

JOHN ABBOTT

MADAME ROLAND,
MAKERS OF HISTORY

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John S. C. Abbott

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PREFACE

The history of Madame Roland embraces the most interesting events of the French Revolution, that most instructive tragedy which time has yet enacted. There is, perhaps, contained in the memoirs of no other woman so much to invigorate the mind with the desire for high intellectual culture, and so much to animate the spirit heroically to meet all the ills of this eventful life. Notwithstanding her experience of the heaviest temporal calamities, she found, in the opulence of her own intellectual treasures, an unfailing resource. These inward joys peopled her solitude with society, and dispelled even from the dungeon its gloom. I know not where to look for a career more full of suggestive thought.

Chapter I Childhood

1754-1767

Characters developed by the French Revolution

Madame Roland

Many characters of unusual grandeur were developed by the French Revolution. Among them all, there are few more illustrious, or more worthy of notice, than that of Madame Roland. The eventful story of her life contains much to inspire the mind with admiration and with enthusiasm, and to stimulate one to live worthily of those capabilities with which every human heart is endowed. No person can read the record of her lofty spirit and of her heroic acts without a higher appreciation of woman's power, and of the mighty influence one may wield, who combines the charms of a noble and highly-cultivated mind with the fascinations of female delicacy and loveliness. To understand the secret of the almost miraculous influence she exerted, it is necessary to trace her career, with some degree of minuteness, from the cradle to the hour of her sublime and heroic death.

Gratien Philpion

His repinings at his lot

Views of Philpion

In the year 1754, there was living, in an obscure workshop in Paris, on the crowded Quai des Orfevres, an engraver by the name of Gratien Philpion. He had married a very beautiful woman, whose placid temperament and cheerful content contrasted strikingly with the restlessness and ceaseless repinings of her husband. The comfortable yet humble apartments of the engraver were over the shop where he plied his daily toil. He was much dissatisfied with his lowly condition in life, and that his family, in the enjoyment of frugal competence alone, were debarred from those luxuries which were so profusely showered upon others. Bitterly and unceasingly he murmured that his lot had been cast in the ranks of obscurity and of unsparing labor, while others, by a more fortunate, although no better merited destiny, were born to ease and affluence, and honor and luxury. This thought of the unjust inequality in man's condition, which soon broke forth with all the volcanic energy of the French Revolution, already began to ferment in the bosoms of the laboring classes, and no one pondered these wide diversities with a more restless spirit, or murmured more loudly and more incessantly than Philpion. When the day's toil was ended, he loved to gather around him associates whose feelings harmonized with his own, and to descant upon their own grievous oppression and upon the arrogance of aristocratic greatness. With an eloquence which often deeply moved his sympathizing auditory,

and fanned to greater intensity the fires which were consuming his own heart, he contrasted their doom of sleepless labor and of comparative penury with the brilliance of the courtly throng, living in idle luxury, and squandering millions in the amusements at Versailles, and sweeping in charioted splendor through the Champs Elysée.

His hostility to the Church

Origin of the French Revolution

Phlippon was a philosopher, not a Christian. Submission was a virtue he had never learned, and never wished to learn. Christianity, as he saw it developed before him only in the powerful enginery of the Roman Catholic Church, was, in his view, but a formidable barrier against the liberty and the elevation of the people – a bulwark, bristling with superstition and bayonets, behind which nobles and kings were securely intrenched. He consequently became as hostile to the doctrines of the Church as he was to the institutions of the state. The monarch was, in his eye, a tyrant, and God a delusion. The enfranchisement of the people, in his judgment, required the overthrow of both the earthly and the celestial monarch. In these ideas, agitating the heart of Phlippon, behold the origin of the French Revolution. They were diffused in pamphlets and daily papers in theaters and *cafés*. They were urged by workmen in their shops, by students in their closets. They became the inspiring spirit of science in encyclopedias and reviews, and formed the chorus in all the songs of revelry and libertinism. These sentiments spread from heart to heart, through Paris, through the provinces, till France rose like a demon in its wrath, and the very globe trembled beneath its gigantic and indignant tread.

Character of Madame Phlippon

Madame Phlippon was just the reverse of her husband. She was a woman in whom faith, and trust, and submission predominated. She surrendered her will, without questioning, to all the teachings of the Church of Rome. She was placid, contented, and cheerful, and, though uninquiring in her devotion, undoubtedly sincere in her piety. In every event of life she recognized the overruling hand of Providence, and feeling that the comparatively humble lot assigned her was in accordance with the will of God, she indulged in no repinings, and envied not the more brilliant destiny of lords and ladies. An industrious housewife, she hummed the hymns of contentment and peace from morning till evening. In the cheerful performance of her daily toil, she was ever pouring the balm of her peaceful spirit upon the restless heart of her spouse. Phlippon loved his wife, and often felt the superiority of her Christian temperament.

Birth of Jane Maria

Adored by her parents

Discontent of Phlippon

Of eight children born to these parents, one only, Jeanne Manon, or *Jane Mary*, survived the hour of birth. Her father first received her to his arms in 1754, and she became the object of his

painful and most passionate adoration. Her mother pressed the coveted treasure to her bosom with maternal love, more calm, and deep, and enduring. And now Jane became the central star in this domestic system. Both parents lived in her and for her. She was their earthly all. The mother wished to train her for the Church and for heaven, that she might become an angel and dwell by the throne of God. These bright hopes gilded a prayerful mother's hours of toil and care. The father bitterly repined. Why should his bright and beautiful child – who even in these her infantile years was giving indication of the most brilliant intellect – why should she be doomed to a life of obscurity and toil, while the garden of the Tuileries and the Elysian Fields were thronged with children, neither so beautiful nor so intelligent, who were reveling in boundless wealth, and living in a world of luxury and splendor which, to Phlippon's imagination, seemed more alluring than any idea he could form of heaven? These thoughts were a consuming fire in the bosom of the ambitious father. They burned with inextinguishable flame.

His complainings to his child

Early traits of character

Love of books

The fond parent made the sprightly and fascinating child his daily companion. He led her by the hand, and confided to her infantile spirit all his thoughts, his illusions, his day-dreams. To her listening ear he told the story of the arrogance of nobles, of the pride of kings, and of the oppression by which he deemed himself unjustly doomed to a life of penury and toil. The light-hearted child was often weary of these complainings, and turned for relief to the placidity and cheerfulness of her mother's mind. Here she found repose – a soothing, calm, and holy submission. Still the gloom of her father's spirit cast a pensive shade over her own feelings, and infused a tone of melancholy and an air of unnatural reflection into her character. By nature, Jane was endowed with a soul of unusual delicacy. From early childhood, all that is beautiful or sublime in nature, in literature, in character, had charms to rivet her entranced attention. She loved to sit alone at her chamber window in the evening of a summer's day, to gaze upon the gorgeous hues of sunset. As her imagination roved through those portals of a brighter world, which seemed thus, through far-reaching vistas of glory, to be opened to her, she peopled the sun-lit expanse with the creations of her own fancy, and often wept in uncontrollable emotion through the influence of these gathering thoughts. Books of impassioned poetry, and descriptions of heroic character and achievements, were her especial delight. Plutarch's Lives, that book which, more than any other, appears to be the incentive of early genius, was hid beneath her pillow, and read and re-read with tireless avidity. Those illustrious heroes of antiquity became the companions of her solitude and of her hourly thoughts. She adored them and loved them as her own most intimate personal friends. Her character became insensibly molded to their forms, and she was inspired with restless enthusiasm to imitate their deeds. When but twelve years of age, her father found her, one day, weeping that she was not born a Roman maiden. Little did she then imagine that, by talent, by suffering, and by heroism, she was to display a character the history of which would eclipse the proudest narratives in Greek or Roman story.

Jane's thirst for reading

Her love of flowers

Jane's personal appearance

Jane appears never to have known the frivolity and thoughtlessness of childhood. Before she had entered the fourth year of her age she knew how to read. From that time her thirst for reading was so great, that her parents found no little difficulty in furnishing her with a sufficient supply. She not only read with eagerness every book which met her eye, but pursued this uninterrupted miscellaneous reading to singular advantage, treasuring up all important facts in her retentive memory. So entirely absorbed was she in her books, that the only successful mode of withdrawing her from them was by offering her flowers, of which she was passionately fond. Books and flowers continued, through all the vicissitudes of her life, even till the hour of her death, to afford her the most exquisite pleasure. She had no playmates, and thought no more of play than did her father and mother, who were her only and her constant companions. From infancy she was accustomed to the thoughts and the emotions of mature minds. In personal appearance she was, in earliest childhood and through life, peculiarly interesting rather than beautiful. As mature years perfected her features and her form, there was in the contour of her graceful figure, and her intellectual countenance, that air of thoughtfulness, of pensiveness, of glowing tenderness and delicacy, which gave her a power of fascination over all hearts. She sought not this power; she thought not of it; but an almost resistless attraction and persuasion accompanied all her words and actions.

Thirst for knowledge

Intellectual gifts

It was, perhaps, the absence of playmates, and the habitual converse with mature minds, which, at so early an age, inspired Jane with that insatiate thirst for knowledge which she ever manifested. Books were her only resource in every unoccupied hour. From her walks with her father, and her domestic employments with her mother, she turned to her little library and to her chamber window, and lost herself in the limitless realms of thought. It is often imagined that character is the result of accident – that there is a native and inherent tendency, which triumphs over circumstances, and works out its own results. Without denying that there may be different intellectual gifts with which the soul may be endowed as it comes from the hand of the Creator, it surely is not difficult to perceive that the peculiar training through which the childhood of Jane was conducted was calculated to form the peculiar character which she developed.

A walk on the Boulevards

Philippon's talk to his child

Youthful dreams

In a bright summer's afternoon she might be seen sauntering along the Boulevards, led by her father's hand, gazing upon that scene of gayety with which the eye is never wearied. A gilded coach, drawn by the most beautiful horses in the richest trappings, sweeps along the streets – a gorgeous vision. Servants in showy livery, and out-riders proudly mounted, invest the spectacle with a degree of grandeur, beneath which the imagination of a child sinks exhausted. Philippon takes his little daughter in his arms to show her the sight, and, as she gazes in infantile wonder and delight, the discontented father says, "Look at that lord, and lady, and child, lolling so voluptuously in their coach. They have no right there. Why must I and my child walk on this hot pavement, while they repose on velvet cushions and revel in all luxury? Oppressive laws compel me to pay a portion of my hard earnings to support them in their pride and indolence. But a time will come when the people will awake to the consciousness of their wrongs, and their tyrants will tremble before them." He continues his walk in moody silence, brooding over his sense of injustice. They return to their home. Jane wishes that her father kept a carriage, and liveried servants and out-riders. She thinks of politics, and of the tyranny of kings and nobles, and of the unjust inequalities of man. She retires to the solitude of her loved chamber window, and reads of Aristides the Just, of Themistocles with his Spartan virtues, of Brutus, and of the mother of the Gracchi. Greece and Rome rise before her in all their ancient renown. She despises the frivolity of Paris, the effeminacy of the moderns, and her youthful bosom throbs with the desire of being noble in spirit and of achieving great exploits. Thus, when other children of her age were playing with their dolls, she was dreaming of the prostration of nobles and of the overthrow of thrones – of liberty, and fraternity, and equality among mankind. Strange dreams for a child, but still more strange in their fulfillment.

Influence of Jane's parents over her

Education in convents

The infidelity of her father and the piety of her mother contended, like counter currents of the ocean, in her bosom. Her active intellect and love of freedom sympathized with the speculations of the so-called philosopher. Her amiable and affectionate disposition and her pensive meditations led her to seek repose in the sublime conceptions and in the soul-soothing consolations of the Christian. Her parents were deeply interested in her education, and were desirous of giving her every advantage for securing the highest attainments. The education of young ladies, at that time, in France, was conducted almost exclusively by nuns in convents. The idea of the silence and solitude of the cloister inspired the highly-imaginative girl with a blaze of enthusiasm. Fondly as she loved her home, she was impatient for the hour to arrive when, with heroic self-sacrifice, she could withdraw from the world and its pleasures, and devote her whole soul to devotion, to meditation, and to study. Her mother's spirit of religion was exerting a powerful influence over her, and one evening she fell at her feet,

and, bursting into tears, besought that she might be sent to a convent to prepare to receive her first Christian communion in a suitable frame of mind.

Jane sent to a convent

Parting with her mother

Madame Roland's account of her first night in the convent

The convent of the sisterhood of the Congregation in Paris was selected for Jane. In the review of her life which she subsequently wrote while immured in the dungeons of the Conciergerie, she says, in relation to this event, "While pressing my dear mother in my arms, at the moment of parting with her for the first time in my life, I thought my heart would have broken; but I was acting in obedience to the voice of God, and I passed the threshold of the cloister, tearfully offering up to him the greatest sacrifice I was capable of making. This was on the 7th of May, 1765, when I was eleven years and two months old. In the gloom of a prison, in the midst of political storms which ravage my country, and sweep away all that is dear to me, how shall I recall to my mind, and how describe the rapture and tranquillity I enjoyed at this period of my life? What lively colors can express the soft emotions of a young heart endued with tenderness and sensibility, greedy of happiness, beginning to be alive to the beauties of nature, and perceiving the Deity alone? The first night I spent in the convent was a night of agitation. I was no longer under the paternal roof. I was at a distance from that kind mother, who was doubtless thinking of me with affectionate emotion. A dim light diffused itself through the room in which I had been put to bed with four children of my own age. I stole softly from my couch, and drew near the window, the light of the moon enabling me to distinguish the garden, which it overlooked. The deepest silence prevailed around, and I listened to it, if I may use the expression, with a sort of respect. Lofty trees cast their gigantic shadows along the ground, and promised a secure asylum to peaceful meditation. I lifted up my eyes to the heavens; they were unclouded and serene. I imagined that I felt the presence of the Deity smiling upon my sacrifice, and already offering me a reward in the consolatory hope of a celestial abode. Tears of delight flowed down my cheeks. I repeated my vows with holy ecstasy, and went to bed again to taste the slumber of God's chosen children."

Jane's books of study

Her thirst for knowledge was insatiate, and with untiring assiduity she pursued her studies. Every hour of the day had its appropriate employment, and time flew upon its swiftest wings. Every book which fell in her way she eagerly perused, and treasured its knowledge or its literary beauties in her memory. Heraldry and books of romance, lives of the saints and fairy legends, biography, travels, history, political philosophy, poetry, and treatises upon morals, were all read and meditated upon by this young child. She had no taste for any childish amusements; and in the hours of recreation, when the mirthful girls around her were forgetting study and care in those games appropriate to their years, she would walk alone in the garden, admiring the flowers, and gazing upon the fleecy clouds in the sky. In all the beauties of nature her eye ever recognized the hand of God, and she ever took pleasure in those sublime thoughts of infinity and eternity which must engross every noble mind. Her teachers had but little to do. Whatever study she engaged in was pursued with such spontaneous zeal, that success had crowned her efforts before others had hardly made a beginning.

Her proficiency in music and drawing

In music and drawing she made great proficiency. She was even more fond of all that is beautiful and graceful in the accomplishments of a highly-cultivated mind, than in those more solid studies which she nevertheless pursued with so much energy and interest.

Scenes in the convent

The scenes which she witnessed in the convent were peculiarly calculated to produce an indelible impression upon a mind so imaginative. The chapel for prayer, with its somber twilight and its dimly-burning tapers; the dirges which the organ breathed upon the trembling ear; the imposing pageant of prayer and praise, with the blended costumes of monks and hooded nuns; the knell which tolled the requiem of a departed sister, as, in the gloom of night and by the light of torches, she was conveyed to her burial – all these concomitants of that system of pageantry, arranged so skillfully to impress the senses of the young and the imaginative, fanned to the highest elevation the flames of that poetic temperament she so eminently possessed.

Impressions made by them

Poetic enthusiasms

God thus became in Jane's mind a vision of poetic beauty. Religion was the inspiration of enthusiasm and of sentiment. The worship of the Deity was blended with all that was ennobling and beautiful. Moved by these glowing fancies, her susceptible spirit, in these tender years, turned away from atheism, from infidelity, from irreligion, as from that which was unrefined, revolting, vulgar. The consciousness of the presence of God, the adoration of his being, became a passion of her soul. This state of mind was poetry, not religion. It involved no sense of the spirituality of the Divine Law, no consciousness of unworthiness, no need of a Savior. It was an emotion sublime and beautiful, yet merely such an emotion as any one of susceptible temperament might feel when standing in the Vale of Chamouni at midnight, or when listening to the crash of thunder as the tempest wrecks the sky, or when one gazes entranced upon the fair face of nature in a mild and lovely morning of June, when no cloud appears in the blue canopy above us, and no breeze ruffles the leaves of the grove or the glassy surface of the lake, and the songs of birds and the perfume of flowers fill the air. Many mistake the highly poetic enthusiasm which such scenes excite for the spirit of piety.

Taking the veil

Taking the black veil

Effect upon Jane

While Jane was an inmate of the convent, a very interesting young lady, from some disappointment weary of the world, took the veil. When one enters a convent with the intention

of becoming a nun, she first takes the white veil, which is an expression of her intention, and thus enters the grade of a novice. During the period of her novitiate, which continues for several months, she is exposed to the severest discipline of vigils, and fastings, and solitude, and prayer, that she may distinctly understand the life of weariness and self-denial upon which she has entered. If, unintimidated by these hardships, she still persists in her determination, she then takes the black veil, and utters her solemn and irrevocable vows to bury herself in the gloom of the cloister, never again to emerge. From this step there is no return. The throbbing heart, which neither cowls nor veils can still, finds in the taper-lighted cell its living tomb, till it sleeps in death. No one with even an ordinary share of sensibility can witness a ceremony involving such consequences without the deepest emotion. The scene produced an effect upon the spirit of Jane which was never effaced. The wreath of flowers which crowned the beautiful victim; the veil enveloping her person; the solemn and dirge-like chant, the requiem of her burial to all the pleasures of sense and time; the pall which overspread her, emblematic of her consignment to a living tomb, all so deeply affected the impassioned child, that, burying her face in her hands, she wept with uncontrollable emotion.

Lofty aspirations

Remark of Napoleon

The thought of the magnitude of the sacrifice which the young novice was making appealed irresistibly to her admiration of the morally sublime. There was in that relinquishment of all the joys of earth a self-surrender to a passionless life of mortification, and penance, and prayer, an apparent heroism, which reminded Jane of her much-admired Roman maidens and matrons. She aspired with most romantic ardor to do, herself, something great and noble. While her sound judgment could not but condemn this abandonment of life, she was inspired with the loftiest enthusiasm to enter, in some worthy way, upon a life of endurance, of sacrifice, and of martyrdom. She felt that she was born for the performance of some great deeds, and she looked down with contempt upon all the ordinary vocations of every-day life. These were the dreams of a romantic girl. They were not, however, the fleeting visions of a sickly and sentimental mind, but the deep, soul-moving aspirations of one of the strongest intellects over which imagination has ever swayed its scepter. One is reminded by these early developments of character of the remark of Napoleon, when some one said, in his presence, "It is nothing but imagination." "Nothing but imagination!" replied this sagacious observer; "*imagination rules the world!*"

Jane's contempt of ease and luxury

Her self-denial

These dim visions of greatness, these lofty aspirations, not for renown, but for the inward consciousness of intellectual elevation, of moral sublimity, of heroism, had no influence, as is ordinarily the case with day-dreams, to give Jane a distaste for life's energetic duties. They did not enervate her character, or convert her into a mere visionary; on the contrary, they but roused and invigorated her to alacrity in the discharge of every duty. They led her to despise ease and luxury, to rejoice in self-denial, and to cultivate, to the highest possible degree, all her faculties of body and of mind, that she might be prepared for any possible destiny. Wild as, at times, her imaginings might have been, her most vivid fancy never could have pictured a career so extraordinary as that to which

reality introduced her; and in all the annals of ancient story, she could find no record of sufferings and privations more severe than those which she was called upon to endure. And neither heroine nor hero of any age has shed greater luster upon human nature by the cheerful fortitude with which adversity has been braved.

Chapter II

Youth

Convent life

Its influence upon Jane

The influence of those intense emotions which were excited in the bosom of Jane by the scenes which she witnessed in her childhood in the nunnery were never effaced from her imaginative mind. Nothing can be conceived more strongly calculated to impress the feelings of a romantic girl, than the poetic attractions which are thrown around the Roman Catholic religion by nuns, and cloisters, and dimly-lighted chapels, and faintly-burning tapers, and matins, and vespers, and midnight dirges. Jane had just the spirit to be most deeply captivated by such enchantments. She reveled in those imaginings which clustered in the dim shades of the cloister, in an ecstasy of luxurious enjoyment. The ordinary motives which influence young girls of her age seem to have had no control over her. Her joys were most highly intellectual and spiritual, and her aspirations were far above the usual conceptions of childhood. She, for a time, became entirely fascinated by the novel scenes around her, and surrendered her whole soul to the dominion of the associations with which she was engrossed. In subsequent years, by the energies of a vigorous philosophy, she disenfranchised her intellect from these illusions, and, proceeding to another extreme, wandered in the midst of the cheerless mazes of unbelief; but her fancy retained the traces of these early impressions until the hour of her death. Christianity, even when most heavily encumbered with earthly corruption, is infinitely preferable to no religion at all. Even papacy has never swayed so bloody a scepter as infidelity.

Jane leaves the convent

Her attachment to one of the nuns

Jane remained in the convent one year, and then, with deep regret, left the nuns, to whom she had become extremely attached. With one of the sisters, who was allied to the nobility, she formed a strong friendship, which continued through life. For many years she kept up a constant correspondence with this friend, and to this correspondence she attributes, in a great degree, that facility in writing which contributed so much to her subsequent celebrity. This letter-writing is one of the best schools of composition, and the parent who is emulous of the improvement of his children in that respect, will do all in his power to encourage the constant use of the pen in these familiar epistles. Thus the most important study, the study of the power of expression, is converted into a pleasure, and is pursued with an avidity which will infallibly secure success. It is a sad mistake to frown upon such efforts as a waste of time.

Jane partakes of the Lord's Supper

Preparations for the solemnity

While in the convent, she, for the first time, partook of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Her spirit was most deeply impressed and overawed by the sacredness of the ceremony. During several weeks previous to her reception of this solemn ordinance, by solitude, self-examination, and prayer, she endeavored to prepare herself for that sacred engagement, which she deemed the pledge of her union to God, and of her eternal felicity. When the hour arrived, her feelings were so intensely excited that she wept convulsively, and she was entirely incapable of walking to the altar. She was borne in the arms of two of the nuns. This depth of emotion was entirely unaffected, and secured for her the peculiar reverence of the sacred sisters.

Jane's delight in meditation

That spirit of pensive reverie, so dangerous and yet so fascinating, to which she loved to surrender herself, was peculiarly in harmony with all the influences with which she was surrounded in the convent, and constituted the very soul of the piety of its inmates. She was encouraged by the commendations of all the sisters to deliver her mind up to the dominion of these day-dreams, with whose intoxicating power every heart is more or less familiar. She loved to retire to the solitude of the cloisters, when the twilight was deepening into darkness, and alone, with measured steps, to pace to and fro, listening to the monotonous echoes of her own footfall, which alone disturbed the solemn silence. At the tomb of a departed sister she would often linger, and, indulging in those melancholy meditations which had for her so many charms, long for her own departure to the bosom of her heavenly Father, where she might enjoy that perfect happiness for which, at times, her spirit glowed with such intense aspirations.

Departure from the convent

Jane goes to live with her grandmother

Character of the latter

At the close of the year Jane left the peaceful retreat where she had enjoyed so much, and where she had received so many impressions never to be effaced. Her parents, engrossed with care, were unable to pay that attention to their child which her expanding mind required, and she was sent to pass her thirteenth year with her paternal grandmother and her aunt Angelieu. Her grandmother was a dignified lady of much refinement of mind and gracefulness of demeanor, who laid great stress upon all the courtesies of life and the elegances of manners and address. Her aunt was gentle and warm-hearted, and her spirit was deeply imbued with that humble and docile piety, which has so often shone out with pure luster even through all the encumbrances of the Roman Catholic Church. With them she spent a year, in a seclusion from the world almost as entire as that which she found in the solitude of the convent. An occasional visit to her parents, and to her old friends the nuns,

was all that interrupted the quiet routine of daily duties. Books continued still her employment and her delight. Her habits of reverie continued unbroken. Her lofty dreams gained a daily increasing ascendancy over her character.

Jane's intellectual progress

She thus continued to dwell in the boundless regions of the intellect and the affections. Even the most commonplace duties of life were rendered attractive to her by investing them with a mysterious connection with her own limitless being. Absorbed in her own thoughts, ever communing with herself, with nature, with the Deity, as the object of her highest sentiment and aspirations, though she did not despise those of a more humble mental organization, she gave them not a thought. The evening twilight of every fine day still found her at her chamber window, admiring the glories of the setting sun, and feeding her impassioned spirit with those visions of future splendor and happiness which the scene appeared to reveal. She fancied she could almost see the wings of angels gleaming in the purple sunlight. Through those gorgeous avenues, where clouds were piled on golden clouds, she imagined, far away, the mansions of the blessed. These emotions glowing within her, gave themselves utterance in prayers earnest and ardent, while the tears of irrepressible feeling filled her eyes as she thought of that exalted Being, so worthy of her pure and intensest homage.

Her father's delight

Jane learns to engrave

The father of Jane was delighted with all these indications of a marked and elevated character, and did all in his power to stimulate her to greater zeal in her lofty studies and meditations. Jane became his idol, and the more her imaginative mind became imbued with the spirit of romantic aspirations, the better was he pleased. The ardor of her zeal enabled her to succeed in every thing which she undertook. Invincible industry and energy were united with these dreams. She was ambitious of knowing every thing; and when her father placed in her hands the *burin*, wishing to teach her to engrave, she immediately acquired such skill as to astonish both of her parents. And she afterward passed many pleasant hours in engraving, on highly-polished plates of brass, beautiful emblems of flowers as tokens of affection for her friends.

Her mother impatient for her return

The mother of Jane, with far better judgment, endeavored to call back her daughter from that unreal world in which she loved to dwell, and to interest her in the practical duties of life. She began to be impatient for her return home, that she might introduce her to those household employments, the knowledge of which is of such unspeakable importance to every lady. In this she was far from being unsuccessful; for while Jane continued to dream in accordance with the encouragement of her father, she also cordially recognized the good sense of her mother's counsels, and held herself ever in readiness to co-operate with her in all her plans.

The visit to Madame De Boismorel

Remarks of servants

Appearance of Madame De Boismorel

Her reception of the visitors

A little incident which took place at this time strikingly illustrates the reflective maturity which her character had already acquired. Before the French Revolution, the haughty demeanor of the nobility of France assumed such an aspect as an American, at the present day, can but feebly conceive. One morning, the grandmother of Jane, a woman of dignity and cultivated mind, took her to the house of Madame De Boismorel, a lady of noble rank, whose children she had partly educated. It was a great event, and Jane was dressed with the utmost care to visit the aristocratic mansion. The aspiring girl, with no disposition to come down to the level of those beneath her, and with still less willingness to do homage to those above her, was entirely unconscious of the mortifying condescension with which she was to be received. The porter at the door saluted Madame Phlippon with politeness, and all the servants whom she met in the hall addressed her with civility. She replied to each with courtesy and with dignity. The grandmother was proud of her grand-daughter, and the servants paid the young lady many compliments. The instinctive pride of Jane took instant alarm. She felt that *servants* had no right to presume to pay *her* compliments – that they were thus assuming that she was upon their level. Alas! for poor human nature. All love to ascend. Few are willing to favor equality by stepping down. A tall footman announced them at the door of the magnificent saloon. All the furnishing and arrangements of this aristocratic apartment were calculated to dazzle the eye and bewilder the mind of one unaccustomed to such splendor. Madame De Boismorel, dressed with the most ostentatious display of wealth, was seated upon an ottoman, in stately dignity, employing her fingers with fancy needle-work. Her face was thickly covered with rouge, and, as her guests were announced, she raised her eyes from her embroidery, and fixing a cold and unfeeling glance upon them, without rising to receive them, or even making the slightest inclination of her body, in a very patronizing and condescending tone said to the grandmother,

"Ah! *Miss* Phlippon, good morning to you!"

Jane, who was far from pleased with her reception in the hall, was exceedingly displeased with her reception in the saloon. The pride of the Roman maiden rose in her bosom, and indignantly she exclaimed to herself, "So my grandmother is called *Miss* in this house!"

"I am very glad to see you," continued Madame De Boismorel; "and who is this fine girl? your grand-daughter, I suppose? She will make a very pretty woman. Come here, my dear. Ah! I see she is a little bashful. How old is your grand-daughter, Miss Phlippon? Her complexion is rather brown, to be sure, but her skin is clear, and will grow fairer in a few years. She is quite a woman already."

Madame De Boismorel's volubility

Thus she rattled on for some time, waiting for no answers. At length, turning again to Jane, who had hardly ventured to raise her eyes from the floor, she said, "What a beautiful hand you have got. That hand must be a lucky one. Did you ever venture in a lottery my dear?"

Jane's dignified rejoinders

"Never, madam," replied Jane, promptly. "I am not fond of gaming."

"What an admirable voice!" exclaimed the lady. "So sweet and yet so full-toned! But how grave she is! Pray, my dear, are you not a little of a devotee?"

"I know my duty to God," replied Jane, "and I endeavor to fulfill it."

"That's a good girl," the noble lady rejoined. "You wish to take the veil, do you not?"

"I do not know what may be my destination, neither am I at present anxious to conjecture it."

"How very sententious!" Madame De Boismorel replied. "Your grand-daughter reads a great deal, does she not, Miss Phlippon?"

"Yes, madam, reading is her greatest delight."

"Ay, ay," rejoined the lady; "I see how it is. But have a care that she does not turn author. That would be a pity indeed."

Jane's indignation

During this conversation the cheeks of Jane were flushed with wounded pride, and her heart throbbed most violently. She felt indignant and degraded, and was exceedingly impatient to escape from the humiliating visit. Conscious that she was, in spirit, in no respect inferior to the maidens of Greece and Rome who had so engrossed her admiration, she as instinctively recoiled from the arrogance of the haughty occupant of the parlor as she had repelled the affected equality of the servants in the hall.

She visits Versailles

Jane's disgust at palace life

She resorts to the gardens

A short time after this she was taken to pass a week at the luxurious abodes of Maria Antoinette. Versailles was in itself a city of palaces and of courtiers, where all that could dazzle the eye in regal pomp and princely voluptuousness was concentrated. Most girls of her age would have been enchanted and bewildered by this display of royal grandeur. Jane was permitted to witness, and partially to share, all the pomp of luxuriously-spread tables, and presentations, and court balls, and illuminations, and the gilded equipages of ambassadors and princes. But this maiden, just emerging from the period of childhood and the seclusion of the cloister, undazzled by all this brilliance, looked sadly on the scene with the condemning eye of a philosopher. The servility of the courtiers excited her contempt. She contrasted the boundless profusion and extravagance which filled these palaces with the absence of comfort in the dwellings of the over-taxed poor, and pondered deeply the value of that regal despotism, which starved the millions to pander to the dissolute indulgence of the few. Her personal pride was also severely stung by perceiving that her own attractions, mental and physical, were entirely overlooked by the crowds which were bowing before the shrines of rank and power. She soon became weary of the painful spectacle. Disgusted with the frivolity of the living, she sought solace for her wounded feelings in companionship with the illustrious dead. She chose the gardens for her resort, and, lingering around the statues which embellished these scenes of almost

fairy enchantment, surrendered herself to the luxury of those oft-indulged dreams, which lured her thoughts away from the trivialities around her to heroic character and brilliant exploits.

"How do you enjoy your visit, my daughter?" inquired her mother.

Characteristic remark

"I shall be glad when it is ended," was the characteristic reply, "else, in a few more days, I shall so detest all the persons I see that I shall not know what to do with my hatred."

"Why, what harm have these persons done you, my child?"

"They make me feel injustice and look upon absurdity," replied this philosopher of thirteen.

Jane's meditations

Thus early did she commence her political meditations, and here were planted the germs of that enthusiasm which subsequently nerved her to such exertions for the disenthralment of the people, and the establishment of republican power upon the ruin of the throne of the Bourbons. She thought of the ancient republics, encircled by a halo of visionary glory, and of the heroes and heroines who had been the martyrs of liberty; or, to use her own energetic language, "I sighed at the recollection of Athens, where I could have enjoyed the fine arts without being annoyed at the sight of despotism. I was out of all patience at being a French-woman. Enchanted with the golden period of the Grecian republic, I passed over the storms by which it had been agitated. I forgot the exile of Aristides, the death of Socrates, and the condemnation of Phocion. I little thought that Heaven reserved me to be a witness of similar errors, to profess the same principles, and to participate in the glory of the same persecutions."

Jane returns home

Her manner of reading

Soon after Jane had entered her fourteenth year, she left her grandmother's and returned to her parental home. Her father, though far from opulence, was equally removed from poverty, and, without difficulty, provided his family with a frugal competence. Jane now pursued her studies and her limitless reading with unabated ardor. Her mind, demanding reality and truth as basis for thought, in the developments of character as revealed in biography, in the rise and fall of empires as portrayed in history, in the facts of science, and in the principles of mental and physical philosophy, found its congenial aliment. She accustomed herself to read with her pen in her hand, taking copious abstracts of facts and sentiments which particularly interested her. Not having a large library of her own, many of the books which she read were borrowed, and she carefully extracted from them and treasured in her commonplace book those passages which particularly interested her, that she might read them again and again. With these abstracts and extracts there were freely intermingled her own reflections, and thus all that she read was carefully stored up in her own mind and became a portion of her own intellectual being.

Jane devotes herself to domestic duties

She goes to market

Jane's aptitude for domestic duties

From the study to the kitchen

Domestic education

Jane's mother, conscious of the importance to her child of a knowledge of domestic duties, took her to the market to obtain meat and vegetables, and occasionally placed upon her the responsibility of most of the family purchases; and yet the unaffected, queenly dignity with which the imaginative girl yielded herself to these most useful yet prosaic avocations was such, that when she entered the market, the fruit-women hastened to serve her before the other customers. The first comers, instead of being offended by this neglect, stepped aside, struck by those indescribable indications of superiority which ever gave her such a resistless influence over other minds. It is quite remarkable that Jane, apparently, never turned with repugnance from these humble avocations of domestic life. It speaks most highly in behalf of the intelligence and sound judgment of her mother, that she was enabled thus successfully to allure her daughter from her proud imaginings and her realms of romance to those unattractive practical duties which our daily necessities demand. At one hour, this ardent and impassioned maiden might have been seen in her little chamber absorbed in studies of deepest research. The highest themes which can elevate or engross the mind of man claimed her profound and delighted reveries. The next hour she might be seen in the kitchen, under the guidance of her placid and pious mother, receiving from her judicious lips lessons upon frugality, and industry, and economy. The white apron was bound around her waist, and her hands, which, but a few moments before, were busy with the circles of the celestial globe, were now occupied in preparing vegetables for dinner. There was thus united in the character of Jane the appreciation of all that is beautiful, chivalric, and sublime in the world of fact and the world of imagination, and also domestic skill and practical common sense. She was thus prepared to fascinate by the graces and elegances of a refined and polished mind, and to create for herself, in the midst of all the vicissitudes of life, a region of loveliness in which her spirit could ever dwell; and, at the same time, she possessed that sagacity and tact, and those habits of usefulness, which prepared her to meet calmly all the changes of fortune, and over them all to triumph. With that self-appreciation, the expression of which, with her, was frankness rather than vanity, she subsequently writes, "This mixture of serious studies, agreeable relaxations, and domestic cares, was rendered pleasant by my mother's good management, and fitted me for every thing. It seemed to forebode the vicissitudes of future life, and enabled me to bear them. In every place I am at home. I can prepare my own dinner with as much address as Philopœmen cut wood; but no one seeing me thus engaged would think it an office in which I ought to be employed."

Dissolute lives of the Catholic clergy

New emotions

Jane was thus prepared by Providence for that career which she rendered so illustrious through her talents and her sufferings. At this early period there were struggling in her bosom those very emotions which soon after agitated every mind in France, and which overthrew in chaotic ruin both the altar and the throne. The dissolute lives of many of the Catholic clergy, and their indolence and luxury, began to alarm her faith. The unceasing denunciations of her father gave additional impulse to every such suggestion. She could not but see that the pride and power of the state were sustained by the superstitious terrors wielded by the Church. She could not be blind to the trickery by which money was wrested from tortured consciences, and from ignorance, imbecility, and dotage. She could not but admire her mother's placid piety, neither could she conceal from herself that her faith was feeling, her principles sentiments. Deeply as her own feelings had been impressed in the convent, and much as she loved the gentle sisters there, she sought in vain for a foundation for the gigantic fabric of spiritual dominion towering above her. She looked upon the gorgeous pomp of papal worship, with its gormandizing pastors and its starving flocks, with its pageants to excite the sense and to paralyze the mind, with its friars and monks loitering in sloth and uselessness, and often in the grossest dissipation, and her reason gradually began to condemn it as a gigantic superstition for the enthrallment of mankind. Still, the influence of Christian sentiments, like a guardian angel, ever hovered around her, and when her bewildered mind was groping amid the labyrinths of unbelief, her *heart* still clung to all that is pure in Christian morals, and to all that is consolatory in the hopes of immortality; and even when benighted in the most painful atheistic doubts, *conscience* became her deity; its voice she most reverently obeyed.

Insolence of the aristocracy

Jane's indignation

She turned from the Church to the state. She saw the sons and the daughters of aristocratic pride, glittering in gilded chariots, and surrounded by insolent menials, sweep by her, through the Elysian Fields, while she trod the dusty pathway. Her proud spirit revolted, more and more, at the apparent injustice. She had studied the organization of society. She was familiar with the modes of popular oppression. She understood the operation of that system of taxes, so ingeniously devised to sink the mass of the people in poverty and degradation, that princes and nobles might revel in voluptuous splendor. Indignation nerved her spirit as she reflected upon the usurpation thus ostentatiously displayed. The seclusion in which she lived encouraged deep musings upon these vast inequalities of life. Piety had not taught her submission. Philosophy had not yet taught her the impossibility of adjusting these allotments of our earthly state, so as to distribute the gifts of fortune in accordance with merit. Little, however, did the proud grandes imagine, as in courtly splendor they swept by the plebeian maiden, enveloping her in the dust of their chariots, that her voice would yet aid to upheave their castles from their foundations, and overwhelm the monarchy and the aristocracy of France in one common ruin.

New acquaintances

Jane's contempt for their ignorance and pride

A noble but illiterate lady

Deference paid to her

Habits of reflection

At this time circumstances brought her in contact with several ladies connected with noble families. The ignorance of these ladies, their pride, their arrogance, excited in Jane's mind deep contempt. She could not but feel her own immeasurable superiority over them, and yet she perceived with indignation that the accident of birth invested them with a factitious dignity, which enabled them to look down upon her with condescension. A lady of noble birth, who had lost fortune and friends through the fraud and dissipation of those connected with her, came to board for a short time in her father's family. This lady was forty years of age, insufferably proud of her pedigree, and in her manners stiff and repulsive. She was exceedingly illiterate and uninformed, being unable to write a line with correctness, and having no knowledge beyond that which may be picked up in the ball-room and the theater. There was nothing in her character to win esteem. She was trying, by a law-suit, to recover a portion of her lost fortune. Jane wrote petitions for her, and letters, and sometimes went with her to make interest with persons whose influence would be important. She perceived that, notwithstanding her deficiency in every personal quality to inspire esteem or love, she was treated, in consequence of her birth, with the most marked deference. Whenever she mentioned the names of her high-born ancestry – and those names were ever upon her lips – she was listened to with the greatest respect. Jane contrasted the reception which this illiterate descendant of nobility enjoyed with the reception which her grandmother encountered in the visit to Madame De Boismorel, and it appeared to her that the world was exceedingly unjust, and that the institutions of society were highly absurd. Thus was her mind training for activity in the arena of revolution. She was pondering deeply all the abuses of society. She had become enamored of the republican liberty of antiquity. She was ready to embrace with enthusiasm any hopes of change. All the games and amusements of girlhood appeared to her frivolous, as, day after day, her whole mental powers were engrossed by these profound contemplations, and by aspirations for the elevation of herself and of mankind.

Chapter III

Maidenhood

1770-1775

First emotions of love

A youthful artist

Maiden timidity

A soul so active, so imaginative, and so full of feeling as that of Jane, could not long slumber unconscious of the emotion of love. In the unaffected and touching narrative which she gives of her own character, in the Journal which she subsequently wrote in the gloom of a prison, she alludes to the first rising of that mysterious passion in her bosom. With that frankness which ever marked her character, she describes the strange fluttering of her heart, the embarrassment, the attraction, and the instinctive diffidence she experienced when in the presence of a young man who had, all unconsciously, interested her affections. It seems that there was a youthful painter named Taboral, of pale, and pensive, and intellectual countenance – an artist with soul-inspired enthusiasm beaming from his eye – who occasionally called upon her father. Jane had just been reading the *Heloise* of Rousseau, that gushing fountain of sentimentality. Her young heart took fire. His features mingled insensibly in her dreamings and her visions, and dwelt, a welcome guest, in her castles in the air. The diffident young man, with all the sensitiveness of genius, could not speak to the daughter, of whose accomplishments the father was so justly proud, without blushing like a girl. When Jane heard him in the shop, she always contrived to make some errand to go in. There was a pencil or something else to be sought for. But the moment she was in the presence of Taboral, instinctive embarrassment drove her away, and she retired more rapidly than she entered, and with a palpitating heart ran to hide herself in her little chamber.

Number of suitors

Jane as a letter writer

Her sentiments adopted by the French ministry

This emotion, however, was fleeting and transient, and soon forgotten. Indeed, highly imaginative as was Jane, her imagination was vigorous and intellectual, and her tastes led her far away from those enervating love-dreams in which a weaker mind would have indulged. A young lady so fascinating in mind and person could not but attract much attention. Many suitors began to appear,

one after another, but she manifested no interest in any of them. The customs of society in France were such at that time, that it was difficult for any one who sought the hand of Jane to obtain an introduction to her. Consequently, the expedient was usually adopted of writing first to her parents. These letters were always immediately shown to Jane. She judged of the character of the writer by the character of the epistles. Her father, knowing her intellectual superiority, looked to her as his secretary to reply to all these letters. She consequently wrote the answers, which her father carefully copied, and sent in his own name. She was often amused with the gravity with which she, as the father of herself, with parental prudence discussed her own interests. In subsequent years she wrote to kings and to cabinets in the name of her husband; and the sentiments which flowed from her pen, adopted by the ministry of France as their own, guided the councils of nations.

Her father, regarding commerce as the source of wealth, and wealth as the source of power and dignity, was very anxious that his daughter should accept some of the lucrative offers she was receiving from young men of the family acquaintance who were engaged in trade. But Jane had no such thought. Her proud spirit revolted from such a connection. From her sublimated position among the ancient heroes, and her ambitious aspirings to dwell in the loftiest regions of intellect, she could not think of allying her soul with those whose energies were expended in buying and selling; and she declared that she would have no husband but one with whom she could cherish congenial sympathies.

A rich meat merchant proposes for Jane's hand

At one time a rich meat merchant of the neighborhood solicited her hand. Her father, allured by his wealth, was very anxious that his daughter should accept the offer. In reply to his urgency Jane firmly replied,

Conversation between Jane and her father about matrimony

Views of Jane in regard to marriage

"I can not, dear father, descend from my noble imaginings. What I want in a husband is a *soul*, not a *fortune*. I will die single rather than prostitute my own mind in a union with a being with whom I have no sympathies. Brought up from my infancy in connection with the great men of all ages – familiar with lofty ideas and illustrious examples – have I lived with Plato, with all the philosophers, all the poets, all the politicians of antiquity, merely to unite myself with a shop-keeper, who will neither appreciate nor feel any thing as I do? Why have you suffered me, father, to contract these intellectual habits and tastes, if you wish me to form such an alliance? I know not whom I may marry; but it must be one who can share my thoughts and sympathize with my pursuits."

"But, my daughter, there are many men of business who have extensive information and polished manners."

"That may be," Jane answered, "but they do not possess the kind of information, and the character of mind, and the intellectual tastes which I wish any one who is my husband to possess."

"Do you not suppose," rejoined her father, "that Mr. – and his wife are happy? He has just retired from business with an ample fortune. They have a beautiful house, and receive the best of company."

"I am no judge," was the reply, "of other people's happiness. But my own heart is not fixed on riches. I conceive that the strictest union of affection is requisite to conjugal felicity. I can not connect myself with any man whose tastes and sympathies are not in accordance with my own. My

husband must be my superior. Since both nature and the laws give him the pre-eminence, I should be ashamed if he did not really deserve it."

"I suppose, then, you want a counselor for your husband. But ladies are seldom happy with these learned gentlemen. They have a great deal of pride, and very little money."

"Father," Jane earnestly replied, "I care not about the profession. I wish only to marry a man whom I can love."

"But you persist in thinking such a man will never be found in trade. You will find it, however, a very pleasant thing to sit at ease in your own parlor while your husband is accumulating a fortune. Now there is Madame Dargens: she understands diamonds as well as her husband. She can make good bargains in his absence, and could carry on all his business perfectly well if she were left a widow. You are intelligent. You perfectly understand that branch of business since you studied the treatise on precious stones. You might do whatever you please. You would have led a very happy life if you could but have fancied Delorme, Dabrieul, or – "

Jane's objections to a tradesman

She is immovable

"Father," earnestly exclaimed Jane, "I have discovered that the only way to make a fortune in trade is by selling dear that which has been bought cheap; by overcharging the customer, and beating down the poor workman. I could never descend to such practices; nor could I respect a man who made them his occupation from morning till night."

"Do you then suppose that there are no honest tradesmen?"

"I presume that there are," was the reply; "but the number is not large; and among them I am not likely to find a husband who will sympathize with me."

"And what will you do if you do not find the idol of your imagination?"

"I will live single."

"Perhaps you will not find that as pleasant as you imagine. You may think that there is time enough yet. But weariness will come at last. The crowd of lovers will soon pass away and you know the fable."

"Well, then, by meriting happiness, I will take revenge upon the injustice which would deprive me of it."

"Oh! now you are in the clouds again, my child. It is very pleasant to soar to such a height, but it is not easy to keep the elevation."

The young physician as a lover

Curious interview

The judicious mother of Jane, anxious to see her daughter settled in life, endeavored to form a match for her with a young physician. Much maneuvering was necessary to bring about the desired result. The young practitioner was nothing loth to lend his aid. The pecuniary arrangements were all made, and the bargain completed, before Jane knew any thing of the matter. The mother and daughter went out one morning to make a call upon a friend, at whose house the prospective husband of Jane, by previous appointment, was accidentally to be. It was a curious interview. The friends so overacted their part, that Jane immediately saw through the plot. Her mother was pensive and anxious. Her

friends were voluble, and prodigal of sly intimations. The young gentleman was very lavish of his powers of pleasing, loaded Jane with flippant compliments, devoured confectionary with high relish, and chattered most flippantly in the most approved style of fashionable inanition. The high-spirited girl had no idea of being thus disposed of in the matrimonial bazaar. The profession of the doctor was pleasing to her, as it promised an enlightened mind, and she was willing to consent to make his acquaintance. Her mother urged her to decide at once.

"What, mother!" she exclaimed, "would you have me take one for my husband upon the strength of a single interview?"

"It is not exactly so," she replied. "This young gentleman's intimacy with our friends enables us to judge of his conduct and way of life. We know his disposition. These are the main points. You have attained the proper age to be settled in the world. You have refused many offers from tradesmen, and it is from that class alone that you are likely to receive addresses. You seem fully resolved never to marry a man in business. You may never have another such offer. The present match is very eligible in every external point of view. Beware how you reject it too lightly."

The physician taken on trial

The connection broken off

Jane, thus urged, consented to see the young physician at her father's house, that she might become acquainted with him. She, however, determined that no earthly power should induce her to marry him, unless she found in him a congenial spirit. Fortunately, she was saved all further trouble in the matter by a dispute which arose between her lover and her father respecting the pecuniary arrangements, and which broke off all further connection between the parties.

Illness of Jane's mother

The jeweler

Her mother's health now began rapidly to decline. A stroke of palsy deprived her of her accustomed elasticity of spirits, and, secluding herself from society, she became silent and sad. In view of approaching death, she often lamented that she could not see her daughter well married before she left the world. An offer which Jane received from a very honest, industrious, and thrifty jeweler, aroused anew a mother's maternal solicitude.

"Why," she exclaimed, with melancholy earnestness, "will you reject this young man? He has an amiable disposition, and high reputation for integrity and sobriety. He is already in easy circumstances, and is in a fair way of soon acquiring a brilliant fortune. He knows that you have a superior mind. He professes great esteem for you, and will be proud of following your advice. You might lead him in any way you like."

"But, my dear mother, I do not want a husband who is to be led. He would be too cumbersome a child for me to take care of."

"Do you know that you are a very whimsical girl, my child? And how do you think you would like a husband who was your master and tyrant?"

Jane's views of congeniality between man and wife

"I certainly," Jane replied, "should not like a man who assumed airs of authority, for that would only provoke me to resist. But I am sure that I could never love a husband whom it was necessary for me to govern. I should be ashamed of my own power."

"I understand you, Jane. You would like to have a man *think* himself the master, while he obeyed you in every particular."

"No, mother, it is not that either. I hate servitude; but empire would only embarrass me. I wish to gain the affections of a man who would make his happiness consist in contributing to mine, as his good sense and regard for me should dictate."

"But, my daughter, there would be hardly such a thing in the world as a happy couple, if happiness could not exist without that perfect congeniality of taste and opinions which you imagine to be so necessary."

"I do not know, mother, of a single person whose happiness I envy."

"Very well; but among those matches which you do not envy, there may be some far preferable to remaining always single. I may be called out of the world sooner than you imagine. Your father is still young. I can not tell you all the disagreeable things my fondness for you makes me fear. I should be indeed happy, could I see you united to some worthy man before I die."

Her mother's death

This was the first time that the idea of her mother's death ever seriously entered the mind of Jane. With an eager gaze, she fixed her eye upon her pale and wasted cheek and her emaciated frame, and the dreadful truth, with the suddenness of a revelation, burst upon her. Her whole frame shook with emotion, and she burst into a flood of tears. Her mother, much moved, tried to console her.

"Do not be alarmed, my dear child," said she, tenderly. "I am not dangerously ill. But in forming our plans, we should take into consideration all chances. A worthy man offers you his hand. You have now attained your twentieth year. You can not expect as many suitors as you have had for the last five years. I may be suddenly taken from you. Do not, then, reject a husband who, it is true, has not all the refinement you could desire, but who will love you, and with whom you can be happy."

"Yes, my dear mother," exclaimed Jane, with a deep and impassioned sigh, "as happy as *you* have been."

The expression escaped her in the excitement of the moment. Never before had she ventured in the remotest way to allude to the total want of congeniality which she could not but perceive existed between her father and her mother. Indeed, her mother's character for patience and placid submission was so remarkable, that Jane did not know how deeply she had suffered, nor what a life of martyrdom she was leading. The effect of Jane's unpremeditated remark opened her eyes to the sad reality. Her mother was greatly disconcerted. Her cheek changed color. Her lip trembled. She made no reply. She never again opened her lips upon the subject of the marriage of her child.

Jane's father becomes dissipated

Meekness of her mother

The father of Jane, with no religious belief to control his passions or guide his conduct, was gradually falling into those habits of dissipation to which he was peculiarly exposed by the character

of the times. He neglected his business. He formed disreputable acquaintances. He became irritable and domineering over his wife, and was often absent from home, with convivial clubs, until a late hour of the night. Neither mother nor daughter ever uttered one word to each other in reference to the failings of the husband and father. Jane, however, had so powerful an influence over him, that she often, by her persuasive skill, averted the storm which was about to descend upon her meek and unresisting parent.

Excursion to the country

Delusive hopes

The poor mother, in silence and sorrow, was sinking to the tomb far more rapidly than Jane imagined. One summer's day, the father, mother, and daughter took a short excursion into the country. The day was warm and beautiful. In a little boat they glided over the pleasant waters of the Seine, feasting their eyes with the beauties of nature and art which fringed the shores. The pale cheek of the dying wife became flushed with animation as she once again breathed the invigorating air of the country, and the daughter beguiled her fears with the delusive hope that it was the flush of returning health. When they reached their home, Madame Phlippon, fatigued with the excursion, retired to her chamber for rest. Jane, accompanied by her maid, went to the convent to call upon her old friends the nuns. She made a very short call.

"Why are you in such haste?" inquired Sister Agatha.

"I am anxious to return to my mother."

"But you told me that she was better."

"She is much better than usual. But I have a strange feeling of solicitude about her. I shall not feel easy until I see her again."

Death of Madame Phlippon

She hurried home, and was met at the door by a little girl, who informed her that her mother was very dangerously ill. She flew to the room, and found her almost lifeless. Another stroke of paralysis had done its work, and she was dying. She raised her languid eyes to her child, but her palsied tongue could speak no word of tenderness. One arm only obeyed the impulse of her will. She raised it, and affectionately patted the cheek of her beloved daughter, and wiped the tears which were flowing down her cheeks. The priest came to administer the last consolations of religion. Jane, with her eyes riveted upon her dying parent, endeavored to hold the light. Overpowered with anguish, the light suddenly dropped from her hand, and she fell senseless upon the floor. When she recovered from this swoon her mother was dead.

Effects upon Jane

Recovery of Jane

Character of her mother

Jane was entirely overwhelmed with uncontrollable and delirious sorrow. For many days it was apprehended that her own life would fall a sacrifice to the blow which her affections had received. Instead of being a support to the family in this hour of trial, she added to the burden and the care. The Abbé Legrand, who stood by her bedside as her whole frame was shaken by convulsions, very sensibly remarked, "It is a good thing to possess sensibility. It is very unfortunate to have so much of it." Gradually Jane regained composure, but life, to her, was darkened. She now began to realize all those evils which her fond mother had apprehended. Speaking of her departed parent, she says, "The world never contained a better or a more amiable woman. There was nothing brilliant in her character, but she possessed every quality to endear her to all by whom she was known. Naturally endowed with the sweetest disposition, virtue seemed never to cost her any effort. Her pure and tranquil spirit pursued its even course like the docile stream that bathes with equal gentleness, the foot of the rock which holds it captive, and the valley which it at once enriches and adorns. With her death was concluded the tranquillity of my youth, which till then was passed in the enjoyment of blissful affections and beloved occupations."

Jane's melancholy

She resorts to writing

Jane soon found her parental home, indeed, a melancholy abode. She was truly alone in the world. Her father now began to advance with more rapid footsteps in the career of dissipation. A victim to that infidelity which presents no obstacle to crime, he yielded himself a willing captive to the dominion of passion, and disorder reigned through the desolated household. Jane had the mortification of seeing a woman received into the family to take her mother's place, in a union unsanctified by the laws of God. A deep melancholy settled down upon the mind of the wounded girl, and she felt that she was desolate and an alien in her own home. She shut herself up in her chamber with her thoughts and her books. All the chords of her sensitive nature now vibrated only responsive to those melancholy tones which are the dirges of the broken heart. As there never was genius untinged by melancholy, so may it be doubted whether there ever was greatness of character which had not been nurtured in the school of great affliction. Her heart now began to feel irrepressible longings for the sympathy of some congenial friend, upon whose supporting bosom she could lean her aching head. In lonely musings she solaced herself, and nurtured her own thoughts by writing. Her pen became her friend, and the resource of every weary hour. She freely gave utterance in her diary to all her feelings and all her emotions. Her manuscripts of abstracts, and extracts, and original thoughts, became quite voluminous. In this way she was daily cultivating that power of expression and that force of eloquence which so often, in subsequent life, astonished and charmed her friends.

Development of character

In every development of character in her most eventful future career, one can distinctly trace the influence of these vicissitudes of early life, and of these impressions thus powerfully stamped upon her nature. Philosophy, romance, and religious sentiment, an impassioned mind and a glowing heart, admiration of heroism, and emulation of martyrdom in some noble cause, all conspired to give her sovereignty over the affections of others, and to enable her to sway human wills almost at pleasure.

Letter from M. Boismorel

Reply to M. De Boismorel

M. Boismorel, husband of the aristocratic lady to whom Jane once paid so disagreeable a visit, called one day at the shop of M. Phlippon, and the proud father could not refrain from showing him some of the writings of Jane. The nobleman had sense enough to be very much pleased with the talent which they displayed, and wrote her a very flattering letter, offering her the free use of his very valuable library, and urging her to devote her life to literary pursuits, and at once to commence authorship. Jane was highly gratified by this commendation, and most eagerly availed herself of his most valuable offer. In reply to his suggestion respecting authorship, she inclosed the following lines:

"Aux hommes ouvrant la carrière
Des grands et des nobles talents,
Ils n'ont mis aucune barrière
A leurs plus sublimes èlans.

"De mon sexe foible et sensible,
Ils ne veulent que des vertus;
Nous pouvons imiter Titus,
Mais dans un sentier moins pénible.

"Joussiez du bien d'être admis
A toutes ces sortes de gloire
Pour nous le temple de mémoire
Est dans le cœurs de nos amis."

Translation

These lines have been thus vigorously translated in the interesting sketch given by Mrs. Child of Madame Roland:

"To man's aspiring sex 'tis given
To climb the highest hill of fame;
To tread the shortest road to heaven,
And gain by death a deathless name.

"Of well-fought fields and trophies won
The memory lives while ages pass;
Graven on everlasting stone,
Or written on retentive brass.

"But to poor feeble womankind
The meed of glory is denied;
Within a narrow sphere confined.
The lowly virtues are their pride.

"Yet not deciduous is their fame,
Ending where frail existence ends;
A sacred temple holds their name —
The heart of their surviving friends."

Character of M. De Boismorel

A friendly correspondence ensued between Jane and M. De Boismorel, which continued through his life. He was a very worthy and intelligent man, and became so much interested in his young friend, that he wished to connect her in marriage with his son. This young man was indolent and irresolute in character, and his father thought that he would be greatly benefited by a wife of decision and judgment. Jane, however, was no more disposed to fall in love with rank than with wealth, and took no fancy whatever to the characterless young nobleman. The judicious father saw that it would be utterly unavailing to urge the suit, and the matter was dropped.

Jane introduced to the nobility

Jane's contempt for the aristocracy

Her good taste

Through the friendship of M. De Boismorel, she was often introduced to the great world of lords and ladies. Even his formal and haughty wife became much interested in the fascinating young lady, and her brilliant talents and accomplishments secured her invitations to many social interviews to which she would not have been entitled by her birth. This slight acquaintance with the nobility of France did not, however, elevate them in her esteem. She found the conversation of the old marquises and antiquated dowagers who frequented the salons of Madame De Boismorel more insipid and illiterate than that of the tradespeople who visited her father's shop, and upon whom those nobles looked down with such contempt. Jane was also disgusted with the many indications she saw, not only of indolence and voluptuousness, but of dissipation and utter want of principle. Her good sense enabled her to move among these people as a studious observer of this aspect of human nature, neither adopting their costume nor imitating their manners. She was very unostentatious and simple in her style of dress, and never, in the slightest degree, affected the mannerism of mindless and heartless fashion.

Madame De Boismorel, at one time eulogizing her taste in these respects, remarked,

"You do not love feathers, do you, Miss Phlippon? How very different you are from the giddy-headed girls around us!"

"I never wear feathers," Jane replied, "because I do not think that they would correspond with the condition in life of an artist's daughter who is going about on foot."

"But, were you in a different situation in life, would you then wear feathers?"

"I do not know what I should do in that case. I attach very slight importance to such trifles. I merely consider what is suitable for myself, and should be very sorry to judge of others by the superficial information afforded by their dress."

M. Phlippon's progress in dissipation

Jane's painful situation

Jane secures a small income

M. Phlippon now began to advance more rapidly in the career of dissipation. Jane did every thing in her power to lure him to love his home. All her efforts were entirely unavailing. Night after night he was absent until the latest hours at convivial clubs and card-parties. He formed acquaintance with those with whom Jane could not only have no congeniality of taste, but who must have excited in her emotions of the deepest repugnance. These companions were often at his house; and the comfortable property which M. Phlippon possessed, under this course of dissipation was fast melting away. Jane's situation was now painful in the extreme. Her mother, who had been the guardian angel of her life, was sleeping in the grave. Her father was advancing with the most rapid strides in the road to ruin. Jane was in danger of soon being left an orphan and utterly penniless. Her father was daily becoming more neglectful and unkind to his daughter, as he became more dissatisfied with himself and with the world. Under these circumstances, Jane, by the advice of friends, had resort to a legal process, by which there was secured to her, from the wreck of her mother's fortune, an annual income of about one hundred dollars.

Consolations of literature

In these gloomy hours which clouded the morning of life's tempestuous day, Jane found an unfailing resource and solace in her love of literature. With pen in hand, extracting beautiful passages and expanding suggested thoughts, she forgot her griefs and beguiled many hours, which would otherwise have been burdened with intolerable wretchedness. Maria Antoinette, woe-worn and weary, in tones of despair uttered the exclamation, "Oh! what a resource, amid the casualties of life, must there be in a highly-cultivated mind." The plebeian maiden could utter the same exclamation in accents of joyfulness.

Chapter IV

Marriage

1776-1785

Sophia Cannet

Roland de la Platière

When Jane was in the convent, she became acquainted with a young lady from Amiens, Sophia Cannet. They formed for each other a strong attachment, and commenced a correspondence which continued for many years. There was a gentleman in Amiens by the name of Roland de la Platière, born of an opulent family, and holding the quite important office of inspector of manufactures. His time was mainly occupied in traveling and study. Being deeply interested in all subjects relating to political economy, he had devoted much attention to that noble science, and had written several treatises upon commerce, mechanics, and agriculture, which had given him, in the literary and scientific world, no little celebrity. He frequently visited the father of Sophia. She often spoke to him of her friend Jane, showed him her portrait, and read to him extracts from her glowing letters. The calm philosopher became very much interested in the enthusiastic maiden, and entreated Sophia to give him a letter of introduction to her, upon one of his annual visits to Paris. Sophia had also often written to Jane of her father's friend, whom she regarded with so much reverence.

M. Roland

One day Jane was sitting alone in her desolate home, absorbed in pensive musings, when M. Roland entered, bearing a letter of introduction to her from Sophia. "You will receive this letter," her friend wrote, "by the hand of the philosopher of whom I have so often written to you. M. Roland is an enlightened man, of antique manners, without reproach, except for his passion for the ancients, his contempt for the moderns, and his too high estimation of his own virtue."

His personal appearance

Character of M. Roland

The gentleman thus introduced to her was about forty years old. He was tall, slender, and well formed, with a little stoop in his gait, and manifested in his manners that self-possession which is the result of conscious worth and intellectual power, while, at the same time, he exhibited that slight and not displeasing awkwardness which one unavoidably acquires in hours devoted to silence and study. Still, Madame Roland says, in her description of his person, that he was courteous and winning; and though his manners did not possess all the easy elegance of the man of fashion, they united the politeness of the well-bred man with the unostentatious gravity of the philosopher. He was thin, with

a complexion much tanned. His broad and intellectual brow, covered with but few hairs, added to the imposing attractiveness of his features. When listening, his countenance had an expression of deep thoughtfulness, and almost of sadness; but when excited in speaking, a smile of great cheerfulness spread over his animated features. His voice was rich and sonorous; his mode of speech brief and sententious; his conversation full of information, and rich in suggestive thought.

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