successful application of Flaubert's theory; he pronounced *L'Education Sentimentale* "elaborately and massively dreary"; and he briefly dismissed *Salamambo* as an accomplished work of erudition. *Salamambo* is indeed a work of erudition; years were spent in getting up its archaeological details. But *Madame Bovary* is also a work of erudition, and *Bouvard and Pecuchet* is a work of enormous erudition; a thousand volumes were read for the notes of the first volume and Flaubert is said to have killed himself by the labor of his unfinished investigations. There is no important distinction to be made between the method or the thoroughness with which he collected his facts in the one case or the other; and the story of the war of the mercenaries against the Carthaginians

is evolved with the same alternation of picture and dramatic spectacle and the same hard merciless externality that distinguish the evolution of Emma Bovary's history.

We may go still farther than that towards wiping out the distinction between Flaubert's "romantic" and his "realistic" works; and by the same stroke what is illusory in the pretensions of the realists, namely, their aspiration to an "impersonal art."

If we were seeking to prove that an author can put NOTHING BUT HIMSELF into his art, we should ask for no more impressive illusions than precisely, Madame Bovary and Salamambo. These two masterpieces disclose to reflection, no less patently than the works of George Sand, their purpose and their meaning. And that purpose and meaning are not a whit less personal to Flaubert than the purpose and meaning of Indiana, let us say, are personal to George Sand. The "meaning" of Madame Bovary and Salamambo is, broadly speaking, Flaubert's sense of the significance – or, rather, of the insignificance – of human life; and the "purpose" of the books is to express it. The most lyrical of idealists can do no more to reveal herself.

The demonstration afforded by a comparison of Salamambo and Madame Bovary is particularly striking because the subject-matters are superficially so unlike. But take any characteristic series of pictures or incidents from Salamambo: take the passing of the children through the fire to Moloch, or the description of the leprous Hanno, or the physical surrender of the priestess to her country's enemy, or the following picture of the crucified

lion:

"They were marching through a wide defile, hedged in by two chains of reddish hillocks, when a nauseous odor struck their nostrils, and they believed that they saw something extraordinary at the top of a carob tree; a lion's head stood up above the foliage.

"Running towards it, they found a lion attached to a cross by its four limbs, like a criminal; his enormous muzzle hung to his breast, and his forepaws, half concealed beneath the abundance of his mane, were widely spread apart, like a bird's wings in flight; under the tightly drawn skin, his ribs severally protruded and his hind legs were nailed together, but were slightly drawn up; black blood had trickled through the hairs, and collected in stalactites at the end of his tail, which hung straight down the length of the cross. The soldiers crowded around the beast, diverting themselves by calling him 'Consul!' and 'Citizen of Rome!' and threw pebbles into his eyes to scatter the swarming gnats."

And now take any characteristic series of pictures or incidents from *Madame Bovary*: take Bovary's bungling and gruesome operations on the club-footed ostler's leg, with the entire village clustering agape; take the picture of the eyeless, idiotic beggar on the road to Rouen; or the scene in which Emma offers herself for three thousand francs to Rodolphe; or the following bit, only a bit, from the detailed account of the heroine's last hours, after the arsenical poisoning:

"Emma's head was turned towards her right shoulder, the

corner of her mouth, which was open, seemed like a black hole at the lower part of her face; her two thumbs were bent into the palms of her hands; a kind of white dust besprinkled her lashes, and her eyes were beginning to disappear in that viscous pallor that looks like a thin web, as if spiders had spun it over. The sheet sunk in from her breast to her knees, and then rose at the tips of her toes, and it seemed to Charles that infinite masses, an enormous load, were weighing upon her.

"The church clock struck two. They could hear the loud murmur of the river flowing in the darkness at the foot of the terrace. Monsieur Bournisien from time to time blew his nose noisily and Homais' pen was scratching over the paper."

In these two detached pictures – the one from a so-called "romantic," the other from a so-called "realistic" book – one readily observes the likeness in the subjects, which are of a ghastly repulsiveness; the same minuteness of observation – e.g., the lion's hind legs "slightly drawn up," the woman's thumbs "bent into the palms of her hands"; the same careful notation of effect on the several senses; the same rhetorical heightening – e.g., the "stalactites at the end of his tail," the web in the woman's eyes "as if spiders had spun it over"; and finally, that celebrated detachment, that air as of a medical examiner, recording the results of an autopsy. What can we know of such an author? All, or nearly all, that he knew of himself, provided we will searchingly ask ourselves what sort of mind is steadily attracted to the painting of such pictures, to the representation of such

incidents, and what sort of mind expresses a lifetime of brooding on the significance of life in two such books as *Madame Bovary* and *Salamambo*.

At its first appearance, *Madame Bovary* was prosecuted, though unsuccessfully, as offensive to public morals. In derision of this famous prosecution, Henry James with studious jauntiness, asserts that in the heat of his first admiration he thought what an excellent moral tract it would make. "It may be very seriously maintained," he continues, "that M. Flaubert's masterpiece is the pearl of 'Sunday reading.'" As a work of fiction and recreation the book lacks, in his opinion, one quite indispensable quality: it lacks charm. Well, there are momentary flashes of beauty and grace, dazzling bits of color, haunting melancholy cadences in every chapter of Flaubert; but a charming book he never wrote. A total impression of charm he never gave – he never could give; because his total impression of life was not charming but atrocious. It is perhaps an accident, as has been suggested, that one can so readily employ *Madame Bovary* to illustrate that text on the "wages of sin." Emma, to be sure, goes down the easy and alluring path to disgrace and ruin. But that is only an incident in the wider meaning of Flaubert's fiction, a meaning more amply expressed in *Salamambo*, where not one foolish woman alone but thousands on thousands of men, women, and children, mingled with charging elephants and vipers, flounder and fight in indescribable welters of blood and filth, and go down to rot in a common pit. If I read

Flaubert's meaning right, all human history is there; you may show it by painting on broad canvas a Carthaginian battle-scene or by photographing the details of a modern bedroom: a brief brightness, night and the odor of carrion, a crucified lion, a dying woman, the jeering of ribald mercenaries, the cackle of M. Homais. It is all one. If Flaubert deserved prosecution, it was not for making vice attractive, but for expressing with invasive energy that personal and desperately pessimistic conception of life by which he was almost overwhelmed.

That a bad physical regimen, bad habits of work in excessive quantities, and the solitude of his existence were contributory to Flaubert's melancholy, his exacerbated egotism, and his pessimism is sufficiently obvious in the letters. This Norman giant with his aching head buried all day long in his arms, groping in anguish for a phrase, has naturally a kindly disposition towards various individuals of his species – is even capable of great generosity; but as he admits with a truth and pathos, deeply appealing to the maternal sympathies of his correspondent, he has no talent for living. He has never been able, like richer and more resourceful souls, to reconcile being a man with being an author. He has made his choice; he has renounced the cheerful sanities of the world:

"I pass entire weeks without exchanging a word with a human being; and at the end of the week it is not possible for me to recall a single day nor any event whatsoever. I see my mother and my niece on Sundays, and that is all. My only company consists of a

band of rats in the garret, which make an infernal racket above my head, when the water does not roar or the wind blow. The nights are black as ink, and a silence surrounds me comparable to that of the desert. Sensitiveness is increased immeasurably in such a setting. I have palpitations of the heart for nothing.

"All that results from our charming profession. That is what it means to torment the soul and the body. But perhaps this torment is our proper lot here below."

To George Sand, who wrote as naturally as she breathed and almost as easily, seclusion and torment were by no means the necessary conditions of literary activity. Enormously productive, with a hundred books to his half-a-dozen, she has never dedicated and consecrated herself to her profession but has lived heartily and a bit recklessly from day to day, spending herself in many directions freely, gaily, extravagantly. Now that she has definitely said farewell to her youth, she finds that she is twenty years younger; and now that she is, in a sense, dissipating her personality and living in the lives of others, she finds that she is happier than ever before. "It can't be imperative to work so painfully" – such is the burden of her earlier counsels to Flaubert; "spare yourself a little, take some exercise, relax the tendons of your mind, indulge a little the physical man. Live a little as I do; and you will take your fatigues and illnesses and occasional dolours and dumps as incidents of the day's work and not magnify them into the mountainous overshadowing calamities from which you deduce your philosophy of universal

misery." No advice could have been more wholesome or more timely. And with what pictures of her own busy felicity she reinforces her advice! I shall produce three of them here in order to emphasize that precious thing which George Sand loved to impart, and which she had the gift of imparting, namely, joy, the spontaneous joyousness of her own nature. The first passage is from a letter of June 14, 1867:

"I am a little remorseful to take whole days from your work, I who am never bored with loafing, and whom you could leave for whole hours under a tree, or before two lighted logs, with the assurance that I should find there something interesting. I know so well how to live OUTSIDE OF MYSELF. It hasn't always been like that. I also was young and subject to indignations. It is over! Since I have dipped into real nature, I have found there an order, a system, a calmness of cycles which is lacking in mankind, but which man can, up to a certain point, assimilate when he is not too directly at odds with the difficulties of his own life. When these difficulties return, he must endeavor to avoid them; but if he has drunk the cup of the eternally true, he does not get too excited for or against the ephemeral and relative truth."

The second passage is of June 21:

"I love everything that makes up a milieu, the rolling of the carriages and the noise of the workmen in Paris, the cries of a thousand birds in the country, the movement of the ships on the waters. I love also absolute, profound silence, and, in short, I love everything that is around me, no matter where I am."

The last passage gives a glimpse of the seventeenth of January, 1869, a typical day in Nohant:

"The individual named George Sand is well: he is enjoying the marvellous winter which reigns in Berry, gathering flowers, noting interesting botanical anomalies, making dresses and mantles for his daughter-in-law, costumes for the marionettes, cutting out scenery, dressing dolls, reading music, but above all spending hours with the little Aurore, who is a marvellous child. There is not a more tranquil or a happier individual in his domestic life than this old troubadour retired from business, who sings from time to time his little song to the moon, without caring much whether he sings well or ill, provided he sings the motif that runs in his head, and who, the rest of the time, idles deliciously... This pale character has the great pleasure of loving you with all his heart, and of not passing a day without thinking of the other old troubadour, confined in his solitude of a frenzied artist, disdainful of all the pleasures of the world."

Flaubert did "exercise" a little – once or twice – in compliance with the injunctions of his "dear master"; but he rather resented the implication that his pessimism was personal, that it had any particular connection with his peculiar temperament or habits. He wished to think of himself as a stoic, quite indifferent about his "carcase." His briefer black moods he might acknowledge had transitory causes. But his general and abiding conceptions of humanity were the result of dispassionate reflections. "You think," he cries in half-sportive pique, "that because I pass my

life trying to make harmonious phrases, in avoiding assonances, that I too have not my little judgments on the things of this world? Alas! Yes! and moreover I shall burst, enraged at not expressing them." And later: "Yes, I am susceptible to disinterested angers, and I love you all the more for loving me for that. Stupidity and injustice make me roar, – and I howl in my corner against a lot of things 'that do not concern me.'" "On the day that I am no longer in a rage, I shall fall flat as the marionette from which one withdraws the support of the stick."

So far as Flaubert's pessimism has an intellectual basis, it rests upon his researches in human history. For *Salamambo* and *The Temptation of St. Anthony* he ransacked ancient literature, devoured religions and mythologies, and saturated himself in the works of the Church Fathers. In order to get up the background of his *Education Sentimentale* he studied the Revolution of 1848 and its roots in the Revolution of 1789. He found, shall we say? what he was looking for—inexhaustible proofs of the cruelty and stupidity of men. After "gulping" down the six volumes of *Buchez and Roux*, he declares: "The clearest thing I got out of them is an immense disgust for the French... Not a liberal idea which has not been unpopular, not a just thing that has not caused scandal, not a great man who has not been mobbed or knifed. 'The history of the human mind is the history of human folly,' as says M. Voltaire. ... Neo-Catholicism on the one hand, and Socialism on the other, have stultified France." In another letter of the same Period and similar provocation: "However much you

fatten human cattle, giving them straw as high as their bellies, and even gilding their stable, they will remain brutes, no matter what one says. All the advance that one can hope for, is to make the brute a little less wicked. But as for elevating the ideas of the mass, giving it a larger and therefore a less human conception of God, I have my doubts."

In addition to the charges of violence and cruelty, which he brought against all antiquity as well as against modern times, much in the fashion of Swift or the older Mark Twain, Flaubert nursed four grave causes of indignation, made four major charges of folly against modern "Christian" civilization. In religion, we have substituted for Justice the doctrine of Grace. In our sociological considerations we act no longer with discrimination but upon a principle of universal sympathy. In the field of art and literature we have abandoned criticism and research for the Beautiful in favor of universal puffery. In politics we have nullified intelligence and renounced leadership to embrace universal suffrage, which is the last disgrace of the human spirit.

It must be acknowledged that Flaubert's arraignment of modern society possesses the characteristics commended by the late Barrett Wendell: it is marked in a high degree by "unity, mass, and coherence." It must be admitted also that George Sand possessed in a high degree the Pauline virtue of being "not easily provoked," or she never could have endured so patiently, so sweetly, Flaubert's reiterated and increasingly ferocious assaults upon her own master passion, her ruling principle. George Sand

was one whose entire life signally attested the power of a "saving grace," resident in the creative and recuperative energies of nature, resident in the magical, the miracle-working, powers of the human heart, the powers of love and sympathy. She was a modern spiritual adventurer who had escaped unscathed from all the anathemas of the old theology; and she abounded, like St. Francis, in her sense of the new dispensation and in her benedictive exuberance towards all the creatures of God, including not merely sun, moon, and stars and her sister the lamb but also her brother the wolf. On this principle she loves Flaubert! – and archly asserts her arch-heresy in his teeth. He complains that her fundamental defect is that she doesn't know how to "hate." She replies, with a point that seems never really to have pierced his thick casing of masculine egotism:

"Artists are spoiled children and the best are great egotists. You say that I love them too well; I like them as I like the woods and the fields, everything, everyone that I know a little and that I study continually. I make my life in the midst of all that, and as I like my life, I like all that nourishes it and renews it. They do me a lot of ill turns which I see, but which I no longer feel. I know that there are thorns in the hedges, but that does not prevent me from putting out my hands and finding flowers there. If all are not beautiful, all are interesting. The day you took me to the Abbey of Saint-Georges I found the *scrofularia borealis*, a very rare plant in France. I was enchanted; there was much – in the neighborhood where I gathered it. Such is life!

"And if one does not take life like that, one cannot take it in any way, and then how can one endure it? I find it amusing and interesting, and since I accept EVERYTHING, I am so much happier and more enthusiastic when I meet the beautiful and the good. If I did not have a great knowledge of the species, I should not have quickly understood you, or known you or loved you."

Two years later the principles and tempers of both these philosophers were put to their severest trial. In 1870, George Sand had opportunity to apply her doctrine of universal acceptance to the Prussians in Paris. Flaubert had opportunity to welcome scientific organization in the Prussian occupation of his own home at Croisset. The first reaction of both was a quite simple consternation and rage, in which Flaubert cries, "The hopeless barbarism of humanity fills me with a black melancholy," and George Sand, for the moment assenting, rejoins: "Men are ferocious and conceited brutes." As the war thickens around him and the wakened militancy of his compatriots presses him hard, Flaubert becomes more and more depressed; he forebodes a general collapse of civilization – before the century passes, a conflict of races, "in which several millions of men kill one another in one engagement." With the curiously vengeful satisfaction which mortals take in their own misery when it offers occasion to cry "I told you so," he exclaims: "Behold then, the NATURAL MAN. Make theories now! Boast the progress, the enlightenment and the good sense of the masses, and the gentleness of the French people! I assure you that anyone

here who ventured to preach peace would get himself murdered."

George Sand in her fields at Nohant – not "above" but a little aside from the conflict – turns instinctively to her peasant doggedly, placidly, sticking at his plow; turns to her peasant with a kind of intuition that he is a symbol of faith, that he holds the keys to a consolation, which the rest of us blindly grope for: "He is imbecile, people say; no, he is a child in prosperity, a man in disaster, more of a man than we who complain; he says nothing, and while people are killing, he is sowing, repairing continually on one side what they are destroying on the other." Flaubert, who thinks that he has no "illusions" about peasants or the "average man," brings forward his own specific of a quite different nature: "Do you think that if France, instead of being governed on the whole by the crowd, were in the power of the mandarins, we should be where we are now? If, instead of having wished to enlighten the lower classes, we had busied ourselves with instructing the higher, we should not have seen M. de Keratry proposing the pillage of the duchy of Baden."

In the great war of our own time with the same foes, our professional advocates of "preparedness," our cheerful chemists, our scientific "intellectuals" – all our materialistic thinkers hard-shell and soft-shell, – took the position of Flaubert, just presented; reproached us bitterly for our slack, sentimental pacificism; and urged us with all speed to emulate the scientific spirit of our enemy. There is nothing more instructive in this correspondence than to observe how this last fond illusion

falls away from Flaubert under the impact of an experience which demonstrated to his tortured senses the truth of the old Rabelaisian utterance, that "science without conscience is the ruin of the soul."

"What use, pray," he cries in the last disillusion, "is science, since this people abounding in scholars commits abominations worthy of the Huns and worse than theirs, because they are systematic, cold-blooded, voluntary, and have for an excuse, neither passion nor hunger?" And a few months later, he is still in mad anguish of desolation:

"I had some illusions! What barbarity! What a slump! I am wrathful at my contemporaries for having given me the feelings of a brute of the twelfth century! I'm stifling in gall! These officers who break mirrors with white gloves on, who know Sanskrit, and who fling themselves on the champagne; who steal your watch and then send you their visiting card, this war for money, these civilized savages give me more horror than cannibals. And all the world is going to imitate them, is going to be a soldier! Russia has now four millions of them. All Europe will wear a uniform. If we take our revenge, it will be ferocious in the last degree; and, mark my word, we are going to think only of that, of avenging ourselves on Germany."

Under the imminence of the siege of Paris, Flaubert had drilled men, with an out-flashing of the savage fighting spirit of his ancestors, of which he was more than half ashamed. But at heart he is more dismayed, more demoralized, more thoroughly

prostrated than George Sand. He has not fortitude actually to face the degree of depravity which he has always imputed to the human race, the baseness with which his imagination has long been easily and cynically familiar. As if his pessimism had been only a literary pigment, a resource of the studio, he shudders to find Paris painted in his own ebony colors, and his own purely "artistic" hatred of the bourgeois, translated into a principle of action, expressing itself in the horrors of the Commune, with half the population trying to strangle the other half. Hatred, after all, contempt and hatred, are not quite the most felicitous watchwords for the use of human society. Like one whose cruel jest has been taken more seriously than he had intended and has been turned upon his own head, Flaubert considers flight: "I cherish the following dream: of going to live in the sun in a tranquil country." As a substitute for a physical retreat, he buries himself in a study of Buddhism, and so gradually returns to the pride of his intellectual isolation. As the tumult in his senses subsides, he even ventures to offer to George Sand the anodyne of his old philosophical despair: "Why are you so sad? Humanity offers nothing new. Its irremediable misery has filled me with sadness ever since my youth. And in addition I now have no disillusion. I believe that the crowd, the common herd will always be hateful. The only important thing is a little group of minds always the same – which passes the torch from one to another."

There we must leave Flaubert, the thinker. He never passes

beyond that point in his vision of reconstruction: a "legitimate aristocracy" established in contempt of the average man – with the Academy of Sciences displacing the Pope.

George Sand, amid these devastating external events, is beginning to feel the insidious siege of years. She can no longer rally her spiritual forces with the "bright speed" that she had in the old days. The fountain of her faith, which has never yet failed of renewal, fills more slowly. For weeks she broods in silence, fearing to augment her friend's dismay with more of her own, fearing to resume a debate in which her cause may be better than her arguments and in which depression of her physical energy may diminish her power to put up a spirited defence before the really indomitable "last ditch" of her position. When Flaubert himself makes a momentary gesture towards the white flag, and talks of retreat, she seizes the opportunity for a short scornful sally. "Go to live in the sun in a tranquil country! Where? What country is going to be tranquil in this struggle of barbarity against civilization, a struggle which is going to be universal?" A month later she gives him fair warning that she has no intention of acknowledging final defeat: "For me, the ignoble experiment that Paris is attempting or is undergoing, proves nothing against the laws of the eternal progression of men and things, and, if I have gained any principles in my mind, good or bad, they are neither shattered nor changed by it. For a long time I have accepted patience as one accepts the sort of weather there is, the length of winter, old age, lack of success in all its forms." But Flaubert,

thinking that he has detected in her public utterances a decisive change of front, privately urges her in a finely figurative passage of a letter which denounces modern republicanism, universal suffrage, compulsory education, and the press – Flaubert urges her to come out openly in renunciation of her faith in humanity and her popular progressivistic doctrines. I must quote a few lines of his attempt at seduction:

"Ah, dear good master, if you could only hate! That is what you lack, hate. In spite of your great Sphinx eyes, you have seen the world through a golden colour. That comes from the sun in your heart; but so many shadows have risen that now you are not recognizing things any more. Come now! Cry out! Thunder! Take your great lyre and touch the brazen string: the monsters will flee. Bedew us with drops of the blood of wounded Themis."

That summons roused the citadel, but not to surrender, not to betrayal. The eloquent daughter of the people caught up her great lyre – in the public Reponse a un ami of October 3, 1871. But her fingers passed lightly over the "brazen string" to pluck again with old power the resonant golden notes. Her reply, with its direct retorts to Flaubert, is not perhaps a very closely reasoned argument. In making the extract I have altered somewhat the order of the sentences:

"And what, you want me to stop loving? You want me to say that I have been mistaken all my life, that humanity is contemptible, hateful, that it always has been and always will be so? ... What, then, do you want me to do, so as to isolate myself

from my kind, from my compatriots, from the great family in whose bosom my own family is only one ear of corn in the terrestrial field? ... But it is impossible, and your steady reason puts up with the most unreasonable of Utopias. In what Eden, in what fantastic Eldorado will you hide your family, your little group of friends, your intimate happiness, so that the lacerations of the social state and the disasters of the country shall not reach them? ... In vain you are prudent and withdraw, your refuge will be invaded in its turn, and in perishing with human civilization you will be no greater a philosopher for not having loved, than those who threw themselves into the flood to save some debris of humanity. ... The people, you say! The people is yourself and myself. It would be useless to deny it. There are not two races. ... No, no, people do not isolate themselves, the ties of blood are not broken, people do not curse or scorn their kind. Humanity is not a vain word. Our life is composed of love, and not to love is to cease to live."

This is, if you please, an effusion of sentiment, a chant of faith. In a world more and more given to judging trees by their fruits, we should err if we dismissed this sentiment, this faith, too lightly. Flaubert may have been a better disputant; he had a talent for writing. George Sand may have chosen her side with a truer instinct; she had a genius for living. This faith of hers sustained well the shocks of many long years, and this sentiment made life sweet.

STUART P. SHERMAN

I. TO GEORGE SAND 1863

Dear Madam,

I am not grateful to you for having performed what you call a duty. The goodness of your heart has touched me and your sympathy has made me proud. That is the whole of it.

Your letter which I have just received gives added value to your article [Footnote: Letter about Salamambo, January, 1863, Questions d'art et de litterature.] and goes on still further, and I do not know what to say to you unless it be that *I* QUITE FRANKLY LIKE YOU.

It was certainly not I who sent you in September, a little flower in an envelope. But, strange to say, at the same time, I received in the same manner, a leaf of a tree.

As for your very cordial invitation, I am not answering yes or no, in true Norman fashion. Perhaps some day this summer I shall surprise you. For I have a great desire to see you and to talk with you.

It would be very delightful to have your portrait to hang on the wall in my study in the country where I often spend long months entirely alone. Is the request indiscreet? If not, a thousand thanks in advance. Take them with the others which I reiterate.

II. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Paris, 15 March, 1864

Dear Flaubert,

I don't know whether you lent me or gave me M. Taine's beautiful book. In the uncertainty I am returning it to you. Here

I have had only the time to read a part of it, and at Nohant, I shall have only the time to scribble for Buloz; but when I return, in two months, I shall ask you again for this admirable work of which the scope is so lofty, so noble.

I am sorry not to have said adieu to you; but as I return soon, I hope that you will not have forgotten me and that you will let me read something of your own also.

You were so good and so sympathetic to me at the first performance of *Villemer* that I no longer admire only your admirable talent, I love you with all my heart.

George Sand

III. TO GEORGE SAND

Paris, 1866

Why of course I am counting on your visit at my own house. As for the hindrances which the fair sex can oppose to it, you will not notice them (be sure of it) any more than did the others. My little stories of the heart or of the senses are not displayed on the counter. But as it is far from my quarter to yours and as you might make a useless trip, when you arrive in Paris, give me a rendezvous. And at that we shall make another to dine informally tete-a-tete.

I sent your affectionate little greeting to Bouilhet.

At the present time I am disheartened by the populace which rushes by under my windows in pursuit of the fatted calf. And they say that intelligence is to be found in the street!

IV. To M. Flobert (Justave) M. of Letters Boulevard du

Temple, 42, Paris Paris, 10 May, 1866

[The postage stamp bears the mark Palaiseau 9 May, '66.]

M. Flobaire, You must be a truly dirty oaf to have taken my name and written a letter with it to a lady who had some favors for me which you doubtless received in my place and inherited my hat in place of which I have received yours which you left there. It is the lowness of that lady's conduct and of yours that make me think that she lacks education entirely and all those sentiments which she ought to understand. If you are content to have written Fanie and Salkenpeau I am content not to have read them. You mustn't get excited about that, I saw in the papers that there were outrages against the Religion in whose bosom I have entered again after the troubles I had with that lady when she made me come to my senses and repent of my sins with her and, in consequence if I meet you with her whom I care for no longer you shall have my sword at your throat. That will be the Reparation of my sins and the punishment of your infamy at the same time. That is what I tell you and I salute you.

Coulard

At Palaiseau with the Monks

They told me that I was well punished for associating with the girls from the theatre and with aristocrats.

V. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT 1866

Sir,

After the most scrupulous combined searches I found at last the body of my beloved brother. You are in belles-lettres and you

would have been struck by the splendor of that scene. The corpse which was a Brother extended nonchalantly on the edge of a foul ditch. I forgot my sorrow a moment to contemplate he was good this young man whom the matches killed, but the real guilty one was that woman whom passions have separated in this disordered current in which our unhappy country is at the moment when it is more to be pitied than blamed for there are still men who have a heart. You who express yourself so well tell that siren that she has destroyed a great citizen. I don't need to tell you that we count on you to dig his noble tomb. Tell Silvanit also that she can come notwithstanding for education obliges me to offer her a glass of wine. I have the honor to salute you.

I also have the honor to salute Silvanit for whom I am a brother much to be pitied.

Goulard the elder

Have the goodness to transmit to Silvanit the last wishes of my poor

Theodore. [Footnote: Letter written by Eugene Lambert.]

VI. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Palaiseau 14 May, 1866

This is not a letter from Goulard. He is dead! The false Goulard killed him by surpassing him in the real and the comic. But this false Goulard also does not deny himself anything, the rascal!

Dear friend, I must tell you that I want to dedicate to you my novel which is just coming out. But as every one has his own

ideas on the subject – as Goulard would say – I would like to know if you permit me to put at the head of my title page simply: to my friend Gustave Flaubert. I have formed the habit of putting my novels under the patronage of a beloved name. I dedicated the last to Fromentin.

I am waiting until it is good weather to ask you to come to dine at Palaiseau with Goulard's Sirene, and some other Goulards of your kind and of mine. Up to now it has been frightfully cold and it is not worth the trouble to come to the country to catch a cold.

I have finished my novel, and you?

I kiss the two great diamonds which adorn your face.

Jorje Sens

The elder Goulard is my little Lambert, it seems to me that he is quite literary in that way.

VII. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Palaiseau, Wednesday, 16 May, 1866

Well, my dear friend, since you are going away, and as in a fortnight, I am going to Berry for two or three months, do try to find time to come tomorrow Thursday. You will dine with dear and interesting Marguerite Thuillier who is also going away.

Do come to see my hermitage and Sylvester's. By leaving Paris, gare de Sceaux, at 1 o'clock, you will be at my house at 2 o'clock, or by leaving at 5, you will be there at 6, and in the evening you could leave with my strolling players at 9 or 10. Bring the copy. [Footnote: This refers to Monsieur Sylveitre, which had just appeared.] Put in it all the criticisms which occur

to you. That will be very good for me. People ought to do that for each other as Balzac and I used to do. That doesn't make one person alter the other; quite the contrary, for in general, one gets more determined in one's moi, one completes it, explains it better, entirely develops it, and that is why friendship is good, even in literature, where the first condition of any worth is to be one's self.

If you can not come – I shall have a thousand regrets, but then I am depending upon you Monday before dinner. Au revoir and thank you for the fraternal permission of dedication.

G. Sand

VIII. TO GEORGE SAND

Paris, 17 or 18 May, 1866

Don't expect me at your house on Monday. I am obliged to go to

Versailles on that day. But I shall be at Magny's.

A thousand fond greetings from your

G. Flaubert

IX. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Nohant, 31 July, 1866

My good dear comrade,

Will you really be in Paris these next few days as you led me to hope? I leave here the 2nd. What good luck if I found you at dinner on the following Monday. And besides, they are putting on a play [Footnote: Les Don Juan de village.] by my son and me, on the 10th. Could I possibly get along without you on that

day? I shall feel some EMOTION this time because of my dear collaborator. Be a good friend and try to come! I embrace you with all my heart in that hope.

The late Goulard,
G. Sand.

X. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Paris, 4 Aug., 1866

Dear friend, as I'm always out, I don't want you to come and find the door shut and me far away. Come at six o'clock and dine with me and my children whom I expect tomorrow. We dine at Magny's always at 6 o'clock promptly. You will give us 'a sensible pleasure' as used to say, as would have said, alas, the unhappy Goulard. You are an exceedingly kind brother to promise to be at Don Juan. For that I kiss you twice more.

G. Sand

Saturday evening.

XI. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

It is next THURSDAY,

I wrote you last night, and our letters must have crossed.

Yours from the heart,

G. Sand

Sunday, 5 August, 1866.

XII. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Paris, Wednesday evening, 22 August, 1866

My good comrade and friend, I am going to see Alexandre at Saint-Valery Saturday evening. I shall stay there Sunday and Monday, I shall return Tuesday to Rouen and go to see you. Tell me how that strikes you. I shall spend the day with you if you like, returning to spend the night in Rouen, if I inconvenience you as you are situated, and I shall leave Wednesday morning or evening for Paris. A word in response at once, by telegraph if you think that your answer would not reach me by post before Saturday at 4 o'clock.

I think that I shall be all right but I have a horrid cold. If it grows too bad, I shall telegraph that I can not stir; but I have hopes, I am already better.

I embrace you.

G. Sand

XIII. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Saint-Valery, 26 August, 1866 Monday, 1 A.M.

Dear friend, I shall be in Rouen on Tuesday at 1 o'clock, I shall plan accordingly. Let me explore Rouen which I don't know, or show it to me if you have the time. I embrace you. Tell your mother how much I appreciate and am touched, by the kind little line which she wrote to me.

G. Sand

XIV. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, at Croissset

Paris, 31 August, 1866

First of all, embrace your good mother and your charming niece for me. I am really touched by the kind welcome I received in your clerical setting, where a stray animal of my species is an anomaly that one might find constraining. Instead of that, they received me as if I were one of the family and I saw that all that great politeness came from the heart. Remember me to all the very kind friends. I was truly exceedingly happy with you. And then, you, you are a dear kind boy, big man that you are, and I love you with all my heart. My head is full of Rouen, of monuments and queer houses. All of that seen with you strikes me doubly. But your house, your garden, your CITADEL, it is like a dream and it seems to me that I am still there.

I found Paris very small yesterday, when crossing the bridges.

I want to start back again. I did not see you enough, you and your surroundings; but I must rush off to the children, who are calling and threatening me. I embrace you and I bless you all.

G. Sand

Paris, Friday.

On going home yesterday, I found Couture to whom I said on your behalf that HIS portrait of me was, according to you, the best that anyone had made. He was not a little flattered. I am going to hunt up an especially good copy to send you.

I forgot to get three leaves from the tulip tree, you must send them to me in a letter, it is for something cabalistic.

XV. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Paris, 2 September, 1866

Send me back the lace shawl. My faithful porter will forward it to me wherever I am. I don't know yet. If my children want to go with me into Brittany, I shall go to fetch them, if not I shall go on alone wherever chance leads me. In travelling, I fear only distractions. But I take a good deal on myself and I shall end by improving myself. You write me a good dear letter which I kiss. Don't forget the three leaves from the tulip tree. They are asking me at the Odeon to let them perform a fairy play: la Nuit de Noel from the Theatre de Nohant, I don't want to, it's too small a thing. But since they have that idea, why wouldn't they try your fairy play? Do you want me to ask them? I have a notion that this would be the right theatre for a thing of that type. The management, Chilly and Duquesnel, wants to have scenery and MACHINERY and yet keep it literary. Let us discuss this when I return here.

You still have the time to write to me. I shall not leave for three days yet. Love to your family.

G. S.

Sunday evening

I forgot! Levy promises to send you my complete works, they are endless. You must stick them on a shelf in a corner and dig into them when your heart prompts you.

XVI. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, at Croissset

Nohant, 21 September, 1866

I have just returned from a twelve days trip with my children, and on getting home I find your two letters. That fact, added to the joy of seeing Mademoiselle Aurore again, fresh and pretty, makes me quite happy. And you my Benedictine, you are quite alone in your ravishing monastery, working and never going out? That is what it means TO HAVE ALREADY gone out too much. Monsieur craves Syrias, deserts, dead seas, dangers and fatigues! But nevertheless he can make Bovarys in which every little cranny of life is studied and painted with mastery. What an odd person who can also compose the fight between the Sphinx and the Chimaera! You are a being quite apart, very mysterious, gentle as a lamb with it all. I have had a great desire to question you, but a too great respect for you has prevented me; for I know how to make light only of my own calamities, while those which a great mind has had to undergo so as to be in a condition to produce, seem to me like sacred things which should not be touched roughly nor thoughtlessly.

Sainte-Beuve, who loves you all the same, claims that you are horribly vicious. But perhaps he may see with somewhat unclean eyes, like this learned botanist who asserts that the germander

is of DIRTY yellow color. The observation was so false, that I could not refrain from writing on the margin of his book: IT IS BECAUSE YOU HAVE DIRTY EYES.

I suppose that a man of intelligence may have great curiosity. I have not had it, lacking the courage. I have preferred to leave my mind incomplete, that is my affair, and every one is free to embark either on a great ship in full sail, or on a fisherman's vessel. The artist is an explorer whom nothing ought to stop, and who does neither good nor ill when turning to the right or to the left. His end justifies all.

It is for him to know after a little experience, what are the conditions of his soul's health. As for me, I think that yours is in a good condition of grace, since you love to work and to be alone in spite of the rain.

Do you know that, while there has been a deluge everywhere, we have had, except a few downpours, fine sunshine in Brittany? A horrible wind on the shore, but how beautiful the high surf! and since the botany of the coast carried me away, and Maurice and his wife have a passion for shellfish, we endured it all gaily. But on the whole, Brittany is a famous see-saw.

However, we are a little fed up with dolmens and menhirs and we have fallen on fetes and have seen costumes which they said had been suppressed but which the old people still wear. Well! These men of the past are ugly with their home-spun trousers, their long hair, their jackets with pockets under the arms, their sottish air, half drunkard, half saint. And the Celtic

relics, uncontestably curious for the archaeologist, have naught for the artist, they are badly set, badly composed, Carnac and Erdeven have no physiognomy. In short, Brittany shall not have my bones! I prefer a thousand times your rich Normandy, or, in the days when one has dramas in his HEAD, a real country of horror and despair. There is nothing in a country where priests rule and where Catholic vandalism has passed, razing monuments of the ancient world and sowing the plagues of the future.

You say US a propos of the fairy play. I don't know with whom you have written it, but I still fancy that it ought to succeed at the Odeon under its present management. If I was acquainted with it, I should know how to accomplish for you what one never knows how to do for one's self, namely, to interest the directors. Anything of yours is bound to be too original to be understood by that coarse Dumaine. Do have a copy at your house, and next month I shall spend a day with you in order to have you read it to me. Le Croisset is so near to Palaiseau! – and I am in a phase of tranquil activity, in which I should love to see your great river flow, and to keep dreaming in your orchard, tranquil itself, quite on top of the cliff. But I am joking, and you are working. You must forgive the abnormal intemperance of one who has just been seeing only stones and has not perceived even a pen for twelve days.

You are my first visit to the living on coming out from the complete entombment of my poor Moi. Live! There is my

oremus and my benediction and I embrace you with all my heart.

G. Sand

XVII. TO GEORGE SAND

Croisset, 1866

I a mysterious being, dear master, nonsense! I think that I am sickeningly platitudinous, and I am sometimes exceedingly bored with the bourgeois which I have under my skin. Sainte-Beuve, between ourselves, does not know me at all, no matter what he says. I even swear to you (by the smile of your grandchild) that I know few men less vicious than I am. I have dreamed much and have done very little. What deceives the superficial observer is the lack of harmony between my sentiments and my ideas. If you want my confession, I shall make it freely to you. The sense of the grotesque has restrained me from an inclination towards a disorderly life. I maintain that cynicism borders on chastity. We shall have much to say about it to each other (if your heart prompts you) the first time we see each other.

Here is the program that I propose to you. My house will be full and uncomfortable for a month. But towards the end of October or the beginning of November (after Bouilhet's play) nothing will prevent you, I hope, from returning here with me, not for a day, as you say, but for a week at least. You shall have "your little table and everything necessary for writing." Is it agreed?

As for the fairy play, thanks for your kind offers of service. I shall get hold of the thing for you (it was done in collaboration

with Bouilhet). But I think it is a trifle weak and I am torn between the desire of gaining a few piasters and the shame of showing such a piece of folly.

I think that you are a little severe towards Brittany, not towards the Bretons who seem to me repulsive animals. A propos of Celtic archaeology, I published in *L'Artiste* in 1858, a rather good hoax on the shaking stones, but I have not the number here and I don't remember the month.

I read, straight through, the 10 volumes of *Histoire de ma vie*, of which I knew about two thirds but only fragmentarily. What struck me most was the life in the convent. I have a quantity of observations to make to you which occurred to me.

XVIII. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Nohant, 28 September, 1866

It is agreed, dear comrade and good friend. I shall do my best to be in Paris for the performance of your friend's play, and I shall do my fraternal duty there as usual; after which we shall go to your house and I shall stay there a week, but on condition that you will not put yourself out of your room. To be an inconvenience distresses me and I don't need so much bother in order to sleep. I sleep everywhere, in the ashes, or under a kitchen bench, like a stable dog. Everything shines with spotlessness at your house, so one is comfortable everywhere. I shall pick a quarrel with your mother and we shall laugh and joke, you and I, much and more yet. If it's good weather, I shall make you go out walking, if it rains continually, we shall roast our bones before the fire while

telling our heart pangs. The great river will run black or grey under the window saying always, QUICK! QUICK! and carrying away our thoughts, and our days, and our nights, without stopping to notice such small things.

I have packed and sent by EXPRESS a good proof of Couture's picture, signed by the engraver, my poor friend, Manceau. It is the best that I have and I have only just found it. I have sent with it a photograph of a drawing by Marchal which was also like me; but one changes from year to year. Age gives unceasingly another character to the face of people who think and study, that is why their portraits do not look like one another nor like them for long. I dream so much and I live so little, that sometimes I am only three years old. But, the next day I am three hundred, if the dream has been sombre. Isn't it the same with you? Doesn't it seem at moments, that you are beginning life without even knowing what it is, and at other times don't you feel over you the weight of several thousand centuries, of which you have a vague remembrance and a sorrowful impression? Whence do we come and whither do we go? All is possible since all is unknown.

Embrace your beautiful, good mother for me. I shall give myself a treat, being with you two. Now try to find that hoax on the Celtic stones; that would interest me very much. When you saw them, had they opened the galgal of Lockmariaker and cleared away the ground near Plouharnel?

Those people used to write, because there are stones

covered with hieroglyphics, and they used to work in gold very well, because very beautifully made torques [Footnote: Gallic necklaces.] have been found.

My children, who are, like myself, great admirers of you, send you their compliments, and I kiss your forehead, since Sainte-Beuve lied.

G. Sand

Have you any sun today? Here it is stifling. The country is lovely.

When will you come here?

XIX. TO GEORGE SAND

Croisset, Saturday evening, ... 1866

Good, I have it, that beautiful, dear and famous face! I am going to have a large frame made and hang it on my wall, being able to say, as did M. de Talleyrand to Louis Philippe: "It is the greatest honor that my house has received"; a poor phrase, for we two are worth more than those two amiable men.

Of the two portraits, I like that of Couture's the better. As for Marchal's he saw in you only "the good woman," but I who am an old

Romantic, find in the other, "the head of the author" who made me dream so much in my youth.

XX. TO GEORGE SAND

Croisset, Saturday evening, 1866

Your sending the package of the two portraits made me think that you were in Paris, dear master, and I wrote you a letter which

is waiting for you at rue des Feuillantines.

I have not found my article on the dolmens. But I have my manuscript (entire) of my trip in Brittany among my "unpublished works." We shall have to gabble when you are here. Have courage.

I don't experience, as you do, this feeling of a life which is beginning, the stupefaction of a newly commenced existence. It seems to me, on the contrary, that I have always lived! And I possess memories which go back to the Pharaohs. I see myself very clearly at different ages of history, practising different professions and in many sorts of fortune. My present personality is the result of my lost personalities. I have been a boatman on the Nile, a leno in Rome at the time of the Punic wars, then a Greek rhetorician in Subura where I was devoured by insects. I died during the Crusade from having eaten too many grapes on the Syrian shores, I have been a pirate, monk, mountebank and coachman. Perhaps also even emperor of the East?

Many things would be explained if we could know our real genealogy. For, since the elements which make a man are limited, should not the same combinations reproduce themselves? Thus heredity is a just principle which has been badly applied.

There is something in that word as in many others. Each one takes it by one end and no one understands the other. The science of psychology will remain where it lies, that is to say in shadows and folly, as long as it has no exact nomenclature, so long as it

is allowed to use the same expression to signify the most diverse ideas. When they confuse categories, adieu, morale!

Don't you really think that since '89 they wander from the point? Instead of continuing along the highroad which was broad and beautiful, like a triumphal way, they stray off by little sidepaths and flounder in mud holes. Perhaps it would be wise for a little while to return to Holbach. Before admiring Proudhon, supposing one knew Turgot? But le Chic, that modern religion, what would become of it!

Opinions chic (or chiques): namely being pro-Catholicism (without believing a word of it) being pro-Slavery, being pro-the House of Austria, wearing mourning for Queen Amelie, admiring Orphee aux Enfers, being occupied with Agricultural Fairs, talking Sport, acting indifferent, being a fool up to the point of regretting the treaties of 1815. That is all that is the very newest.

Oh! You think that because I pass my life trying to make harmonious phrases, in avoiding assonances, that I too have not my little judgments on the things of this world? Alas! Yes! and moreover I shall burst, enraged at not expressing them.

But a truce to joking, I should finally bore you.

The Bouilhet play will open the first part of November. Then in a month we shall see each other.

I embrace you very warmly, dear master.

XXI. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, at Croisset

Nohant, Monday evening, 1 October, 1866

Dear friend,

Your letter was forwarded to me from Paris. It isn't lost. I think too much of them to let any be lost. You don't speak to me of the floods, therefore I think that the Seine did not commit any follies at your place and that the tulip tree did not get its roots wet. I feared lest you were anxious and wondered if your bank was high enough to protect you. Here we have nothing of that sort to be afraid of; our streams are very wicked, but we are far from them.

You are happy in having such clear memories of other existences. Much imagination and learning – those are your memories; but if one does not recall anything distinct, one has a very lively feeling of one's own renewal in eternity. I have a very amusing brother who often used to say "at the time when I was a dog. ..." He thought that he had become man very recently. I think that I was vegetable or mineral. I am not always very sure of completely existing, and sometimes I think I feel a great fatigue accumulated from having lived too much. Anyhow, I do not know, and I could not, like you, say, "I possess the past."

But then you believe that one does not really die, since one LIVES AGAIN? If you dare to say that to the Smart Set, you have courage and that is good. I have the courage which makes me pass for an imbecile, but I don't risk anything; I am imbecile under so many other counts.

I shall be enchanted to have your written impression of Brittany, I did not see enough to talk about. But I sought a general impression and that has served me for reconstructing one or two

pictures which I need. I shall read you that also, but it is still an unformed mass.

Why did your trip remain unpublished? You are very coy. You don't find what you do worth being described. That is a mistake. All that issues from a master is instructive, and one should not fear to show one's sketches and drawings. They are still far above the reader, and so many things are brought down to his level that the poor devil remains common. One ought to love common people more than oneself, are they not the real unfortunates of the world? Isn't it the people without taste and without ideals who get bored, don't enjoy anything and are useless? One has to allow oneself to be abused, laughed at, and misunderstood by them, that is inevitable. But don't abandon them, and always throw them good bread, whether or not they prefer filth; when they are sated with dirt they will eat the bread; but if there is none, they will eat filth in *secula seculorum*.

I have heard you say, "I write for ten or twelve people only." One says in conversation, many things which are the result of the impression of the moment; but you are not alone in saying that. It was the opinion of the *Lundi* or the thesis of that day. I protested inwardly. The twelve persons for whom you write, who appreciate you, are as good as you are or surpass you. You never had any need of reading the eleven others to be yourself. But, one writes for all the world, for all who need to be initiated; when one is not understood, one is resigned and recommences. When one is understood, one rejoices and continues. There lies

the whole secret of our persevering labors and of our love of art. What is art without the hearts and minds on which one pours it? A sun which would not project rays and would give life to no one.

After reflecting on it, isn't that your opinion? If you are convinced of that, you will never know disgust and lassitude, and if the present is sterile and ungrateful, if one loses all influence, all hold on the public, even in serving it to the best of one's ability, there yet remains recourse to the future, which supports courage and effaces all the wounds of pride. A hundred times in life, the good that one does seems not to serve any immediate use; but it keeps up just the same the tradition of wishing well and doing well, without which all would perish.

Is it only since '89 that people have been floundering? Didn't they have to flounder in order to arrive at '48 when they floundered much more, but so as to arrive at what should be? You must tell me how you mean that and I will read Turgot to please you. I don't promise to go as far as Holbach, **ALTHOUGH HE HAS SOME GOOD POINTS, THE RUFFIAN!**

Summon me at the time of Bouilhet's play. I shall be here, working hard, but ready to run, and loving you with all my heart. Now that I am no longer a woman, if the good God was just, I should become a man; I should have the physical strength and would say to you: "Come let's go to Carthage or elsewhere." But there, one who has neither sex nor strength, progresses towards childhood, and it is quite otherwhere that one is renewed; **WHERE?** I shall know that before you do, and, if I can, I shall

come back in a dream to tell you.

XXII. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Nohant, 19 October

Dear friend, they write me from the Odeon that Bouilhet's play is on the 27th. I must be in Paris the 26th. Business calls me in any event. I shall dine at Magny's on that day, and the next, and the day after that. Now you know where to find me, for I think that you will come for the first performance. Yours always, with a full heart,

G. Sand

XXIII. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Nohant, 23 October, 1866

Dear friend, since the play is on the 29th I shall give two more days to my children and I leave here the 28th. You have not told me if you will dine with me and your friend on the 29th informally, at Magny's at whatever hour you wish. Let me find a line at 97 rue des Feuillantines, on the 28th.

Then we shall go to your house, the day you wish. My chief talk with you will be to listen to you and to love you with all my heart. I shall bring what I have "ON THE STOCKS." That will GIVE ME COURAGE, as they say here, to read to you my EMBRYO. If I could only carry the sun from Nohant. It is glorious.

I embrace and bless you.

G. Sand

XXIV. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Paris, 10 November, 1866

On reaching Paris I learn sad news. Last evening, while we were talking – and I think that we spoke of him day before yesterday – my friend Charles Duveyrier died, a most tender heart and a most naive spirit. He is to be buried tomorrow. He was one year older than I am. My generation is passing bit by bit. Shall I survive it? I don't ardently desire to, above all on these days of mourning and farewell. It is as God wills, provided He lets me always love in this world and in the next.

I keep a lively affection for the dead. But one loves the living differently. I give you the part of my heart that he had. That joined to what you have already, makes a large share. It seems to me that it consoles me to make that gift to you. From a literary point of view he was not a man of the first rank, one loved him for his goodness and spontaneity. Less occupied with affairs and philosophy, he would have had a charming talent. He left a pretty play, Michel Perrin.

I travelled half the way alone, thinking of you and your mother at Croisset and looking at the Seine, which thanks to you has become a friendly GODDESS. After that I had the society of an individual with two women, as ordinary, all of them, as the music at the pantomime the other day. Example: "I looked, the sun left an impression like two points in my eyes." HUSBAND: "That is called luminous points," and so on for an hour without stopping.

I shall do all sorts of errands for the house, for I belong to it, do I not? I am going to sleep, quite worn out; I wept unrestrainedly

all the evening, and I embrace you so much the more, dear friend. Love me MORE than before, because I am sad.

G. Sand

Have you a friend among the Rouen magistrates? If you have, write him a line to watch for the NAME Amedee Despruneaux. It is a civil case which will come up at Rouen in a few days. Tell him that this Despruneaux is the most honest man in the world; you can answer for him as for me. In doing this, if the thing is feasible, you will do me a personal favor. I will do the same for any friend of yours.

XXV. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT 11 November, 1866

I send you my friend Despruneaux in person. If you know a judge or two, – or if your brother could give him a word of support, do arrange it, I kiss you three times on each eye.

G. Sand

Five minutes' interview and that's all the inconvenience. Paris, Sunday

XXVI. TO GEORGE SAND

Monday night

You are sad, poor friend and dear master; it was you of whom I thought on learning of Duveyrier's death. Since you loved him, I am sorry for you. That loss is added to others. How we keep these dead souls in our hearts. Each one of us carries within himself his necropolis.

I am entirely **UNDONE** since your departure; it seems to me as if I had not seen you for ten years. My one subject of

conversation with my mother is you, everyone here loves you. Under what star were you born, pray, to unite in your person such diverse qualities, so numerous and so rare?

I don't know what sort of feeling I have for you, but I have a particular tenderness for you, and one I have never felt for anyone, up to now. We understood each other, didn't we, that was good.

I especially missed you last evening at ten o'clock. There was a fire at my wood-seller's. The sky was rose color and the Seine the color of gooseberry sirup. I worked at the engine for three hours and I came home as worn out as the Turk with the giraffe.

A newspaper in Rouen, le Nouvelliste, told of your visit to Rouen, so that Saturday after leaving you I met several bourgeois indignant at me for not exhibiting you. The best thing was said to me by a former sub-prefect: "Ah! if we had known that she was here ... we would have ... we would have ..." he hunted five minutes for the word; "we would have smiled for her." That would have been very little, would it not?

To "love you more" is hard for me – but I embrace you tenderly. Your letter of this morning, so melancholy, reached the **BOTTOM** of my heart. We separated at the moment when many things were on the point of coming to our lips. All the doors between us two are not yet open. You inspire me with a great respect and I do not dare to question you.

XXVII. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, at Croisset

Paris, 13 November, 1866 Night from Tuesday to Wednesday

I have not yet read my play. I have still something to do over. Nothing pressing. Bouilhet's play goes admirably well, and they told me that my little friend Cadol's [Footnote: Edward Cadol, a dramatic author and a friend of Maurice Sand.] play would come next. And, for nothing in the world, do I want to step on the body of that child. That puts me quite a distance off and does not annoy me – NOR INJURE ME AT ALL. What style! Luckily I am not writing for Buloz.

I saw your friend last evening in the foyer at the Odeon. I shook hands with him. He had a happy look. And then I talked with Duquesnel about the fairy play. He wants very much to know it. You have only to present yourself when ever you wish to busy yourself with it. You will be received with open arms.

Mario Proth will give me tomorrow or next day the exact date on the transformation of the journal. Tomorrow I shall go out and buy your dear mother's shoes. Next week I am going to Palaiseau and I shall hunt up my book on faience. If I forget anything, remind me of it.

I have been ill for two days. I am cured. Your letter does my heart good. I shall answer all the questions quite nicely, as you have answered mine. One is happy, don't you think so, to be able to relate one's whole life? It is much less complicated than the bourgeois think, and the mysteries that one can reveal to a friend are always the contrary of what indifferent ones suppose.

I was very happy that week with you: no care, a good nesting-place a lovely country, affectionate hearts and your beautiful

and frank face which has a somewhat paternal air. Age has nothing to do with it. One feels in you the protection of infinite goodness, and one evening when you called your mother "MY DAUGHTER," two tears came in my eyes. It was hard to go away, but I hindered your work, and then, – and then, – a malady of my old age is, not being able to keep still. I am afraid of getting too attached and of wearying others. The old ought to be extremely discreet. From a distance I can tell you how much I love you without the fear of repetition. You are one of the RARE BEINGS remaining impressionable, sincere, loving art, not corrupted by ambition, not drunk with success. In short you will always be twenty-five years of age because of all sorts of ideas which have become old-fashioned according to the senile young men of today. With them, I think it is decidedly a pose, but it is so stupid! If it is a weakness, it is still worse. They are MEN OF LETTERS and not MEN. Good luck to the novel! It is exquisite; but oddly enough there is one entire side of you which does not betray itself in what you do, something that you probably are ignorant of. That will come later, I am sure of it.

I embrace you tenderly, and your mother too, and the charming niece! [Footnote: Madame Caroline Commanville.] Ah! I forgot, I saw Couture this evening; he told me that in order to be nice to you, he would make your portrait in crayon like mine for whatever price you wish to arrange. You see I am a good commissioner, use me.

XXVIII. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT 16 November, 1866

Thanks, dear friend of my heart, for all the trouble that I gave you with my Berrichon Despruneaux. They are friends from the old country, a whole adorable family of fine people, fathers, children, wives, nephews, all in the close circle at Nohant. He must have been MOVED at seeing you. He looked forward to it, all personal interest aside. And I who am not practical, forgot to tell you that the judgment would not be given for a fortnight. That in consequence any proceeding within the next two weeks would be extremely useful. If he gains his suit relative to the constructions at Yport, he will settle there and I shall realize the plan formed long since of going every year to his house; he has a delicious wife and they have loved me a long time. You then are threatened with seeing me often scratching at your gate in passing, giving you a kiss on the forehead, crying courage for your labor and running on. I am still awaiting our information on the journal. It seems that it is a little difficult to be exact for '42. I have asked for the most scrupulous exactitude.

For two days I have been taking out to walk my Cascaret, [Footnote: Francis Laur.] the little engineer of whom I told you. He has become very good looking, the ladies lift their lorgnons at him, and it depends only on him to attain the dignity of a negro "giraffier," but he loves, he is engaged, he has four years to wait, to work to make himself a position, and he has made a vow. You would tell him that he is stupid, I preach to him, on the contrary, my old troubadour doctrine.

Morality aside, I don't think that the children of this day

have sufficient force to manage at the same time, science and dissipation, cocottes and engagements. The proof is that nothing comes from young Bohemia any longer. Good night, friend, work well, sleep well. Walk a little for the love of God and of me. Tell your judges who promised me a smile, to smile on my Berrichon.

XXIX. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT 16 November, 1866

Don't take any further steps. Contrary to all anticipations, Despruneaux has gained his suit during the session.

Whether you have done it or not, he is none the less grateful about it and charges me to thank you with all his good and honest heart.

Bouilhet goes from better to better. I have just seen the directors who are delighted.

I love you and embrace you.

Think sometimes of your old troubadour. Friday

G. Sand

XXX. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT 18 November (?), 1866

I think that I shall give you pleasure and joy when I tell you that

La Conjuraton d'Ambroise, thus says my porter, is announced as a real money-maker. There was a line this evening as at Villemer, and

Magny which is also a barometer, shows fair weather.

So be content, if that keeps up, Bouilhet is a success. Sunday

G. S.

XXXI. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Palaiseau, 22 November, 1866

I think that it will bring me luck to say good evening to my dear comrade before starting to work.

I am QUITE ALONE in my little house. The gardener and his family live in the pavilion in the garden and we are the last house at the end of the village, quite isolated in the country, which is a ravishing oasis. Fields, woods, appletrees as in Normandy; not a great river with its steam whistles and infernal chain; a little stream which runs silently under the willows; a silence ... ah! it seems to me that I am in the depths of the virgin forest: nothing speaks except the little jet of the spring which ceaselessly piles up diamonds in the moonlight. The flies sleeping in the corners of my room, awoken at the warmth of my fire. They had installed themselves there to die, they come near the lamp, they are seized with a mad gaiety, they buzz, they jump, they laugh, they even have faint inclinations towards love, but it is the hour of death and paf! in the midst of the dance, they fall stiff. It is over, farewell to dancing!

I am sad here just the same. This absolute solitude, which has always been vacation and recreation for me, is shared now by a dead soul [Footnote: Alexandre Manceau, the engraver, a friend of Maurice Sand.] who has ended here, like a lamp which is going out, yet which is here still. I do not consider him unhappy in the region where he is dwelling; but the image that he has left near me, which is nothing more than a reflection, seems to complain because of being unable to speak to me any more.

Never mind! Sadness is not unhealthy. It prevents us from drying up. And you dear friend, what are you doing at this hour? Grubbing also, alone also; for your mother must be in Rouen. Tonight must be beautiful down there too. Do you sometimes think of the "old troubadour of the Inn clock, who still sings and will continue to sing perfect love?" Well! yes, to be sure! You do not believe in chastity, sir, that's your affair. But as for me, I say that SHE HAS SOME GOOD POINTS, THE JADE!

And with this, I embrace you with all my heart, and I am going to, if I can, make people talk who love each other in the old way.

You don't have to write to me when you don't feel like it. No real friendship without ABSOLUTE liberty.

In Paris next week, and then again to Palaiseau, and after that to Nohant. I saw Bouilhet at the Monday performance. I am CRAZY about it. But some of us will applaud at Magny's. I had a cold sweat there, I who am so steady, and I saw everything quite blue.

XXXII. TO GEORGE SAND

Croisset, Tuesday

You are alone and sad down there, I am the same here.

Whence come these attacks of melancholy that overwhelm one at times? They rise like a tide, one feels drowned, one has to flee. I lie prostrate. I do nothing and the tide passes.

My novel is going very badly for the moment. That fact added to the deaths of which I have heard; of Cormenin (a friend of twenty-five years' standing), of Gavarni, and then all the rest, but

that will pass. You don't know what it is to stay a whole day with your head in your hands trying to squeeze your unfortunate brain so as to find a word. Ideas come very easily with you, incessantly, like a stream. With me it is a tiny thread of water. Hard labor at art is necessary for me before obtaining a waterfall. Ah! I certainly know THE AGONIES OF STYLE.

In short I pass my life in wearing away my heart and brain, that is the real TRUTH about your friend.

You ask him if he sometimes thinks of his "old troubadour of the clock," most certainly! and he mourns for him. Our nocturnal talks were very precious (there were moments when I restrained myself in order not to KISS you like a big child).

Your ears ought to have burned last night. I dined at my brother's with all his family. There was hardly any conversation except about you, and every one sang your praises, unless perhaps myself, I slandered you as much as possible, dearly beloved master.

I have reread, a propos of your last letter (and by a very natural connection of ideas), that chapter of father Montaigne's entitled "some lines from Virgil." What he said of chastity is precisely what I believe. It is the effort that is fine and not the abstinence in itself. Otherwise shouldn't one curse the flesh like the Catholics? God knows whither that would lead. Now at the risk of repetition and of being a Prudhomme, I insist that your young man is wrong. [Footnote: Refers to Francis Laur.] If he is temperate at twenty years old, he will be a cowardly roue at

fifty. Everything has its compensations. The great natures which are good, are above everything generous and don't begrudge the giving of themselves. One must laugh and weep, love, work, enjoy and suffer, in short vibrate as much as possible in all his being.

That is, I think, the real human existence.

XXXIII. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, at Croisset

Palaiseau, 29 November, 1866

One need not be spiritualist nor materialist, you say, but one should be a naturalist. That is a great question.

My Cascaret, that is what I call the little engineer, will decide it as he thinks best. He is not stupid and he will have many ideas, deductions and emotions before realizing the prophecy that you make. I do not catechise him without reserve, for he is stronger than I am on many points, and it is not Catholic spiritualism that stifles him. But the question by itself is very serious, and hovers above our art, above us troubadours, more or less clock-bearing or clockshaped.

Treat it in an entirely impersonal way; for what is good for one might be quite the reverse for another. Let us ask ourselves in making an abstract of our tendencies or of our experiences, if the human being can receive and seek its own full physical development without intellectual suffering. Yes, in an ideal and rational society that would be so. But, in that in which we live and with which we must be content, do not enjoyment and excess go hand in hand, and can one separate them or limit them, unless

one is a sage of the first class? And if one is a sage, farewell temptation which is the father of real joys.

The question for us artists, is to know if abstinence strengthens us or if it exalts us too much, which state would degenerate into weakness, – You will say, "There is time for everything and power enough for every dissipation of strength." Then you make a distinction and you place limits, there is no way of doing otherwise. Nature, you think, places them herself and prevents us from abusing her. Ah! but no, she is not wiser than we who are also nature.

Our excesses of work, as our excesses of pleasure, kill us certainly, and the more we are great natures, the more we pass beyond bounds and extend the limits of our powers.

No, I have no theories. I spend my life in asking questions and in hearing them answered in one way or another without any victoriously conclusive reply ever being given me. I await the brilliance of a new state of my intellect and of my organs in a new life; for, in this one, whosoever reflects, embraces up to their last consequences, the limits of pro and con. It is Monsieur Plato, I think, who asked for and thought he held the bond. He had it no more than we. However, this bond exists, since the universe subsists without the pro and con, which constitute it, reciprocally destroying each other. What shall one call it in material nature? EQUILIBRIUM, that will do, and for spiritual nature? MODERATION, relative chastity, abstinence from excess, whatever you want, but that is translated

by EQUILIBRIUM; am I wrong, my master?

Consider it, for in our novels, what our characters do or do not do, rests only on that. Will they or will they not possess the object of their ardent desires? Whether it is love or glory, fortune or pleasure, ever since they existed, they have aspired to one end. If we have a philosophy in us, they walk right according to us; if we have not, they walk by chance, and are too much dominated by the events which we put in the way of their legs. Imbued by our own ideas and ruled by fatality, they do not always appear logical. Should we put much or little of ourselves in them? Shouldn't we put what society puts in each one of us?

For my part, I follow my old inclination, I put myself in the skin of my good people. People scold me for it, that makes no difference. You, I don't really know if by method or by instinct, take another course. What you do, you succeed in; that is why I ask you if we differ on the question of internal struggles, if the hero ought to have any or if he ought not to know them.

You always astonish me with your painstaking work; is it a coquetry? It does not seem labored. What I find difficult is to choose out of the thousand combinations of scenic action which can vary infinitely, the clear and striking situation which is not brutal nor forced. As for style, I attach less importance to it than you do.

The wind plays my old harp as it lists. It has its HIGH NOTES, its LOW NOTES, its heavy notes – and its faltering notes, in the end it is all the same to me provided the emotion comes, but I

can find nothing in myself. It is THE OTHER who sings as he likes, well or ill, and when I try to think about it, I am afraid and tell myself that I am nothing, nothing at all. But a great wisdom saves us; we know how to say to ourselves, "Well, even if we are absolutely nothing but instruments, it is still a charming state and like no other, this feeling oneself vibrate."

Now, let the wind blow a little over your strings. I think that you take more trouble than you need, and that you ought to let THE OTHER do it oftener. That would go just as well and with less fatigue.

The instrument might sound weak at certain moments, but the breeze in continuing would increase its strength. You would do afterwards what I don't do, what I should do. You would raise the tone of the whole picture and would cut out what is too uniformly in the light.

Vale et me ama.

XXXIV. TO GEORGE SAND

Saturday morning

Don't bother yourself about the information relative to the journals. That will occupy little space in my book and I have time to wait. But when you have nothing else to do, jot down on paper whatever you can recall of '48. Then you can develop it in talking. I don't ask you for copy of course, but to collect a little of your personal memories.

Do you know an actress at the Odeon who plays Macduff in Macbeth? Dugueret? She would like to have the role of Nathalie

in Mont-reveche. She will be recommended to you by Girardin, Dumas and me. I saw her yesterday in Faustine, in which she showed talent. My opinion is that she has intelligence and that one could profit by her.

If your little engineer has made a VOW, and if that vow does not cost him anything, he is right to keep it; if not, it is pure folly, between you and me. Where should liberty exist if not in passion?

Well! no, IN MY DAY we didn't take such vows and we loved! and swaggeringly. But all participated in a great eclecticism and when one strayed FROM LADIES it was from pride, in defiance of one's self, and for effect. In short, we were Red Romantics, perfectly ridiculous to be sure, but in full bloom. The little good which remains to me comes from that epoch.

XXXV. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Palaiseau, 30 November, 1866

There would be a good deal to say on all that, my comrade. My Cascaret, that is to say, the fiance in question, keeps himself for his fiancee. She said to him, "Let us wait till you have accomplished certain definite work," and he works. She said to him, "Let us keep ourselves pure for each other," and he keeps himself pure. It is not that he is choked by Catholic spiritualism; but he has a high ideal of love, and why counsel him to go and lose it when his conscience and his honor depend on keeping it?

There is an equilibrium which Nature, our ruler, herself puts in our instincts, and she sets the limit to our appetites. Great

natures are not the most robust. We are not developed in all our senses by a very logical education. We are compressed in every way, and we thrust out our roots and branches when and how we can. Great artists are often weak also, and many are impotent. Some too strong in desire are quickly exhausted. In general I think that we have too intense joys and sorrows, we who work with our brains. The laborer who works his land and his wife hard by day and night is not a forceful nature. His brain is very feeble. You say to develop one's self in every direction? Come, not all at the same time, not without rest.

Those who brag of that, are bluffing a bit, or IF THEY DO everything, do everything ill. If love for them is a little bread-and-butter and art a little pot-boiler, all right; but if their pleasure is great, verging on the infinite, and their work eager, verging on enthusiasm, they do not alternate these as in sleeping and waking.

As for me, I don't believe in these Don Juans who are Byrons at the same time. Don Juan did not make poems and Byron made, so they say, very poor love. He must have had sometimes – one can count such emotions in one's life – a complete ecstasy of heart, mind and senses. He knew enough about them to be one of the poets of love. Nothing else is necessary for the instrument of our vibration. The continual wind of little appetites breaks them.

Try some day to write a novel in which the artist (the real artist) is the hero, you will see what great, but delicate and restrained, vigor is in it, how he will see everything with an attentive eye, curious and tranquil, and how his infatuations with

the things he examines and delves into, will be rare and serious. You will see also how he fears himself, how he knows that he can not surrender himself without exhaustion, and how a profound modesty in regard to the treasures of his soul prevents him from scattering and wasting them.

The artist is such a fine type to do, that I have never dared really to do him. I do not consider myself worthy to touch that beautiful and very complicated figure; that is aiming too high for a mere woman. But if it could certainly tempt you some day, it would be worth while.

Where is the model? I don't know, I have never REALLY known any one who did not show some spot in the sunlight, I mean some side where the artist verged on the Philistine. Perhaps you have not that spot; you ought to paint yourself. As for me I have it. I love classifications, I verge on the pedagogue. I love to sew and to care for children, I verge on the servant. I am easily distracted and verge on the idiot. And then I should not like perfection; I feel it but I shouldn't know how to show it.

But one could give him some faults in his nature. What ones? We shall hunt for them some day. That is not really what you are working on now and I ought not to distract you from it.

Be less cruel to yourself. Go ahead and when the afflatus shall have produced everything you must elevate the general tone and cut out what ought not to come down front stage. Can't that be done? It seems to me that it can. What you do appears so easy, so abundant! It is a perpetual overflow, I do not understand your

anguish. Good night, dear brother, my love to all yours. I have returned to my solitude at Palaiseau, I love it. I leave it for Paris, Monday. I embrace you warmly. Good luck to your work.

G. Sand

XXXVI. Monsieur Gustave Flobert at Croisset,

Rouen [The postage stamp bears the mark, Paris, 4, December, 1866]

Sir the noise that you make in literature by your distinguished talent I also made in my day in the manner that my means permitted me I began in 1804 under the auspices of the celebrated Madame Saqui and bore off palms and left memories in the annals of the tight-rope and coregrafie balancer in all countries where I have been there appreciated by generals and other officers of the Empire by whom I have been solicited up to an advanced age so that wives of prefects and ministers could not have been complimented about it I have read your distinguished works notably Madame Bovarie of which I think I am capable of being a model to you when she breaks the chains of her feet to go where her heart calls her. I am well preserved for my advanced age and if you have a repugnance for an artist in misfortune, I should be content with your ideal sentiments. You can then count on my heart not being able to dispose of my person being married to a man of light character who squandered my wax cabinet wherein were all figures of celebrities, kings, emperors, ancient and modern and celebrated crimes, which if I had had your permission about it you would have been placed

in the number I had then a place in the railroad substation to have charge of the cabinets which the jealousy of my rival made me lose, it is in these sentiments that I write you if you deign to write the history of my unhappy life you alone would be worthy of it and would see in it things of which you would be worthy of appreciating I shall present myself at your house in Rouen whose address I had from M. Bouilhet who knows me well having come to see me in his youth he will tell you that I have the phthisic still agreeably and always faithful to all who knew me whether in the civil or in the military and in these sentiments for life your affectionate

Victoire Potelet

called Marengo Lirondelle widow Dodin Rue Lanion, 47, Belleville.

XXXVII. TO GEORGE SAND

Wednesday night, 5th December, 1866

Oh! how lovely the letter of Marengo the Swallow is! Seriously, I think it a masterpiece, not a word which is not a word of genius. I have laughed aloud many times. I thank you very dear master, you are as good as can be.

You never tell me what you are doing. How far has the play gone?

I am not at all surprised that you don't understand my literary agonies. I don't understand them myself. But they exist nevertheless, and violent ones.

I don't in the least know how to set to work to write, and I

begin by expressing only the hundredth part of my ideas after infinite gropings. Not one who seizes the first impulse, your friend, no! not at all! Thus for entire days I have polished and re-polished a paragraph without accomplishing anything. I feel like weeping at times. You ought to pity me!

As for our subject under discussion (a propos of your young man), what you write me in your last letter is so my way of thinking, that I have not only practised it but preached it. Ask Theo. However, let us understand one another. Artists (who are priests) risk nothing in being chaste; on the contrary. But the bourgeois, what is the use in it for them? Of course there must be certain ones among humanity who stick to chastity. Happy indeed those who don't depart from it.

I don't agree with you that there is anything worth while to be done with the character of the IDEAL ARTIST; he would be a monster. Art is not made to paint the exceptions, and I feel an unconquerable repugnance to putting on paper something from out of my heart. I even think that a novelist HASN'T THE RIGHT TO EXPRESS HIS OPINION on any subject whatsoever. Has the good God ever uttered it, his opinion? That is why there are not a few things that choke me which I should like to spit out, but which I swallow. Why say them, in fact! The first comer is more interesting than Monsieur Gustave Flaubert, because he is more GENERAL and therefore more typical.

Nevertheless, there are days when I consider myself below imbecility. I have still a globe of goldfish and that amuses me.

They keep me company while I dine. Is it stupid to be interested in such simple things? Adieu, it is late, I have an aching head.

I embrace you.

XXXVIII. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, at Paris December, 1866

"Not put one's heart into what one writes?" I don't understand at all, oh! not at all! As for me, I think that one can not put anything else into it. Can one separate one's mind from one's heart? Is it something different? Can sensation itself limit itself? Can existence divide itself? In short, not to give oneself entirely to one's work, seems to me as impossible as to weep with something else than one's eyes, and to think with something else than one's brain.

What was it you meant? You must tell me when you have the time.

XXXIX. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Paris, 8 December, 1866

You ask me what I am doing? Your old troubadour is content this evening. He has passed the night in re-doing a second act which did not go properly and which has turned out well, so well that my directors are delighted, and I have good hopes of making the end effective – it does not please me yet, but one must pull it through. In short, I have nothing to tell you about myself which is very interesting. When one has the patience of an ox and the wrist broken from crushing stones well or badly, one has scarcely any unexpected events or emotions to recount. My poor Manceau

called me the ROAD- MENDER, and there is nothing less poetic than those beings.

And you, dear friend, are you experiencing the anguish and labors of childbirth? That is splendid and youthful. Those who want them don't always get them!

When my daughter-in-law brings into the world dear little children, I abandon myself to such labor in holding her in my arms that it reacts on me, and when the infant arrives, I am sicker than she is, and even seriously so. I think that your pains now react on me, and I have a headache on account of them. But alas! I cannot assist at any birth and I almost regret the time when one believed it hastened deliverances to burn candles before an image.

I see that that rascal Bouilhet has betrayed me; he promised me to copy the Marengo letter in a feigned hand to see if you would be taken in by it. People have written to me seriously things like that. How good and kind your great friend is. He is adored at the Odeon, and this evening they told me that his play was going better and better. I went to hear it again two or three days ago and I was even more delighted with it than the first time.

Well, well, let's keep up our heart, whatever happens, and when you go to rest remember that someone loves you. Affectionate regards to your mother, brother and niece.

G. Sand

XL. TO GEORGE SAND

Croisset, Saturday night

I have seen Citizen Bouilhet, who had a real ovation in his own country. His compatriots who had absolutely ignored him up to then, from the moment that Paris applauded him, screamed with enthusiasm. – He will return here Saturday next, for a banquet that they are giving him, – 80 covers, at least.

As for Marengo the Swallow, he kept your secret so well, that he read the letter in question with an astonishment which duped me.

Poor Marengo! she is a figure! and one that you ought to put in a book. I wonder what her memoirs would be, written in that style? – Mine (my style) continues to give me no small annoyance. I hope, however, in a month, to have crossed the most barren tract. But at the moment I am lost in a desert; well, by the grace of God, so much the worse for me! How gladly I shall abandon this sort of thing, never to return to it to my dying day! Depicting the modern French bourgeois is a stench in my nostrils! And then won't it be time perhaps to enjoy oneself a bit in life, and to choose subjects pleasant to the author?

I expressed myself badly when I said to you that "one should not write from the heart." I meant to say: not put one's personality into the picture. I think that great art is scientific and impersonal. One should, by an effort of mind, put oneself into one's characters and not create them after oneself. That is the method at least; a method which amounts to this: try to have a great deal of talent and even of genius if you can. How vain are all the poetic theories and criticisms! – and the nerve of the

gentlemen who compose them sickens me. Oh! nothing restrains them, those boneheads!

Have you noticed that there is sometimes in the air a current of common ideas? For instance, I have just read my friend Du Camp's new novel: *Forces Perdues*. It is very like what I am doing, in many ways. His book is very naive and gives an accurate idea of the men of our generation having become real fossils to the young men of today. The reaction of '48 opened a deep chasm between the two Frances.

Bouilhet told me that you had been seriously ill at one of the recent Magny's, although you do pretend to be a "woman of wood." Oh! no you are not of wood, dear good great heart! "Beloved old troubadour," would it not perhaps be opportune to rehabilitate him at the Theatre Almanzor? I can see him with his toque and his guitar and his apricot tunic howling at the black-gowned students from the top of a rock. The talk would be fine. Now, good night; I kiss you on both cheeks tenderly.

XLI. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Paris, 7 December, 1866

Something like a week ago someone came to my house in the morning to ask me the address of the bootmaker, my maid did not want to awaken me, and it was not until noon that I read the letter; the bearer said he came from the Hotel Helder on the rue Helder. I answered at once that Simonin lived at 15 rue Richelieu, I wrote to your mother thinking that it was she who wrote to me. I see that she did not receive my note and I don't understand about

it, but it is not my fault.

Your old Troubadour is sick as a dog again today, but it will not prevent him from going to Magny's this evening. He could not die in better company; although he would prefer the edge of a ditch in the spring.

Everything else goes well and I leave for Nohant on Saturday. I am trying hard to push the entomological work which Maurice is publishing. It is very fine.

I am doing for him what I have never done for myself. I am writing to the newspaper men.

I shall recommend Mademoiselle Bosquet to whom I can, but that appeals to another public, and I don't stand in as well with the literary men as I do with the scholars. But certainly Marengo the Swallow **MUST BE DONE** and the apricot troubadour also. All that was of the Cadios of the revolution who began to be or who wanted to be something, no matter what. I am of the last comers and you others born of us, you are between the illusions of my time and the crude deception of the new times. It is quite natural that Du Camp should go parallel with you in a series of observations and ideas, that does not mean anything. There will be no resemblance.

Oh no! I have not found a title for you, it is too serious, and then I should need to know everything. In any case I am no good today to do anything except to draw up my epitaph. Et in Arcadia ego, you know, I love you, dear friend brother, and bless you with all my heart.

G. Sand

Monday.

XLII. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, at Croissset

Paris, 9 January, 1867

Dear comrade,

Your old troubadour has been tempted to bite the dust. He is still in Paris. He should have left the 25th of December; his trunk was strapped; your first letter was awaiting him every day at Nohant. At last he is all ready to leave and he goes tomorrow with his son Alexandre [Footnote: Alexandre Dumas fils.] who is anxious to accompany him.

It is stupid to be laid on one's back and to lose consciousness for three days and to get up as enfeebled as if one had done something painful and useful. It was nothing after all, except temporary impossibility of digesting anything whatever. Cold, or weakness, or work, I don't know. I don't think of it any longer. Sainte-Beuve is much more disquieting, somebody have written you about it. He is better also, but there will be serious trouble, and on account of that, accidents to look out for. I am very saddened and anxious about it.

I have not worked for two weeks; so my task has not progressed very much, and as I don't know if I am going to be in shape very soon, I have given the Odeon A VACATION. They will take me when I am ready. I think of going a little to the south when I have seen my children. The plants of the coast are running through my head. I am prodigiously uninterested in

anything which is not my little ideal of peaceful work, country life, and of tender and pure friendship. I really think that I am not going to live a long time, although I am quite cured and well. I get this warning from the great calm, CONTINUALLY CALMER, which exists in my formerly agitated soul. My brain only works from synthesis to analysis, and formerly it was the contrary. Now, what presents itself to my eyes when I awaken is the planet; I have considerable trouble in finding again there the MOI which interested me formerly, and which I begin to' call YOU in the plural. It is charming, the planet, very interesting, very curious but rather backward, and as yet somewhat unpractical; I hope to pass into an oasis with better highways and possible to all. One needs so much money and resources in order to travel here! and the time lost in order to procure. these necessaries is lost to study and to contemplation. It seems to me that there is due me something less complicated, less civilized, more naturally luxurious, and more easily good than this feverish halting-place. Will you come into the land, of my dreams, if I succeed in finding the road? Ah! who can know?

And the novel, is it getting on? Your courage has not declined? Solitude does not weigh on you? I really think that it is not absolute, and that somewhere there is a sweetheart who comes and goes, or who lives near there. But there is something of the anchorite in your life just the same, and if envy your situation. As for me, I am too alone at Palaiseau, with a dead soul; not alone enough at Nohant, with the children whom I love too much to

belong to myself, – and at Paris, one does not know what one is, one forgets oneself entirely for a thousand things which are not worth any more than oneself. I embrace you with all my heart, dear friend; remember me to your mother, to your dear family, and write me at Nohant, that will do me good.

The cheeses? I don't know at all, it seems to me that they spoke to me of them, but I don't remember at all. I will tell you that from down there.

XLIII. TO GEORGE SAND

Croisset, Saturday night

No, dear master, you are not near your end. So much the worse for you perhaps. But you will live to be old, very old, as giants live, since you are of that race: only you **MUST** rest. One thing astonishes me and that is that you have not died twenty times over, having thought so much, written so much and suffered so much. Do go then, since you have the desire, to the Mediterranean. Its azure sky quiets and invigorates. There are the Countries of Youth, such as the Bay of Naples. Do they make one sadder sometimes? I do not know.

Life is not easy! What a complicated and extravagant affair! I know something about that. One must have money for everything! So that with a modest revenue and an unproductive profession one has to make up one's mind to have but little. So I do! The habit is formed, but the days that work does not go well are not amusing. Yes indeed! I would love to follow you into another planet. And a propos of money, it is that which

will make our planet uninhabitable in the near future, for it will be impossible to live here, even for the rich, without looking after one's property; one will have to spend several hours a day fussing over one's INCOME. Charming! I continue to fuss over my novel, and I shall go to Paris when I reach the end of my chapter, towards the middle of next month.

And whatever you suspect, no "lovely lady" comes to see me. Lovely ladies have occupied my mind a good deal, but have taken up very little of my time. Applying the term anchorite to me is perhaps a juster comparison than you think.

I pass entire weeks without exchanging a word with a human being, and at the end of the week it is not possible for me to recall a single day nor any event whatsoever. I see my mother and my niece on Sundays, and that is all. My only company consists of a band of rats in the garret, which make an infernal racket above my head, when the water does not roar or the wind blow. The nights are black as ink, and a silence surrounds me comparable to that of the desert. Sensitiveness is increased immeasurably in such a setting. I have palpitations of the heart for nothing.

All that results from our charming profession. That is what it means to torment the soul and the body. But perhaps this torment is our proper lot here below?

I told you, didn't I, that I had reread Consuelo and the Comtesse de Rudolstadt; it took me four days. We must discuss them at length, when you are willing. Why am I in love with Siverain? Perhaps because I am of both sexes.

XLIV. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT at Croissset

Nohant, 15 January, 1867

Here I am at home, fairly strong except for several hours during the evening. Yet, **THAT WILL PASS. THE EVIL OR HE WHO ENDURES IT**, my old cure used to say, **CAN NOT LAST**. I received your letter this morning, dear friend of my heart. Why do I love you more than most of the others, even more than old and well-tried friends? I am asking, for my condition at this hour, is that of being

THOU WHO GOEST SEEKING, AT SUNSET, FORTUNE! ...

Yes, intellectual fortune, **LIGHT!** Oh well, here it is: one gets, being old, at the sunset of life, – which is the most beautiful hour of tones and reflections, – a new idea of everything and of affection above all.

In the age of power and of personality, one tests one's friends as one tests the earth, from the point of view of reciprocity. One feels oneself solid, one wants to find that which bears one or leads one, solid. But, when one feels the intensity of the moi fleeing, one loves persons and things for what they are in themselves, for what they represent in the eyes of one's soul, and not at all for what they add further to one's destiny. It is like the picture or the statue which one would like to own, when one dreams at the same time of a beautiful house of one's own in which to put it.

But one has passed through green Bohemia without gathering anything there; one has remained poor, sentimental and

troubadourish. One knows very well that it will always be the same, and that one will die without a hearth or a home. Then one thinks of the statue, of the picture which one would not know what to do with and which one would not know where to place with due honor, if one owned it. One is content to know that they are in some temple not profaned by cold analysis, a little far from the eye, and one loves them so much the more. One says: I will go again to the country where they are. I shall see again and I shall love always that which has made me love and understand them. The contact of my personality will not have changed them, it will not be myself that I shall love in them.

And it is thus, truly, that the ideal which one does not dream of grasping, fixes itself in one because it remains ITSELF. That is all the secret of the beautiful, of the only truth, of love, friendship, of art, of enthusiasm, and of faith. Consider it, you will see.

That solitude in which you live would be delicious to me in fine weather. In winter I find it stoical, and am forced to recall to myself that you have not the moral need of locomotion AS A HABIT. I used to think that was another expenditure of strength during this season of being shut in; – well, it is very fine, but it must not continue indefinitely; if the novel has to last longer, you must interrupt it, or vary it with distractions. Really, my dear friend, think of the life of the body, which gets upset and nervous when you subdue it too much. When I was ill in Paris, I saw a physician, very mad, but very intelligent, who said very true

things on that subject. He said that I SPIRITUALIZED myself in a disquieting manner, and when I told him, exactly, a propos of you, that one could abstract oneself from everything except work, and have more rather than less strength, he answered that the danger was as great in accumulating as in losing, and a propos of this, many excellent things which I wish I could repeat to you.

Besides, you know them, but you never pay any attention to them. Then this work which you abuse so in words, is a passion, and a great one! Now, I shall tell you what you tell me. For our sake and for the sake of your old troubadour, do SPARE yourself a little.

Consuelo, La Comtesse de Rudolstadt, what are they? Are they mine? I don't recall a single word in them. You are reading that, you? Are you really amused? Then I shall read them one of these days and I shall love myself if you love me.

What is being hysterical? I have perhaps been that also, I am perhaps; but I don't know anything about it, never having profoundly studied the thing, and having heard of it without having studied it. Isn't it an uneasiness, an anguish caused by the desire of an impossible SOMETHING OR OTHER? In that case, we are all attacked by it, by this strange illness, when we have imagination; and why should such a malady have a sex?

And still further, there is this for those strong in anatomy: THERE IS ONLY ONE SEX. A man and a woman are so entirely the same thing, that one hardly understands the mass of distinctions and of subtle reasons with which society is nourished

concerning this subject. I have observed the infancy and the development of my son and my daughter. My son was myself, therefore much more woman, than my daughter, who was an imperfect man.

I embrace you. Maurice and Lina who have tasted your cheese, send you their regards, and Mademoiselle Aurore cries to you, WAIT, WAIT, WAIT! That is all that she knows how to say while laughing like a crazy person; for, at heart she is serious, attentive, clever with her hands as a monkey and amusing herself better with games she invents, than with those one suggests to her. I think that she will have a mind of her own.

If I do not get cured here, I shall go to Cannes, where some friends are urging me to come. But I can not yet mention it to my children. When I am with them it is not easy to move. There is passion and jealousy. And all my life has been like that, never my own! Pity yourself then, you who belong to yourself!

XLV. TO GEORGE SAND

Wednesday evening

I have followed your counsel, dear master, I have EXERCISED!!! Am I not splendid; eh?

Sunday night, at eleven o'clock, there was such lovely moonlight along the river and on the snow that I was taken with an itch for movement, and I walked for two hours and a half imagining all sorts of things, pretending that I was travelling in Russia or in Norway. When the tide came in and cracked the cakes of ice in the Seine and the thin ice which covered the

stream, it was, without any exaggeration, superb. Then I thought of you and I missed you.

I don't like to eat alone. I have to associate the idea with someone with the things that please me. But this someone is rare. I too wonder why I love you. Is it because you are a great man or a charming being? I don't know. What is certain is that I experience a PARTICULAR sentiment for you and I cannot define it.

And a propos of this, do you think (you who are a master of psychology), that one can love two people in the same way and that one can experience two identical sensations about them? I don't think so, since our individuality changes at every moment of its existence.

You write me lovely things about "disinterested affection." That is true, so is the opposite! We make God always in our own image. At the bottom of all our loves and all our admirations we find ourselves again: ourselves or something approaching us. What is the difference if the OURSELVES is good!

My moi bores me for the moment. How this fool weighs on my shoulders at times! He writes too slowly and is not bluffing at all when he complains of his work. What a task! and what a devil of an idea to have sought such a subject! You should give me a recipe for going faster: and you complain of seeking a fortune! You! I have received a little note from Saint-Beuve which reassures about his health, but it is sad. He seemed to me depressed at not being able to haunt the dells of Cyprus. He is within the truth, or at least within his own truth, which amounts to the same thing.

I shall be like him perhaps, when I am his age. However, I think not. Not having had the same youth, my old age will be different.

That reminds me that I once dreamed a book on Saint Perrine. Champfleury treated that subject badly. For I don't see that he is comic: I should have made him atrocious and lamentable. I think that the heart does not grow old; there are even people whose hearts grow bigger with age. I was much drier and more bitter twenty years ago than now. I am feminized and softened by wear, as others get harder, and that makes me INDIGNANT. I feel that I am becoming a COW, it takes nothing to move me; everything troubles and agitates me, everything is to me as the north wind is to the reed.

A word from you, which I remembered, has made me reread now the Fair Maid of Perth. It is a good story, whatever one says about it. That fellow decidedly had an imagination.

Well, adieu. Think of me. I send you my best love.

XLVI. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, at Croisset

Nohant, 1867

Bah! zut! troulala! Well! well! I am not sick any more, or at least I am only half sick. The air of the country restores me, or patience, or THE OTHER person, the one who wants to work again and to produce. What is my illness? Nothing. Everything is all right, but I have something that they call anemia, an effect without a tangible cause, a breakdown which has been threatening for several years, and which became noticeable at Palaiseau, after my return from Croisset. An emaciation that is

too rapid to be within reason, a pulse too slow, too feeble, an indolent or capricious stomach, with a sensation of stifling and a fondness for inertia. I was not able to keep a glass of water on my poor stomach for several days, and that brought me so low that I thought I was hardly curable; but, all is getting on, and I have even been working since yesterday.

You, dear, you go walking in the night, in the snow. That is something which for an exceptional excursion, is rather foolish and might indeed make you ill also. Good Heavens! It is not the moon, it is the sun that I advise; we are not owls, **OBVIOUSLY!** We have just had three spring days. I wager that you have not climbed up to my dear orchard which is so pretty and which I love so much. If it was only in remembrance of me, you ought to climb up every fine day at noon. Your work would flow more abundantly afterward and you would regain the time you lost and more too.

Then you are worrying about money? I don't know what that is, since I have not a sou in the world. I live by my day, work as does the proletarian; when I can no longer do my day's work, I shall be packed up for the other world, and then I shall have no more need of anything. But you must live. How can you live by your pen if you always let yourself be duped and shorn? It is not I who can teach you how to protect yourself But haven't you a friend who knows how to act for you? Alas, yes, the world is going to the devil in that respect; and I was talking of you, the other day, to a very dear friend, while I was showing him the

artist, a personage become so rare, and cursing the necessity of thinking of the material side of life. I send you the last page of his letter; you will see that you have in him a friend whom you did not suspect, and whose name will surprise you.

No, I shall not go to Cannes, in spite of a strong temptation. Imagine, I received a little box filled with flowers gathered outdoors, five or six days ago; for the package followed me to Paris and to Palaiseau. Those flowers are adorably fresh, they smell sweetly, they are as pretty as anything. – Ah! to go, go at once to the country of the sun. But I have no money, and besides I have no time. My illness has delayed me and put me off. Let us stay here. Am I not well? If I can't go to Paris next month, won't you come to see me here? Certainly, it is an eight hours' journey. You can not see this ancient nook. You owe me a week, or I shall believe that I love a big ingrate who does not pay me back.

Poor Sainte-Beuve! More unhappy than we, he who has never had any great disappointments and who has no longer any material worries. He bewails what is the least regrettable and the least serious in life understood as he understood it! And then very proud, having been a Jansenist, his heart has cooled in that direction. Perhaps the intelligence was developed, but that does not suffice to make us live, and does not teach us how to die. Barbès, who has expected for a long time that a stroke would carry him off, is gentle and smiling. It does not seem to him, and it does not seem to his friends, that death will separate him from us. He who quite goes away, is he who believes he ends and does

not extend a hand so that anyone can follow him or rejoin him.

And good-night, dear friend of my heart. They are ringing for the performance. Maurice regales us this evening with marionettes. They are very amusing, and the theatre is so pretty! A real artist's jewel. Why aren't you here? It is horrid not to live next door to those one loves.

XLVII. TO GEORGE SAND

Wednesday

I received yesterday your son's book. I shall start it when I have gotten rid of less amusing readings, probably. Meanwhile, don't thank him any the less, dear master.

First, let's talk of you; "arsenic." I am sure of it! You must drink iron, walk, and sleep, and go to the south, no matter what it costs, there! Otherwise the WOODEN WOMAN will break down. As for money, we shall find it; and as for the time, take it. You won't do anything that I advise, of course. Oh! well, you are wrong, and you hurt me.

No, I have not what you call worries about money; my revenues are very small, but they are sure. Only, as it is your friend's habit to anticipate them he finds himself short at times, and he grumbles "in the silence of his closet," but not elsewhere. Unless I have extraordinary reverses, I shall have enough to feed me and warm me until the end of my days. My heirs are or will be rich (for it is I who am the poor one of the family). Then, zut!

As for gaining money by my pen, that is an aspiration that I have never had, recognizing that I was radically incapable of it.

I have to live as a small retired countryman, which is not very amusing. But so many others who are worth more than I am not having the land, it would be unfair for me to complain. Accusing Providence is, moreover a mania so common, that one ought to refrain from it through simple good taste.

Another word about money and one that shall be quite between ourselves. I can, without being inconvenienced at all, as soon as I am in Paris, that is to say from the 20th to the 23rd of the present month, lend you a thousand francs, if you need them in order to go to Cannes. I make you this proposition bluntly, as I would to Bouilhet, or any other intimate friend. Come, don't stand on ceremony!

Between people in society, that would not be correct, I know that, but between troubadours many things are allowable.

You are very kind with your invitation to go to Nohant. I shall go, for I want very much to see your house. I am annoyed not to know it when I think of you. But I shall have to put off that pleasure till next summer. Now I have to stay some time in Paris. Three months are not too long for all I want to do there.

I send you back the page from the letter of your friend Barbes, whose real biography I know very imperfectly. All I know of him is that he is honest and heroic. Give him a hand-shake for me, to thank him for his sympathy. Is he, **BETWEEN OURSELVES**, as intelligent as he is good?

I feel the importance now, of getting men of that class to be rather frank with me. For I am going to start studying the

Revolution of '48. You have promised me to hunt in your library at Nohant for (1) an article of yours on faience; (2) a novel by father X – , a Jesuit, on the Holy Virgin.

But what sternness for the father Beuve who is neither Jesuit nor virgin! He regrets, you say, "what is the least regrettable, understood as he understood it." Why so? Everything depends upon the intensity that one puts on the thing.

Men always find that the most serious thing of their existence is enjoyment.

Woman for us all is the highest point of the infinite. That is not noble, but that is the real depth of the male. They exaggerate that unmercifully, God be thanked, for literature and for individual happiness also.

Oh! I have missed you so much. The tides are superb, the wind groans, the river foams and overflows. It blows from the ocean, which benefits one.

XLVIII. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, at Paris

Nohant, 8 February, 1867

No, I am not Catholic, but I reject monstrosities. I say that the hideous old man who buys young girls does not make love and that there is in it neither death nor birth, nor infinity, nor male nor female. It is a thing against nature; for it is not desire that drives the young girl into the arms of the ugly old man, and where there is not liberty nor reciprocity there is an attack against holy nature. Therefore that which he regrets is not regrettable, unless he thinks that his little cocottes will regret his person, and I ask

you if they will regret anything else than their dirty wages? That was the gangrene in this great and admirable mind, so lucid and so wise on all other subjects. One pardons everything in those one loves, when one is obliged to defend them from their enemies. But what we say between ourselves is buried, and I can tell you that vice has quite spoiled my old friend.

We must believe that we love one another a great deal, dear comrade, for we both had the same thought at the same time. You offer me a thousand francs with which to go to Cannes; you who are as hard up as I am, and, when you wrote to me that you WERE BOTHERED about money matters, I opened my letter again, to offer you half of what I have, which still amounts to about two thousand francs; it is my reserve. And then I did not dare. Why? It is quite stupid; you were better than I, you came straight to the point. Well, I thank you for that kind thought and I do not accept. But I would accept, be sure of it, if I did not have other resources. Only I tell you that if anyone ought to lend to me, it is Buloz who has bought chateaux and lands with my novels. He would not refuse me, I know. He even offers it to me. I shall take from him then, if I have to. But I am not in a condition to leave, I have had a relapse these last few days. I slept thirty-six hours together, exhausted. Now I am on my feet again, but weak. I confess to you that I have not the energy TO WISH TO LIVE. I don't care about it; moving from where I am comfortable, to seek new fatigues, working like a dog to renew a dog's life, it is a little stupid, I think, when it would be so sweet to pass away like

that, still loving, still loved, at strife with no one, not discontent with oneself and dreaming of the wonders of other worlds-this assumes that the imagination is still fresh. But I don't know why I talk to you of things considered sad, I have too much the habit of looking at them pleasantly. I forget that they appear afflicting to those who seem in the fulness of life. Don't let's talk about them any longer and let spring do the work, spring which perhaps will breathe into me the desire to take up my work again. I shall be as docile to the interior voice that tells me to walk as to that telling me to sit down.

It is not I who promised you a novel on the Holy Virgin. At least I don't think so. I can not find my article on faience. Do look and see if it was printed at the end of one of my volumes to complete the last sheet. It was entitled Giovanni Freppa ou les Maioliques.

Oh! what luck! While writing to you it has come back to me that there is a corner where I have not looked. I hasten there, I find it! I find something better than my article, and I send you three works which will make you as learned as I am. That of Passeri is charming.

Barbes has intelligence, certainly! but he is a sugar loaf. Brain on a lofty scale, head of an Indian, with gentle instincts, almost impossible to find; all for metaphysical thought which becomes an instinct and a passion that dominates everything. Add to that a character that one can only compare to Garibaldi. A creature of incredible sanctity and perfection. Immense worth without

immediate application in France. The setting of another age or another country is what this hero needs. And now good-night, – O God, what a CALF I am! I leave you the title of COW, which you give yourself in your days of weariness. Never mind, tell me when you are to be in Paris. It is probable that I shall have to go there for a few days for one thing or another. We must embrace each other and then you shall come to Nohant this summer. It is agreed, it must be!

My affectionate regards to your mother and to your lovely niece.

Please acknowledge the receipt of the three pamphlets; they would be a loss.

XLIX. TO GEORGE SAND

Dear master,

You really ought to go to see the sun somewhere; it is foolish to be always suffering; do travel; rest; resignation is the worst of the virtues.

I have need of it in order to endure all the stupidities that I hear! You can not imagine to what a degree they have reached. France which has been sometimes taken with St. Vitus dance (as under Charles VI), seems to me now to have a paralysis of the brain. They are mad with fear. Fear of the Prussians, fear of the strikes, fear of the Exposition which does not go well, fear of everything. We have to go back to 1849 to find such a degree of imbecility.

There was at the last Magny such inane conversation that I swore to myself never to put foot inside the place again. The only subjects under discussion all the time were Bismarck and the Luxembourg. I was stuffed with it! For the rest I don't find it easy to live. Far from becoming blunted my sensibilities are sharper; a lot of insignificant things make me suffer. Pardon this weakness, you who are so strong and tolerant.

The novel does not go at all well. I am deep in reading the newspapers of '48. I have had to make several (and have not yet finished) journeys to Sevres, to Creil, etc.

Father Sainte-Beuve is preparing a discourse on free thought

which he will read at the Senate a propos of the press law. He has been very shrewd, you know.

You tell your son Maurice that I love him very much, first because he is your son and secundo because he is he. I find him good, clever, cultivated, not a poseur, in short charming, and "with talent."

L. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Nohant, 4 March, 1867

Dear good friend, the friend of my heart, the old troubadour is as well as ten thousand men – who are well, and he is gay as a finch, because the sun shines again and copy is progressing.

He will probably go to Paris soon for the play by his son Dumas, let us try to be there together.

Maurice is very proud to be declared COCK by an eagle. At this moment he is having a spree with veal and wine in honor of his firemen.

The AMERICAN [Footnote: Henry Harrisse.] in question is charming. He has, literally speaking, a passion for you, and he writes me that after seeing you he loves you more, that does not surprise me.

Poor Bouilhet! Give him this little note enclosed here. I share his sorrow, I knew her.

Are you amused in Paris? Are you as sedentary there as at Croisset?

In that case I shall hardly see you unless I go to see you.

Tell me the hours when you do not receive the fair sex, and

when sexagenarian troubadours do not incommode you.

Cadio is entirely redone and rewritten up to the part I read to you, it is less offensive.

I am not doing Montreveche. I will tell you about that. It is quite a story. I love you and I embrace you with all my heart.

Your old George Sand

Did you receive my pamphlets on the faience? You have not acknowledged them. They were sent to Croisset the day after I got your last letter.

LI. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT 14 March, 1867

Your old troubadour is again prostrate. Every moment his guitar threatens to be broken. And then he sleeps forty-eight hours and is cured – but feeble, and he can not be in Paris on the 16th as he had intended. Maurice went alone a little while ago, I shall go to join him in five or six days.

Little Aurore consoles me for this mischance. She twitters like a bird along with the birds who are twittering already as in full spring time.

The anemone Sylvia which I brought from the woods into the garden and which I had a great deal of trouble in acclimating is finally growing thousands of white and pink stars among the blue periwinkle. It is warm and damp. One can not break one's guitar in weather like this. Good-bye, dear good friend.

G. Sand

LII. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Friday, 22 March, 1867

Your old troubadour is here, not so badly off. He will go to dine on Monday at Magny's, we shall agree on a day for both of us to dine with Maurice. He is at home at five o'clock but not before Monday.

He is running around!

He embraces you.

LIII. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT 1867 (?)

Then Wednesday, if you wish, my dear old fellow. Whom do you want to have with us? Certainly, the dear Beuve if that is possible, and no one if you like.

We embrace you.

G. S. Maurice Saturday evening.

LIV. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

Nohant, 11 April, 1867

Here I am back again in my nest, and almost cured from a bad fever which attacked me in Paris, the day before my departure.

Really your old troubadour has had ridiculous health for six months. March and April have been such stupid months for him. It makes no difference, however, for he is recovering again, and is seeing once more the trees and the grass grow, it is always the same thing and that is why it is beautiful and good. Maurice has been touched by the friendship that you have shown him; you have seduced and ravished him, and he is not demonstrative.

He and his wife, – who is not at all an ordinary woman, – desire absolutely that you come to our house this year, I am charged to tell you so very seriously and persistently if need be

And is that hateful grip gone? Maurice wanted to go to get news of you; but on seeing me so prostrated by the fever, he thought of nothing except packing me up and bringing me here like a parcel. I did nothing except sleep from Paris to Nohant and I was revived on receiving the kisses of Aurore who knows now how to give great kisses, laughing wildly all the while; she finds that very funny.

And the novel? Does it go on its way the same in Paris as in Croisset? It seems to me that everywhere you lead the same hermitlike existence. When you have the time to think of friends, remember your old comrade and send him two lines to tell him that you are well and that you don't forget him.

LV. TO GEORGE SAND

I am worried at not having news from you, dear master. What has become of you? When shall I see you?

My trip to Nohant has fallen through. The reason is this: my mother had a little stroke a week ago. There is nothing left of it, but it might come on again. She is anxious for me, and I am going to hurry back to Croisset. If she is doing well towards the month of August, and I am not worried, it is not necessary to tell you that I shall rush headlong towards your home.

As regards news, Sainte-Beuve seems to me very ill, and Bouilhet has just been appointed librarian at Rouen.

Since the rumours of war have quieted down, people seem to me a little less foolish. My nausea caused by the public cowardice is decreasing.

I went twice to the Exposition; it is amazing. There are splendid and extraordinary things there. But man is made to swallow the infinite. One would have to know all sciences and all arts in order to be interested in everything that one sees on the Champ de Mars. Never mind; someone who had three entire months to himself, and went every morning to take notes, would save himself in consequence much reading and many journeys.

One feels oneself there very far from Paris, in a new and ugly world, an enormous world which is perhaps the world of the future.

The first time that I lunched there, I thought all the time of America, and I wanted to speak like a negro.

LVI. TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT, at Croisset

Nohant, 9 May, 1867

Dear friend of my heart,

I am well, I am at work, I am finishing Cadix. It is warm, I am alive, I am calm and sad, I hardly know why. In this existence so even, so tranquil, and so gentle as I have here, I am in an element that weakens me morally while strengthening me physically; and I fall into melancholies of honey and roses which are none the less melancholy. It seems to me that all those I love forget me, and that it is justice, because I live a selfish life having nothing to do for any one of them.

I have lived with tremendous attachments which overwhelmed me, which exceeded my strength and which I often used to curse. And it happens that having nothing more to carry them on with, I am bored by being well. If the human race went on very well or very ill, one would reattach oneself to a general interest, would live with an idea, wise or foolish. But you see where we are now, you who storm so fiercely against cowards. That disappears, you say? But only to recommence! What kind of a society is it that becomes paralyzed in the midst of its expansions, because tomorrow can bring a storm? The thought of danger has never produced such demoralizations. Have we declined to such an extent that it is necessary to beg us to eat, telling us at the same time that nothing will happen to disturb our digestion? Yes, it

is silly, it is shameful. Is it the result of prosperity, and does civilization involve this sickly and cowardly selfishness?

My optimism has had a rude jolt of late. I worked up a joy, a courage at the idea of seeing you here. It was like a cure that I carefully contrived, but you are worried about your dear, old mother, and certainly I can not protest.

Well, if, before your departure from Paris, I can finish Cadio, to which I am bound under pain of having nothing wherewith to pay for my tobacco and my shoes, I shall go with Maurice to embrace you. If not, I shall hope for you about the middle of the summer. My children, quite unhappy by this delay, beg to hope for you also, and we hope it so much the more because it would be a good sign for the dear mother.

Maurice has plunged again into Natural History; he wants to perfect himself in the MICROS; I learn on the rebound. When I shall have fixed in my head the name and the appearance of two or three thousand imperceptible varieties, I shall be well advanced, don't you think so? Well, these studies are veritable OCTOPUSES, which entwine about you and which open to you I don't know what infinity. You ask if it is the destiny of man to DRINK THE INFINITE; my heavens, yes, don't doubt it, it is his destiny, since it is his dream and his passion.

Inventing is absorbing also; but what fatigue afterwards! How empty and worn out intellectually one feels, when one has scribbled for weeks and months about that animal with two legs which has the only right to be represented in novels! I see

Maurice quite refreshed and rejuvenated when he returns from his beasts and his pebbles, and if I aspire to come out from my misery, it is to bury myself also in studies, which in the speech of the Philistines, are not of any use. Still it is worth more than to say mass and to ring the bell for the adoration of the Creator.

Is it true what you tell me of G – ? Is it possible? I can not believe it. Is there in the atmosphere which the earth engenders nowadays, a gas, laughing or otherwise, which suddenly seizes the brain, and carries it on to commit extravagances, as there was under the first revolution a maddening fluid which inspired one to commit cruelties? We have fallen from the Hell of Dante into that of Scarron.

Of what are you thinking, good head and good heart, in the midst of this bacchanal? You are wrathful, oh very well, I like that better than if you were laughing at it; but when you are calmer and when you reflect?

Must one find some fashion of accepting the honor, the duty, and the fatigue of living? As for me, I revert to the idea of an everlasting journey through worlds more amusing, but it would be necessary to go there quickly and change continually. The life that one fears so much to lose is always too long for those who understand quickly what they see. Everything repeats itself and goes over and over again in it.

I assure you that there is only one pleasure: learning what one does not know, and one happiness: loving the exceptions. Therefore I love you and I embrace you tenderly.

Your old troubadour G. Sand

I am anxious about Sainte-Beuve. What a loss that would be!

I am content if Bouilhet is content. Is it really a good position?

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