LETTER XII
FROM JULIE

This letter was included in the preceding one.

Our project must be abandoned. Everything has changed, my dearest friend; let us bear this change without complaint; it is the working of a wiser hand than ours. We thought to reunite our lives; this reunion was not good. It was a blessing from Heaven that it was forestalled, for misfortune would surely have followed.

For a long time I clung to my illusion. That illusion helped to make me better; it is destroyed at this moment when I no longer need it. You thought me cured, and I believed so too. Let us give thanks to Him who made this error persist as long as it was useful. Seeing how close I was to the abyss, who knows whether I would not have lost my head? Yes, it was of no use trying to stifle the first sentiment which kindled me to life, it only entrenched itself within my heart. It reawakens now when I need no longer fear it; it sustains me as my strength ebbs away; it brings me to life as I am dying. My friend, I make you this confession without shame; this sentiment that clung to me despite myself was involuntary; it never harmed my innocence; whatever depended on my will was devoted to duty. If my heart, upon which the will has no hold, was given to you, this was my torment, not my crime. I did what I had to do; my virtue is still untarnished, and my love without remorse.

I take pride in the past; but who could answer for the future? One more day might have brought about my fall. What would have happened had my whole life been spent with you? Think of the risks I have run while unaware! Think of those still greater ones to which I would have been exposed! It was doubtless for myself I felt those misgivings I thought were aimed at you. We believed we had met all our trials, but they might have all too readily returned. Have I not lived long enough in regard to virtue and to happiness? What else is there of use to me still to extract from life? In taking this from me, Heaven deprives me of nothing I regret, and places my honor beyond risk. My friend, the moment is right for me to leave, satisfied with you and with myself; I leave with joy, for there is nothing cruel in this departure. After so many sacrifices, this last one seems little enough: it is but dying one more time.
I foresee your pain; I feel it for you; I know all too well how much you are to be pitied, and the knowlege of your grief is the greatest sorrow I carry with me. But, look also at the consolations I am leaving you. Let the obligations bequeathed to you by her whom you held dear make it your duty to go on living for her sake. You must keep on caring for the best part of herself. You lose nothing of Julie but that which you have lost long since. All that was best in her remains behind for you. Come, join her family. Let her heart dwell in your midst. Let all she loved be united so that she may live anew. Your tasks, your pleasures, your friendship, all will be her work. The bonds of your union tied by her will bring her back to life; she will only die with the last one of you all.

Remember that you still have another Julie, and do not forget how much you owe to her. Each of you is about to lose one half of your life; you must unite that you may preserve the other; the only way you will both survive me is by caring for my family and my children. Oh that I might invent still tighter bonds to bind together all those whom I love! Ah, how you two need to be united! How this idea should reinforce your attachment to each other! Your very objections to this engagement will only be more reasons why it should be made. How could you ever speak of me without being moved by a common sense of sympathy? No: Claire and Julie will become so intermingled in your mind that your heart will no longer be able to separate the two. Her heart will repay you all that you have felt for her friend, she will become both its confidant and its object: you will be happy beside her who remains with you without ceasing to be faithful to her whom you have lost, and, after so many sorrows and regrets, before you have passed the age of life and love, your heart will have burned with a legitimate fire; you will have enjoyed an innocent happiness.

Within this chaste union you will be able to fulfill, without distractions and without fear, those tasks I now bequeath you; after that you will no longer be at a loss to say what good you have done here on earth. You know well that there is a man worthy of a happiness for which he dares not hope. That man is your deliverer, the husband of the friend whom he returned to you. Alone, without interest in this life or expectation for the next, without pleasure, without consolation,
without hope, he will soon be the most unhappy man alive. You owe him some return for the care he has taken of you, and you know how to put this to the best use. Remember my last letter. Pass your days with him. Let nothing that loved me forsake him. He gave you back your love of virtue, let him see its worth. Be Christian yourself that he may become so. Success is closer than you think: he has done his duty, I shall do mine, do you yours. God is just; my confidence will not betray me.

I have only one word to say to you concerning my children. I know how much care their education will cost you, but I know too that this care will be gladly given. During the moments of dismay inseparable from this task, tell yourself: These are Julie's children, and it will no longer be a chore. Monsieur de Wolmar will give you the notes I made concerning your treatise and the character of my two sons. This paper is only an outline: I am not giving it to you as a rulebook, and I expect you to use it according to your own judgement. Do not make them into scholars, make them into good and just men. Speak to them occasionally of their mother... you know if they were dear to her... tell Marcellin that I died happy because I died for him. Tell his brother that it was because of him that I loved life. Tell them... I feel weary. It is time to end this letter. In entrusting my children to you, the separation seems less hard; I feel I am still with them.

Farewell, farewell, my tender friend... Alas, I end my life as I began it. I am saying too much perhaps at this moment when the heart holds nothing back... But then! why should I fear to say all that I feel? It is no longer I that speak, I am already in the arms of death. When you read this letter, the worms will be devouring the face of your beloved as well as her heart where you will no longer be. But, could my soul exist without you? Without you, could there be any happiness for me? No, I am not leaving you, I go to await you. Virtue, which separates us on this earth, will unite us in our eternal home. I die in this glad expectation, only too happy to buy with my life the right to love you without crime, and to tell you so one final time.

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