

LION FEUCHTWANGER



'TIS FOLLY
TO BE WISE

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By LION FEUCHTWANGER

Author of THIS IS THE HOUR,
PROUD DESTINY, JOSEPHUS, etc.

LION FEUCHTWANGER, one of the world's great novelists, has written the astonishing, intimate story of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the wisest and most foolish of all philosophers . . . the exalted, visionary, often ridiculous, little man whose heights of philosophical grandeur were equaled only by the degrading absurdity of his private life. It is also the story of his effortlessly adulterous wife . . . of the frivolous nobles of France who made it fashionable to read him, but who missed the point of what he was saying . . . and of the heroes, villains and fools who built the French Revolution on his words.

It is a story of great magnificence and great, ironic bitterness; but one, also, of true comfort and inspiration. For it relates how Rousseau, from beyond the grave, was avenged upon those who sinned most grievously against him. It tells of the good and the evil that came to the world largely because a cuckolded husband, who happened to be a greatly misunderstood philosopher, was murdered by his wife's paramour.

It contains two rather startling love stories, each involving a lover of Rousseau's wife. One of them was a stud groom, a lecher, a blackmailer. The other was a young nobleman, who wanted only to be a disciple of the man he revered. He found, instead, shame and ignominy as the seduced seducer of his master's wife. Only much later was he to discover a faith to lead him through the turmoil of the revolutionary world into which he was born, and a love which would survive war, and rebellion, and the days of the Terror.

This, then, is the story of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in life and in death . . . of his life as he lived it and as he described it in his celebrated *Confessions* . . . and of his spirit as it lived on and affected the destinies of those he left behind.



Feuchtwanger

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'Tis folly to be wise.

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Also by Lion Feuchtwanger

THIS IS THE HOUR
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SIMONE
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THE JEW OF ROME
MARIANNE IN INDIA
THE OPPERMANNS
JOSEPHUS
SUCCESS
THE UGLY DUTCHESS
POWER

'TIS FOLLY
TO BE WISE

or

Death and Transfiguration of
Jean-Jacques Rousseau

A Novel by

LION FEUCHTWANGER

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PART ONE

JEAN-JACQUES'S LAST DAYS

AN EAGERLY AWAITED GUEST

JEAN-JACQUES'S WIFE

JEAN-JACQUES LEAVES PARIS

BACK TO NATURE

FERNAND THE DISCIPLE

MIND AND HEART

NICOLAS AND THÉRÈSE

FERNAND'S ENTANGLEMENTS

A SERGEANT TAKES A HAND

HEIGHTS AND DEPTHS

THÉRÈSE'S SUITORS

CONFESSIONS

MORE CONFESSIONS

WHAT IS TRUTH?

CAVE CANEM

FRIEND AND FOE

OPUS ULTIMUM

Great men are meteors, consuming
themselves to light the world.

NAPOLÉON

Chapter 1 *An Eagerly Awaited Guest*

AFTER BREAKFAST Monsieur de Girardin read his mail. This was his custom every morning, and he read now with no special attentiveness, chiefly from a sense of duty.

Suddenly his face lit up with joyful surprise.

Could it be? Was it possible? It was more than Monsieur de Girardin had dared to hope for. But there it was, he held the good tidings in his hands: Jean-Jacques was coming! His friend Lebègue had written to tell Monsieur de Girardin the glad news that his venerated master, the greatest of living men, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, was to be his guest.

Monsieur de Girardin paced the floor, holding the letter in his hand and reading it again and again.

The philosophy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau had profoundly changed the course of his life. René-Louis, Marquis of Girardin, Count of Vauvré and Brégy, Lord of Ermenonville and many other broad lands, had been Lord Chamberlain at the court of the King of Poland in Lunéville and Commander of the Royal Guards. He had lived high and been greatly envied. But then — some twelve years ago — he had become acquainted with the books of Jean-Jacques, the Citizen of Geneva, and had seen the hollowness of the life he was leading. The world was corrupted by civilization; if you wanted to be free from a tormenting sense of desolation, you had to get back to the simple life, to Nature. And the Marquis had left the court of Lunéville to reshape his life by the Master's doctrines. He advocated political reforms because Jean-Jacques had preached reform in his book *The Social Contract*; he brought up Fernand, his son and heir, by the principles Jean-Jacques had laid down in his novel *Émile*; he remade his estate of Ermenonville into a rustic landscape like the one Jean-Jacques had described in his sentimental novel the *Nouvelle Héloïse*.

Jean-Jacques himself had returned to Paris years ago where he now

lived, tacitly tolerated although officially banished. Monsieur de Girardin felt a burning eagerness to approach the great teacher, to talk with him and exchange ideas. But Jean-Jacques was shy and inaccessible; the Marquis had been permitted to call on him only once, years ago.

Recently the news had spread that Jean-Jacques, after all the trouble and fret of his life in Paris, was once more looking for a peaceful refuge in the country. Monsieur de Girardin had sent him a respectful letter, cordially offering his hospitality. And he had asked a mutual friend, Doctor Lebègue, to put all the advantages of the estate of Ermenonville in a favorable light. But many notables were vying with each other to get Jean-Jacques under their roof; the Marquis knew his chances were slim. And now he had been chosen after all.

He wondered whether he ought to inform his son, Fernand, at once of this good fortune. But he checked the impulse. Though his heart was full of Jean-Jacques's libertarian ideas, he had retained from his army days a strict sense of discipline and duty. After breakfast he must make the rounds of the gardens. That was his schedule, and even this morning he would stick to it. The glad tidings would have to wait.

He put on his low-crowned, narrow-brimmed hat and took his long flexible, gold-knobbed cane. A tall, slender man of about fifty, dressed with rustic simplicity in a long-skirted coat and low boots, he went out of doors. A small retinue attached itself to him: the bailiff, the head gardener, one of the household staff.

The daily inspection of his park was René de Girardin's favorite occupation. And now that the gardens were to be crowned in glory by the presence of Jean-Jacques, his rounds were doubly delightful.

Applying the principles of Jean-Jacques, Monsieur de Girardin had compiled a detailed *Handbook of Landscape Gardening*, and the grounds of his château were intended to demonstrate his theories. In contrast to the stiff, geometric gardens of Versailles, his park at Ermenonville was designed to inspire anyone strolling there with keener awareness of Nature — all of Nature. The gardens contained gentle pastures and dusky woods; wild waterfalls, a quiet brook, and a sweetly melancholy lake; noble, desolate rocks and lovely glens — so that you could roam according to your mood from one to the other and fit the outer landscape to your inner needs. There were also reminders of the past. Here and there in the expanse of park a small temple or a ruin recalled the glories of Greece and Rome, and there

were inscriptions of every kind, carved on benches, engraved on columns, even scratched into the bark of trees, classical and modern quotations to point up the emotional significance of the spot.

In this world the Marquis wandered day after day, peering and inspecting. He had achieved much, but still he found imperfections, things to be done but not yet accomplished, and this was both a perpetual spur and a daily delight. Like a field marshal he raised his long flexible cane and issued his orders to gardeners and workmen, giving the object in question or even the man himself a gentle tap. For this habit his people called the imperious, though benevolent seigneur 'Le Père la Tapette.' Today his eyes were sharper than usual, his ambitions more high-flown, for now his creation must not be found wanting by Jean-Jacques.

He walked along the little lake. Above it, giving an effect of distance, rose a small temple, the Temple of Philosophy. He crossed pleasant meadows where cattle grazed, ambled down the Avenue of Dreams, climbed the woodland path to the boulders of the desert. Here he stood enjoying the richly varied view that lay before him. He felt confident; his world would withstand the scrutiny of the man who had first imagined it.

What a providential inspiration it was that just three weeks ago he, Girardin, had hit upon the idea of starting the Swiss chalet. The Marquis went to the building site. Yes, the workmen were getting along well. For a week or two Jean-Jacques would probably have to live in the pavilion, but after that he would be able to move to the chalet. The chalet rose out of a gently sloping meadow, in front of a sunlit grove scarcely touched by human hand. These were the fields of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, the 'Paradise of Clarens.' Jean-Jacques would live amid the landscape of Saint-Preux and Julie, his immortal creations.

The Marquis had completed his rounds. Now he could allow himself the pleasure of announcing Jean-Jacques's impending arrival to his son.

He sent for Fernand. The seventeen-year-old count — as heir to the Lord of Ermenonville he bore the title of Count de Brégy — came dressed even more simply than the Marquis. Instead of the usual splendid coat and finely embroidered vest, he wore a shirt open at the neck.

"Count Fernand," the father announced to the boy, "good news! Our friend and teacher Jean-Jacques is coming! From now on he will live in Ermenonville!"

The young man's large black eyes lit up with such rapture that his father was touched. "Well, my boy," he said, trying to cover up his emotion by a jocular tone, "have I done well? Are you pleased with me?" Fernand, in a voice unsteady from emotion, answered, "Thank you, sir. Oh yes, very much!"

As soon as he was alone, Fernand ran off into the woods with which the gardens merged. He came to a hidden clearing, his favorite retreat when he wanted to settle things in his mind. There he threw himself down on the moss beneath an ancient black spruce that he loved. He meditated.

Yes, his father had done well. But Jean-Jacques's coming was his own, Fernand's, personal triumph. For Jean-Jacques — though of course this was a great secret — was his friend. That time his father had succeeded in getting an invitation to the shy philosopher's house in Paris, he had taken Fernand with him. They had brought a score for Jean-Jacques to copy; it was one of the Master's idiosyncrasies that he wished to earn his living not by his philosophy, but by his craft of copying music. And so there in the simple fifth-floor apartment in the Rue Plâtrière, Fernand had stood before that frail-looking man. He had gazed into those eyes filled with God and truth and had been deeply moved by the simplicity of this greatest of living men. And he had overcome his awe and spoken, said that he preferred the earlier version of Jean-Jacques's opera *The Village Prophet* to the one then being performed at the Paris Opera. Jean-Jacques had smiled a knowing, faintly bitter smile and had replied that the young gentleman was not far wrong, that the new production was in fact artificial and affected. But there were good reasons why this latest version had been chosen for performance, he added. And then he had been allowed to come a second time to fetch the copied music — Fernand, not his father; and once more Jean-Jacques had spoken to him. He had permitted him to call a third time. Yes, Fernand had had three conversations with the Master! There was no doubt about it, if Jean-Jacques was coming to Ermenonville, he was coming not to his father, but to him, Fernand.

His heart was bursting with joy; he wanted to whoop with happiness. Here in the clearing, the forest gave back a wonderful echo. He shouted, "Jean-Jacques! We are going to see Jean-Jacques, forest!" He shouted, "Welcome, Jean-Jacques!" And a hundred echoes returned the words, "Welcome, Jean-Jacques!"

To impart his joy to the trees was not enough for him — they could not appreciate the fact that Jean-Jacques was coming to him. To him! He must share his glorious secret with someone who would know what it meant.

He rode over to Château Latour, to his friend Gilberte. He rode just as he was, in his open-necked shirt, without a wig, his dark hair blowing in the wind. A tall, thin young man with a bony face, a big bold nose, a long neck and prominent Adam's apple, he was not handsome, but his ardent black eyes made him so.

He reached Château Latour and made his way at once to Gilberte. She was at a dancing lesson, sumptuously gowned, surrounded by her companion, her English governess, and her dancing master.

Gilberte Robinet de Latour was the illegitimate child of a very rich gentleman of the new nobility. Her mother had been an actress. Both parents had died young, and she had been reared by her grandfather, who had taken a great fancy to the child. Robinet, an exceedingly rich financier and tax-collector, a farmer-general of the King's Revenues, had adopted Gilberte and made her his sole heir. Recently Fernand and Gilberte had become close friends. The Marquis did not like Fernand's association with a daughter of the lower nobility who was, moreover, of dubious origin. He was uncomfortable at the thought of having to obtain the King's permission when his son married; for unless he had the King's consent, Count Fernand could not marry beneath him without losing title to the domain of Ermenonville and to other privileges. But Girardin mastered his displeasure; he did not want to betray Jean-Jacques's philosophy.

If he reluctantly agreed to take Gilberte into his family he wished at least to have a part in her upbringing. But how much of a part — that was a question that had led to many tedious arguments with Gilberte's clever, cynical grandfather, Farmer-general Robinet. He by no means disliked Fernand and thought it rather a joke that his illegitimate granddaughter should marry into the high nobility. On the other hand, he was a hardheaded old fellow who didn't fancy taking anyone else's advice about the education of his Gilberte. He knew his Rousseau and regarded the man's ideas as a stimulating topic of conversation, but quite utopian; and he was fond of teasing the Girardins about their enthusiasm for a man who wanted to turn us all into Canadian savages. He had no objection to Gilberte's occasionally wearing coarse, peasant-like dresses, nor did he do anything to stop her from sometimes walking alone to Château Ermenon-

ville or even riding over there dressed like a man, *à l'Amazone*. But generally speaking, Rousseau or no Rousseau, he expected her to behave as became a young lady of rank.

This year, moreover, she would be 'coming out,' and Monsieur Robinet was having her carefully instructed in the complicated rituals of salon and ballroom.

Fernand found her in the middle of one such lesson. He thought the tall, lively young girl disfigured by the Parisian ball gown. Gilberte's warm, frank, vibrant face was so much more natural without powder; her generous smiling mouth seemed so much more beautiful to him without the beauty patch above it. But he had to put up with it and sit sulking against the wall, watching his disguised friend and beloved.

However, Gilberte perceived immediately that something important had happened. Risking her grandfather's vexation, she made a deep curtsy proper to the dance, said, "Excuse me, ladies and gentlemen," and left her astonished companions. Taking Fernand's hand, she led him into her small boudoir.

But she could not immediately shed her ladylike manner. She lowered herself grandly onto a sofa and invited him to sit down on one of the small gilt chairs. They sat facing one another, he in his open shirt and rough knee breeches, she in her sumptuous ball gown. Her shoulders rose charmingly above the brocade; her thick blond hair was piled high, curled and powdered, above the rounded, childish, rather self-willed forehead.

"What is the matter, Fernand?" she asked. Fernand said, "Jean-Jacques is coming! He is going to live at Ermenonville from now on!" And immediately — he simply could not keep it in any longer — he blurted out his secret. He told Gilberte about his three conversations in Paris and cried triumphantly, "He is coming to me! Jean-Jacques is coming because of me!"

He could not sit still on the little gilt chair. He walked up and down, fairly sputtering in his enthusiasm. His father, he said, for all of his generosity and open-heartedness, had drunk too deep of the corrupt philosophy of the courts of Versailles and Lunéville. The teachings of Jean-Jacques would not take on paper already written on. Only they, the youth, could fully understand his thoughts and feelings in all their wonder, simplicity, and newness. In the English colonies in America, the New World, fighters for freedom were already putting Jean-Jacques's philosophy into practice. Now, living

in the aura of the Master and having the unspeakable happiness of daily hearing his dear resonant voice, he and Gilberte would be given the strength to do their part in building a new France in the spirit of Jean-Jacques.

Gilberte listened. She had spent her childhood with her mother, the actress, and had experienced many changes of fortune. From her mother she had inherited sound common sense, and from her grandfather's pithy, realistic comments on life she had learned much. She saw the world more clearly than the Girardins and she was better able to distinguish between dream and reality. Now, as Fernand in his defiantly simple costume paced her elegantly appointed boudoir, his Adam's apple bobbing up and down his long bare throat, his whole body jerking with convulsive movements, the absurdity of the scene by no means escaped her. But she also saw his ardent, visionary eyes, heard his excited voice. She understood what Jean-Jacques's coming meant to her gifted, courageous friend who was burning with a hundred ambitions, and she did not smile at his overflowing rapture.

Jean-Jacques's eloquence and charm, and the emotion of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, had affected her also; she looked forward with tense curiosity to meeting the writer himself. In a few weeks, she would be going to Saint-Vigor, her grandfather's country seat near Versailles. What fun it was going to be to tell the ladies and gentlemen of the Court about her conversations with the greatest author of the century.

Fernand suggested that they read together parts of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, at Ermenonville, in the setting of Jean-Jacques. They had done this before, now and then, and Gilberte agreed at once.

She changed her clothes. Now they were both properly dressed for Jean-Jacques's world. They rode over to Ermenonville, and there they read aloud of Julie's pure, deep, glowing love for Saint-Preux and Saint-Preux's love for Julie. They themselves became these two; they kissed, stopped thinking, were worlds away from the frivolous gallantries of the Court and the city of Paris. And they were boundlessly happy.

Chapter 2 Jean-Jacques's Wife

DOCTOR LEBÈGUE came to Ermenonville to tell the Marquis about Jean-Jacques's wishes and habits.

The famous doctor was a friend of both the Marquis and Jean-Jacques. Rousseau trusted him because Doctor Lebègue was opposed to the medical theory then in vogue and worked with Nature, not against her.

Lebègue spoke of how he had persuaded Jean-Jacques to move to Ermenonville. First of all, he had got the women on his side; for in practical matters Jean-Jacques depended on his wife, Thérèse, who in her turn blindly obeyed her mother, old Madame Levasseur. Knowing that the old woman was avaricious, Lebègue had bribed her with small gifts. He had also dangled before her the prospect that the Marquis would have the moving attended to by his own people and would repay her personally for all the trouble. Lebègue would advise the Marquis to send Madame Levasseur fifty livres at once to meet expenses. If all went well Jean-Jacques would arrive in the course of the coming week — alone, for the time being. The women would come later, as soon as they had dissolved the establishment in Paris.

The Marquis and Fernand passed the following days in eager anticipation. But the week went by, and then a few days more, and no Jean-Jacques appeared. Then came a message: would the Marquis send carriages and servants to Paris for the moving.

The furniture came, and the women came — Thérèse and her mother. But no Jean-Jacques.

Monsieur Girardin was dismayed. Had not Doctor Lebègue said that Jean-Jacques would arrive before the women? They themselves couldn't explain it; Jean-Jacques had left Paris several days earlier. But they were not particularly worried. The strange man often took roundabout routes, they declared, and drifted here and there. He would turn up sooner or later.

The Marquis recovered his composure and courteously expressed his pleasure at the ladies' arrival. On the occasion of his visit in Paris he had caught only a glimpse of Thérèse. He knew that when Jean-Jacques had met her she had been very young and a waitress in a shabby hotel. She was now about thirty-seven or thirty-eight years old. She wore a simple gown of flowered *siamoise* — an inexpensive material, part cotton, part linen. Her chestnut-brown hair was concealed beneath a bonnet such as women of the lower middle class wore. To the Marquis, Madame Rousseau seemed common but not without charm. Her rather plump face was almost expressionless, but men might be attracted by her large, indolent eyes and the languid movements of her body. Slowly, naïvely, without shame or modesty, she took stock of things and people. She spoke little and seemed to have difficulty in finding the right words.

Madame Levasseur, her mother, on the other hand, was quick with her tongue. "I may have been born in Orléans, but I'm a Parisienne," she stated. She was old, probably over seventy, but tough and lively. Her little frame was burdened with much fat; her black dress stretched taut over massive breasts, and she breathed with difficulty. But none of this troubled her. She was aware that, by reason of her own personality and as Jean-Jacques's mother-in-law, she could demand a great deal, and her piercing black eyes, hard and alert above the small, flat nose, peered at the world belligerently.

The Marquis showed the ladies to the pavilion, where they were to live for the time being. It was close to the château, a trim, rustic two-storied building once occupied by the steward. "I suppose you would like me to send over a maid from the château to be at your service constantly," Girardin said. "Well, I like that, sir!" Madame Levasseur replied. "What a pass things would be coming to if we couldn't look after my son-in-law." And Thérèse added in her rather deep, halting voice, "Jean-Jacques likes to be waited on by me alone, and no one else is going to do it."

Doctor Lebègue had forewarned Girardin that to avoid unpleasantness with Jean-Jacques it was necessary to make concessions to the women. Though his army days had accustomed him to command, the Marquis controlled himself and patiently explained that here things were not the same as in Paris. Even for trivial needs you had to go long distances. For medicines, for example, which he had heard the Master needed, it would be necessary to send someone to the apothecary in Dammartin or Senlis. It was essential to keep in touch with

the château, and the women would need special attendance. Once more he asked to be allowed to place one of the maids at their disposal.

"If you insist, sir," Madame Levasseur replied, "then we will accept, with thanks." But Thérèse declared with her phlegmatic obstinacy, "Jean-Jacques must never catch sight of the girl you send us. He wants to be left in peace. That's what he has come here for. We won't let anyone in the house without his say-so. And when my mother or I aren't here the house must be locked." Madame Levasseur said placatingly, "My son-in-law has one or two idiosyncrasies." She enunciated each syllable of the fancy word distinctly. "All great men have their little quirks."

Girardin did not like the idea that within his own domain there should be any place to which he, the seigneur of Ermenonville, was denied admittance. But after all, he had a master key to the pavilion — as to all the buildings on the estate — kept safely in his bedroom. "Your wishes shall be respected, mesdames," he said. "And I think I have just the right person for your purposes. It is my courier and factotum Nicolas. He will keep himself permanently at your disposal at the château. He is used to carrying out my orders conscientiously; he will not be inquisitive. Besides, he is an excellent horseman, and if you need anything at any time he can always ride into town. I will send him over so that he can introduce himself to you."

Their household goods had been unloaded. The Marquis said he would look in again later on to ask the ladies' wishes, and took his leave.

The women had left Paris early in the morning. It was hot and they were tired. Now that the furniture had been arranged, they decided to rest. Madame Levasseur went upstairs to her bedroom. Thérèse locked the front door, took off her gown, lay down on her bed in the alcove and dozed off.

Suddenly, with a little cry, she started up. Someone was standing in the room, a redheaded fellow of medium size, lean and straddle-legged. "Excuse me, madame," he said in a squeaky voice, speaking French with an accent. "I knocked, and since nobody answered I walked in." Thérèse had drawn a shawl about her. "But I locked the door," she said. "Monsieur le Marquis," the fellow informed her, "gave me his master key in case the ladies were out for a walk in the garden. Monsieur le Marquis sends the ladies these fruits and sweetmeats." He placed the basket on the table and fussily unpacked it.

From the twilight alcove Thérèse watched him, in silence, sitting up in bed, her naked shoulders slightly hunched under her shawl.

The fellow had finished, but made no move to go. He regarded Thérèse, her warm, dark-skinned, somewhat vague face, her brown eyes with their animal placidity, her round, smooth throat, her plump breasts hinted at beneath the shawl. "I am, as you might say, your valet, madame," he said with an ironically exaggerated bow. "French people cannot pronounce my name. Simply call me Nicolas." His pale, impudent eyes above his turned-up nose with its wide nostrils stared unwaveringly at Thérèse as she sat there, half naked, in the warm fragrance of her voluptuous body. As a result of her initial shock her mistrust of this fellow lingered, but the boldness of his steady, lustful look titillated her at the same time. She remained seated in silence, her lazy brown eyes fixed on him, her body motionless.

"Do the ladies desire my assistance in any way at the moment?" he offered. Thérèse replied in her languid voice that she would ask her mother. As she went upstairs, he followed her with his eyes. The long petticoat did not wholly hide her pleasantly rounded hips. She was no longer young, but for all that a well-preserved, luscious piece of female flesh, he thought.

She came downstairs with old Madame Levasseur. "Monsieur le Marquis has commanded me, madame," said Nicolas, again with exaggerated civility, "to be entirely at your disposal." Madame Levasseur examined him from head to foot. "You talk a strange sort of French, my lad." There was a hint of antagonism in her hoarse, toneless voice. "I am a subject of His Britannic Majesty," Nicolas explained. "I don't think we will need you much, monsieur," Madame Levasseur said dryly. "At most for running errands." "I shall run errands, if you wish," Nicolas said, and turning to Thérèse he added, "And if the lady wishes to ride, I shall be honored to teach her a trick or two. I used to be head trainer at Mr. Tattersall's in London. Monsieur le Marquis brought me over here to put his stud in order and manage it for him."

Thérèse regarded him incuriously but steadily. "The most important thing is," said Madame Levasseur, "that you mustn't let my son-in-law see you. He doesn't care for unfamiliar —" she searched for the word — "for unfamiliar countenances." "What doesn't he care for?" asked Nicolas. "Unfamiliar faces," explained Madame Levasseur. Nicolas kept his eyes fixed on the dark-skinned Thérèse.

Toward evening, when it grew cooler, Monsieur de Girardin came

as he had promised. He praised the ladies for the speed with which they had set up house, then invited them to let him show them the park.

Outside the house a young man was waiting. Girardin introduced him as his son, Count Brégy. Fernand joined the party, and the quartet slowly strolled through the park.

The Marquis was used to hearing expressions of rapture from his visitors. He waited for Jean-Jacques's womenfolk to break out into enthusiastic exclamations. But all Madame Levasseur said was, "Very fine, very pretty, isn't it, Thérèse?" and, "How nice and cool it is here." At last the disappointed Marquis could not help explaining, "This little vineyard is modeled after the landscape which Jean-Jacques evokes in the fifth book of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*. You remember, the vintage festival." "Really?" said Thérèse. And Madame Levasseur, also without enthusiasm, said, "The *Nouvelle Héloïse* — yes, he often read it aloud to us while he was working on it. He wrote it on gold-leaf paper and had to have blue and silver writing sand for it. We had to have everything sent from Paris. An interesting book." The Marquis was greatly put out.

The paths grew narrower and the four split up. Girardin and Madame Levasseur went ahead; Thérèse and Fernand followed.

Fernand was even more upset by the women's indifference than his father. He had not dared to speak much with Thérèse in Paris, but he had noticed that she was of a simple mentality. He knew, like everyone else, that she was low-born, and to himself he had explained Jean-Jacques's marriage as a symbolic act intended to express his kinship with the people. Now, no longer inhibited by the shyness and awe which the presence of the Master had inspired in him, Fernand ventured to inspect Thérèse more closely. He expected to discover the great simple qualities which the woman undoubtedly possessed, the virtues which had made Jean-Jacques select this particular woman as his life companion.

He regarded her from the side. A few chestnut-brown locks had escaped her bonnet. She seemed to have no objection to his looking at her; she even turned her face toward him, calmly returning his scrutiny. Her large, beautiful eyes had the simplicity of Nature. And if what she said was insignificant, yet her voice was deep and soulful. Even her walk, it seemed to Fernand, was like a languid melody. Yes, Jean-Jacques must have known what he was doing when he chose this woman.

Meanwhile old Madame Levasseur, walking ahead with the Marquis, was discussing practical matters. Her son-in-law, she explained, set store by his dignity. He did not wish to get anything for nothing but wished to pay for his rent and board by copying music for the Marquis as he had done in Paris. Now, of course people were wild to get anything written by Jean-Jacques, but he never charged more than the customary twelve sous per page. She had not wanted to say anything about it that time in Paris, but usually she and Thérèse managed it in such a way that behind Jean-Jacques's back they got paid an additional sum. The Marquis would therefore permit her to present her bill after Jean-Jacques's own. But for God's sake he must never let her son-in-law hear of the transaction.

The stout old woman's cunning was distasteful to the Marquis. "Please arrange the matter as you wish, madame," he answered rather stiffly. Madame Levasseur detected the distaste in his voice. "He is a bit of a crank, you see," she explained. "He's always raising objections you don't expect. He really needs peace and quiet, and he wanted to go to the country, but you can't imagine what a fuss he made about moving. It cost me a lot of sweat to bring him around."

"I am indebted to you for your trouble," the Marquis replied with reserve. "I only hope that your stay here will in every respect be to the Master's liking and to yours."

"Everything would be easy," the old woman went on plaintively, "if he weren't a great man, if he were normal. Sometimes you get to feel there's a screw loose. Who would dream of harming him out here? But before we even left Paris he kept growling, 'And the door is to remain locked at all times.'"

The Marquis recognized the threat. If he didn't promptly come to terms with this harpy she would keep Jean-Jacques a prisoner in the pavilion, and a fat lot of good the master key would do the Marquis. "It goes without saying, madame," he replied, "that we will have every possible consideration for Monsieur Jean-Jacques's desire for solitude. On the other hand I have a natural desire to see him from time to time and to listen to what he has to say." He stood still, touched her lightly with his cane, and declared, "If you will help me in this, madame, you can rely on my sense of gratitude."

She regarded him out of sly, darting black eyes. "All right, sir," she said, "I'll do my part."

Chapter 3 *Jean-Jacques Leaves Paris*

THE MAN WHOSE time was being haggled over, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, had left the house in the Rue Plâtrière a week ago, genuinely intending to go to Ermenonville. In fact he had meant to make the journey on foot; he was very fond of walking. It was not a great distance — twelve to fifteen hours at a comfortable pace.

He wore a plain black coat and black stockings. He had with him a knapsack containing only a few indispensable articles, and carried a staff as he had always done on walking tours in his native Switzerland. A slightly built man of sixty-six, a little stooped, he walked through the streets of Paris with a brisk, vigorous gait. He longed to see trees that were free from dust and soot, to hold converse amid Nature with brooks and rivers, with the wind wafting in the branches, with his own heart, and with God. He yearned to be away from Paris; in every Parisian he saw an enemy. This was a flight he was embarking on.

But when he reached the boundaries of the city his pace slackened. An idea which had been worrying him for some days past without his putting it into words now suddenly grew clear, exhorting him, bringing him to a halt. He must not go away yet. He must not leave this damnable city until he had made one final appeal to it.

During these difficult years in Paris he had written a book, *Rousseau Sits in Judgment upon Jean-Jacques*. In his thoughts he called the book 'Dialogues,' because in it he argued with himself, accusing, justifying, laying bare his heart. The book was not intended for his contemporaries; it was meant to show posterity the senseless malice with which his fellow man had misunderstood and persecuted him.

But he had always had great trouble with his manuscripts. False friends had copied them in secret and published them in distorted form, even reversing the meaning of some sentences in order to blacken him. He must protect his great work of vindication from a

similar fate. What if the man to whom he was now going, what if even Girardin should prove faithless, an enemy in disguise, lying in wait for an opportunity to rob him of his manuscript? Did he not owe it to himself and the world to find a safer place for his book?

The vague ideas of the last few days crystallized into a plan. He must appeal to Providence itself. He must call upon it to send him from the unknown a person to whom he could entrust his work. But if it were his fate not to find such a person, then he must hand over the manuscript to God Himself, must lay it down upon His altar.

But this undertaking involved a great deal of new delicate writing. He might have gone back home, but he was afraid Thérèse and her mother would try to talk him out of his purpose, and he was worn out, he could not bear to let himself in for more of their nagging. Where, harried on all sides as he was, would he find a human being who without asking questions would put him up and help him?

Only one person occurred to him, someone whom he seldom saw, who was not one to push himself forward; a man with a simple, honest face. He was a dramatist named François Ducis who had revealed a sympathetic understanding for Jean-Jacques's sufferings.

To this man, then, Jean-Jacques furtively betook himself. He begged him to take him in for a night or two without saying anything to a soul. He asked only for paper, ink, and quills and to be left undisturbed. Ducis, a man of few words, consented.

Jean-Jacques set to work. In a pamphlet he addressed himself in burning words to all Frenchmen who still loved truth and justice. 'Why,' he complained, 'have I, a forlorn, solitary man, for fifteen years been humiliated, laughed at, misunderstood, insulted, without ever finding out the reason? Why am I the only one not to know what sentence has been passed on me, and why? Men of France! You are being made the prisoners of a delusion which will persist as long as I live.' He wrote out of the honesty of despair, but his repetitions and his involved sentences so obscured his meaning that anyone unfamiliar with Jean-Jacques's work, life, and character could hardly understand it.

He revised the text of the appeal, condensed, expanded. Then he made many copies in the form of handbills. All day long he wrote. And all night, by the light of candles. At the end he counted the handbills he had written. There were thirty-six of them. That should be enough to invoke the play of chance and make sure that his great work was read by the right person.

He left Ducis's house as secretly as he had come. He had the handbills in the pockets and cuffs of his coat; the great work of vindication, the 'Dialogues,' he had put back into his knapsack.

He went directly to the Luxembourg Gardens. There, in one of the quiet side paths, he picked out a bench. He drew the handbills out of his pockets, and out of his knapsack took the bulky manuscript. There he sat on the shady seat, a frail, worn old man with haggard, furrowed face and drooping shoulders. Beside him lay his 'Dialogues' and his handbills, his despairing appeal to a man he hoped would understand him. He looked at the spangles of sunlight dancing underneath the swaying branches, enjoyed the gentle breeze of early summer, and rested, gathering strength for the great venture.

He watched the passers-by. He was good at reading faces. If anyone should pass by who struck him as receptive, he would give him the appeal; and if on reading it the man should appear moved, he would entrust to him the great manuscript to be preserved for posterity.

The passers-by were few. But they walked slowly, dreaming and musing, so that he had the leisure to observe them well.

He let several go by. There wasn't a face that seemed capable of responding to his message. But he must not hesitate any longer; he must not shirk. He would have to make the attempt.

An elderly man approached at an easy pace. His face was friendly, and there was no one else nearby. Jean-Jacques approached him and held out his handbill. "Please take this, sir, and read it!" he said in his deep, pleasant voice. The old gentlemen did not quite know what to make of this strange person. "How much is your pamphlet?" he asked cautiously. "Read it, sir. That is all I ask of you," Jean-Jacques pleaded urgently. "Do so for the sake of humanity and justice!" The old man began, rather suspiciously, to read. 'Oh, you citizens of France,' he read, 'citizens of that people once so lovable and gentle, what has become of you?' 'Oh,' he thought to himself, 'obviously one of those crackpot philosophers, those enthusiasts who want to change France and the rest of the world as well.' He read a little further. Then, being something of a philosopher himself, but a sensible and discriminating one, he began to give Jean-Jacques advice. "This is extravagant nonsense you have here, my friend. You have not digested your reading. Study quite simple books at first — history, geography. Then, when you are equipped for it you might try Voltaire or Rousseau." "Please finish it, at least," Jean-Jacques pleaded feebly. But the gentleman had had enough of this fellow and his hand-

bill. "Thank you, my friend, I have read enough," he said, and he gave back the paper and set off at a brisker though still moderate pace.

Jean-Jacques sat down, breathed deeply, and closed his eyes. He tried to get up his courage. A young lady came by. Women had always understood him better than men. This one carried her parasol with a pretty, natural grace. Beneath the parasol shone a delicate, sensitive face. She had surely read the *Nouvelle Héloïse* and wept over it; surely its ideas had impressed themselves upon her heart. Jean-Jacques approached her. "I am an unhappy man, madame," he said in a soft, gentle voice, and as she was about to walk on in confusion he continued, "Do not leave me standing here, madame! I beseech you in the name of all the agony of living beings." The lady's step faltered. "Please read this," Jean-Jacques insisted, "and you will at once recognize that here speaks one on whom has been heaped immeasurable suffering and injustice. Grant me ten minutes, I implore you! Please read this, madame" — and he offered her the handbill. The lady stopped. She had indeed read the *Nouvelle Héloïse*; she was sensitive, and this person, though obviously come down in the world, seemed interesting. Something in his voice moved her. The trouble was that she had made a rendezvous with a friend here in the Luxembourg, had only twenty minutes to spare for this friend, and was not that he already approaching? "Calm yourself, monsieur, calm yourself!" she said soothingly, and did not take his handbill.

He sat exhausted on his bench. How lovely it would be to go away, to leave this crude, unfeeling Paris behind him! But he must not yet give up. One last time he must appeal to the great city.

A young man approached, reading — probably a student. He would try it on him. The young, their hearts not yet hardened, their feelings not yet perverted, understood him better than the old. Impetuously he approached the student, who, startled out of his reading, looked at the shabby old man in bewilderment. "Read this, my dear sir, please!" Rousseau begged him, holding out the handbill. The student was not yet turned twenty, but he was a Parisian, he knew the world. No doubt the old man was urging on him an advertisement for some quack remedy, or for a brothel. "Very well, old fellow, since you're so anxious that I should," he said with faint mockery. He took the sheet and read it. It was exaggerated stuff; hard to make anything out of it. The style showed the influence of Jean-Jacques. He looked at the old man waiting there, begging and demanding at once. What strange, burning eyes he had! Surely it was — "Excuse me," he said uncer-

tainly, "have I not the honor of addressing Monsieur Jean-Jacques himself?" Jean-Jacques turned aside, embarrassed and rather alarmed. He blushed. "But of course you are Jean-Jacques!" the student cried. "What unexpected good fortune!" And then, "May I keep this manuscript?" he asked excitedly.

Two other young people had stopped, their curiosity aroused by the student's vehement gestures and the timorous behavior of the old man. "This is Jean-Jacques," the student announced. "Jean-Jacques Rousseau!" "So it is, it is Jean-Jacques!" cried the others. "And yesterday the papers said that he was ill and had left the city!" More people came on the scene, whispering among themselves. Jean-Jacques was surrounded. Bewildered, he ran back to his bench, gathered up his handbills, stuck the large manuscript back into his knapsack. People crowded around him. "Let me pass, ladies and gentlemen!" he implored them. Let me alone! I have important — vitally important business to attend to!" Hesitatingly, reluctantly, they let him go. For a while they straggled after him, then dispersed.

He *had* important business to attend to. Now that humanity had rejected him he would, as the inner voice had commanded him, turn directly to his Maker, to God, the Protector of the downtrodden, the Guardian of Truth and Justice. A verse from the Bible was in his heart: 'O God, let me fall into Thy hands, but let me not fall into the hands of men!' He walked toward God's house, and being a musician and a writer, he involuntarily turned the verse into fresh words — ringing, stirring words.

Now he was at the bridge. Age-old and gray, the cathedral of Notre Dame rose before him. Thirty-six years ago he had seen it for the first time; countless times since then he had been inside the cathedral and was completely familiar with the order of its rituals. He knew that on this particular day the choir would be empty. There, in the choir of Notre Dame, on the high altar of this noblest of cathedrals, he would deposit his work.

As always, his heart was eased and humbled by the sight of the powerful yet delicate masonry. He crossed the square. He felt as if he were entering the comforting dimness of a shady wood.

He entered the church by a side door and approached the choir with the reverent, humble step of a pilgrim.

His heart stood still. The choir was closed. Never in all these thirty-six years had he found the choir closed on a Saturday. Today the inexorable iron of the grating confronted him. A frightful miracle had

happened. God did not accept his vindication. God, like man, rejected him!

He fled from the cathedral in unseemly haste. Like a hunted creature he ran through the streets of Paris to the city boundaries, to the open country, away from all men.

Chapter 4 Back to Nature

HE WAS SOME time finding the solitude he sought. For here in the immediate vicinity of Paris the country was crossed and carved up everywhere by roads, big and small, all crowded with carriages, mounted men, and people on foot.

And even when he reached a quieter neighborhood there was still no solitude. There were still people on the roads, though not so many. Time was when his affairs and duties had obliged him, too, to act the part of a gentleman and travel in a carriage with baggage befitting his station. Then his cares had climbed into the carriage with him, as had his shyness of the other passengers and the constraint his consideration for them imposed. Once inside he had felt nothing but a longing to arrive as quickly as possible. How much better off and freer he felt now. He did not care when he reached Ermenonville. Tomorrow, the next day, or the day after that — it did not matter. And before long, when he had got away from human beings, he would begin to feel pleasure in his own rhythm, in the changing scene, the beauty of Nature.

At last the city lay well behind him. He left the main road, chose a narrow path, then an even narrower one. He wandered at random in the woods and fields. Soon his despair gave way to an almost consoling resignation.

He sat down on a tree stump at the edge of a wooded grove and rested.

It was refreshing to be alone. If you contemplated people from a distance their weaknesses faded. You stopped expecting them to have

qualities they simply did not possess. How fortunate that the inner law of his being always brought him back again to Nature, to those things called 'inanimate' that his heart endowed with the most wonderful charms and sensations. How quickly unrest and despair were dispelled in the peace of Nature! Fools said that only the evil man flees from his fellows. The opposite was true. For the evil man it might be hell to be thrown back on himself alone; for the good man solitude was paradise.

Gradually his mind wandered. He sank into that sweet, melancholy state of reverie in which all is imagery and music. He became one with the landscape around him, with the trees, the moss, the ants and beetles; he was part of these woods; there was nothing in him but feeling. He was free from the burden of fruitless thoughts and vain words; the dreary obligation to write lay far behind him.

For the remainder of the day he went where whim and impulse led him. He held only roughly to his course toward Ermenonville and did not hesitate to take long, winding detours.

Evening came, and he decided to sleep in the open as he had done so often before. He lay down on the moss beneath a tree. Through the branches he saw the faraway sky turning pale, then darkening. Gone was the despairing urge to prove to callous, indifferent people how pure his heart was and how false their own vision. He fell asleep with a light and happy heart.

The next day and the next he drifted in the same way, aimless and yet certain of his purpose, and it was not till the third day that in a calm and peaceful mood he reached the village of Ermenonville.

He turned aside at the inn called The Chestnuts and sat down at one of the bare wooden tables in the garden. There were cottage flowers, a little pond with weir baskets. The innkeeper came out, dressed with rustic negligence in shirt and breeches, a cap on his head. With casual good nature he examined the dusty, unshaven traveler and asked his wishes. Jean-Jacques ordered an omelette and wine. Out on the road the village priest went by, reading his breviary. The innkeeper and Jean-Jacques greeted him. "Good day, Goodman Maurice, good day, monsieur," the priest replied. The innkeeper brought the order. Jean-Jacques ate the omelette with relish and slowly sipped the dark-yellow wine. The innkeeper sat down and chatted with him. Suddenly something in Jean-Jacques's face appeared to strike him. He stood up, removed his cap, and asked reverently, in an excited voice, whether the gentleman was not the great Jean-

Jacques Rousseau. Rather uncomfortably, Jean-Jacques admitted that he was. Goodman Maurice told him that he had read his works seven times, every single page, and seven times had been deeply moved. Moreover, Monsieur was most respectfully and impatiently being awaited at the château.

Jean-Jacques was sorry that the days of his lazy, happy anonymity were over.

Goodman Maurice sent his little daughter over to the château with the news that the anxiously awaited guest had arrived. The child came upon the Marquis in the park, surrounded by gardeners and workmen. He exclaimed with delight, kissed the little messenger, and set forth at once to fetch Jean-Jacques.

Sure enough, there under the chestnut trees at the inn sat the greatest thinker the French-speaking world had produced since Montaigne and Descartes, talking to Goodman Maurice like an equal — just as Socrates might have spoken to a man in the street, or even to a slave. Overcome with emotion, the Marquis walked up to Jean-Jacques, laid aside his cane, and saying, "Permit me, Master," embraced him. He stepped back. "Welcome to Ermenonville, Jean-Jacques Rousseau!" he cried with solemn fervor.

He conducted Jean-Jacques to the house in which he was to live for the time being. Walking through the gardens, Jean-Jacques recognized immediately and without prompting that the landscape had been laid out according to his description. He stood still and looked Girardin full in the face with his fine, eloquent eyes. "This is my landscape," he said, "the setting of my Julie." The Marquis was overcome with pleasure, but he answered simply, "Yes, Monsieur Jean-Jacques, I made a modest attempt to reproduce your landscape."

They had reached the pavilion. "I must ask you," said Girardin, "to make shift with this pavilion for the next few weeks. Another dwelling is in preparation for you, simple yet conceived with love: an alpine cottage from your homeland, a Swiss *châlet* in which I hope you will be happy for many years to come." Jean-Jacques regarded the pavilion, the tall trees surrounding it, the wooden fence, the brook with the rustic wooden bridge, the little waterfall. He held out his hand to the Marquis. "Thank you, sir," he said. "*Hoc erat in votis*. This is just what I hoped for."

There were many, many things the Marquis longed to say to Jean-Jacques. But he restrained himself, and merely drew a very large, intricate-looking key out of his coat pocket. "Here, beloved Master,

is a key," he declared, "which will open to you all the gates and doors on the estate. And now I leave you to your ladies," he added quickly and walked away, lest he make his guest uncomfortable by showing his emotion.

Jean-Jacques entered. Seeing Thérèse, he realized how much he had missed her during those last dreadful days in Paris. She was his shield against the hostile world, the only human being on earth in whose presence he felt safe. Slowly there came into her tranquil eyes a faint answering glow. He embraced her. She did not ask the reasons for his long absence. She was obviously glad that he was there at last.

He looked around, taking in his new home. There stood their dear, familiar household goods: the simple wooden chairs with the rush seats, the spinet with the B that always stuck, the chests of drawers, the cupboard. Through the open blue-and-white curtains of the alcove he saw the beds with their blue-and-white covers. There was the writing table with the massive inkstand, the scraper he used to erase his mistakes when he wrote music. There was the chest with the manuscripts. On the mantelpiece in front of the mirror stood a coffee-pot and cups. On the walls his engravings were hanging: the forest of Montmorency, the lame beggar being fed by children. Here in the walnut bookcase were his books and scores.

And there was the birdcage with the pair of canaries. The two women had done well; they had arranged the furniture very much as it had stood in the flat in Paris. But how much friendlier the room and its contents looked here. In Paris one or two miserable pots of flowers had stood upon the window sill. Here trees and shrubs looked in through the large windows on every side; he could hear the murmuring of the brook; the room extended into the landscape. Once again, in her choice of Ermenonville, Thérèse had proved to be an instrument of Providence. Here he would spend his last years in happy seclusion.

It was getting on toward evening; a chill came in from outside. Thérèse unpacked his knapsack. He laid his manuscript with the others in the chest. Then he sat down in his favorite chair, the big wooden chair with arm rests and a rush seat, and enjoyed the tranquillity of his new abode.

A low but insistent knock startled him. After the discreet, respectful greeting he had received from the Marquis, he had hoped the people from the château would leave him in peace. And here they were invading his privacy after all. While Thérèse ran to open the door he

stood up in vexation, turned away from the door, and went to the window to look at the gardens.

Thérèse had opened the door and stepped outside. When she came back into the house, she saw Jean-Jacques's face distorted with fear and dread. "What is it? What is the matter?" she asked.

He did not answer.

A head had appeared at the window, mean and hostile with pale, malevolent eyes, carrot-red hair, and a squat, wide-nostriled nose. The head had examined him, grinning. They had spied him out. Even here the enemy had his spies.

Thérèse was used to his not speaking when these strange moods came upon him. She shrugged her shoulders and brought into the room what she had found at the door, a basket filled with fruit, cold meats, cakes, and sweetmeats. It must be a welcoming present from the Marquis, she explained, delivered by the servant whom he had assigned to them, and who had been instructed not to show himself inside the house.

Slowly Jean-Jacques grew calm, and when old Madame Levasseur came downstairs to greet him, all traces of his momentary alarm were gone.

He spent a peaceful night.

Next morning he rose very early, as was his custom when in the country. Thérèse prepared a simple breakfast of coffee, milk, bread and butter. The old woman was still asleep. They sat and talked idly of everyday things.

Since he was in a calm frame of mind she ventured to ask about his health. For ever since childhood he had suffered from a bladder complaint which often caused him the severest pain and distressing ischuria. His behavior was frequently dictated by this ailment. He was reluctant to speak about it; even Doctor Lebègue had difficulty in getting the details out of him. Thérèse was the only person with whom he was candid. He let her hear his complaints and curses, let her look after him. She knew that agitation was wont to provoke an attack, and was relieved to learn that in spite of the hard time he had had in Paris the affliction had for once spared him.

After breakfast he took his walking stick and went out of doors to explore the world in which he was now to live.

He readily yielded to the illusion that the diverse landscape conveyed. There were heath, grove and thicket, virgin forest, lonely crag and pleasant woodland. There was a stretch of park land con-

trived with artful simplicity to recall the fields in which the characters in his books had strolled, and effortlessly his imagination transformed the simulated design into those regions where he had experienced such sweet sorrows and lacerating passions.

A narrow winding path led up a woodland hill. Halfway up, a wasteland strewn with rocks and stones appeared. A log cabin was there. Jean-Jacques sat down on a rock. Sweetly melancholic, the landscape spread out before him, down to a small lake, and farther yet, to wooded hills.

He descended to the lake and walked along the pale, shimmering water. Boats lay invitingly on its edges. On a point jutting out into the lake stood a great, spreading willow tree, its branches drooping over the water. Opposite lay a small island which Jean-Jacques fell in love with at once. It was covered with poplars whose trembling leaves were mirrored in the lake. Beneath the dense, swaying twigs of the willow was a small grassy bank. This would be the right place for the blissful idleness he loved, for slowly flowing sensations half pleasurable, half sad; the right place for melancholy dreams.

He wandered on, following paths which lost themselves in thickets, and reached the boundaries of the park where it merged imperceptibly into the countryside, into open fields and then forest.

He headed back in the direction of the château and found himself in a grove of ancient ivy-wreathed trees that had been allowed to become gnarled and cracked. Moss-covered tree stumps were everywhere. The branches were so interlaced as to form a canopy of foliage. There were flowers growing in this bright and charming 'virgin forest'; sunlight and shadow created graceful and bizarre patterns on the mossy ground.

Jean-Jacques followed the course of a little stream which flowed through the grove. As it gradually opened up, a gently sloping meadow became visible. There, at the edge of the meadow, carpenters were erecting a little house. He knew at once that it was meant for him; it was the Swiss *châlet* of which his host had spoken. He could not distinguish the people over there very clearly, but he had an idea that he could see the Marquis among them, could see him making off, tactfully withdrawing at Jean-Jacques's approach. He smiled, touched by such consideration.

He sat down on a tree stump and watched them building the pleasant dwelling for his declining years on a piece of land which had been landscaped in the image of his *Nouvelle Héloïse*. Periods of his

life flowed into each other: his distant, happy past, his dreamlike present, the prospect of a tranquil future in this little house.

He sat a long time in this way, transported, without desires, happy. The sun rose high; he had lost all sense of time.

When he got back to the pavilion, the meat was overcooked. Madame Levasseur grumbled. Thérèse did not grumble, but it was plain that she was sorry about the good food that had been spoiled.

Chapter 5 Fernand the Disciple

OLD MADAME LEVASSEUR proudly announced to the Marquis that she had prevailed upon her son-in-law to appear the following evening at Monsieur Girardin's table. And what a job it had been, she said.

Madame Levasseur was lying. Jean-Jacques had been so moved by the sight of the Swiss *châlet* and by Girardin's consideration that without any intervention on her part he had offered to pay his respects to the Marquis the following evening.

There was much festive excitement in the *château*. Fernand's tutor, a withdrawn, scholarly Alsatian named Monsieur Gerber was almost as wrought-up as the others. Fernand, with his father's permission, sent a messenger to Latour, for naturally Gilberte must share the wonderful experience.

Jean-Jacques was received at the main gate. He was punctiliously neat, dressed in modest bourgeois fashion, and his manner was friendly and simple. He greeted Fernand warmly and looked attentively at Gilberte and Monsieur Gerber, neither of whom he had met before. In fact he went up very close to them to see them better, for he was shortsighted, though when Doctor Lebègue had advised him to wear spectacles or a *lorgnon* he had indignantly rejected the idea. Nature, he had declared, had its reasons for weakening a person's eyes; one should not try to outsmart Nature.

An Irish setter of medium size, a fine long-haired female, took part in the reception of the guests. The dog jumped up at Jean-Jacques

and gamboled about him, barking in happy excitement and showing her delight when he stroked her and talked to her. "My father brought Lady over from England for me," Fernand explained. "Then he brought you something unusually fine," answered Jean-Jacques with the smile of a man who knows dogs.

There was solidity and good taste, and no ostentation, about the way Château Ermenonville was furnished. Jean-Jacques particularly liked the large music room with its many instruments, stands, and scores.

He began to describe his walk through the park, and in the presence of the whole company — how the Marquis's heart was pounding — he praised the gardens. He had seen everything, noticed many of the inscriptions. He also spoke of the Swiss *châlet*, and he himself now referred to the landscape as his 'Paradise of Clarens.'

When, after dinner, the Marquis asked whether they might have some music, he sat down without any fuss at the piano, praised the beautiful instrument, played and sang. "How weary I am of waiting," he sang, and, "It's divine to be fifteen and in love," and several more of those tender, naïve popular songs of his. His voice was deep, rather tired, but warmly modulated.

"Enough," he interrupted himself finally, turning to Girardin. "It would be a pleasure to hear a young voice now," he said. Fernand had the temerity to suggest, "Do ask Mademoiselle de Latour, Father." The Marquis, in the mildest of moods, replied: "Since it is your wish, Count," and bowed toward Gilberte.

Gilberte was rather disappointed with Jean-Jacques. She found his deliberately bourgeois clothes affected, and when he went right up to whoever was speaking at the time and stared, she had to choke back her laughter. Nor had he said a single word that could be considered impressive. The famous man left her cold.

When the Marquis called on her, she calmly asked Jean-Jacques if he would sing his duet 'In the Shade of a Happy Valley' with her. The Master, somewhat taken aback at such lack of respect, regarded the tall, fresh young girl with his shortsighted eyes. "I shall not sing again this evening, mademoiselle," he answered stiffly.

There was a short, embarrassed silence. Gilberte did not seem really offended; she did what she had been asked to do, took up the lute and sang.

She sang the song of King Henry and fair Gabrielle, a sort of soldier's ballad which had almost come to be regarded as Château Er-

menonville's own song. For Henry the Fourth — Henry the Great — had often visited his friend and brother-in-arms De Vic, Lord of Château Ermenonville, in the company of his fair mistress Gabrielle d'Estrée. The tower where they had lived, Gabrielle's Tower, was in good condition; mementos of Gabrielle and King Henry were everywhere about the castle.

Gilberte sang:

“When the taste of victory palls
Henry Four, our noble King,
Safe within these castle walls
Dallies long and has his fling
With fair Lady Gabrielle —
Happy times has he and sport:
And rememb'ring what they wrought,
Happy times have we as well.”

Jean-Jacques made no comment. Fernand was sad that his friend Gilberte had failed to win the Master's approval.

Jean-Jacques now turned to Fernand and asked, “Do you play too, monsieur?” Hesitantly Fernand replied that he had learned to play the piano a little. He did not add that he would rather have learned the violin but that for some reason the Marquis had been against it. For a while Fernand had practiced in secret with his tutor, Monsieur Gerber, an enthusiastic fiddler. But when his father discovered this he had, for the sake of discipline, actually smashed the violin.

As if prompted by an impulse to justify himself, the Marquis now told Jean-Jacques how he had brought Fernand up according to the principles laid down in the Master's novel on education, *Émile*. To keep the young Count in trim, he had made him take long walks and swim in the lake even in winter. He had also taken care that his son should be in touch with the people. Thus Fernand had played with the peasant children of Ermenonville, had gone to school with them and learned reading, writing, and arithmetic from the village school-master Philippe Harlet. “Apart from that,” he went on, “his education in the arts and sciences has of course not been neglected. Our dear and learned friend Monsieur Gerber has instructed him in the classics and in morals. And in German too, of which he is a master, being Alsatian.” He bowed slightly in Monsieur Gerber's direction.

While Jean-Jacques had disliked the pertness of Mademoiselle de Latour, his capricious nature was drawn toward Fernand as he stood

there shy and blushing while his father talked about him. "Then the young Count is ten times more learned than an old man like me," he said jokingly. Stroking Lady's head while the dog stared at him with her moist, faithful eyes, he turned to the Marquis. "And yet I would like your permission to contribute to the young master's education and in this way pay a part of my rent. I won't poach on your preserves, Monsieur Gerber. But if the young man does not mind taking the trouble of accompanying me on my walks now and again, I will merely talk to him of this or that — whatever happens to enter my head."

Highly pleased, the Marquis accepted the Master's offer with the warmest expressions of gratitude. Fernand was overwhelmed. He was only sorry that the Master had been so cool toward Gilberte. She herself, however, seemed scarcely to mind.

From now on Jean-Jacques and Fernand took frequent walks together, accompanied by the setter Lady. Jean-Jacques did not sound like a philosopher. But although he spoke of slight, ordinary matters, everything he said struck Fernand as being significant.

With Fernand he explored the park and countryside around Ermenonville, in which there were an astonishing number of lovely secluded spots. Fernand showed him the hidden clearing which he regarded as his property. Jean-Jacques extolled its peace and isolation and remarked, without Fernand's having to point it out, "It should have a magnificent echo, this clearing of yours." At once, like a small boy, he tried it out. "A thousand thanks, my dear Fernand!" he called into the woods, and, "My dear Fernand!" the call came back. This was the first time Jean-Jacques had called him by his first name, and Fernand's face lit up. "I am happy, Monsieur Jean-Jacques!" he shouted into the shadows. "Monsieur Jean-Jacques!" answered the forest.

Jean-Jacques smiled kindly at Fernand. Then he stood up and called in his deep voice, "Freedom and Equality!" "Freedom and Equality!" shouted Fernand in the opposite direction, and now "Freedom and Equality!" reverberated from all sides. But this time the echo was confused, distorted, and sinister, and they did not call again.

Jean-Jacques felt no suspicion toward young people. They were still close to Nature; they understood him. In Fernand's company he behaved with childlike gaiety. Indeed at times he appeared more childlike than Fernand. And when the latter gathered chickweed, that small reddish plant which was the favorite food of Jean-Jacques's canary birds, then the bitter, disillusioned man who would accept

nothing from any grand gentleman thanked him with manifest pleasure.

Jean-Jacques was fond of talking about the nature and habits of plants, though he was never didactic about it. Botany was a delightful science, and you could gather knowledge and experience while walking. He began a new herbarium, an album in which he pressed the flowers that he found at Ermenonville. Fernand helped him press them. Later, Jean-Jacques told him, he would only have to look at these 'Flora of Ermenonville' for wood and hill and valley to come to life for him.

Then he would abruptly begin to speak of weighty matters — of the limits of state authority, of the innate rights of man, of a sensible, natural order of society.

Friendship with the Master meant fulfillment and great happiness to Fernand. Only one thing disturbed him. He did not dare to show Gilberte the full extent of his happiness. How cruelly disappointed she must be that Jean-Jacques rejected her. He tried to comfort her with cautious phrases. But she was in no need of consolation. With her big, strong hand she brushed aside the crotchety old man's whims. "I am only interested in his books," she said. "I read the *Nouvelle Héloïse* and am grateful to him for that."

Besides, her thoughts were taken up with other matters. She was leaving Latour for a while and going to Saint-Vigor, her grandfather's beautiful country seat near Versailles. Monsieur Robinet had invited a number of ladies and gentlemen to whom Gilberte was to be introduced. He also intended to take her to Paris for a week or two.

Happy and excited, she told Fernand about the gowns that were being made for her, and showed him the courtly gestures, the dance steps, curtsies, and the thousand other arts she had to master.

Fernand had spent his early childhood with his father at the Lunéville court of Stanislas, the king of Poland, and even nowadays the Girardins, father and son, frequently put in appearances at Paris and Versailles. But Fernand was full of Jean-Jacques's libertarian ideals; he lent himself with reluctance to the cumbersome, empty ceremonies. To him the life at court and in the Paris salons, for all its wit and dazzle, lacked depth in feeling, and he often jeered at it. He praised Jean-Jacques for having refused, after the success of his opera, *The Village Prophet*, to appear for an audience with Louis the Fifteenth although he knew that by so doing he was forfeiting an otherwise certain annual pension.

Gilberte made no secret of the fact that she did not share Fernand's distaste for the atmosphere of the Court and the Paris salons. She was looking forward to Paris and Saint-Vigor. He was rather vexed that she should not be more downcast over their impending separation.

She noticed this and made up her mind to do something to please him.

He had told her that Jean-Jacques often sat by the lake beneath the old willow tree, gazing across the island of tall poplars, musing and meditating. From the thickly wooded island you could watch him without being seen. Gilberte suggested to Fernand that they hide on the island and make music, play Jean-Jacques's melodies, sing his songs, while he sat beneath his willow tree.

And so they did. They played and sang Jean-Jacques's duets, and other tunes; Gilberte sang that song of his which was heard all over France — in the Queen's chambers, in the seamstress's workshop, in the peasant's barnyard:

“Little birds, so carefree in your love,
Pity me and cease your song.
The lover who gave me joy
Has sailed for a foreign land.
For New World treasures he forsook
His love, and death defied.
Why seeks he joys across the sea
That he here already has?”

They had feared that Jean-Jacques might be annoyed and leave; it was never possible to predict how he would react to what one did to please him. But he stayed; he listened.

Next time he visited the château he described how he had heard music from the island, and the singing of young voices. He could not say whether it had been imagination or reality, but it had been beautiful.

Fernand and Gilberte did not betray their secret. They held each other's hands, smiling happily.

Two days later Gilberte left for Saint-Vigor.

Chapter 6 *Mind and Heart*

JEAN-JACQUES had reached the conclusion that Monsieur de Girardin honestly meant well by him; he went more and more often to the château, two or three evenings a week.

He submitted with good grace when Girardin asked about the ultimate meaning of certain passages in his books; he answered patiently and often at some length. The Marquis had had Jean-Jacques's books splendidly bound and interspersed with blank pages; on these blank pages he entered Jean-Jacques's elucidations, adding each time in delicate Greek characters: *'autòs épha'* — the Master's own words.

Girardin spoke to Jean-Jacques occasionally of his own affairs. One evening he indulged in a bitter outburst against the Prince de Condé, to whom, as a prince of the blood, the Capitainerie Royale had granted hunting rights over Girardin's estate. His peasants, he recounted heatedly, were complaining about the monstrous havoc wrought by the game. More than once peasants who had tried to drive away the game animals had been shot at by the Prince's keepers. He had always rebelled against such abuse of the royal privilege, and he spoke of an incident in Fernand's childhood that still gave him pleasure to remember.

One time, when the Prince gave notice that he was coming to hunt, the Marquis went away in order not to have to greet him, and left little Count Fernand, at that time twelve years old, to do the honors. Fernand did not appear at the Prince's table until dessert, and when the Prince offered him some choice fruit he answered, "Thank you, monsieur, this is my home and I have already been served."

Jean-Jacques was amused by the story. Courage of this kind, he declared, was rarer than military bravery. Fernand blushed.

One evening, finding Jean-Jacques in a particularly expansive mood, the Marquis asked, "What happened to the 'Polish Constitution' which you drew up for our friend Count Wielhorski? Why were only

fragments of it published?" Jean-Jacques's face grew dark. "The Count is no friend of mine," he said, and added, "Excerpts from the manuscript were published prematurely in a distorted form; they brought fresh persecution upon me. I do not know whether the Count was to blame. In any case I forbade further publication."

Jean-Jacques had brought his womenfolk with him, and while the others sat in an embarrassed silence old Madame Levasseur applied herself to her food with an air of indifference. She knew quite well what they were talking about. It was she who had loaned out a copy of the manuscript, and been well paid for it. The Polish gentleman had known nothing about the matter. Probably her fool of a son-in-law was exaggerating the consequences.

Meanwhile Jean-Jacques went on grimly, "In any case Wielhorski and his adherents would not have been able to put my constitution into effect. To translate my ideas into reality is a hard problem, for the moment insoluble. I have worked in vain. My 'Corsican Constitution' was also useless labor. The time hasn't come yet," he repeated, tight-lipped, "to turn my political concepts into practical laws. You can't produce democracy by edict."

Monsieur Gerber was shy and seldom spoke at table. But today he felt he had to do so. "Permit me," he said contentiously, "to defend Jean-Jacques against Jean-Jacques. Thousands have learned from your *Constitution for the Republic of Corsica* that the general principles of the *Social Contract* can be converted into unequivocal directives for a particular situation."

"Yes, and we all know what has become of the Republic of Corsica," Jean-Jacques returned bitterly. "And of my constitution."

Monsieur Gerber grew heated. "The constitution which Plato drew up for Syracuse," he said, "was never put into practice either. Yet Plato's *Republic* is still alive and effective today. The Americans have realized that your *Social Contract* is something more than a beautiful Utopia, and are on the point of making it a reality. The time will come when France too — when all of Europe will see you as its Lycurgus."

Fernand sprang to his feet. "That time will come!" he cried. "I know it will come." Jean-Jacques rose and gave him his hand. "You are right, Fernand," he said. "Men will find their way back to Nature and to virtue. But the way will be long and fraught with suffering." Though he spoke tonelessly, his deep voice, old, sad, yet confident, went straight to Fernand's heart.

Since Gilberte's departure he had spent more and more time with the Master. He had so far overcome his natural shyness as to talk to him about Gilberte. "And it is you, Monsieur Jean-Jacques," he said impetuously, "whom I have to thank for it all. Since reading the *Nouvelle Héloïse* I have known how love can be in tune with Nature and God — and how glorious life!"

Jean-Jacques's sad, wise, penetrating gaze lingered on him. "You have happy eyes, Fernand," he told him. "You see this girl of yours with happy eyes. Long may you continue to do so. I too was once very happy. But a susceptible heart is one of heaven's most fatal gifts. Its possessor is the plaything of the air and elements; sun and mist determine his fate; he is sad or happy as the wind blows."

Their understanding of each other deepened. Often they sat opposite each other in the woods, the old philosopher with the vital face, the sensitive mouth, the strong, bold nose and the marvelously intelligent brow; the young man with the burning eyes. At their feet crouched Lady, the setter. They felt a bond between them as they talked, and even more when they were silent.

On the other hand, there were times when Fernand thought he sensed that Jean-Jacques wished to be alone. Then he would slip quietly away.

Once, while they were resting in the open and the Master was obviously talking to himself and not to him, he began to move off. But Jean-Jacques looked up. "Why do you run away, Fernand?" he asked, and then went on talking of the most intimate matters in Fernand's presence.

Thereafter this happened often. Jean-Jacques would meditate aloud, and seemed to like Fernand's being there. He might begin by complaining that he spoke the simplest language in the world — the language of the heart — and yet this was the language many refused to understand. Misunderstandings had turned friends into foes, brought persecution upon him such as no man had suffered before. "My persecutors have enemies too," he said, "but they need enemies, need persecution; they have a thick skin and pressure only makes it thicker and more calloused. My skin is thinner, easily hurt. They do not realize, my erstwhile friends, what they are doing to me. They mock me, they torment me, and when I cry out they say, 'How sensitive he is.' And I loved them; I was truly their friend; I feel their loss. Oh, those whom life takes away give me more pain than those who are taken away by death."

Fernand sat quite still and listened. Even though he had been asked to stay, he felt like a spy.

His heart was full of sympathy for the Master. He felt he must give him some token of his love. And one day the shy young man plucked up courage. Stammering a reverent lie, he explained to Jean-Jacques that the dog, Lady, had grown very fond of him and now looked on him as her master. He begged Jean-Jacques to take the bitch over into the pavilion. He needed her, needed a watchdog against his many enemies.

Touched, Jean-Jacques smilingly accepted the gift.

Chapter 7 Nicolas and Thérèse

ONE EVENING when Jean-Jacques was up at the château and the women were sitting alone in the pavilion, there came a knock on the door. The women were surprised. Nicolas entered.

He bowed low, conveying a hint of mockery by the extravagance of the gesture. Monsieur le Marquis, he declared with a polite grin, had ordered him to do all in his power to serve the ladies. But since he was not allowed to show himself in front of Monsieur Rousseau, he had had no chance to find out whether the ladies had any special wishes. To put this right, he was taking it upon himself to come while the philosopher was at the castle.

The women were sitting at the table; the meat was steaming in the dish. Madame Levasseur looked at Nicolas with her small, hard eyes. "I can't think of anything we need," she said. But Thérèse replied in her languid voice, "It is kind of you to ask, Monsieur Nicolas."

The old woman sat deliberately silent, her manner challenging Nicolas to remove himself. He stayed. Impudently he looked Thérèse up and down with arrogant appreciation. Thérèse returned his look. "Won't you eat with us, Monsieur Nicolas?" she invited him. Madame Levasseur said sourly, "Jean-Jacques may come back

at any moment." Not taking his eyes off Thérèse, Nicolas said in his strong English accent, "The respected author and philosopher, Monsieur Rousseau, will hardly be back as soon as all that. Dinner at the castle lags because the conversation is so interesting, and even when it's over Monsieur le Marquis usually detains Monsieur the Philosopher." "I absolutely will not have my son-in-law see you here," said Madame Levasseur in her toneless, hoarse voice. She emphasized the "you." Apparently amused, Nicolas bowed and said, "My dear ladies, that is just why I picked this time to pay you my respects." Again he looked at Thérèse. As if drawn and compelled, she said, "Won't you please sit down, Monsieur Nicolas," and she stood up to fetch him a plate and silverware. Nicolas replied, "Since you are so kind as to ask me, madame, it would be impolite to refuse."

Madame Levasseur maintained a hostile silence. This fellow was no dish for her. But Nicolas was a deft talker and soon overcame the awkwardness. He knew the world, he remarked; he had been head trainer for Mr. Tattersall in London, the best judge of horse-flesh in the world. Grand gentlemen were in and out of the place all the time, and it had cost the Marquis a good deal of money and persuasion to lure him away from such a first-rate position. He sometimes regretted having exchanged that marvelous great city of London for the dullness and loneliness of Ermenonville. But now that he had had the good fortune to meet the Ladies Rousseau, he no longer regretted it. He raised his glass to Madame Levasseur, then with a meaningful glance at Thérèse said, "Your health!" and drank it off. He hadn't intended to talk about himself, he went on fluently, but to express his surprise at Monsieur Rousseau's queer-ness. For all his knowledge of the world, he had never come across such a man before. London had its Doctor Johnson, a famous philosopher too, but fond of good living and a man who knew how to get money out of people. And here Monsieur Rousseau, an even more famous philosopher, made not a sou or a penny out of his fame. He, Nicolas, was always eager to learn, and would be grateful if the ladies could explain this to him.

Madame Levasseur's mistrust increased. The fellow had designs on Thérèse, that much was obvious. He'd caught on right away that she had taken a fancy to him. The way the silly goose was angling for him with her eyes, he couldn't have missed it. This fellow Nicolas knew a thing or two about women, and obviously he didn't need her

plump and aging daughter Thérèse. The man smelled money in Jean-Jacques's philosophy and wanted to worm his way into the family. Madame Levasseur would have to put a spoke in his wheel. She intended to keep her daughter under her thumb; she was not going to let any beggarly Englishman put his dirty fingers in her pie.

Thérèse rose slowly and began to clear the table. Nicolas said, "Now I must be going or Monsieur really might come back. Too bad — I really would have liked to hear about his philosophy. We haven't discussed the ladies' special wishes either. Perhaps I may make a suggestion?" He turned to Thérèse: "Suppose you walk part of the way through the park with me, so that Monsieur Rousseau doesn't surprise us here. Then we can talk it all over, the philosophy and the special wishes." Thérèse stood uncertainly. Madame Levasseur said, low and sharp, "Am I supposed to wash the dishes by myself?" Her mother's opposition irritated Thérèse. "I'll be right back," she said, and went out with Nicolas.

Outside it was still, and very dark. The paths were narrow; to walk side by side, their bodies had to touch. They plunged into a little wood. Nicolas led her with confidence; he obviously felt at home in the dark. They could hear each other's breathing. Twigs cracked under their feet. "You don't have an easy life," Nicolas said at last, "with your Mama and Monsieur the Philosopher. Such a charming lady deserves a much better life, if you ask me." He subdued his squeaky voice, but it still sounded almost shrill in the silence of the night. He put his arm around her waist to guide her. She was aware of the strong masculine smell emanating from him. "When I say 'a charming lady' I know what I'm talking about. I've had experience." With an abrupt, vigorous movement he pulled her to him and impudently gave her a long, deep kiss on the mouth. Then, releasing her, he said politely, "Thank you, madame," and resumed the conversation. "No, you certainly don't have an easy time of it. Monsieur Rousseau may know philosophy, but he doesn't know life. Believe me. Otherwise he'd make hay while the sun shines. All the aristocrats are crazy about him today, but who can tell what tomorrow may bring? The high and mighty change faster than the moon. I know the world, I've had experiences of my own. One day it will be too late and Monsieur the Philosopher will be stuck, and you with him."

Thérèse defended Jean-Jacques. "My husband doesn't need your aristocrats," she said with unwonted belligerence. "The publishers

offer my husband any amount of money for his philosophical works, and there are whole piles of writings. But he won't send them out. He doesn't want the money." Nicolas whistled through his teeth. "I understand, madame," he said. "A life of poverty is part of his philosophy." Rather helplessly, without much conviction, Thérèse said, "He is a great man. Everyone says so." It sounded like an apology. "I daresay he is," said Nicolas condescendingly. "I'm no judge of that. But I do know that he is a very impractical man, totally inexperienced. Let's be frank about it; he's a fool." Thérèse made an attempt to explain: "It has to do with his philosophy. He says, 'simplicity,' he says, 'back to Nature,' and won't take money." "All very well," Nicolas answered, "but why doesn't he go back to this Nature of his alone? Why does he have to take you with him? Bare Nature isn't what you're destined for, madame. I saw that the moment I laid eyes on you."

Thérèse was silent. Glibly, Nicolas went on, "You may say, 'What business is that of yours, Monsieur Nicolas?' and in a way you would be right. If Monsieur Rousseau is impractical and you have no objection, madame, then it should not matter at all to me. But it does matter to me. It makes my blood boil. Not for his sake, but for yours, madame. Because I'm interested in you, as I dare say you've already noticed." And he kissed her even more violently than before.

Breathing hard, Thérèse straightened her bonnet and neckerchief and said, "I must go back, or Jean-Jacques will really come and wonder where I am." "What a pity," said Nicolas gallantly. "I could have gone on talking with you all night, madame. But if there's no help for it —" and he escorted her back.

"And we still haven't discussed your special wishes or Monsieur Rousseau's possible needs," he said as the lighted windows of the house came in view. "We must meet again soon. The only trouble is that your Mama doesn't approve of me, and I don't think she'll be overjoyed to see me again. May I suggest that we talk things over without your Mama, next time Monsieur dines at the château? May I expect you here, in the dark?" She made no reply. He kissed her a last time, feeling her up and down. Her body yielded, and he knew she would come.

Whistling softly, he went back to the servants' quarters. He was in good humor. She was a handful all right, and she was in the bag. And with her there'd be some cash, too. The dear old girl had let that out, in the simplicity of her heart. Back to Nature! He'd get his

hands on the jack. Let that mucking mother of hers, that fat little old bag, bust a gut with fury.

Hitherto his life in France had been a disappointment to him. He had had dreams of starting up a business in Paris like Tattersall's in London, a riding school with a bit of horse-trading and betting on the side. But you needed capital to get started — that was the hitch. This Madame Rousseau might be just the bootstrap he needed to pull himself up by. Perhaps — after all, Fortune was fond of choosing roundabout ways — the scribblings of that idiot would be turned into good horses yet. At any rate, one thing was certain, the philosopher's wife had a nice backside.

While the Marquis's servant pursued his dream, Thérèse in the pavilion washed the dishes while Madame Levasseur made quite clear what she thought of her daughter's association with Monsieur Nicolas.

Madame Levasseur had no objection to Thérèse's carrying on with a man now and then. Jean-Jacques was old, and even in his best years he had never been man enough to satisfy a full-blooded female. Besides Thérèse had her work cut out for her, taking care of him. Not every woman would have looked after that cripple with such devotion during his attacks; it was a messy business. And not every girl would have put up with his quirks so patiently. So that before God and man Thérèse certainly had a right to a bit of amusement in her limited spare time. But she might be more choosy about her suitors. "You might give Jean-Jacques a finer collaborator," she declared. "This Englishman isn't the right man at all. He caught a whiff of the cash to be got out of this philosopher of yours, and that's all he's after. These pug-nosed, pale-eyed types — I never could stomach them. Or do you think he wants you for your soft eyes and fat behind? He can get them younger and thinner whenever he wants. If you've got to roll in the hay, you slut, kindly pick someone who isn't out to fleece you and your old mother."

Thérèse washed the dishes and said nothing.

Chapter 8 *Fernand's Entanglements*

BY TACIT CONSENT, Jean-Jacques and Fernand concealed their friendship. When Jean-Jacques was visiting the château he addressed himself to Girardin and Monsieur Gerber, seldom to Fernand.

It struck Fernand that the Jean-Jacques who conversed with his father and Monsieur Gerber was a different person from the Jean-Jacques whom he knew on his walks. Exchanging question and answer with his father and Monsieur Gerber, he was no longer the unconstrained, youthful, almost lighthearted man who roamed in the woods with Fernand. Apparently people had no fixed outline; they changed with the company they kept.

At the château Jean-Jacques sometimes became a complete stranger to Fernand. On one occasion Fernand left rather than let this alien Jean-Jacques spoil the picture he carried in his heart.

He wandered through the darkened gardens, musing on his Jean-Jacques. Would he ever succeed in making Jean-Jacques see Gilberte as he saw her?

Voices startled him out of his reverie. He heard whispering, breathing, sighing, the broken moans and murmurs of a couple making love. He stood still, attracted and repelled. He had had his own early experiences — wild, brief, ugly, sad, disappointing incidents, one here in the country, one in Paris. He hated to think of them, and ever since he realized how deeply he loved Gilberte he had banished all memory of them to a remote corner of his consciousness.

He wanted to hurry away; it was indecent, beneath him, to listen to what was going on here. No doubt a manservant and a maid in their lust. The rut of animals was better than the rut of humans. Animals knew nothing else but rut; when human beings abandoned to lust what they ought to keep for love, they felt a rage of shame.

He turned away, took a few steps to put himself beyond the range of this moaning and whispering.

Then he recognized the voices.

He recognized the man's voice first; there was only one person who squeaked like that — that odious groom Nicolas. In the same instant, shocked to the depths of his being, he recognized the woman's voice. That throaty, drawling voice was also unmistakable. It belonged to . . . Even in his thoughts he shied away from the name. No, he would not listen. Now it would be a sin to listen. He had to go away.

He stayed. Listened.

Listened with turmoil in his heart. This, then, was the woman, depraved, half animal, whom France's most sublime philosopher had chosen for his companion. There he sat in the dining hall, blithely conversing with Father and Monsieur Gerber, and here lay his wife, the woman who had shared decades of his life with him, lying with the scum of the earth, with a clod into whom the Creator had blown only the faintest breath of spirit. There they were, moaning in their bestial lust, wallowing in the mud. And this was being done to the greatest, the wisest of mortals! Was Jean-Jacques so blind? Was the man who had seen more deeply into the world than anyone else blind within his immediate orbit, his own four walls, his marriage bed? Fernand was filled with boundless astonishment, with fear of life, with deepest compassion for the great childlike man who had tied his life to this lascivious bitch.

He walked in the darkness for a long time, his thoughts in turmoil. What was he to do? How would he face Jean-Jacques? Ought he not to inform him of his dreadful discovery?

Next day he avoided Jean-Jacques. He wanted to thresh things out with himself first. Perhaps he had been mistaken after all; perhaps emotional confusion had forced him to put a false interpretation on what he heard — and how horrible a mistake would be in such a momentous affair. He must have been mistaken. He had been mistaken. The English groom had been amusing himself with one of the maids. He should have looked the other way and passed on. Forget the matter.

But he could not get out of his head the low, confused, vulgar, disturbing sounds that had reached him from the shrubbery. And it *had* been Jean-Jacques's wife! There was only one such voice.

He must hear that voice again, must put the thing to the test.

He devised a pretext for seeing her and went to the pavilion at a time when he knew Jean-Jacques was out walking.

The women were surprised. He stood irresolutely, stammered something about wishing to ask Jean-Jacques to copy the music he had brought as soon as possible, even if it meant leaving other work aside; he needed it as a surprise for his father. Madame Levasseur took the music from him and said she would give Jean-Jacques the message.

At this point Fernand should by rights have gone. He stayed. His empty hands dangled awkwardly. He watched Thérèse, surreptitiously, so he thought. She regarded him calmly, shamelessly, with animal placidity. She had immediately sensed that he had come because of her.

There was a silence. The canary birds trilled in their cage. Neither of the women came to his aid; they waited for him to speak. He made a stab at it. "I wanted to ask," he began, "whether Monsieur Jean-Jacques feels at home here, whether you yourselves feel at home." His tongue tripped him up in his effort to overcome his embarrassment. "You surely know, mesdames," he went on, "that Monsieur Jean-Jacques has often allowed me to accompany him. I flatter myself that I might even say I have his friendship. So you will understand that it means a great deal to me to know that Monsieur Jean-Jacques feels at home here in our Ermenonville. I hope you all feel at home here," he added slyly and politely. He thought to himself 'I was mistaken after all. She is so calm. Of course she has no idea that I know her hideous secret. The way she looks at me! No, I was not mistaken. She would drive any man crazy; you can feel it. And yet she isn't even beautiful. And she's stupid and common. Scum. Is she never going to take her eyes off me?'

Madame Levasseur meanwhile was reflecting that she would never understand what it was that men found attractive in a woman. Her Thérèse was certainly not beautiful; she had a fat, expressionless face and was as lazy and stupid as a herd of cows; yet men swarmed about her like flies around a carcass. Here was this young count, heir to a noble house, stammering and stuttering and squirming with lust. Actually, of course, it was a blessing. Perhaps he could be played off against that good-for-nothing lout and interloper, that manure-prince Nicolas. This innocent bumpkin certainly would not try to steer Jean-Jacques's money into his own pocket and do her out of her share.

"We are grateful to you for your friendly interest, sir," she said. "We're getting on quite well here, and my son-in-law likes it. I don't

imagine we'll be in a hurry to go back to Paris. If Jean-Jacques gets enough work" — and she nodded towards the music — "we shall find our bread and butter here too." Thérèse looked steadily at Fernand. It gave her a lift to have someone half her own age fall for her — a good-looking boy, not a worn-out philosopher. And a count at that. "Thank you very much, Count Fernand," she said at last, "we like it here very much." It sounded as if she had said, "I like you very much."

For a long time Fernand drifted around the gardens, oppressed by gloomy thoughts and reveries. This woman Thérèse was as full of mysteries as Nature herself. When you looked into her eyes you plumbed the primal depths of life. That was probably why Jean-Jacques had attached himself to her. He had taken Nature itself to wife — Nature, which was at once good and evil.

In the days that followed, Fernand went on avoiding the Master and lurked about the pavilion when he knew Jean-Jacques was not there. It was base of him, wicked, a betrayal of the Master. But did not the Master himself teach that people should learn more from Nature than from books? Fernand had to get to the bottom of the sinister mystery. He had to find out what linked Jean-Jacques to this woman, and what bound her to that animal Nicolas.

After a short while, though it seemed to him endless, he met Thérèse. She was going to pass by without stopping; she seemed in a hurry. He plucked up courage and asked whether he might discuss Jean-Jacques's affairs with her. She considered, then answered without embarrassment that Jean-Jacques went to bed early, even before dark. She could see Fernand that evening; he might expect her sometime after nine o'clock by the bridge. "A walk is a good thing, these warm nights," she said. She spoke clumsily, groping for every word.

It was a clear night, but even so the paths through woods and thickets were shadowed and dark. They spoke little. They had to watch where they were going, and now and again they called to each other to give warning of a stone or a protruding branch. When they spoke it was with bated breath and subdued voices. There was secrecy in their movements, an air of things forbidden.

Fernand was extremely ill at ease. Here he was roaming the woods with this woman, just like that beast Nicolas. What would Jean-Jacques think if he should see him? And Gilberte? She would shrink from him forever. Yet both would be unfair to him. His purpose here

was not that of Nicolas, but that of a philosopher.

They came to the willow tree by the lake where Jean-Jacques liked to sit. Thérèse pushed the mass of twigs aside and sank down on the grassy bank with a faint sigh of relief. With a gesture she invited him to sit down beside her. The bank was narrow, their bodies touched as they sat.

Opposite was the island with the tall poplars in whose shadow he and Gilberte had sung for Jean-Jacques. It lay bathed in silvery-green moonlight. And here he sat with Jean-Jacques's wife, prying and spying on them both. Yet the sense of something forbidden was not unpleasant; it excited him.

Nevertheless, he involuntarily moved a little away from Thérèse. She gave a barely perceptible start of surprise. "You wanted to ask me something about Jean-Jacques, Count Fernand, didn't you?" she said in her husky voice. He was grateful to her for breaking the oppressive silence. "Yes, madame," he hastened to answer, "it would be very kind of you to tell me." "What do you want me to tell?" she asked after a pause. He reflected. Then he asked, "What does Jean-Jacques do when he is at home? Does he work?" Faintly surprised, she answered, "Of course, monsieur. He potters about with those pressed plants of his. And he often copies music." Patiently Fernand explained, "I didn't mean that. I mean, is he writing anything new?" "He sometimes writes too," Thérèse replied with amiable indifference. "A few days ago he read some of it aloud to me. He often reads aloud to me. I don't understand all of it. I don't catch on very fast, you know. All that scribbling isn't for me, anyhow. It isn't for the living. It's for the ones to come, he says."

"I ought not to be listening to this," Fernand thought. "It's indecent. She betrays him out of stupidity, in all innocence; but I know what I'm doing." "Isn't it getting late for you, madame?" he said aloud. "Wouldn't you like to go back?" "Not yet," she replied easily. "Jean-Jacques is in bed, and he's a good, sound sleeper."

He seized on her words, grateful to have found a harmless topic of conversation. "So his health has been good here in Ermenonville?" he asked. "Yes," she answered, "he is well at the moment, thank God. But with him you can expect an attack anytime. You know, this frightful bladder trouble, this urethritis." She stressed every syllable of the medical term. "And it always comes just at the worst possible moment. That time when his opera was performed at court and he should have had the audience and received a pension, he simply

couldn't appear before the King. You know, when he has these attacks, he has to leave the room all the time, and that wouldn't do with the King and all those fine ladies and gentlemen. When he has an attack he won't have anyone with him but me. And looking after him is no simple matter, I can tell you. I have to insert the catheter, and not hurt him; he's always sorry for himself, and it is very painful. And of course he's irritable and impatient. But I'm used to it. I'm not complaining."

So it was not the pride of a free citizen that had prompted Jean-Jacques to decline the audience, but an affliction of the bladder! Fernand compressed his lips. He would not have it so; it was impossible. That was her simple-minded explanation for it but it was not so. 'I mustn't stay here any longer,' he thought to himself over and over again. 'I am spying on Jean-Jacques in his nakedness. I am sounding out this woman who is as innocent and irresponsible as Nature itself. It's unethical. It is *stealing* fruit from the tree of knowledge. I shall no longer be able to face Gilberte. I mustn't go on listening.'

But Thérèse sat there quietly, obviously wanting to stay, and he could not think how to start leaving. He asked, "You have been married to Jean-Jacques for more than twenty years, haven't you, madame?" "Married only ten years," she replied without embarrassment. "But I've lived with him since I was eighteen. Ever since he took me away from that awful hotel. The others kept pestering me and he protected me. He was very good to me. But I've always taken very good care of him, too. Then all of a sudden he took it into his head to marry me. It was a lovely wedding. We were in Bourgoin at the time, at the Golden Fountain Inn. He invited two friends, artillery officers. He took a private room and made a gorgeous speech, and then he said, 'And so I declare before Nature that I take this woman to be my wife.' We were all very moved, and then we had a marvelous meal and we all sang." She told her story slowly, hesitantly, not because she was embarrassed but because she had to pick her words.

Then she broke off with coarse archness. "But I'm talking about myself. You're interested in Jean-Jacques, not me." Blushing furiously — though of course she could not see that in the dark — Fernand clumsily assured her that he was interested in anything about Jean-Jacques, and especially in her, his faithful companion. "Companion," Thérèse repeated slowly, "that's a nice word. I must remem-

ber it. And that's really how it has been. We've had a lot of good times together in all these long years, and a lot of bad ones too, I must say. It's a relief to have a friend you can say these things to. Everyone else is always envious of me because I'm the wife of the great Jean-Jacques, and they say nasty things about me. But it isn't easy for a simple girl to be the wife of a philosopher. Companion. He's a saint, but he's difficult. He's ill, and difficult to look after, and he's irritable and impatient. I have plenty of worry and hard work."

She shifted a little closer to Fernand, held out her hand to him. Did he take her hand or she his? It was a large, fleshy hand, somewhat damp. He pressed it. Then, without withdrawing her hand, she slowly stood up. He also rose, abruptly, acutely embarrassed, but he did not let go of her hand.

They returned in silence. He took her right up to the house.

When Thérèse next met Nicolas she was immeasurably tender. Being a cynic, he saw through it at once. "Aha," he observed, "You've been carrying on with our little count, that lanky bean pole." With unwonted spirit Thérèse replied, "You're mad. Count Fernand is shy, and a little boy. He talks about nothing but philosophy." "So you think you can teach me something about human nature?" exclaimed Nicolas. "They talk about the top story when they really mean the ground floor. And don't get the idea that I'm jealous. I know just how good I am. I won't lose by the comparison."

Chapter 9 A Sergeant Takes A Hand

FROM THE little town of Dammartin, Nicolas brought back a letter which had been handed to him there at the Two Angels' Inn, to be delivered to Madame Levasseur in person. "A love letter for your Mama," he told Thérèse with a grin.

The old lady, usually so cheerful and even-tempered, became pale and speechless as soon as she recognized the handwriting. The letter was from François, from Sergeant François Renoux, her son!

So he was back from America! When the King had recently concluded his military alliance she had given up hope of ever seeing her beloved François again.

She held the letter unopened in her aged, trembling hands, and a swift succession of images, the vicissitudes of a long, hard life, reeled through her mind. There were the brief, happy years with her first husband, Sergeant Renoux. A little irresponsible, her lamented Po-paule, all soldier, not exactly bright, but what a man! A real figure of a man! And how she had loved him, even though he had given her so much to worry about, and kept her frantic trying to lay hands on the money he was always asking for. But then he would tell of his campaigns, of the Polish War of Succession, the battles of Philipps-burg and Milan, and her heart would leap up when he talked so mightily and smiled like a happy little boy, all the time patting her bottom.

And their son, François, had taken after him. He too was a soldier from head to foot, he had the same booming laugh and the same gay, generous heart. And when he came with that shamefaced and mischievous look of his and asked for money, always more money, she couldn't refuse him any more than she had been able to refuse his father in his time. It was true that the boy always seemed to be fighting in lost battles, but it certainly wasn't his fault that that damnable, godless Prussian Frederick had won at Rossbach and Krefeld. He was a brave boy — he'd proved that by going across the sea to the Americans, to the Boston people, the Liberty fellows, to set up a new society over there. And now, with the alliance concluded, they didn't need him any more. So she could have him again!

She tore open the letter. Yes, he was at the inn in Dammartin. And wasn't he wonderful — no sooner was he back from the red Indians than he came to embrace his mother at the first opportunity! What a pity he couldn't have come straight to Ermenonville; but her fool of a son-in-law got hopping mad if he so much as laid eyes on François. One time when Jean-Jacques was away he had borrowed a few shirts from his drawer, and Jean-Jacques had raised the roof about this 'theft.' He could forgive François the thousands of livres he had bilked him of, he raged, but to have stolen his India silk shirts, one of his few joys in life, was an act of such abysmal villainy that he never wanted to set eyes on the fellow again. Alas, now she could only embrace her beloved son behind the back of that idiot Jean-Jacques.

They met in the pavilion while Jean-Jacques was dining at the château. Thérèse left them to themselves, and Madame Levasseur experienced a joy such as God reserves only for His saints.

She could not take her eyes off her son. And indeed he was something to feast the eyes upon, was Sergeant Renoux. Madame Levasseur might well be proud that such a little woman as she was the mother of so handsome and imposing a son. So he had been fighting in distant lands, among the savages, in the virgin forests of America, by the side of the Boston people, for tea and freedom. But unfortunately, as the facts trickled out of his colorful narrative, even there he had not had any luck. Of course he had been honored, because he had naturally not withheld the fact that he was the brother-in-law of Jean-Jacques, who, you might say, was the inventor of freedom. But apart from glory the place didn't have very much to offer. "It's only a country for a Jean-Jacques," he declared bitterly. "Nothing but Nature and virtue, and no money at all." And so, after the pact, when they no longer needed him, he had come home. He had fought in seven battles, and when he stepped onto dry land at Le Havre and counted his booty it had amounted to twelve livres and three sous. "In fact," he boomed, "America was a disappointment. The Liberty fellows are broke. Of course I didn't go over there for the sake of money; but for seven battles and all that blood and sweat, twelve livres and three sous is too cheap for my father's son. For my mother's son," he amended with a laugh, slapping her heartily on the back.

Madame Levasseur dissolved in the bliss of this hour. For, happily, he really was his father's son, and she had loved his father, and that was why the son had turned out so well. Her second husband, Monsieur Levasseur, the mint inspector from Orléans, had been a sad, querulous little man whom she had taken for reasons of prudence. Her heart and her loins had not responded to him, and that was why all that had come of it was this dull, heavy, stupid Thérèse. But she'd been the one to have the luck, while her glorious son, now close on fifty, hadn't caught fortune by the forelock, even in the wilds of America.

"At least I've brought a good idea back home with me," Sergeant François went on. "For when our good King Louis made the alliance with the Liberty fellows, I spent a long, miserable, sad night in the bivouac turning the whole military and political situation over and over in my head. I thought of our good King Louis and I said to myself: He won't go for it, he doesn't like these Liberty fellows — you

can't blame him for that from his point of view — and he doesn't want to send them any soldiers. But, I said to myself, in the end he'll have to. Because these Boston people won't pull it off by themselves. If a French army doesn't take a hand, the English will win, and that's something our Most Christian King can't allow either. So in the end, let me tell you, Mama, he'll have to swallow the bitter pill, even if it does make him screw up his face."

He drank some of Jean-Jacques's wine. "Then what?" asked Madame Levasseur. "So they'll need soldiers, I told myself," the Sergeant went on, "and since there aren't enough recruits as it is, there won't be nearly enough in the future. Mark my words, drumming up recruits is an even more profitable business than it used to be. But it's a tough business. You have to be born and raised to it to be a good recruiter. A recruiting officer needs a damn good line of talk and experience in war. So it follows that they'll want you, Sergeant Renoux, I told myself. You, with your well-known gift of gab and your military experience. You can do yourself and the cause of freedom far more good in Paris than in the forests of America. So here I am."

Madame Levasseur foresaw that her son François's good idea would cost her money in the end. But this anxiety was submerged in her tremendous joy at having him back. This much was sure: he was in France, and the war was over there in America. "So you won't be in any hurry to go back to the wars, my boy," she said with relief.

He had only stayed two days in Paris, he explained, for he had longed to see his beloved Mama again at the first possible moment. But he had already had a chance to speak to his friend Colonel de la Rocque. The latter knew his Sergeant Renoux and had already promised him monopoly rights as recruiting sergeant for his regiment. If he really got them and could make his speeches in the splendid uniform of the Royal Racoleurs, with a regimental band and standards, then — as his Mama could imagine — he would rally civilians to the colors by the score. There was only one hitch: the War Ministry required all recruiting sergeants to put up a bond of a hundred louis d'or. He hoped Mama would be able to lend him the money; if she could not he was in danger of missing a sure thing, the chance of a lifetime.

Madame Levasseur had heard of these 'sure things' before, but nothing ever came of them and in her heart of hearts she was convinced that nothing would come of this one either. But she pic-

tured her François in the glittering Racoleur uniform, with the plume on the helmet rising proudly in four spirals, addressing the crowd in his powerful voice, winning over the waverers with his jokes and bullying, and letting the gold pieces glide through his fingers. She could not leave him in the lurch, now that he had returned from America. She would get the money for him, she promised, but he would have to stay a few days in Dammartin while she was raising it. He answered good-naturedly that, of course, he'd realized a hundred louis weren't chicken-shit and Mama couldn't pull them out of her stocking right off; but her promise was enough for him. And he agreed to await a message from her at the Two Angels' Inn.

When she was alone, Madame Levasseur looked longingly and with helpless resentment at Jean-Jacques's desk and chest. There lay the fool's writings, and they were ready cash if only he were willing. Bassompierre, the publisher in Geneva, and Michel Rey in Amsterdam were bidding thousands for them. But — as Madame Levasseur knew from experience — trickery was useless; there was nothing to be done with the papers. The publishers were shrewd businessmen and not satisfied with artful letters and dubious signatures; they wanted written declarations in Jean-Jacques's own hand.

Madame Levasseur was breathing so hard that the down on her upper lip stirred gently. Come what might, she was not going to let her beloved son's projects be frustrated by Jean-Jacques's crazy ideas. She would think of something; she must think of something.

Next day she did think of something.

She went to Monsieur Girardin. "It goes against the grain, sir, for me to come to you begging," she said. "My late-lamented first husband, Sergeant Renoux of the King's Dragoons, had his pride. He liked to conquer and to live on his share of the booty, not on charity. But to speak straight from the shoulder, sir, as becomes the wife of an old soldier: I need money." And she told him about her son's project. Her maternal heart ran away with her; her cold, toneless voice became vibrant. As to her son's plan, it was not just a matter of ordinary recruiting, she declared. He had fought for freedom at the side of the Boston people, in the virgin forests of the red Indians, and with his own eyes and at the risk of his life had seen that her son-in-law's philosophy, Jean-Jacques's ideas on freedom and Nature, could only be put into effect if the King were to send a powerful army across the seas. Her son wanted to do his bit to help this undertaking. That was why he needed the money.

Girardin realized that she intended to touch him for a considerable sum. He drew himself up and pointed his walking stick at her. "How much money do you want, madame?" he asked with military brevity.

"A hundred louis d'or," answered Madame Levasseur with equal brevity.

This was an outrageous request, and Girardin's face showed quite plainly that he regarded it as such. "I don't want the money as a gift," Madame Levasseur hastened to explain. "We have good security to offer. There are works of Jean-Jacques which are not to be published until after his death. They are here, in our care, big bundles of manuscript. I am asking you to lend me the hundred louis against these papers."

The Marquis attempted a tactical maneuver. He was ready to lend the money, he declared, but not behind the Master's back. Madame would permit him to ask for Jean-Jacques's consent. "Go ahead and ask, monsieur," answered Madame Levasseur coldly. "Do, by all means. You'll see what happens — he'll have a fit. I can tell you that in advance, and that's just what I wanted to avoid." She was offended. Her voice became even lower and very hard. "If you go to Jean-Jacques about this, tomorrow or the day after tomorrow he'll go back to Paris. That's as clear as crystal, I know my son-in-law. He won't stay in a place where his poverty has been thrown in his face."

This bloated vampire's unabashed blackmail infuriated Monsieur de Girardin. But the old shark was capable of taking Jean-Jacques back to Paris. He would have to agree to her insolent demands. Moreover, he might possibly profit from her suggestion. There did exist unpublished works by Jean-Jacques; that was well known. The Master had written memoirs, and read aloud from them in Paris; but he had had to give up these readings because certain great ladies and gentlemen had felt insulted, and the Chief of Police had interfered. Girardin was tempted by the prospect of acquiring a claim on the manuscripts.

"It is repugnant to me, madame," he said, "even to think of the time when the manuscripts you mention are to be published. But since you have brought up the matter, I would like to make sure that I have understood you aright. I naturally would not consider having any part in the financial exploitation of the works. I would take it as an insult if you were even to hint of such a possibility. Rather I take it that you mean this: should — in, let us hope, the very

distant future — the necessity arise of considering the posthumous publication of manuscripts by Jean-Jacques, then you and your daughter will empower me to take part in editing them. That was what you meant, was it not, madame?”

The old woman was not sure what these involved, inflated phrases were supposed to mean, but she saw that he was prepared to come across with the hundred louis and she replied boldly, “Certainly, monsieur, that was exactly what I meant.” “Very well, madame,” said Girardin, “I shall be glad to give you a draft for the hundred louis d’or.”

Chapter 10 Heights and Depths

MADAME LEVASSEUR sent a message to her son. He came at once. “I knew it,” he exulted, “you can rely on Mama.” The tall, husky soldier embraced the short, fat old woman and kissed her loudly on both cheeks.

This time, however, she was alone with her boy only for a short time. For Nicolas, instead of sporting with Thérèse in the park, had come to take a look at the sergeant who as Thérèse’s half-brother was, so to speak, his brother-in-law. He listened with interest to Monsieur Renoux’s stories. The two men took to each other at once; they had the same philosophy of life.

There was a knock at the door—and who should enter but the young Count Fernand.

In the meanwhile he had met Jean-Jacques several times. His equable melancholic serenity convinced Fernand that the Master took Nature as he found it and Thérèse just as she was. How presumptuous it would be of Fernand to try to disturb this understanding.

Besides, he might have been mistaken that night. He had to forget; he tried hard to forget.

If only Gilberte were here! A terrible yearning for Gilberte overcame him. He sought out the places where he had been with her;

rode over to the deserted Château Latour. Forcing the astonished caretaker to admit him, he hurried to Gilberte's apartment, her boudoir, her bedroom, snatched up clothes she had left behind, pressed them to his heart, kissed them. He longed for Gilberte; his body and soul were on fire.

He wrote her a long, long letter telling her of his conversations with Jean-Jacques, and of how the Master had complained that his works bore no fruit. Then he told her of his visit to abandoned Latour. He poured out his whole heart. He wrote page upon rapturous page in the language of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*.

Afterward it occurred to him that he had written nothing to her about his experiences with Thérèse. But there was no hypocrisy in this. While he wrote he had genuinely forgotten Thérèse.

However, that evening at the château the familiar doubts and bewilderments had again violently attacked him. As so often in the presence of others, Jean-Jacques had been agreeable to him, but a stranger. And he was hit harder than ever before by the thought that Jean-Jacques was never the same; each person he spoke to turned him into someone else. What was he like when he talked and lived with Thérèse?

There at his father's table sat the Master, amiably chatting and enjoying himself. Who was he, this incomprehensible person, the warmest and the coldest, the most far-seeing and the blindest of mortals? Had he no idea what his wife probably — no, certainly — was doing at this very moment?

A tormenting desire to know more overcame Fernand. He could not bear to stay in the château. The woman would certainly be taking advantage of Jean-Jacques's absence to meet her paramour. But if she were doing so, doing so again, was that not proof beyond all possible doubt? Fernand felt that he had to see with his own eyes, hear with his own ears.

He went to the pavilion. If there was a light he could go in on some pretext and see for himself whether Thérèse was at home.

There was a light, and he entered. But to his surprise there were two men there. Nothing had been proved, nothing refuted. He had hoped to find Thérèse either alone in the house or somewhere in the park in the forbidden embrace of that scum, that animal. And now the errand that had been so hard to undertake was in vain. He was disappointed and furious.

Suddenly he became very much the lord, the heir who one day

would rule this estate. "You had orders," he said to Nicolas, "not to appear in the pavilion. How dare you loll around here?" Nicolas looked at him, grinned, looked across at Thérèse. "Answer, you lout!" Fernand cried out. Nicolas in his squeaky voice answered calmly, "If Monsieur le Marquis asks me, I will tell him the reasons." "Get out, you scoundrel," Fernand shouted. It infuriated Nicolas to have this young pipsqueak treat him so highhandedly in the presence of the Levasseur family. He was on the point of answering back rudely, but then he decided that would be foolhardy. With a wary, malicious glare he sidled past Fernand and Thérèse.

Fernand expressed his regret that the ladies had been given such an impertinent servant as Nicolas. He was quite the man of the world, entirely at ease. Thérèse felt herself raised in the eyes of her mother and brother because such a splendid young man was courting her.

Madame Levasseur, delighted that the turtledove had asserted himself and packed that lout off home, introduced her son, Sergeant Renoux. Fernand was slightly abashed to learn that this second man was not another of Thérèse's suitors, but her brother. He looked at her more kindly, inwardly asking forgiveness.

The Sergeant tried to impress the young Count by telling stories about America. Fernand was fascinated. For this new American state was founded on Jean-Jacques's principles; the Boston people professed to be his ardent disciples, and Benjamin Franklin, now their envoy in Paris, declared at every possible opportunity how much the American Revolution was indebted to the theories of Jean-Jacques.

"It's a damned hard, dirty war," the Sergeant told them. "The common people are enthusiastic, but the rich are secretly on the side of the tyrant; they keep their pockets buttoned up, and the Liberty men are very poor. They starve until their ribs show. Their uniforms are nothing but rags. They haven't even got shoes. It's damned cold, and enthusiasm alone doesn't warm your hide — nor fill your belly. If we don't send them soldiers, they won't bring it off. Sergeant François Renoux knows what he's talking about, sir. Of course, some of us did go over there, even a few gentlemen of the aristocracy; you've certainly heard of Monsieur de Lafayette. But what can a measly handful of men conjure up?"

Fernand listened absorbed. "The common people are enthusiastic." Yes, the people were making sacrifices for Jean-Jacques's ideas. The

people understood him; Jean-Jacques and the people spoke the same language.

François rose. "I'm afraid I must go," he said. "It isn't wise for me to meet Jean-Jacques. The fact is, there are certain things we disagree about, my brother-in-law and me," he explained to Fernand. "Because he's so impractical. But his ideas have the stuff; I live and I'd die for them." He embraced his mother. "Come again soon, my boy," she said. "There's nothing I'd rather do," the Sergeant answered, "but I don't know whether I'll be able to manage it." "Please come, my son," said Madame Levasseur. Her cold voice sounded almost imploring.

Fernand also took his leave. "Come and see us again soon, Count Fernand," Madame Levasseur said cordially. While her mother once more embraced François, Thérèse escorted Fernand to the door. "Do come soon," she said softly, invitation in her husky, drawling voice.

Fernand walked for a while through the night-shrouded park, pondering the compelling power of Jean-Jacques's words and visions. They were transforming a whole continent, the world across the ocean. They were forcing the King against his will to aid the cause of freedom. Even an uncouth fellow like this sergeant here had been so deeply moved by them that he had gone overseas to fight against tyranny in the virgin forests.

Fernand had quite forgotten his reason for going to the pavilion. He no longer gave a thought to Jean-Jacques's blindness, to those weaknesses and peculiarities Thérèse had spoken of.

And then came Gilberte's answer to his long letter, and this answer erased Thérèse wholly from his mind and senses. Even in the midst of the social whirl, Gilberte wrote, she had found time to read the *Nouvelle Héloïse* again. And the frivolous language which she used to describe her impressions of Saint-Vigor gyrated strangely off, now and then, into romantic phrases charged with feeling. Fernand glowed as he read them. He saw her clearly before him; he pressed her letter to his lips. Gilberte alone existed for him.

But these noble emotions did not endure. Next day, the memory of Thérèse overcame him almost physically. He saw her, her mother, and her brother just as he had last seen them in their house, saw their faces and gestures, heard the words they had spoken. They were the same faces, the same words, but how evilly, how strangely altered. There they sat, the three members of the Levasseur family,

by the light of candles; they sat around Jean-Jacques's table, discussing Jean-Jacques, disposing of him as one might of a feeble-minded child. Fernand thought of the rogue Nicolas; and now there were four of them, waiting for Jean-Jacques's death like vultures perched around a dying man.

He set his teeth and banished the picture from his mind. He recalled Gilberte's hasty, childish handwriting, heard Jean-Jacques's voice — not loud, yet how persuasive — summoning people in the words of the *Social Contract* to a life of freedom and equality.

But mingling with it came Thérèse's drawling, husky voice, inviting him, "Do come soon." Was this not the voice of Providence itself challenging him to discover what was at the bottom of the strange, disquieting communion between the Master and Thérèse?

He would not obey this voice. He would stop tormenting himself with these foolish doubts. He would await Gilberte's return. With her he would discuss all the disharmonies which he had seen and brooded upon. When he talked to her, looked into her clear eyes, all his confusions would be resolved.

Must he really wait? Was there not a swifter, surer, more direct way to learn the truth? Had not the Master written memoirs? And had not Thérèse said of his writing, "It's for the ones to come, he says"? The reference must be to the memoirs! And they were here. In the pavilion. He must read them! The Master himself must explain the Master to him.

He would manage to get a look into these memoirs. Thérèse must manage this for him. That was the meaning of his friendship with her.

Once more he prowled about the pavilion, and this time he succeeded easily in intercepting her. They arranged to meet on the next evening that Jean-Jacques spent at the château.

When that evening came, Fernand was as shy as at their first encounter. Side by side they walked along the narrow paths in silence. Fernand was determined to avoid any suggestive word or gesture and to talk to her only about the Master.

Finally in a stifled voice, stumblingly, he began to talk. How different it was, he said, to hear from Jean-Jacques's own mouth phrases that you recognized from his books; how exciting these phrases sounded. And how splendid that Sergeant Renoux had been inspired by Jean-Jacques to go to America. Thérèse was puzzled. As far as she knew, François had had to go abroad because he had been in-

volved in some affair dubious enough to engage the attention of the King's magistrates. But it was not her business to put doubts into the young Count's mind. "Yes," she said, "Jean-Jacques reads very well. It is pleasant to have someone read aloud while you're working. I am very fond of it on the long winter evenings when I'm sewing."

They had come once more to the willow tree by the shore of the lake. Thérèse sat down on the grassy bank where Jean-Jacques was accustomed to sit. The bank was narrow. Fernand did not want to sit down beside her; he had not come on her account but on Jean-Jacques's. He remained standing. Wondering a little, she asked, "Why don't you sit down?" He did so.

"Talk only about Jean-Jacques!" he commanded himself. "Only about the memoirs!" Aloud he said, "You were kind enough, madame, to inform me that Monsieur Jean-Jacques was writing various things and that there were various manuscripts in existence." Thérèse pricked up her ears suspiciously. Here he was talking about Jean-Jacques's scribblings again. Perhaps she had been wrong; perhaps it really was the papers he wanted, and not her at all. But no, it was all just talk. She might be stupid, but she never made a mistake about what men were after. "Yes," she said. "There is stuff that he has written, bundles of it. But all for future generations. Didn't I tell you?"

He was prepared for her saying this, and had already thought out his reply. But he had forgotten what it was. The nearness of her body confused him, and he made no attempt to collect himself. There was a silence. Opposite them the island of the tall poplars was faintly discernible. Leaves rustled; the lake plashed softly.

"How hot it is," Thérèse said. With deliberate movements she unfastened her bonnet and took it off. She ran her fingers through her hair; it tumbled down over her shoulders. He did not dare to look. He had seen the chestnut-brown hair under her bonnet and had tried to imagine what this hair would look like when it was no longer imprisoned by the bonnet. Now he felt something tickling his cheek. It was her hair, and at last he looked at her. "Yes," said Thérèse, "My hair is long and heavy. It's a job getting it all under my bonnet."

Fernand swallowed. He must not let himself go; he must keep his mind on what he wanted to say. "I know that the manuscript is for the ones to come, madame," he said, "but I am still young. In a way I belong to those to come. Would you allow me to have a look at Jean-Jacques's manuscript?"

Thérèse was disagreeably surprised. Was it possible? Was he really after the papers? Dimly she remembered Jean-Jacques's complaints that his enemies had falsified his writings in order to blacken him before the King and the world in general. Could this young man be — ? Nonsense. She couldn't have been mistaken. When a man spoke so hoarsely, with such agitation, there was only one thing he wanted.

She turned her head slightly, so that the full torrent of her hair brushed against his cheek. He felt he must retreat, must flee. For the fraction of a second he remembered Gilberte, her room, her clothes, her fragrance. But this memory faded before it really became clear, and there was nothing left but the reality of Thérèse's hair. Against his will his hand glided through this flowing hair, stroked it, sank into it, twisted it, gently pulled it. "You're hurting me," she said, and in the darkness she groped for his hand, took it. He snatched his hand away as if he had been burned, stretched it out again and grasped hers, grasped it more firmly, pressed it, relaxed his hold, pressed it a little harder.

She felt triumphant. But now she kept the young man waiting. She pretended not to know what he really wanted. Instead, she referred matter-of-factly to his silly, boyish request to be allowed to look at the scribblings. "I don't know whether I can do anything for you about that," she said. "I'll have to talk to my mother. I'm sure Jean-Jacques wouldn't like it at all. I ought not to do anything he wouldn't like. He's so good to me. He's a saint."

Fernand only half listened. He was still holding her hand, but why did she no longer return his pressure? And why was she starting to talk about the manuscript again? He was disappointed.

Now, however, she felt the time had come. "But it is hard to say no to you," she went on, and she returned the pressure of his hand, laid her arm around his shoulders. "I'd do a lot for you," she said.

They kissed.

His stern resolve was brushed aside; he had ceased to think. He could not tell whether he embraced her or she him, whether he was drawn down or let himself fall. He sank, unwilling and willing, into depths, into flame, into Nature.

Chapter 11 *Thérèse's Suitors*

THÉRÈSE HAD never felt any guilt about seeking extramarital pleasures. Long ago when she had confessed to Jean-Jacques that she was no longer a virgin, he had not minded. She did not know whether he had noticed anything later when she tumbled in the hay with other men; he never said a word about it. At any rate, in view of his condition, she felt justified in having other men. But when she did, she was faithful to her lover; she believed in having only one at a time. She had thought that for the summer here in Ermenonville this one would be Monsieur Nicolas, and now suddenly the young Count had come along and she had allowed herself to be seduced by him.

Ordinarily she took things as they came and did not waste much thought on them. But Nicolas — she had perceived this immediately — was the right man for her, her match in body as well as in station, and her conscience bothered her about not being faithful to him. Carrying on with two men at once wasn't nice. She was too decent for that.

All the same, it would probably turn out all right this time. As a servant and a man of her own class, Nicolas would surely understand that a simple woman had no choice but to oblige a real count and the future seigneur of Ermenonville. As for Count Fernand himself, he was very young and inexperienced and certainly wouldn't notice that she was having an affair with Nicolas at the same time.

To tell the truth she was genuinely fond of both of them. Nicolas was the better lover, but this fresh young count, this green lover, made a girl feel good too. Besides she could talk frankly to him, grand gentleman though he was; he was easier to talk to than Nicolas, the man of her own class.

When she saw Nicolas again for the first time after her experience with Fernand, her body pulsed with love for him. She found him

more manly than before; she thought he was the only man for her. The wrong she had done him made him more desirable than ever. But when he took her, she could not help thinking of Fernand; it was as if she were making love with both of them at once, and it was very sweet.

Later it struck her that her real infidelity to Nicolas was in thinking of Count Fernand while she lay in Nicolas's arms. She made an attempt to justify herself. First, with clumsy archness, she asked him if he were faithful to her. "Don't talk such rubbish, old girl," he replied with rough good nature. Whereupon, as if he had called her to account, she protested that the young Count wasn't after 'this' at all; he only wanted to read Jean-Jacques's scribbles.

Nicolas, usually so glib, fell silent. Since her very first mention of the fool's scribblings he had been counting on somehow using those papers to make the two hundred louis d'or that he needed for his stables. He wasn't going to have that young Count putting his oar in. Something had to be done, and fast.

He gave Thérèse a detailed account of his plans. The fact was, he declared, the Marquis had cheated him. He had enticed him here from London with the promise that he would have a big, fancy stud to look after. Instead of which Monsieur de Girardin was squandering his money on these crazy gardens. He, Nicolas, wasn't going to wear himself out here. As soon as he could manage it he would set himself up as the Tattersall of Paris. He went into great detail; just talking of horses made his heart swell. Thérèse could not follow all Nicolas said, but she had faith in him and was full of enthusiasm.

"And to think that all I need is a miserable two hundred louis d'or!" he exclaimed indignantly. "And the world full of idle cash. Why, you have the same trouble yourself, Madame Thérèse. There are all the philosopher's writings and a woman like you has to pinch and scrape and get along with only one silk dress. And now Count Fernand wants to have a look at the papers. He'll make trouble, your Count Fernand, mark my words. He'll be babbling everywhere, and if there's too much talk about the papers they'll lose their virginity, so to speak; their value to the connoisseur will go phut. And there you'll sit, Madame Thérèse, with your cotton dresses. Take my advice, turn the writings into money while they're still worth something. Of course I know you have no head for business, but a smart woman like your Mama ought to be able to handle that half-assed old philosopher. And as soon as we've got the money, you'll see how quick it

breeds more. I'll have my stables and you'll have gowns and jewels and a gilded carriage like a lady deserves. Talk to your Mama! I want you to! Do as I tell you."

Thérèse knew that if anything could have been done with the papers her mother would have done it long ago. But she felt flattered that Nicolas was jealous of her little count and also that he should consider her not only someone with whom to tumble in the hay, but a friend with whom he could discuss his affairs. Besides, he was apt to turn nasty if crossed. She replied that she would pass his advice on to her mother. He favored her with a good smack on the behind and remarked that he had seen right off that she was a person to whom a man could talk sense.

He went home through the park alone, still mulling over his plans. He couldn't do with less than two hundred louis. It was no good beginning in a small way; the whole thing was to do it in style.

His train of thought was disturbed by furious barking. A dog came leaping out at him. He sized up the situation at once; the philosopher, the fool, had taken Lady up to the château with him, as he so often did of late. The wretched beast had taken a dislike to him, Nicolas, from the first, and now it was even butting in on his meetings with Thérèse. "Shut up, you filthy bitch," he muttered in English to the growling, snapping, barking animal. "It's only me," he called out in French, "Monsieur Nicolas, from the household of Monsieur le Marquis." "Here, Lady," the fool called soothingly. The dog retreated and the philosopher and the stableboy each went his way.

For her part, Thérèse was surprised, even a little amused, that her suitors should both make such a fuss about Jean-Jacques's scribblings. All right, she would do her best to please them both, Fernand as well as Nicolas.

Determined to play her game cleverly, she mentioned to her mother only Fernand's request to have a look at the papers. Then, unconsciously betraying her little count, she went on as if it were her own thought. "Maybe there really is something in this talk of Jean-Jacques. His enemies may really be trying to get hold of his stuff and falsify it. Perhaps you ought to collect on his scribbles as soon as possible. If you don't, their value to the connoisseur will go up the flue." Her mother gave her a penetrating glance. "What's going up the flue?" she asked with a grin. "Their value to the connoisseur? You ought to have your fat bottom smacked with your 'value to the connoisseur.' But I know who's behind this twaddle.

That pimp of yours, your manure-prince, that Nicolas.” Thérèse looked sulky. She was annoyed with herself for having handled the thing so stupidly. Nothing, of course, ever got by her mother.

With inexorable logic Madame Levasseur continued, “If you had an ounce of brain, you would see that the fellow isn’t out to get what’s left of your beauty. He’s after our chink. But you probably still don’t see that. You were always dumb, but when you’re in heat you lose your last shred of sense.”

She herself cast a malevolent and greedy look, as she had done so often before, at Jean-Jacques’s writing table and chest. Nicolas’s advice was quite superfluous. She would long ago have liked to turn the papers into money. She was no longer so young and a little cash would certainly have come in handy, if only to indulge her son, François. But she had had to learn to sit it out.

“As for letting the Count see the writings, I shall have to think that over,” she told Thérèse severely. “I’ll talk to him myself, and you keep your mouth shut. You’ll only mess things up. And you can tell that pimp of yours that any advice he has to give me, he can come and give himself. I’ll tell him a thing or two!”

Once alone, she considered carefully the best course of action. She’d be damned if she’d let that manure-prince get anywhere near the writing table or chest. The young Count — well, he was welcome to grub about in the papers. It would be all right to string the little turtledove along.

Chapter 12 Confessions

A CONFUSION OF emotions throbbed in Fernand’s breast after his recent experience, emotions which he had never known.

He had betrayed Jean-Jacques, Gilberte, Thérèse; he had contaminated himself and everyone else.

Yet, what he had felt for Thérèse, and still felt, was not the mere lust or sexual greed which had seized him that time in Paris and that second time in the country. Nor was it love; it would be blasphemy

to compare his feelings for Gilberte with what he felt for Thérèse. What drew him to Thérèse was Nature — Nature itself. Thérèse was wholly untouched by the spiritual. She was a clod, she was mud, she was the puddle; but she was also the sunlight that danced upon the puddle's surface. What had drawn him to her was more than just desire. When she said to him, "I'd do a lot for you," the velvety quality of her voice had expressed a tenderness he would never forget. She loved him; there was no doubt of it.

But what next? How was he to look Jean-Jacques in the face? What was to happen when Gilberte returned?

He ought to pluck his feeling for Thérèse out of his heart like a poisoned arrow. But if he stopped seeing Thérèse and simply ran away, was that not base and cowardly? He could not shirk his moral obligation in that way. He must see her at once, must make it clear why they both had to avoid seeing each other. But he was afraid of himself. What he had done disgusted him, and he longed to do it again and yet again.

Once more he went to the pavilion when he knew Jean-Jacques was out for a walk. With every step of the way he felt grim repentance and overwhelming desire.

He knocked. A thin, toneless voice answered, "Come in." He entered. Madame Levasseur was there alone. He was deeply disappointed even while he breathed a sigh of relief.

The old woman was glad of the chance to speak to Fernand alone. He had probably come about the papers, she began. Thérèse had mentioned his interest in them. "But," she declared, "it's really not right, sir, what you're asking of us. It is my son-in-law's wish that no one should see the papers before his death." She looked at Fernand with her sharp little eyes. "Why don't you ask him yourself?" she said abruptly. "You are so often together." He stood silent and confused. "I know our Jean-Jacques is a bit peculiar," she said, coming to his rescue, "and you are a true friend. This I can see for myself, and my son-in-law says the same. So I shall do you this favor," she concluded graciously. "But we must be careful. Come only when you're absolutely certain he won't surprise us." Fernand stammered his thanks. She wagged her finger at him playfully. "You're a foxy one, my young sir," she said. "You've got around my daughter already and now you're getting around me. Putting an old woman up to mischief for the first time in her life! Till tomorrow, then."

Fernand went away in a daze. Why did he not apply to Jean-Jacques himself, Madame Levasseur had asked. Even she had recognized the sordid character of his undertaking. No, he would not go ahead with it. He would not go to the pavilion tomorrow and poke and pry among Jean-Jacques's manuscripts.

Next morning he was at the pavilion. Madame Levasseur handed him two packets. "There are seventeen folders to the bundle," she explained. "I've counted them. I've also noted just how things were arranged in the chest and on his writing table so that these can go back exactly where they were."

Thérèse was in the room, going about her housework. She could not tear her eyes away from him, for it was some time since she had seen him. Her presence upset him. He found himself unable to concentrate. "Can I take the manuscripts with me?" he asked finally. "What are you thinking of, sir?" cried Madame Levasseur, horrified. "As though it weren't risky enough already!" And pointing to Jean-Jacques's writing table, she commanded, "Now sit down."

Hesitantly, Fernand sat down. What he was doing was sacrilege. To pry among the Master's secrets at his own writing desk, in the presence of his wife, whom he had defiled — it was a monstrous act. But now he had plunged into the current and there was no going back.

He opened the first packet. There was the word 'Recollections,' but it had been crossed out, and in Jean-Jacques's beautiful, powerful, yet delicate, hand, had been substituted the word 'Confessions.'

He read:

'I have entered upon a performance which is without example, whose accomplishment will have no imitator. I mean to present my fellow mortals with a man in all the integrity of Nature; and this man shall be myself!

'Myself alone. I sense my heart, and I know man. I am not made like any of those I have met and not, I daresay, like anyone in existence. If I am not better, at least I am different.

'Whenever the last trumpet shall sound, I will present myself before the sovereign Judge with this book in my hand, and loudly proclaim: Thus have I acted, these were my thoughts, such was I. I have concealed no crimes, added no virtues. I have shown myself as I was; sometimes mean and contemptible, sometimes noble, high-minded, and sublime. Let the countless host of my fellow men listen to my confessions, let them blush at my depravity, let them tremble

at my sufferings. And then, O Supreme Being, let a single one dare say at the foot of Thy throne: I was better than that man.'

Fernand read on, and indeed a shockingly naked truthfulness leapt at him from the wonderful lucidity of Jean-Jacques's phrases. Fernand had not dreamed that any man could so fearlessly lower himself into the caverns of his own ego. How monstrously fissured were the depths of the human soul, how much more perilous than any clefts beneath the surface of the earth. Miraculous that anyone who dared enter and regard these ghastly mysteries did not go out of his mind.

Fernand read about the first corporal punishment that, at the age of eight, Jean-Jacques had received. And how this spanking, administered by a pretty woman of thirty, had given the small boy a kind of sensual gratification, a precocious sexual stirring, and how this experience had determined the direction of his passions, his desires, his sensuality for all time.

And Fernand read of how at nine Jean-Jacques had suffered his first injustice. He was punished for a misdeed he had not committed, but had remained unshaken — 'obstinate' his elders had called him; he refused to confess to what he had not done, and he emerged from this cruel trial sore but triumphant. 'Imagine a child,' Fernand read, 'shy and obedient, a child hitherto governed by the voice of reason, treated mildly, experiencing for the first time so violent an instance of injustice — and that inflicted by the very people whom he most loves and respects! What a collapse of his world! What revolution in his heart, in his brain! The bodily pain, although severe, I felt but little; all I felt was indignation, rage, despair. When at length I was in bed and could vent my wrath, I sat upright on my poor posterior and began to shout times without number with all my might: "Carnifex! Carnifex! Carnifex! Tormentor! Executioner!" Even while I write this I feel my pulse quicken, and should I live a hundred thousand years, that memory will never wither. This first instance of violence and oppression is so deeply graven on my heart that it kindles with rage when I see or hear of any act of injustice, whoever may be the object. This occurrence terminated the serenity of my childhood.'

And Fernand read of how at eighteen, working as a lackey in a great household, Jean-Jacques had, for no apparent reason, stolen a worthless old pink-and-silver ribbon, and had then blamed the theft on a pleasant, good-natured chambermaid who had never done him

the slightest harm. All this Jean-Jacques described graphically, with no attempt at explanation; it simply was so, and Fernand was appalled at the power of evil and unreason which could break forth and overcome even such a man as Jean-Jacques.

Jean-Jacques plunged even deeper and more distressingly into the murky labyrinth of his inmost soul, recounted ever new actions and propensities, both 'ridiculous and pathetic' — simple pleasures of the flesh and exquisite indulgences of the imagination.

Then Fernand read of the wicked treatment Jean-Jacques had suffered at the hands of his friends. The great men of the time, Diderot, Melchior Grimm, the makers of the *Encyclopédie*, the great Voltaire himself — all of them had banded against Jean-Jacques, had persecuted and betrayed him. All had proved themselves conceited, deluded, shallow. Their suave, important faces were masks concealing gargoyles. Only one figure in the group of leading intellectuals stood up before Jean-Jacques's searching test: Jean-Jacques.

For three mornings in a row Fernand came to the house and read the thick packets of the *Confessions*. The sheets as they were given him by Madame Levasseur were not in the right order, but that hardly mattered, so fascinated and overwhelmed was he by the material.

He wanted to read slowly and carefully, but he read quickly, with furious urgency. For surely he must hurry. There was the chance that his luck would not last: either Madame Levasseur would change her mind, or his secret reading would be discovered, or some unpredictable mischance would occur.

The women went bustling about their work; the trees looked in at the windows; the canaries trilled loudly in their cage. Fernand read on. Now and again, much against his will, he would be distracted by Thérèse's presence. But when she was not about he was even more distracted. Then he would be obsessed by the image of her lying somewhere with Nicolas, and the painful impressions arising from Jean-Jacques's writings would mingle in his soul with the tormenting image of Thérèse's embrace with Nicolas.

He read what Jean-Jacques had to say about the Levasseur family. He read the grotesque and ugly tale of Thérèse's brother, Sergeant François, 'the American,' stealing Jean-Jacques's silk shirts. He read how Madame Levasseur and her whole family ruthlessly exploited his 'wonderfully unselfish' Thérèse. The story went on: The old woman, pretending mother-love, even self-sacrifice, spied on

Jean-Jacques and betrayed him to his enemies. 'I might have pardoned her avarice,' he read, 'but I could not forgive her dissimulation. Her infamy has alienated my heart so completely that at times I can scarcely conceal my contempt for her.' Fernand was crushed to think that now he too should be availing himself of this spiteful old woman's help, and at the same time he was grimly amused that Madame Levasseur should herself have enabled him to read the bad that Jean-Jacques had to say about her.

Jean-Jacques also described his ailment, 'a defective formation of the bladder which caused an almost continual retention of urine.' And there stood recorded how the court marshal summoned him to Fontainebleau after the triumph of his opera, *The Village Prophet*. He was to be presented to the King and to receive a yearly pension. 'My first thought,' Fernand read, 'was that of my constant need to relieve myself. Already on the evening of the performance this need had greatly troubled me, and I was sure it would torture me even more the next day in the King's apartments among all those ladies and gentlemen. The mere idea of the scandal I would provoke if I should have to run away from the King's person made me faint. I should have preferred death. Only those who know what this condition is can imagine the horror the mere threat of it causes.' So Thérèse had been right. Not Jean-Jacques the Citizen of Geneva but Jean-Jacques the invalid with a weak bladder had performed that splendid gesture. Yet Thérèse's simple interpretation had been wrong nonetheless. For Jean-Jacques gave an account of his other motives too, and these were the motives of a proud citizen. In simple, convincing language he told how he had not wished to be seduced by honor or money, but wanted to remain independent, and how he had quarreled with his friend Diderot because he had urged him to apply even belatedly for the pension. The ruthless clarity with which Jean-Jacques set down his motives caused Fernand's feelings to plunge from admiration to disillusionment and soar up again to reverence.

Further on Jean-Jacques related contemptuously how a friend of his, a gouty old man worn out by a life of lechery and other excesses, had set out to seduce Thérèse, using the basest, most shameless means: money, a disgusting book, smutty pictures. Fernand was consumed with shame and violent remorse. If Jean-Jacques felt such contempt for the false old friend, how outraged would he be that he, Fernand, his own pupil and so very, very young, had approached the Master's companion with obscene eyes and hands? The strangest thing

of all was that even as he felt this, Thérèse's proximity was quickening his blood. The woman tempted and disgusted him, excited him as nothing had ever excited him before. He tried to picture Gilberte to himself in the hope that her pure image would put to rout the lust emanating from Thérèse. He could not. He tried to return to the *Confessions*. He could read no further. He went down to the lake, swam fast and far as though he could wash away the corruption in his soul.

Chapter 13 *More Confessions*

IT WAS A pleasant surprise for Girardin and Monsieur Gerber when Jean-Jacques appeared unannounced at the château one day with his womenfolk. Fernand on the other hand did not know what to do, what to say or where to look. Madame Levasseur favored him with a little conspiratorial smile, and even Thérèse's languid face wore an expression of mischievous amusement.

Jean-Jacques behaved as naturally as ever. He conversed animatedly with the Marquis and even persuaded Monsieur Gerber to talk. The shy man was soon describing the plays he had staged with Fernand in the latter's puppet theater and was extolling the talent the young Count had displayed. He did not mention that he himself wrote verses in his leisure hours, nor did he speak of the intense pleasure he had derived from these innocent puppet shows. Jean-Jacques was obviously delighted with the Alsatian's story. "What about it, Fernand," he said. "Shall we put on a little performance ourselves one of these days? My *Village Prophet*, for example?"

Jean-Jacques's unsuspecting friendliness shattered Fernand.

Taking his leave of them, the Master said, "May I expect you tomorrow, Fernand?" He had never before actually invited the young Count to accompany him. Fernand was almost frightened.

Again the following morning, Jean-Jacques was calm, affectionate, and even gay. Fernand walked at his side, feeling himself the vilest hypocrite on earth. He answered in monosyllables, his expres-

sive face betraying his discomfort. He could only hope that Jean-Jacques would not notice.

But Jean-Jacques asked: 'What is the matter, Fernand? You seem depressed. Are you thinking of your Gilberte?' Fernand writhed with pain and shame; he could scarcely keep from crying like a little boy.

Yet the very next day, when he knew that Jean-Jacques was out walking, he revisited the pavilion. The interval had merely strengthened his fierce, sweet, morbid eagerness to read further, to uncover the Master's secrets.

What he learned this time was indeed strangely loathsome. Certain rumors spread by Jean-Jacques's friends which he, Fernand, had always dismissed as vile slander turned out to be true. There it was — Jean-Jacques himself had written it down in his fine, firm, graceful characters with an untrembling hand: he had committed Thérèse's children to the Foundling Hospital, to the Hospice des Enfants-Trouvés. Not one but several; and he told of these horrible acts — acts which seemed to violate the commands of Nature and human decency — as if they were the most natural in the world. He described this in every detail, with no attempt 'to excuse or to accuse' himself. Boldly and serenely he had chosen this most convenient 'way out of the incommmodity' without the slightest qualms, and the reasons he enumerated for his behavior were clear, sober and practical. In the first place, it was a customary procedure. In the second place, he wished to save Thérèse's honor, since at the time he had not yet married her. In the third place, he was merely applying his own principles when as an honest citizen and a good father, he had destined his children to become artisans and peasants rather than adventurers and fortune-hunters. There had been only one obstacle to overcome: the opposition of Thérèse herself. Oddly enough, she had been most reluctant to save her honor and reputation by these means. 'She obeyed with wails and tears,' Jean-Jacques recorded.

Fernand read this in the presence of the woman whose infants had been 'disposed of' in this manner, and in his heart he sided with Thérèse. He was appalled by Jean-Jacques's bald, shameless account. This inarticulate woman, blind creature of instinct — what must she have suffered when this was done to her?

He leafed back through the pages and reread what Jean-Jacques had written thus far about Thérèse. He read with almost unbearable suspense, avidly devouring each mention of her name. A great deal

was written about her, by turns coldly critical and heartwarming, revolting and sublime.

Fernand read on — read of Jean-Jacques's first encounter with Thérèse in the small, wretched Hotel Saint-Quentin; of her simplicity and soft, eloquent glances which had moved him to defend her against the coarse jests of the other boarders; and of her thanking him with the only thing she had to offer, her body. But at once a misunderstanding arose between them. For after Thérèse had slept with him for the first time, she spoke darkly of having something to confess to him. Jean-Jacques was led to suppose that she was ill and had passed the infection on to him. For days they talked at cross-purposes until finally Thérèse explained that she had not been a virgin — had he not noticed it himself? 'As soon as I understood her,' his account ran, 'I gave a shout of joy.' "Virginity!" I exclaimed. "Who would expect that in Paris, and of a girl already twenty! Ah, my Thérèse, how happy I am to have you so clean and healthy!"

Fernand read on: 'At first, amusement was my only object; I then perceived I had found a companion for life. While thinking of nothing more than my pleasure, I had laid the foundation of my happiness.'

Then Fernand saw these words: 'At first I attempted to improve her mind; my pains were useless. Her mind remains as Nature formed it; it is not susceptible to cultivation. I do not blush to acknowledge that she writes only tolerably and never knew how to read well. For more than a month I did my utmost to teach her how to tell the time; she still cannot do so. She never could enumerate the twelve months of the year in order. She neither knows how to count nor how to reckon the price of anything. She cannot use her words correctly and often says the opposite of what she means. Her ignorance, her malapropisms, are famous among my friends. For the amusement of Madame de Luxembourg I once made a list of the phrases she uses. But this person, so limited in understanding — so stupid, if you will — can give astonishingly sound advice in cases of difficulty and has rescued me from the gravest dangers.'

Further: 'The most intimate union of the flesh did not appease me; what I longed for was the union of two souls.' And: 'After all, we had very few ideas in common, Thérèse and I. The pleasure of our country life inspired me to reflections which were beyond her. And it is precisely in rustic solitude that you want a companion who shares your feelings.'

Fernand was shocked and astounded. Here in the same room sat the Thérèse of flesh and blood, unaware that in these pages there lived a Thérèse praised for her companionship and good nature, yet bared in all her nullity and emptiness — a Thérèse shadowy yet immortal, far more real than the living Thérèse sitting beside him.

'I have always considered the day which united me with my Thérèse,' he read, 'as that which set the course of my inner life. I am united with her by means of an attachment which neither time nor ill fate have been able to impair, and everything which ought to have destroyed it has only strengthened it.'

But on the next page he read: 'What then will the reader think when I declare to him, with all the sincerity which he must now recognize as part of my character, that from the first moment I saw her up to this day I have never felt the least spark of love for her. The sensual needs which I satisfied on her person were only those of the sexual impulse; they had nothing to do with my inner self.' There it was — naked, shameless. Fernand was crushed.

Clearly and concisely, Jean-Jacques summed up: 'She was without a shadow of art or coquetry. I had nothing to fear from men. I am certain of being the only man she ever truly loved; and her moderate passions never desired another man — even when I had ceased to be a man to her.'

Fernand thought he must have misread. He read the passage a second time, and then a third time.

How could a man who saw more deeply than any other into Nature and human relationships be so blind about the woman with whom he shared his life?

Was he so blind? Or did he wish to be so blind? Was a great man who combined genius with such convenient blindness still a great man?

But who was he, Fernand, to set himself up as Jean-Jacques's judge? He had studied his writings intensively, had been living close to him for weeks. Yet now he was discovering that he had known nothing about him.

Did he know anything about him even now? The man who had lived the turbulent, shameless life described in the *Confessions*, who had endured outrageous sufferings and inflicted outrageous suffering upon others — was this the same person who had gone walking with Fernand yesterday to collect botanical specimens, who had shown compassion for every living creature? Which was the real Jean-

Jacques — the modest one who chatted amiably with any forester and listened to the advice of Goodman Maurice, proprietor of The Chestnuts; or the Jean-Jacques who proclaimed himself a shining example to all mankind?

'This is the man I am, Jean-Jacques, Citizen of Geneva. Has anyone had deeper, more horrifying insights than I? Has anyone suffered more bitterly than I? *Ecce homo*. All are wrong; I alone am right.'

And what if it were so? What if Jean-Jacques were right and everyone else wrong?

Be that as it may, had he not grounds for unlimited pride? He had conceived and explored a new world; his adventure had been more daring than that of Columbus. Would not this man, so frail in body, collapse beneath the weight of his fearful knowledge? Was not incomparable pride essential if he were to hold himself erect?

A chaos of emotions — awe, admiration, pity, reverence and a faint, ironic contempt — mingled in Fernand's heart.

And just as Jean-Jacques became stranger and more problematical as Fernand learned more about him, so did all the other people he knew lose their clear outlines. The faces of those close to him changed again and again. There was no longer any fixed reality. The life which he had thus far observed about him was only the thin outer crust; it was beneath this that real life, complex and bewildering, began.

Fernand slept poorly during this period. When he closed his eyes he saw before him the firm, graceful handwriting of the *Confessions*, and even as he looked, it turned into the persons and places it described. He himself became Jean-Jacques, committed Jean-Jacques's monstrous crimes. He allowed himself to be kept by a middle-aged mistress. He denied his old faith, denied also his new faith, to regain citizenship of his city of Geneva. He loved women whom he could never hope to possess and slept with women for whom he felt no love. He abandoned his newborn children. He betrayed his friends. He accused himself, then defended himself with empty excuses. He loathed himself and boasted of loathing himself. Whatever he did was just. He considered himself the only just man in the world. And — strangest of all — he was.

Throughout these weeks, Fernand lived far from Ermenonville, in the bizarre and dangerous world of the *Confessions*. His own world became bizarre too. For if he were to set down his own short life with the truthfulness of the Master, would he not disclose abysses as terrible as those which Jean-Jacques had revealed? Fernand felt no love

for Thérèse, had nothing in common with her, could not plead any great, consuming passion. When he lay with her, deceiving the Master and wallowing in the slime, it was only because he was attracted to filth, because he was corrupted through and through. And on top of it all he went to the pavilion and pried into the Master's secrets.

Yet his consciousness of the fact that this act of reading was wicked and perverse merely enhanced its value. Cost what it may, he ate greedily of the tree of knowledge. What were the pronouncements of the Ancients, the revelations of the Bible, the teachings of the French classics, as against the profound, equivocal wisdom of this book! What a horrifying greed for truth blazed from these pages, what a crushing, exalted passion for Janus-headed knowledge!

Chapter 14 What Is Truth?

FERNAND'S CHILDHOOD had not been especially happy. Monsieur de Girardin had proud and pleasant memories of his career as a general. It was a source of worry to him that his son showed so little inclination toward discipline and military life. With the idea of strengthening his moral fiber, Girardin sent his thirteen-year-old son to the Military Academy. This establishment, famous for its stiff regime, was attended almost entirely by commoners and government officials. The teachers, determined to show that they were not impressed by Count Brégy's title, had treated him with special severity. His comrades, filled with conscious or unconscious envy of the future seigneur of Ermenonville who was assured of a brilliant career requiring no effort on his part, had kept themselves at a distance, or even been openly hostile. The sensitive boy had suffered in soul and body. Sometimes he felt that he would never survive his schooldays. Then later, during the long journey in the company of his father, he had realized how greatly his father loved him. When to that revelation was added the great joy of discovering Gilberte, Fernand's

whole outlook had become happy. He had rested content in the belief that with the bitter years at the Military Academy the most difficult part of life was behind him. And now, through his own fault, he had become involved in such an ugly and horrible mess that by comparison his former experiences were simply childish nonsense.

He made up his mind to confess everything to the Master. But he could not do it.

He resolved to write to Gilberte, his soul-mate, and tell her the whole story of his surreptitious reading, his physical and spiritual involvement with Thérèse. He would make his confession with the same fanatical honesty Jean-Jacques had displayed in reviewing his life. Once he captured in words his heartsickness, he would be able to rise from the morass into which his recklessness had enticed him.

But even as he conceived the plan he knew he could not carry it out. It simply was not in him to express his own noxious inner life with the courageous objectivity of a Jean-Jacques. He would color his actions, would be too emotional to refrain from accusing and excusing himself; he would lament his own wickedness. And it would all be a lie. He did not want to part with his wickedness, not for anything. He was proud that he was as he was.

Nor would he give up his entanglement with Thérèse. She repelled him, and yet he knew she had only to say in her deep, languid voice, "How about going for another walk, Count Fernand?" and whatever he was doing he would rise and go with her. Her air of torrid lust, her smell, her profoundly innocent viciousness, her slow, provocative carriage, the painful effort with which she assembled words to express her murky mind, even the disgust she aroused in him — all these were links in the chain with which she held him.

Thérèse did not invite him to go walking with her. At their first meeting after their embrace, she had been disappointed to find him so stiff and distant. Did he regret having made love to her? Had his love been spent in this one embrace? Instinct told Thérèse that this was not so; it was just that he was a count and felt embarrassed. She hung around while he was reading Jean-Jacques's scribbles, and it gratified her to see that her presence upset him. If she so much as glanced at him out of the corners of her eyes, he stirred uneasily. But she gave him no encouragement.

The two times Fernand came and did not find her in, she was in fact with Nicolas, just as he had thought with bitter scorn and fury.

But these encounters had not gone off well. Thérèse was afraid to tell Nicolas that her mother had rejected his advice and would not do anything about the papers. But Nicolas was expecting a report from her, and since she said nothing he asked her bluntly, "Have you spoken to your Mama, madame?" She faltered, "Not yet." Whereupon he became brusque and surly, and when she grew amorous he fended her off, saying he was in no mood for such foolishness. "If that's what you want, you can go to your dear little Count," he said venomously, and she realized that until she could settle the matter of the papers there would be no more love-making with Nicolas.

On the other hand, Fernand, who up to now had only come by day, turned up one evening when Jean-Jacques was at the château. Both women instantly saw that he had come for Thérèse's sake.

Thérèse had been hoping Nicolas would take advantage of this evening. She had already been waiting for him for quite a while. But he was standing her up — obviously in order to punish her. By this time she was thoroughly annoyed, and she greeted Fernand with her sulkiest expression. Vexed with her stupid daughter, Madame Levasseur did what she could to help the young gentleman get his pleasure. "Why don't you and Thérèse go out for a breath of fresh air on a warm summer evening like this?" she asked bluntly. Fernand looked at Thérèse with helpless eagerness. But she gave him a bold stare and answered lazily and ungraciously, "I don't feel like it tonight." Shamefaced, Fernand left.

He walked in the darkness, depressed and angry. But his rage was directed not against Thérèse, but against Jean-Jacques. How could she help becoming what she was, after all the dreadful things he had done to her? Fernand rebelled against the Master. Jean-Jacques, the man who had preached the noblest, the wisest imaginable principles of education in *Émile*, should certainly have accepted the duty of bringing up his own children.

A woman who had suffered so much deserved to be pitied. He longed to caress her. The memory of her eyes excited him. The wild, voluptuous images of the *Confessions* welled up in his mind, mingling with fantasies of his own. He imagined a second encounter, fiercer and more passionate than the first one by the lake.

When Thérèse found that Nicolas had again passed up chances to see her, she reproached herself for having treated the young Count so badly. Now she had neither of them. After all, the young Count had not meant to hurt her. He was just a dreamer, a silly, awkward

child. The breach between them was artificial; she must stop it from getting any wider or she'd be out one more fine friendship. Lying with him just once only — no, that wasn't at all what she'd had in mind.

She watched for him to pass by. Just as he had hoped and feared, she said, "How about going for another walk, Count Fernand?"

They met that same evening.

It happened just as he had imagined it; his desire swept all doubts aside and engulfed him in a dark, turbulent flood.

Later they sat on the grassy bank under the willow tree. She was very affectionate. "Fernand!" she said in her husky voice, savoring the sound of the name. "I may call you Fernand, may I not?" she asked proudly and fondly, and it was the first time she had addressed him so intimately. "I've never done it with a grand gentleman before," she added dreamily.

It was time for her to go home, but she lingered. Fernand was different from Nicolas; he was her friend as well as her lover, and she wanted to talk to him. In her clumsy way she tried to explain to him that she was not bad. Jean-Jacques was a noble character, a saint, but he just wasn't a man. He was handicapped by his ailment. Even when he was young — that was so long ago — he had kept away from her for months, sometimes as long as a year; he would lie beside her as lifeless as a stick of wood. She had a right to a man; even her mother, for all her strictness, recognized that.

Fernand listened in silence. Thérèse began again. "And then the children," she said. "He ought not to have done that."

Fernand forgot that he had just lain with this woman. She no longer existed for him; nothing existed but the *Confessions*. He was seized with a boundless desire to learn the truth, the whole truth. Of course, what Jean-Jacques had written was the truth, but it was only a part of the truth; it would not be the whole truth until he found out what Thérèse knew and felt.

His mouth dry, he asked, "Is it really true that he took the children away from you?" Thérèse answered evenly, "Everybody knows that." "All five children?" Fernand persisted. Surprised, Thérèse asked, "Five? What makes you say five? Two."

Fernand was thunderstruck. Had Jean-Jacques lied? Had he lied in the most truthful book in the world — the book with which he intended to present himself at the Last Judgment?

Thérèse meanwhile went on, "Twice was rotten enough for me.

It was nothing to him. They were *my* children." Very softly, Fernand asked, "They weren't his?" In her placid voice she said, "What's that? I can't hear you." With an effort he repeated, somewhat louder, "They weren't his children?" Thérèse answered, "No. Not really." Fernand, with tremendous self-command, continued, "And did he know it?" Thérèse said, "I suppose so. Otherwise he wouldn't have been so mean."

It was a rather dark night. Fernand could not see Thérèse; he only heard her placid voice. And in his mind he saw the firm, graceful handwriting of the *Confessions*, the letters standing out black and clear against the ivory paper, telling that story candidly, with a convincing air of conviction, setting forth cogent reasons why Jean-Jacques had had to act just so. And the story was all a lie. 'Otherwise he wouldn't have been so mean.' This stupid, lifeless voice was speaking the truth, and the whole magnificent edifice of principles, emotions, and confessions came crashing to the ground.

Fernand was furious with the Master. But he checked his fury. It was not quite so simple as he wished to make it. Jean-Jacques had not lied. A man writing with such overwhelming frankness for posterity, for the Supreme Being, must be saying what he profoundly believed. With her simple mind Thérèse speaks her simple truth. But many motives combine to produce an action, and at the root of every action base and noble reasons are inextricably mingled. There is no truth which does not consist of many truths.

There they sit on the grassy bank under the willow tree, on Jean-Jacques's bank, and Thérèse betrays Jean-Jacques, and Fernand betrays Jean-Jacques; they combine to betray him. For one moment Fernand feels himself justified, in the next he despises himself again. And out of it all he gets a bitter, voluptuous, remorseful satisfaction.

In the darkness Thérèse said plaintively and fondly, "There is no one else I can talk to, not even my mother." "Not even the stableboy?" Fernand wondered. But as if in the simplicity of her mind she had divined his thought, she went on, "With you I can talk about anything I like, Fernand. You are my only friend, Fernand."

Chapter 15 *Cave Canem*

AT HER NEXT meeting with Nicolas, Thérèse got up enough courage to tell him that she had spoken to her mother, and that her mother did not propose to touch Jean-Jacques's writings.

Nicolas's face darkened. "You don't seem to have been particularly clever about it, madame." He attempted an ironic tone.

Then he burst out, "Your head is full of chaff. You're so stupid, it stinks; what's the use of trying to tell a brainless female like you what to do?" Offended, Thérèse said, "You've known from the start, Monsieur Nicolas, that I'm no philosopher." After a pause she added, "My mother says that if you've got anything to say to her, you're to say it yourself." "That would be the last straw," Nicolas grumbled.

But when he was alone he thought the matter over. Delay was dangerous. Any day some other schemer might get hold of the papers, or some fool of an aristocratic idealist might stick his finger in the pie. He had no choice; he would have to go and talk to the old woman himself. After all, it was to her advantage to come to an understanding with him.

He went to Madame Levasseur when he was sure he would find her alone, and asked permission to discuss frankly the issues between them. The old woman scrutinized him with her hard little eyes. "There's nothing between us as far as I'm concerned," she said, "but if you think anything will come of it, say your piece."

"With your sharp eyes, madame," Nicolas explained, "you have undoubtedly noticed that there is something between your daughter and your humble servant. My heart went out to Madame Rousseau, so to speak, it was a *coup de foudre*, as they say in this country, and I am proud and happy that my humble, persistent wooing has brought your daughter around." "I'm an old woman," Madame Levasseur answered, "and unfortunately not strong enough to bash your head in as you deserve." Nicolas smiled amiably. "You misunderstand the situation, madame," he said. "You underestimate your daughter's affection for your humble servant, and you underestimate my Bri-

tish doggedness. I don't want anything improper; on the contrary, I should like to legalize the relationship between Madame Rousseau and myself." He rose to his feet and bowed. "I have the honor, madame," he said, "to ask your daughter's hand in marriage." The old woman said dryly, "My daughter is already married, as you may have heard." "Madame," Nicolas said, "you force me to put the cards on the table. You see, I've always been able to tell at a glance when one of my horses is on the way out, and believe me, Monsieur the Philosopher isn't good for much longer. When a man has philosophized so hard for sixty-six years, he can't have much stamina left. Here I am. As a serious suitor and the philosopher's obvious successor, I feel it is no more than my duty to settle things in good time — that is to say now — with my future mama-in-law."

"You're barking up the wrong tree, monsieur," said Madame Levasseur with good-humored scorn. "My son-in-law is temperate; staying here has done wonders for his health; and Thérèse and I take the best care of him. These frail-looking people are always tough. Our Jean-Jacques will last a long while yet, never fear."

"Very well," replied Nicolas. "If you want to have it so, we'll drop the question of your son-in-law's health for the time being. But I am devoted to your daughter, and what's more I'm naturally inquisitive. Permit me a question, madame. Why is it that Monsieur the Philosopher hasn't had a new book out for so long? I hear he's been hard at work, and the whole world is waiting for his next book. And there's plenty of money to be got out of such stuff. How is it that a sensible woman like yourself won't saddle that horse?" "A plain question deserves a plain answer," the old woman declared cheerfully. "For certain philosophical reasons which are too exalted for me and certainly for you too, my son-in-law does not want to have his new works published before his lamented demise. He does not want to. Do you understand? And that's the end of it. Period." She continued complacently, "There's no money to be made out of those papers. Get the idea out of your head once and for all, young man! There's not a sou in this house that will find its way into your pocket."

"You seem to distrust me," Nicolas said sadly. "But I can understand it. I know human nature, and I can see the way you think, madame. 'A penniless fellow,' you reckon, 'a lackey, a domestic; what sort of prospects would my daughter and I have with anyone like that?' But as it happens your humble servant *has* got prospects. I'm something more than just a lackey. I used to be head trainer at

Mister Tattersall's in London. That may mean nothing to you, madame, but it means a lot to the grand gentlemen in Paris." He described his scheme to her and then declared, "All I need is a little capital to start with — about two hundred louis. Of course I could raise the money elsewhere, but as I've already told you, I feel a certain attachment to your daughter and would like to let you both in on the transaction. You smile, madame, you distrust me as much as ever. But I guarantee your money will multiply. Just one year's profits should fix the three of us up for life."

The old woman listened with interest. The fellow reminded her of her son, Sergeant François. He had the same dashing line of talk, and on top of that he probably had more gumption.

Nicolas perceived at once that he was on a more promising tack. "Have a little faith in me," he pleaded. "You won't regret it. It's a shame how wretchedly you live here. Monsieur the Philosopher may be keen on Nature and poverty, but I'm sure you're not so philosophically inclined yourself, madame." He warmed up, spoke excitedly. "There the papers lie. A clever lady like you should be able to find some way of making two hundred louis on them. Put the money into my business, and I give you my word as a man of honor, a judge of horses, and a Britisher that I'll marry Madame Rousseau and we'll all live like the Lord God in Paris."

But Madame Levasseur's interest in the glib schemer had already evaporated. This fellow Nicolas was not her son François, and she was not inclined to share Thérèse with him. But she had realized how much her man-crazy Thérèse depended on him, and the creature was capable of any underhanded trick. With Thérèse's help he might steal Jean-Jacques's papers, or make some other dirty deal. Therefore she must not stir him up, must not be too obvious about turning him down.

In a businesslike way she explained to him that it would be impossible to exploit the manuscripts behind Jean-Jacques's back. Before the buyers risked any hard cash they would turn up in person and ask Jean-Jacques if he approved of the transaction; written statements, no matter how good they looked, were not enough. "Don't sit there like a lost sheep," she consoled Nicolas when she saw his gloomy, disappointed face. "I'm not saying no to your plans. But don't be so hasty, young man. The papers won't lose their value, and they're as safe with me as a penny in the good Lord's pocket." Nicolas gave up trying to change Madame Levasseur's mind. If you

got too close to the old mare she was likely to kick out.

He did his best to put on a more agreeable expression. But the old woman, sensing his rage, went on placating him. "You ought not to wish for my dear son-in-law's demise. Besides the deep sorrow Thérèse and I would feel, it would be a severe financial blow. Let me tell you, he still writes like a youngster. When what he calls his inspiration is on him, his pen gallops along, and before you know it there's a new manuscript and his estate is worth eight or ten thousand louis more. Only a fool would want the goose that lays the golden eggs to pass away."

"I understand," said Nicolas, "and I accept the fact that for the time being you do not wish to legalize the relationship between your daughter and me. But I never give a thing up," he went on with a good pretense of cheerfulness. "I'm the kind that sticks to a job."

"Let's have a drink on that," said Madame Levasseur. She fetched the apricot liqueur which the Marquis had sent down to the house. They clinked glasses, drank, and parted amicably, not unlike a pair of thieves.

But Madame Levasseur had not drunk away her fear of the dangerous young man. As soon as she shut the door behind him, her expression became gloomy and hostile.

Nor had Nicolas washed down his anger with that excellent brandy. The old jade couldn't fool him. She was his enemy; she would do anything to keep him from getting at the papers and setting up his stables. But she'd miss her guess. He spat noisily in his rage.

To add to his irritation, Lady, the bitch, now sprang out at him once more, barking furiously. Modulating his voice with an effort, he called out that he was Nicolas, the Marquis's servant. Jean-Jacques was heard calling the dog off. But after the animal backed away Nicolas cursed ferociously, in English, his low voice full of savage anger.

When Jean-Jacques left the house for his early-morning walk not many days later, he found Lady's kennel empty. He shook his head. Only once before had she failed to wait for him.

At noon the animal still had not appeared, and he fell into a panic. There was no question about it: this was the doing of his old enemies, Grimm and Diderot. They were after him, and to leave him unprotected they had killed the dog, that splendid creature that he had loved. Oh, it was a vile trick, a stupid act of cruelty! But he kept

his forebodings to himself. He managed to control himself all day, saying nothing of his suspicions to the women. But when the dog had not turned up the day after, his anxiety, horror, and fury could no longer be suppressed. "It is Grimm and Diderot!" he ranted. "They have wormed their way in! More attacks! More persecutions! I shall never have peace from them. They will do all they can to ruin me. I am lost, I must fly, I must leave the country! I must go overseas!"

In vain Madame Levasseur tried to quiet him. But next day Thérèse brewed a sedative drink, an herb tea, in which he had faith. He drank it eagerly and asked for a second cup. By evening he had calmed down. He spoke warmly of how the peace of Ermenonville agreed with him.

It was Madame Levasseur who was by no means reassured. There was something to her son-in-law's delusions. Evil was being plotted against him, though not from the quarter he thought. She knew who had done away with the dog. The seven deadly sins were stamped on the fellow's brow. There was no limit to what he would do.

He had to be got out of the way.

She went to Girardin. "You know how my son-in-law is, sir," she began; "being a philosopher he has his quirks, his sudden fits. This time, I'm sorry to say, he's thrown a fit over Monsieur Nicolas. The fact is he can't stand him. I'm sure Monsieur Nicolas is a fine young man, but he had better keep away from the pavilion in the future."

Girardin had heard rumors of Madame Rousseau's making eyes at Nicolas. No doubt this was why the old woman wanted to get rid of him. Girardin was not fond of revising his arrangements, but this time it was probably the wisest course. "Thank you for informing me of this, madame," he said somewhat stiffly. "I will place another servant at your disposal." "Many thanks, sir," the old woman replied, "but that won't be enough. This fit my son-in-law has thrown over Monsieur Nicolas is a specially violent one. An antipathy, so to speak. I should like to ask you to remove Monsieur Nicolas from Ermenonville altogether."

The Marquis's expression hardened. He drew himself up straight and tall and pointed his stick at Madame Levasseur. "Have I understood you aright, madame?" he asked. "You would like me to dismiss him?" "I should like you to throw him out, sir," answered Madame Levasseur.

Involuntarily, a recent experience rose to Girardin's mind. Yet it was a mere nothing, a fleeting supposition. Inserted into the wall

of his bedroom and skillfully concealed behind the paneling was the keyboard on which hung the master keys of all the many buildings of his estate. It held well over a hundred keys arranged in an order of which he alone knew the secret. From time to time he rearranged them, facing some to the right, some to the left. Twice recently there had been a minute discrepancy, and he had momentarily imagined that someone had been tampering with his keyboard. But almost at once he had told himself that his memory was playing tricks on him. Then there had been one occasion when he had found Nicolas in his bedroom at a time when he had no reason to be there. Both these tiny incidents now returned to him and in spite of himself his mind linked the two.

Yet it was not fair to condemn an otherwise reliable person on the basis of vague feelings. His whole nature rebelled against Madame Levasseur's bold demand. "Nicolas is an experienced and faithful servant," he said. "Have you anything factual to produce against him? Has he disobeyed the order not to disturb you at the pavilion? Has Monsieur Jean-Jacques complained?"

Madame Levasseur was prepared for this question. "As you know, sir," she said, "my son-in-law, being a philosopher, does not express himself in plain words. He says nothing 'factual,' but I can assure you, sir, the man has his intuitions, and you'd be surprised how he hits the nail on the head. When the dog Lady disappeared he had terrific intuitions. It was his enemies from Paris, he raged, and they had bribed someone from the château. And whom he meant by 'someone from the château' — there can hardly be any doubt about that."

The Marquis, annoyed, did not reply. The old woman pressed on. "You have to take my son-in-law's philosophy into account, sir. I'm an old woman with much experience and I can vouch for that. Otherwise one of these days he'll take it into his head to scoot off to Paris, or even to England. And staying here is doing him so much good. Why, it's doing us all good. It would be such a pity if all this were to end just because of Monsieur Nicolas."

The suggestion of blackmail in these remarks was galling to the Marquis. He nevertheless recognized that the old woman could easily make good her threats. Moreover, his memories were coming into focus — the time he had surprised Nicolas in his bedroom, Nicolas had asked if the Marquis wanted to order the mare La Tempête, for the following morning. The request was abnormal. It

could perfectly well have waited until after breakfast the next day.

"Nicolas will be removed," he said.

"I thank you on Jean-Jacques's behalf," replied the old woman. Then, bethinking herself of the scoundrel's vindictive nature, she went on hastily. "One thing more, please: don't on any account let Monsieur Nicolas think that my son-in-law is behind this. He'd go talking about it in the village, and it would come back to my son-in-law. Jean-Jacques is so easily upset, he'd get frantic all over again."

That very day the Marquis talked with Nicolas. He said he was sorry that he had given him false hopes. He had finally given up his plan for a big stud. He could no longer ask Nicolas to stay on. He would be paid a full year's wages and was free to return to London.

Nicolas sized up the situation at once. So the old mare had raised a kick. But he kept his head and gave the whole situation a quick thinking over.

The amount which the Marquis was offering him in compensation was no chicken-shit. He was pretty sure that the gentleman, who plainly had a bad conscience, could be held up for the two hundred louis that Nicolas needed for the riding establishment. But there was more than two hundred in the affair with Thérèse. There was a fortune in that. He wasn't going to be leaving the fool's papers to that old bitch. No, by God, he would pay the fat old fart-in-the-bottle back for this trick, and with interest. All he needed was time, and his chance was bound to come.

"I thought I'd been satisfactory, milord," he said in English, very hurt and on his dignity. "But it is for you to command." "I have no criticism to make of you, Mr. Bally," replied the Marquis with evident discomfort, "but I did not think it right to keep you any longer from the profession you like so well." "As you are so kindly disposed toward me," said Nicolas, "I wonder if I might ask two favors which would make leaving easier." "Speak out, Nicolas," answered Monsieur de Girardin, relapsing into French. Nicolas explained, "There's not much chance of Mr. Tattersall taking me back, since I left him. That means that it may be some time before I find another place in London. May I wait on here in Ermenonville until something comes through?" "Certainly," said the Marquis. "Furthermore," Nicolas proceeded, "it would stand against me in obtaining a good position if it were known that I was dismissed from here. I'd find a place much easier if for the time being nothing were said about my dismissal."

Glad to have put this disagreeable task behind him, the Marquis agreed to both requests.

Chapter 16 Friend and Foe

WHEN IT BECAME evident to Madame Levasseur that that scoundrel Nicolas was still swaggering about in Ermenonville in spite of what the Marquis had promised her, she was disappointed and indignant. Of course she knew that if it suited their book, noblemen broke their word just like ordinary folk. But the Marquis was a philosopher and one of her son-in-law's disciples. She would not have expected such two-faced dealings from him.

There was no telling what fresh knavery this fellow Nicolas was dreaming up. And Thérèse, the silly goose, was hopelessly gone on him. Jean-Jacques, the fool, whose health was not nearly as robust as she had tried to make that rascally Britisher believe, was apt to kick off anytime. Then Nicolas would have his claws on Thérèse and on the papers as well.

That fellow's hash had to be settled once and for all. She set about figuring out some other scheme.

She was deeply in awe of everything legal and lawyerish — sealed and notarized papers had been used to drive her out of her house and her business in Orléans. She had learned much from that. Now she knew the dodges and she would put them to use herself. She would fix up some sort of legal paper by which Thérèse could manage her property only with her mother's approval. That way the papers would be out of that robber's reach. Let him see what he could do then.

She was perfectly open in explaining to Thérèse that her signature would be needed on a paper to protect the money from that lout of hers. "It's no business of yours how I work it," she declared. "You wouldn't understand if I did tell you. When everything's ready you'll just come to the royal notary with me and sign. And I wouldn't be telling my Nicolas all about it, either." Thérèse looked sulky, but she

was glad that her clever mother had taken the matter in hand. She was deliciously frightened of her Nicolas and perfectly aware that he could get anything he wanted out of her.

Ermenonville, however, was not the best place in the world for Madame Levasseur's plan. She needed an experienced lawyer and notary to draw up a document which would be proof against Nicolas's schemes. She would have preferred to go to Paris, but the sharp-eyed fellow would have seen that something was up. She learned that there was a clever lawyer in Senlis; but the man had unfortunately gone away for two or three weeks. With a sigh she set herself to wait for his return.

If Nicolas's doings had caused deep anxiety to old Madame Levasseur, the disappearance of the dog had thrown Fernand into a turmoil. He felt himself to blame for this blow against the Master. His despicable affair with Thérèse had aroused Nicolas's malice. Now the Master was in danger, and he, Fernand, had brought this danger upon him.

He avoided Jean-Jacques, feeling afraid of him. He even avoided the company of his father and Monsieur Gerber as well as he could. He did not want to converse and he feared being questioned. He went about brooding, miserable.

To escape the tension, he began to go more often to the village.

As a child he had been there a good deal, in accordance with his father's wishes. It had never been easy to get the village children to accept him as an equal, and the time that he spent at the Military Academy had widened the gulf between his old playfellows and himself. Nevertheless he had kept up his friendship with them and took a sympathetic interest in their concerns. Now more than ever he felt his need for their rough, simple companionship.

Of a different order was the friendship he had with one Martin Catrou, son of the widow Catrou who kept the general store in the village. Martin was a sturdy young man just Fernand's age. He ran errands for his mother and sometimes he even went to Paris, where, as at home, he looked and listened, had a keen eye for men and affairs, and drew his own conclusions. Martin's rough and ready intelligence and shrewd common sense were unlike anything Fernand was used to. He was interested, repelled, attracted. Martin liked to tease him and point up his aristocratic weaknesses. His jibes were provoking, yet Fernand took them in good part and tried to understand the other's point of view.

Now, during this unhappy period, he met Martin. "And what is your saint up to these days?" Martin asked. The grin on his friend's plain, shrewd face, and the flippancy of his words, seemed to Fernand to typify all the mockery of Jean-Jacques's enemies. "Leave Jean-Jacques out of it," he said, and tried to seem bland. "You don't understand him." "Why not?" Martin said defiantly. "I see him often enough. The old man's one of my mother's best customers, and I have eyes in my head!"

Fernand saw that Martin meant to pick a quarrel and tried to smooth matters over. "I'm sure you understand most people very well," he remarked. "But kindly leave Jean-Jacques to me." Martin however, kept to his line. "They say in Paris, all you have to do to be a great philosopher is to play the fool. And that's right up his alley."

It was painful to Fernand to think that he himself sometimes doubted Jean-Jacques, thinking that the Master's own words were out of tune with his actions. He felt a bit of a hypocrite as he scolded Martin. "You're an ungrateful bunch," he said indignantly. "He's devoted his life to proclaiming the equality of man. He has endured endless persecution for you, and all he gets for thanks is that you call him a fool." Martin sat there, a robust, thickset figure. He thrust his head forward; his black hair grew low on his broad forehead. "Yes — liberty, equality, fraternity," he mocked, and the words as he spoke them sounded hollow and meaningless. "They've a fine sound, like juicy roast duck. But they're just hot air and nonsense. Let him tell us how we're to get this freedom of his with the gendarmes and tax-collectors and aristocrats and lawyers all around. That other one, Voltaire, now he really did something for us. He let you fellows know that you had gone too far with your villainous tribunals. And he had his own people taught something practical, something to bring in money. But did your precious Jean-Jacques ever teach one single useful thing? Did he ever, for instance, say anything sensible about taxes, tolls, and so on?"

Jean-Jacques's words, 'I have worked in vain,' rose forcibly to Fernand's mind. But immediately he thought of America and her fight for freedom and was about to use this as an argument. But Martin went on: "He jabbars about the millennium. Just like Father Gauchet. And that's why you aristocrats are so keen on him. For this way you can show that your heart is with us lowly folk and can hang on to what you've got with a good conscience. No, Voltaire's the boy for us."

Fernand held himself in check. Calmly he retorted, "You might

try reading one of his books with those sharp eyes of yours before you talk such rot." Martin was as complacent as ever. "I don't need to read his book," he answered. "It's enough to take a look at the fellow. He moons around the village, so that you'd think he was walking on clouds instead of our muddy village street. He doesn't see two steps in front of him, I tell you." Then as Fernand merely shrugged his shoulders and stood up, Martin grew even more specific. "He can't even see what's going on inside his own four walls, that saint of yours. His wife likes her bit of fun, they say, but he doesn't notice a thing."

At this Fernand lost control of himself. He was perfectly aware that he was no match for Martin, but he threw himself at him, just as he had done when they were boys together. Martin fended him off, casually at first, but more roughly when Fernand went on fighting. It ended with Fernand's being soundly thrashed.

He went home, deeply humiliated. What right had he to take umbrage at Martin's remarks? What Martin said was nothing compared to the indecency of his own actions.

Nevertheless Martin's chatter stuck in his mind. There was a kernel of truth in it. This wisest of men was indeed blind, a bit insincere and a bit of the fool. He hated to think so, and yet there it was. There were the things he had read about in the *Confessions*, and the things simple-minded Thérèse had told him and simple people had observed; and they just did not fit together.

Fernand felt he was no longer competent to deal with these gnawing doubts.

It was not his way to pour out his troubles to others, but this would not be the first time that Monsieur Gerber had proved himself a friend. During the bad years at the Military Academy Fernand had received help and consolation from his tutor during his short leaves home. Monsieur Gerber had been able to understand everything from the slightest allusion and to respond with just the right words.

Cautiously Fernand told his tutor of his doubts concerning Jean-Jacques. He hinted that his words and his behavior did not always tally with his writings and teaching. He hinted of his own bewilderment.

There was a short silence before Monsieur Gerber replied. He too spoke in cautious terms: "Jean-Jacques's enemies judge him with their own mediocre logic. They compare an earlier statement of his with a later one, compare something he may have done or not done at some

time of his life with the ideals that he preaches — anything to poke cheap fun at him.”

Fernand knew that his friend and tutor was not saying this in reproach. Certainly Fernand could not be classed with Jean-Jacques's enemies and he was on the point of bursting out with this when Monsieur Gerber went on, “Occasionally I am fortunate enough to be vouchsafed a talk with Jean-Jacques, unimportant though I am. I confess that I too have been bewildered by a lack of measure in him, an extravagance of thought and feeling. But then I realize that I cannot grasp him in his entirety, for none of us can. Then I feel chastened and humble. You must not permit yourself to doubt him, Fernand! Genius is something so indefinable, so intangible that it crumbles to nothing at the first breath of doubt.” He grew quite excited for a man of his reserve as he continued, “And among all our contemporaries Jean-Jacques is the only genius. The others go to a lot of trouble, patching and fussing. He puts things down with one stroke; he creates. He does not prove things, he reveals them. The others inch along, with infinite toil and fret. He takes wing and flies. Don't worry yourself, Fernand, over this word or that which is beyond our understanding. Do not doubt him!”

Fernand had never heard his tutor speak so passionately. His conviction, his idealism were an echo of Jean-Jacques's own. Fernand was ashamed of his disloyalty in face of the older man's reverence.

But it was only for a short time that Monsieur Gerber's words helped him. Once more he found himself going about in conflict and distress.

Then came the news that Gilberte was returning in two days. Fernand sighed with relief. He decided to confess everything to her. He was sure her radiant presence would make everything bright.

Gilberte had had a thoroughly good time. Both in Saint-Vigor and Paris, she had been besieged by young men, who vied with each other in gallantry. Her most serious suitor was Mathieu, the twenty-five-year-old Baron de Vassy who was also the heir of the aged Henri, Count de Courcelles. Mathieu was handsome and exquisite in his manners. His attentions had a clearly serious tone, and Gilberte's grandfather liked to tease her by pointing out that here, too, was a speedy way to catch a title with the honorable patina of age in place of her own still raw one. Without taking the young Duke's wooing seriously, Gilberte had nevertheless got considerable pleasure out of it.

Life in Paris was certainly very different from life in Ermenonville. Things took on another meaning, so that Gilberte felt she had learned a great deal — in a few weeks she had become older and wiser by years. She tested Jean-Jacques's ideas against reality and found some of them distinctly naïve. At times, for all her youth, she felt herself far more sophisticated than the famous old philosopher.

In one respect Fernand had been right — these creatures of the Court circle and the Paris salons were affected through and through. They had a positive dread of showing their feelings, as though that would be unworthy of men of the world. Even Mathieu had done his courting in such oblique, roundabout ways that she had scarcely been able to keep from laughing. In the midst of a brilliant reception she would think of Fernand, and would be forced to smile, but not unkindly. She missed him greatly, his clumsy, boyish frankness, his impetuosity, his enthusiasms, the sincerity of his feelings.

And now she was back in Latour and he saw her again. She was wearing powder and beauty patches. She had become thinner; some of the rosy color was gone from her cheeks. But she still had her shining eyes, her wide, smiling mouth, her honest, straightforward loveliness. And in her turn she looked at him and there was her beanstalk of a Fernand, with the prominent Adam's apple, the unruly hair, and the shy and yet ardent eyes. Away flew his doubts and miseries, away flew her worldly wisdom. They took each other by the hand and kissed, shyly at first, then long and deep.

Gilberte began to talk. Nothing of any moment. She broke off with a laugh. "Ten times a day there were things I simply had to tell you about, and now I can't think of one. Tell me your news first," she begged.

She thought she knew what he would tell her. She had been touched and amused when she read his long emotional letters; she expected to hear something similar now, something confused, touching, faintly absurd.

But the gaiety quickly left her face. She recognized at once that the liaison he was describing, his entanglement with Madame Rousseau, was no casual affair. It was something sinister, menacing. Fernand talked with an effort, breaking off frequently and stammering as he groped for the exact words, the truthful phrase. He spoke like a soul in torment. But Gilberte paid no attention to that. All she saw was that here was a new Fernand, a Fernand who had wronged her and her love. She was chilled, almost repelled by him.

He was breathing hard, and for some time he was unable to go on. Gilberte did nothing to make it easier; she sat motionless, asking no questions, staring at her hands which rested in her lap. There was an oppressive silence.

At last Fernand resumed. He told her candidly about his surreptitious reading of the *Confessions*, how he would sneak into the pavilion and pry among Jean-Jacques's sordid secrets while Thérèse sat close by, unsuspecting, stupid, depraved and seductive. He said that by his own testimony Jean-Jacques fully recognized Thérèse's dullness and stupidity; there had never been any spiritual communion between her and the Master. Fernand went on to tell what he knew personally of her affair with that repulsive stableboy. He spoke of how he loathed Thérèse and yet could not tear himself away from her.

Gilberte's eyes darkened; furrows appeared on her clear brow, and her large mouth shut in a severe line. This person before her was no longer a boy; he was a grown man bearing the taint which she supposed went with being a man. She had longed to see Fernand the boy. How she felt about this man, she could not tell.

He had stopped talking about himself and now spoke of the new Jean-Jacques whom he had discovered in the *Confessions*. Here he was no longer inhibited; words flowed passionately as he defended the Master. Fernand labored to show her what a great man Jean-Jacques was just because he did not try to conceal any of his weaknesses. Terrible suffering was the price Jean-Jacques had had to pay for this tremendous work.

Gilberte only half listened. She was fearfully wrought up by what Fernand had told her of his connection with Thérèse.

But suddenly she stiffened and paid attention. For now Fernand was describing how Jean-Jacques had abandoned his children and why. Here was something that Gilberte felt concerned herself.

It so happened that barely two weeks ago the Comtesse de Montpéroux had been taking gifts to the Paris orphanage and had invited Gilberte and some other young ladies and gentlemen to go with her. This orphanage, the Hospice des Enfants-Trouvés, was regarded as one of the sights of Paris. During the drive there someone explained to Gilberte why the ladies and gentlemen found the place of such special interest. It still happened that young gallants pressed for money would have their illegitimate offspring brought to the orphanage; and on these tours of inspection there would be merry guessing games as to whether this or that child were related to one of the visi-

tors. So they had done this time, too. Rightly or wrongly, however, Gilberte had felt hurt and had suspected them of alluding to her own questionable origins, her *noblesse bâtarde*. She had stood looking with mixed feelings at the niche where newborn babes were left. Behind it there was a sliding panel, and there was also a bell so that the person bringing the infant could announce its arrival before slipping away. Perhaps seventeen years ago someone had toyed with the thought of disposing of Gilberte herself in this niche. The visit to the orphanage had scarcely been a pleasant experience.

Listening to Fernand's description of Jean-Jacques's crime, the painful memory returned with renewed force. While he was telling her about himself and Thérèse she had kept silent, but now she burst out, "Why, he's a monster, this Jean-Jacques of yours!"

Fernand had not expected any such reaction. He swallowed hard. "You mustn't say that, Gilberte," he murmured at last.

But Gilberte's thoughts had already turned from Jean-Jacques. What did she care about Jean-Jacques? The issue between Fernand and herself was what counted now. She saw him nervously clenching and unclenching his hands, waiting for her to speak — hands that had pawed that woman. While she, with gallantries being lavished upon her by the handsome young men at Saint-Vigor, had been longing for him, he had been wallowing with this disgusting creature. She felt herself degraded, ridiculous. Her normally happy expression grew darker still. She started to speak, but feeling that a word spoken in the first flush of her anger might be fateful for them both, she held her peace.

Fernand sat tense and frightened. The hard trial of confession was behind him. He had not spared himself; he had told no lies and concealed nothing. And now it was up to Gilberte to acquit him or condemn him. He scrutinized her face and saw a Gilberte he had never known. This Gilberte was adult, knowing, by no means friendly — in fact angry. But with pleasure and alarm he realized that he loved this new Gilberte even more than the childish, gay girl he had known.

But abruptly his mood shifted and now he desired her as he had sometimes desired Thérèse, with wicked lust. He felt an urge to degrade Gilberte, to trample on her purity, her accursed innocence, to drag her down into his own filth.

Still she said nothing. He could no longer bear it; he went up to her and tried to take her hand. Involuntarily she withdrew her hand and moved away from him.

It was plain that she had sensed what he was feeling. He was ashamed to the core. She condemned him.

She perceived his misery. It served him right. She longed to say something wounding to him, to tell him how vile he was. And she also longed to say something kind to him, something consoling. She did not know what she wanted.

"Excuse me, Fernand," she said at last, "you must go now. I must take all this in and see where I stand. Give me time. I would rather not see you for a few days."

Chapter 17 Opus Ultimum

JEAN-JACQUES HAD always felt at his best in the society of common folk, peasants and ordinary townspeople. After Lady's disappearance he took to visiting the neighboring villages more often, to talk with simple, wholesome people. He chatted with them about their everyday affairs, and if the conversation went on very long he would give them tobacco to compensate them for the loss of working time. The peasants and small-holders regarded this man, whom their seigneur treated as a superior and who nonetheless dealt with them as an equal among equals, as being 'off his rocker.' But they soon noticed to their delight that his craziness was useful to them. He brought their complaints before the Marquis; the seigneur tempered his military harshness and used his stick less often on his peasants. At Jean-Jacques's urging he even dropped his long-standing opposition to the marriage of a cottager's daughter, and gave his permission. The girl's grandmother henceforth prayed daily for 'Monsieur Rousseau the scribe', although he was not a Catholic.

And although not a Catholic, he was fond of a chat with Father Gauchet. They paced back and forth, Jean-Jacques speaking of the blessings of tolerance, the priest railing at the Marquis's stubborn and difficult character. Or Jean-Jacques would hail the grandeur and multifariousness of Nature, while the priest praised Nature's Creator, and they got on well with one another.

Jean-Jacques even took part in the villagers' games; he bowled and, in spite of his shortsightedness practiced archery. On Sundays there was dancing to the music of fife and bagpipes, and one time when Dame Ganeval invited the Master to dance he did not have to be urged twice, and circled round with the best.

He was often to be seen in the garden of The Chestnuts. Sitting at one of the bare wooden tables over a pint of the dark amber wine, he would revel in the sight of the rustic flower beds and amuse himself feeding the ducks or the fish in the small pond. He would listen patiently to Goodman Maurice's idle chatter and give his time freely to any patron who wanted to converse with him.

It was here at the inn that he heard of the death of Voltaire, his great colleague, friend, and foe. Goodman Maurice told him the news; Maurice already knew all about it. Actually, Voltaire had been killed by the Parisians' tumultuous enthusiasm. After many years in exile he had at the age of eighty-three returned to his native city, and Paris had greeted him by weeks of wild ovations, which he had not been strong enough to stand.

Shock, deep sorrow, and a trace of satisfaction passed in swift succession across Jean-Jacques's expressive face. Those Parisians had persecuted him, Jean-Jacques, as fanatically, as frantically as they had honored Voltaire; perhaps — but Jean-Jacques did not allow himself to formulate this — that had been one of the reasons why he had left the city right after Voltaire's arrival.

Goodman Maurice, garrulously indignant, described how the Archbishop's hatred had dogged the great fighter and philosopher even in death. Voltaire had been refused Christian burial. In order to prevent his corpse from being thrown into the carrion pit, his family had to smuggle it hurriedly out of Paris by weird and undignified ruses.

As he listened to this, the expression on Jean-Jacques's face changed to pure sympathy and indignation. He remembered his own feud with the Archbishop and how his books had repeatedly been ripped apart and burned by the executioner and how he himself had been hounded hither and yon and driven out of the country and across the sea. He forgot the venomous hatred with which Voltaire had pursued him; he felt himself as the dead man's friend and comrade; the offenses against Voltaire were blows against himself.

He felt the need for solitude, and took his leave. But at the garden gate he encountered Father Gauchet, who at once began to talk, overbrimming with spite and triumph, about Voltaire. "I hear," he exulted,

“that that heretic, atheist, and blasphemer has given up the ghost in despair.” Usually Jean-Jacques took the energetic priest’s blunt remarks in good part. But today, identifying himself with the slandered philosopher, he responded angrily, “How dare you call this great man godless, Father? Go through his works and you will discover a hundred passages that demonstrate his reverence for the Supreme Being.”

Jean-Jacques hurried off to the peace and solitude of the park. At the edge of the wild grove he sat down on one of the moss-covered tree stumps. Across the meadow they were building his chalet; muffled sounds of work in progress reached him.

Now that he no longer felt called upon to defend the dead man, his sympathy gave way to resentment. This very old man who had just died had wronged him, made fun of him, set the forces of stupidity and arbitrary violence yapping at his back — out of sheer envy. And wholly without cause, for he had lived grandly in glory, riches, and good fortune. Jean-Jacques’s own gifts and fame had been dimmed by Voltaire’s genius, wit, and mockery; the world had acclaimed Voltaire as the supreme embodiment of art and knowledge.

Yet he had been living proof of that truth which Jean-Jacques proclaimed: that art and knowledge lead only to corruption. For Jean-Jacques, generously defending his dead adversary, had lied when he assured the priest that Voltaire had been a believer. Voltaire had not been a believer. He had been a poor devil, vicious, malignant, restless, an evil to himself and the world. He had been all intellect, had had no soul.

And now he lay enveloped in utter darkness.

Jean-Jacques’s gnawing imagination pictured the darkness surrounding the dead man’s corrupting corpse. The sunlit rim of the grove and the sloping, rising meadow were drained of light as he thought of the nocturnal void enclosing the dead Voltaire. The summery white clouds spread out gray and threatening, the murmuring of the breeze became a dreary keening, the noises of the work at the chalet sounded dull and hollow, as if someone were thumping the lid of a coffin. Everything round about breathed decay.

Jean-Jacques jerked himself out of his reverie. The hammering over at the chalet rang out as it had before, clear, strong, and reassuring. They were building him a house over there. He was alive, and a setting for a worthy and peaceful old age was being prepared for him.

He turned his thoughts away from his dead friend-foe and continued to meditate, in a mood of gentle, floating melancholy, upon death.

He knew what it was to die; he had died many times, sweetly and painlessly, fading like a light, fading out like a note of music; he had died when he wrote the lines in which his Julie died. He knew there was nothing terrible about death.

Then, against his will, he went back to his contention with Voltaire. Voltaire had only himself to blame for the abuse that was being hurled at him. He had been witty — and had employed his wit only to draw a distorted picture of the world. He fashioned everything in his own image: petty, vain, and spiteful. He had been content to be a great author — and after all, what was there in that?

No one knew better than Jean-Jacques himself how little that amounted to. He had always felt his fame to be a sheer burden. When he left Paris he had rejoiced that he could retire into peace and need not write any more books.

But now that his rival was dead and he was the only great writer left in the world, was it not his duty to place one more stone on the edifice? He had already written of his struggle and his insights; must he not write one last book, the book of his peace and resignation?

As he walked home, sentences started forming in his mind. He spoke them aloud, turning them and shaping them, taking pleasure in their cadences.

As soon as he reached the pavilion he began to write. Through the open window he could hear the sougning of the wind, the rustling of the trees, the murmur of the brook Nonette. The twittering of the birds outside mingled with the trilling of his own canary bird: he wrote. Wrote upon fine gilt-edged paper for he loved fine writing paper, wrote firm, graceful characters, smiled as he wrote. The words flowed easily from his pen.

The work took hold of him; he was obsessed by it. Wherever he was he was working, shaping, creating. He did not eat; he slept little; he worked.

So possessed was he that he did not notice how Fernand continued to avoid him. One day when Fernand unexpectedly encountered him in the garden, he was so bemused with himself and his work that he remained unaware of the young man's uneasiness. "What do you think, Fernand," he cried, "I'm writing again. I'm writing about my walks and my reveries."

Fernand was glad that Jean-Jacques did not reproach him, made not the slightest allusion to his long defection. He even considered telling Jean-Jacques about his quarrel with Gilberte and saying how

hard it was for people to understand each other, no matter how close they were. Jean-Jacques meanwhile had forgotten that he was there, he was absorbed in himself, was speaking entirely to himself. "I must not withhold my unique happiness from others," he meditated. "I want everyone to know of those hours of ecstasy and feel them with me." He went on talking to himself, murmuring, smiling, gesticulating; obviously he was at work on his book.

Fernand tried to slip quietly away. But Jean-Jacques restrained him: "No, no, don't go away!" And so Fernand accompanied him farther as Jean-Jacques made for the clearing in the woods, the open space with the echo.

There they sat, and Jean-Jacques kept on talking in his deep, quiet voice. At first Fernand was so preoccupied with his brooding about Gilberte that he scarcely listened. But slowly Jean-Jacques's words cast their spell about him; they were music that pierced straight to his heart. How had the man who had flayed himself alive to record the fevered events of the *Confessions* contrived to find such heavenly peace? Fernand forgot Gilberte, let himself be lulled by Jean-Jacques's wisdom and sensibility. He shut his eyes and shared the Master's vision, enjoyed with him the sublimely simple tranquillity of Nature, entered into his communion with animal and tree.

But gradually into Jean-Jacques's serenity crept the old obsession. "Let the whole world conspire to persecute me," he mused. "I no longer care. I have resigned myself, and repose in the shade of my suffering, peaceful and hopeless. Sometimes I still wish that the torments I have suffered might benefit posterity, like the Passion of Socrates or of Jesus of Nazareth. But if my enemies destroy my writings too, so that my sufferings shall have been in vain, I am resigned even to that. I renounce everything.

"I am alone in the world," he went on dreamily. "I have no brother, no kinsman, no friend, no companion, only myself. Yes," and he stared unseeingly at Fernand, "the most sociable, the friendliest of men is outlawed by unanimous decree. So I drift on through life, forever condemned to solitude, peaceful in the bottomless gulf, mortal, wretched, yet no longer susceptible to any shock — like God."

Horror seized Fernand. He stared in fascination at this madman, this wise man, sitting gentle and sad and motionless, mottled by the sun and shadow, shaping sentences of rare beauty, unearthing his heart.

Stillness, hot and threatening, hovered above the clearing. Flies

danced in the shimmering air. Jean-Jacques's eyes, his wonderful eyes, were fixed upon Fernand, seeing him and not seeing him. Those eyes perceived things no one else saw — near and tangible things they overlooked. There came to Fernand dim recollections of stories he had been required to learn. The ancients had represented their prophets as blind: Tiresias was blind, Homer was blind, Oedipus, who solved the riddle of the Sphinx, had blinded himself.

"I expect nothing any more," Jean-Jacques said to himself. "I live in the depth and am content. I renounce. With my whole heart I renounce everything." He fell silent and sat, mild and enchanted, turning in the treadmill of his madness.

A tumult of thoughts and emotions assailed Fernand: pity, reverence, fright, even a faint impulse to laugh. He could no longer bear Jean-Jacques's visionary blind eyes, nor the soft, vibrant voice which now kept saying, "I renounce, I renounce." He wanted to get up and leave, but he did not dare.

Jean-Jacques had again fallen silent. He sat on the ground facing Fernand in the peaceful shadow of his black spruce, and toyed idly with his stick. It was hot. Neither of them said anything.

Fernand could no longer bear it. He began to speak rapidly and, perhaps in order to establish a bond between Jean-Jacques and himself, he plunged straight into an account of the bad years in the Military Academy. He described how everyone had made him suffer, his superiors and his fellow pupils, just because he was the son of the seigneur of Ermenonville. There had been one man in particular, a gymnastics teacher, a veteran soldier, a coarse, fat, muscular, pink-skinned sergeant of about forty, who had hated him and persecuted him with vicious ingenuity. During class the men had tormented him with kicks and blows of the fist disguised as 'assistance.' Those had been two miserable years for Fernand; he had experienced to the full malevolence and injustice and maltreatment of soul and body. "Men are evil," he concluded, helpless, desperate, himself evil.

Jean-Jacques turned his gloriously young, radiant eyes on him. "Men are evil," he said. "You are right. But man is good. Man is good!" he repeated fervently, passionately.

Yes, these days he believed in inborn goodness more deeply than ever before. The summer was unusually fine, the days cloudless but not too hot, and the excitement and glowing joy in his work persisted.

Ermenonville was blessed. He would stay a long time here, deep into the winter, perhaps even through the winter, perhaps for the rest

of his life. He would complete his botanical lexicon. And he would sort out and make a collection of the songs he had set to music in the past few years.

New plans kept coming to him. He would write a sequel to *Emile*. From his walks with Fernand he had learned many new things about the thoughts and feelings of young people.

It was a pity that Fernand turned up so seldom of late. Probably the reason was their difference in age; the young man was unable to enter into the gentle and despairing resignation of a man of sixty-seven.

Yet at this very time Jean-Jacques was to be given one last proof of how much, in spite of his age, he still meant to young people.

For on one of these beautiful summer mornings, while he walked along the lake and had stooped to pluck a flower, a young man suddenly came up to him and said, "May I help you? May I carry your books for you?" Somewhat disconcerted Jean-Jacques asked, "Who are you? What do you want?" "I am a student, studying law," the young man replied, "and now that I have seen you I have nothing more to seek in Ermenonville. All my dreams are fulfilled."

With gentle irony Jean-Jacques said, "So young and already such a flatterer?" The stranger blushed all over his face. "I've walked for ten hours, monsieur," he defended himself, "not in order to pay you compliments, but to have the happiness of seeing you." Smiling, Jean-Jacques replied somewhat maliciously, "You cannot impress me with your ten hours on foot, monsieur. Old as I am, much longer walks than that don't scare me."

But then he went up close to the young man and peered at him with his shortsighted eyes. The stranger was very youthful indeed. He had a broad and determined forehead; his hair was brushed down over it, and his eyes, which he kept fixed on Jean-Jacques, glowed with veneration. "You look sincere, young man," Jean-Jacques said at last. "Don't be offended at my not giving you a better reception. But I have to protect myself from idle curiosity-seekers. Paris breaks into my retreat just to view me, to annoy me. Paris won't let me have a peaceful old age." "Permit me to assure you," the young man answered respectfully, "that it is not idle curiosity which draws us young people to you. We love and admire you fervently. We need your counsel, need your ideas if we are to live." "Very well," said Jean-Jacques. "If you wish, you may accompany me through the gardens here and we will chat. But you won't hear

much about politics, I'm afraid. I'd rather tell you about the flowers and the trees. You will discover, my friend, that botany is the most delightful of all sciences."

The young man walked with him, asking few questions, listening attentively.

Finally, feeling that here was a friend, Jean-Jacques spoke of the matter which never ceased to weigh upon him: how misunderstood he was; how everything he wrote was twisted and robbed of meaning and effect; what a hopeless battle he was waging all alone against the insensitiveness of all the world.

The young man ardently denied this. "You, ineffectual?" he cried. "But you are so close to us! The common people love you! The others — Diderot and Raynal and all the rest of those clever fellows, even the great Voltaire himself — they write for the few. Those gentlemen don't understand the people, and the people don't understand them. But everyone understands your language, Master. 'Man is born free — and is everywhere in chains!' Anyone can grasp that. The others are spoken of respectfully as Monsieur Voltaire or Monsieur Diderot. France — the whole world — calls you Jean-Jacques. No one else has had that honor. You need your first name only, like the King." He broke off. "What a thoughtless comparison! Forgive me. I well know what you think of kings; your words are stamped indelibly upon my memory." And he quoted: "It is incontestable that the people set kings on the throne to protect their freedom, not to destroy it.' I swear to you that we, the youth of France, will see that your words are transformed into reality, into deeds. You have shown the way: we, the Jeans and the Jacques, will replace Louis with Jean-Jacques."

Jean-Jacques listened, smiling. "To the trees of Ermenonville you can say that sort of thing with impunity," he said. "But don't let anyone in Paris hear of it. Otherwise, young man, you certainly won't live long enough to realize your dreams."

In his exuberant emotionality the student had reminded Jean-Jacques of Fernand. Playfully he said, "If you want to do me a favor, pick me a little chickweed for my canaries."

But when, on leaving, the stranger asked whether he might come again, Jean-Jacques mastered his feelings and refused him. "My friend," he said, "I am afraid I would get used to you. I cannot afford a new friendship; I could not bear new disappointments."

The young man bowed low and departed.

Back in Paris the student — he was nineteen years old, from Arras,

and named Maximilien Robespierre — wrote in his diary:

‘I have seen Jean-Jacques, the Citizen of Geneva, the greatest of mortals. I am still bursting with joy and pride for he called me his friend!

‘Noble man, you have taught me to acknowledge the grandeur of Nature and the eternal principles of the social order.

‘But in your sublime countenance I also descried the furrows traced by that sorrow to which the injustice of men has condemned you. With my own eyes I have seen in you how the world rewards the struggle for truth.

‘Yet I will follow in your footsteps.

‘The old edifice is crumbling. Faithful to your teachings, we will use the pickaxe to complete its destruction and will carry the stones with which to build a new house more glorious than any the world has ever seen. Perhaps for such an undertaking I and others will have to pay with direst misfortune or even premature death. I am not dismayed. You called me your friend: I will show myself worthy.’

PART TWO

JEAN-JACQUES IN DEATH

A DARK EVENING

A BETRAYER BETRAYED

BELATED REPENTANCE

THE INQUEST

INHUMATION

A KNOTTY LEGACY

THE DANGEROUS TRUTH

EXPULSION OF THE EVIL ONE

ROYAL COMEDY

FERNAND SEES THE LIGHT

FERNAND ACTS

Vitam impendere vero —
Devote your life to truth.

JUVENAL — JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

A useful lie is better
than a useless truth.

OLD FRENCH SAYING

Chapter 1 *A Dark Evening*

WHEN FERNAND HEARD that the two women were driving to Senlis he decided to make the most of their absence and call on Jean-Jacques to go for a walk. He thought he would feel less constrained knowing that Thérèse was away. But he delayed irresolutely for so long that when he finally reached the pavilion Jean-Jacques was not there. Fernand visited all his favorite haunts and still could not find him. He strolled over to the village. Goodman Maurice was in the garden of the inn, and Fernand asked him whether Jean-Jacques had passed that way. Maurice said yes. But, he added in his garrulous way, Monsieur Jean-Jacques had lingered only for a short while, then he had said he was eager to get to work and had gone home.

To disturb the Master at his writing was out of the question. But sometimes, during breathing spells, he would play the piano, and then Fernand would not hesitate to go in. Fernand went to the pavilion. It was locked and no sound was audible from within but the singing of the canaries. Out of sorts at having missed Jean-Jacques, but a little relieved also, he shrugged his shoulders and walked away.

After lunch he studied Tacitus with Monsieur Gerber. Then he went for another walk in the gardens; but still he saw no sign of Jean-Jacques. He went for a swim in the lake, sat down under the willow tree and waited for a long time.

Dinner was early that evening. The Marquis was in good humor, and even Monsieur Gerber was talkative. He related that the day before yesterday Jean-Jacques had played for him some of the songs he had composed here in Ermenonville. Monsieur Gerber certainly did not mean to boast of his intimacy with the Master, and yet Fernand was hurt that *he* had not been the first to hear the songs. Monsieur de Girardin remarked that he must invite Jean-Jacques for an evening of music soon.

They talked about other things. Gerber praised the ease with which

Fernand read his Tacitus. The Marquis suggested that the conversation be conducted for a while in Latin. This was done and caused considerable merriment; even Fernand brightened up. It turned out to be a gay evening.

Yet before night fell everything was horribly changed. From the entrance hall came screams and wails. Everyone rushed out. And there was Thérèse, a Thérèse they had never known. The otherwise quiet, placid woman was in a state of frightful panic. Her gown, a pretty pastel gown she had worn on the trip to Senlis, had stains on it, brownish-red stains — bloodstains.

What had happened? Had she hurt herself? No, not she: Jean-Jacques. Had Jean-Jacques had an attack? Perhaps. He did not move. He was stiff and cold. He was — dead. Nobody understood. “Stiff and cold and dead,” Thérèse repeated.

A man of action, Monsieur de Girardin at once issued orders. “You, Paul, go to Doctor Chenu; you, Gaspard, ride to Senlis and fetch me Doctor Villeron. Get them both here at all costs!”

Then he ran over to the pavilion. Fernand went with him, and Monsieur Gerber, and others.

Meanwhile Madame Levasseur had been alone in the pavilion with the dead Jean-Jacques. When she found the poor fool lying in his blood, she had been horribly frightened. Her first impulse had been to do nothing, to let things take their course. Then the villainous brute would end on the gallows or on the rack. But Thérèse had started to scream at once, and her screams had brought Madame Levasseur to her senses. Her silly Thérèse could let herself go; she, the old woman of seventy-three, had to think, to calculate swiftly and correctly.

The fiend had not simply bashed in her son-in-law’s head; he had arranged the body neatly in front of the fireplace so that it might be thought he had collapsed and in falling injured himself on the corner of the mantel. The brute had obviously intended to give her a hint. If she said she suspected him, then Thérèse’s relations with him would inevitably come out, and that would be the end of everything, not only for Nicolas but for Thérèse as well.

All these thoughts ran through the old woman’s head in a matter of seconds. She realized that the rat had reckoned shrewdly. There was nothing she could do to him. In fact, she would have to shield him for the time being.

“Help me get him onto the bed,” she snapped at Thérèse.

At the sight of all the blood, Thérèse had started screaming again, and this time the old woman had not rebuked her; she had let her shriek and wail, let her rush out of the house and over to the château. Now Madame Levasseur was alone. But she would not be alone for long; soon they would all be here, and by then the story the scoundrel had prepared must be credible.

First of all she rushed to examine the chest. There they were, those valuable papers covered with the fool's writing. The cur had had the sense to leave them where they were.

She sat down, feeling very weak. But she must pull herself together; she must think straight now; she must not let herself be caught in any inconsistency. A good thing her head was functioning better than her legs.

Here was the Marquis. And all the others.

The light inside the pavilion was dim, but Girardin saw at once that there were bloodstains all over the floor. "What has happened?" he asked. "Where is he?" Madame Levasseur pointed to the alcove, which was in semidarkness. "We laid him on the bed," she said. Hesitantly, the Marquis approached. His eyes slowly grew accustomed to the dimness. Jean-Jacques lay on the bed in his dressing gown, his thin face caked with dried blood.

Girardin stared stupidly; his brain stopped working. For the first time in his life he felt on the point of falling down in a faint.

Madame Levasseur continued speaking. "What did you say, madame? I beg your pardon, madame?" he asked, pulling himself together. "We found him lying on the floor," Madame Levasseur declared, "here, by the chimney. We lifted him and laid him on the bed. Actually I had to do it by myself; Thérèse was hardly any use at all. But of course he hardly weighs anything. He was already quite cold, and the blood was dry. But we got blood on ourselves all the same, as you see." The Marquis went a little closer to the bed. "It looks as if he banged himself on the right side," said Madame Levasseur, "it's over his whole right temple." "And the house was locked when you came back from Senlis?" the Marquis asked. "Yes," replied Madame Levasseur, and she added, "This is how I think it happened — he had a stroke and when he collapsed he fell against the corner of the mantel."

Inwardly, the Marquis sighed with relief. Such an explanation was credible; it had to be credible. He went up still closer to the body. He had looked upon many dreadful wounds on the field of battle, but

this head encrusted with blood was the ghastliest sight he had ever seen. "Yes, probably the right temple," he answered rather stupidly.

For years now he had lived in peace, content with himself and, on the whole, with the rest of the world, so that Jean-Jacques's sinister death struck him with a unique impact. All of a sudden Jean-Jacques's visit, which he had regarded as the happiest event in his life, had turned into a black disaster. The noble, gentle Master had been abruptly, bloodily, wrenched from the peace which he had found here at last. And Girardin himself felt involved in the horror — though he did not know exactly how, nor did he wish to know.

He had to summon others to share his grief. "You were so close to him, my son," he said. "Look at him. Come closer, do not be afraid to look."

Fernand's eyes had been drawn again and again to Thérèse's blood-stained gown — he could not help it. He felt a horror of her; he had to exert the full force of his reason to convince himself that she had not shed this blood. She and the old woman had been away in Senlis; they had a valid alibi. He himself was the guilty one. Ever since Lady's disappearance he had known that Jean-Jacques was in danger. This very day some premonition had told him to seek out Jean-Jacques and protect him. But he had been deterred by a fear of the first awkward moments of meeting, and had deliberately delayed. He was to blame for this gruesome turn of events.

He went up to the body as his father had bidden him. There lay his friend. Jean-Jacques had offered him his love. But Fernand's own heart had been sluggish, he had not been capable of sufficient love. He stared at the head encrusted with blood. He was almost numb with grief; he had never imagined such terrible grief could exist.

Meanwhile, Girardin pulled himself together. He had duties to the dead man and to himself. If he himself had recoiled at the sight of the bloodstained corpse, how much more reluctant would others be to accept Madame Levasseur's sensible explanation. They would invent cheap tales about this blood. He would have to see to it that reason triumphed over wild imagination and superstition. His sense of duty and responsibility displaced sorrow.

And here was the Maitre Chirurgien from Ermenonville, Chenu. "I fear we were all too late, Doctor," said Girardin, and led him to the body. After a cursory examination Doctor Chenu shrugged his shoulders and declared that Monsieur Rousseau must have been dead

for hours, for four or five hours. Quickly the Marquis put in, "A dreadful sight, is it not? But there is a perfectly natural explanation. The house was locked. Jean-Jacques was alone at the time of the seizure. As he collapsed he struck his head on the sharp corner of the mantel-piece. That is what Madame Levasseur thinks, and that is probably what happened." He spoke with agitation. The Maître Chirurgien of Ermenonville concurred rather lamely with the Seigneur of Ermenonville: "Yes, I daresay that is probably what happened."

Uneasily, Girardin observed that the whole room was full of people. Father Gauchet and Martin and the mayor of Ermenonville were there; heads were peering in at the windows. There were people from the château and people from the village.

In an undertone Doctor Chenu suggested that it might be in order to notify Monsieur Bonnet, the Procureur Fiscal of Ermenonville, for the post-mortem. The Marquis was disturbed by this suggestion. He had often had differences with the Procureur Fiscal. But the doctor was right, the Fiscal must be informed; that was the law, and it was also necessary in order to stop foolish rumors from spreading.

Monsieur Bonnet was sent for.

By now the Marquis was almost convinced that his enemies would circulate rumors; they would not shrink from insinuating that he himself had not guarded his guest with sufficient vigilance. Proud man that he was, this thought gnawed at him almost as savagely as his grief. And more and more people came and whispered to each other, and the carefree singing of the canaries went on amid their whispering. "Can't you at least keep those birds quiet!" Girardin burst out at Madame Levasseur, speaking nervously, and more loudly than he had intended. Without a word the old woman put a cloth over the cage.

Then she turned to Thérèse, who was sitting slumped in a corner, her face vacant, her mouth slightly open, and in a low voice gave her an order. "Make room, please," she said to the people standing near the fireplace. Thérèse fetched a small pail of water and began to wash the blood from the floor. No one attempted to help her. They all watched in silence.

"They are holding their tongues now," the Marquis thought, "but as soon as they get outside they'll begin to wag them. By now they already know about it in Senlis and it will reach Louvres before long. Postmaster Payen is a great gossip; he'll spread the story with malicious additions. He'll tell it to his travelers — and they all stop over

in Louvres. Before the day is over they'll know it in Paris. It's a long day.'

The day was long, an endless midsummer day, and more and more people poured into the house. For everyone that left, three newcomers arrived, and there were always fresh faces at the windows. The Marquis would have liked to drive the people away, but he felt that would be imprudent.

Then the Procureur Fiscal, Monsieur Bonnet, came. As required by law he had brought a doctor with him — the same Doctor Villeron whom the Marquis had sent for. The official gave a civil greeting. Against his will the Marquis's face grew tense and his mouth felt dry; now was the time for caution.

The Procureur addressed a few factual questions to the women. Thérèse sat apathetically while Madame Levasseur answered. Everyone listened attentively. What Madame Levasseur said was perfectly reasonable; it would be hard to find any objections to it. Yes, the house had been locked as usual; lock and bolts were intact, the windows shut — no doubt Jean-Jacques had closed them because of the heat. They had found him lying on the floor — horribly covered with blood as he was now. They themselves had been in Senlis all day, shopping. She named the shops where they had made purchases, but she did not mention the visit to Maître Gibert. Then she repeated her conjecture about a stroke and the corner of the mantel.

"That is Doctor Chenu's opinion too," Girardin hastily put in to support her story.

But now what lout was this, interfering? Goodman Maurice of The Chestnuts — his tenant, his subject! "I imagine I am the last person to have seen the deceased before his dreadful demise," he said, addressing himself officiously to the Procureur. "I have read all his works seven times, and I think I can fairly say he enjoyed a chat with me. Monsieur Jean-Jacques looked in excellent health when he came by this morning. I was positively struck how well he looked. Not peaked in the least, Your Honor. It is incomprehensible to me that he should suddenly be lying here dead." "Thank you, my friend," said the Procureur, "we will apply to you if we have any questions to ask." He turned to Doctor Villeron: "Would you like to examine the body?" The doctor went up to the body. "Madame Levasseur's is the only conceivable explanation," said the Marquis in an authoritarian tone.

After a brief examination the doctor declared, "It is quite possible that the cause suggested by Madame Levasseur was responsible for

the lethal result. But conclusive findings can be established only by an autopsy."

Madame Levasseur had sensed the hostility of the crowd as they watched her Thérèse wiping the blood from the floor. In her toneless voice, very quietly, she challenged the pack. "My son-in-law more than once expressed the wish," she declared, "that he should not be buried before an autopsy had taken place, and he wanted at least ten witnesses to be present. He was always afraid of his enemies; everyone knows that. Monsieur le Marquis, and you, Your Honor — I ask you to order an autopsy so as to clear up anything there may be to clear up."

The Marquis had taken a profound dislike to the old woman from the first, and though it was unreasonable he had a faint suspicion that she might be mixed up in this bloody affair. But he could not help feeling respect and something akin to gratitude when he saw how bravely and skillfully she was handling matters — he could not have done better himself — and the tacit understanding between them deepened.

Monsieur Bonnet replied, "I doubt that there is anything to clear up. But as you and the Marquis wish it, an autopsy will be performed." He bowed politely to the old woman and Thérèse. "Be assured of my unqualified sympathy, mesdames," he said, and left.

The Marquis was relieved. The immediate danger had been averted. It was the dreadful appearance of the corpse which would start talk; once it was properly laid out he could much more easily keep the truth from being distorted.

If only all these people would go! "My friends," he said, turning to the bystanders with a rather forced briskness, "I think it would be fitting to leave these ladies to themselves now." Slowly the room cleared.

It was quite dark by this time. Madame Levasseur lit candles. Now that the initial emergency had been met, Girardin gave in to weakness. He sat down and closed his eyes.

But the thought of all that was still to be done tonight and in the following days made relaxation impossible. Dame Aubrun must be instructed to lay out the corpse the first thing in the morning. And he must send a message at once to Doctor Lebègue. And he must get Houdon, the sculptor, to come and make the death mask; there was no time to be lost. The autopsy must not be held before the death mask was taken.

His glance fell on the chest and writing table. He would have to get the manuscripts into safekeeping too, as soon as possible, so that nothing happened to them. But that could hardly be done before the funeral. He would see to it that the ceremony was dignified and simple. At least Jean-Jacques would be buried on Girardin's land. Ermenonville, where the greatest man of the century was to have had a peaceful old age, would be his final resting place.

Gradually these practical thoughts gave way in Girardin's mind to a pure, deep grief. He went to the body. He remembered how Jean-Jacques had so cheerfully spoken about all he still meant to get done in Ermenonville — the collection of songs, the Reveries, the Botanical Lexicon, and ever so many other things. And the Swiss ch[^]alet where he meant to do all this work, and to which he had looked forward so eagerly, would be ready in the next few days; but there would be no Jean-Jacques to take possession of it. There he lay, snatched away in the midst of his plans, with that gaping wound in his temple. There had been so many friends close by, and yet the great beloved had bled his life away all alone, had breathed his last in that cold, appalling solitude which had been his glory and his grief all his life. The sadness of the human lot struck Girardin with bitter force; it gave him greater anguish than he had ever felt on any field of battle. But into his sorrow there kept absurdly intruding a bit of doggerel, a mnemonic verse used to help Latin students memorize the impersonal verbs which take the accusative of the person who is properly their subject. Monsieur Gerber had often recited this verse to Fernand: '*Piget, pudet, poenitet, taedet atque miseret.* It torments, shames, makes repentent, disgusts, saddens.'

He pulled himself together. He had quite forgotten the women. There was no way out of it, he would have to do something about them. "Won't you come up to the ch[^]teau and dine with us, mes-dames?" he said, addressing himself to Madame Levasseur. "I could send someone over to watch by the body." "Thank you, sir," Madame Levasseur replied coldly, almost with hostility. "It is very kind of you, but we will stay here."

Girardin returned to the ch[^]teau. Reluctantly, almost mechanically, he went up to his bedroom and opened the secret panel which concealed the board with all his passkeys. They were hanging as they should, in his private, deliberately irregular arrangement. The passkey to the pavilion hung correctly, facing to the right, half hidden by the key to gate number 17, and all the keys round about it were

hanging properly. Vaguely the memory recurred to him of his encounter with Nicolas in this bedroom. He suppressed the thought, but he was unable to drive away the memory of the old woman's hostile look as she declined his invitation to dinner. He did not want to acknowledge it, but he knew exactly what that look signified. If he had kept his promise and sent Nicolas away this would not have happened — that was what the old woman had meant.

What silly fancies! He shook his head with impatient vehemence.

He went to his study. There was work to do. He was glad of it, it distracted his mind. "Have the steward come here," he ordered his major-domo. "And have some more of the men ready also. I must send couriers to Paris — several couriers. And I must make arrangements for the funeral."

He organized, he rapped out instructions, succinctly, with military brevity. The burial would be simple but at the same time impressive. For even the remotest generations must and would tell the tale of Jean-Jacques's funeral.

Chapter 2 A Betrayer Betrayed

NIGHT HAD FALLEN by the time Madame Levasseur and Thérèse were at last left alone. Madame Levasseur sat in Jean-Jacques's favorite chair. She was exhausted. In a life that had had its share of hard days, this day had been one of the hardest. And tomorrow and the day after — the whole week was going to be no cinch either.

At least she had at the last minute as good as settled matters with the notary. This Maître Gibert could pry the last sou out of one's last petticoat, but he knew his law, he had grasped what she wanted and what he had to do about it, and the document would be ready in the next few days. Thérèse had signed here and signed there; only the final signature and the seal were lacking. But they were mere formalities, the notary had said. Right after the funeral she would go to Senlis again with Thérèse; in the interval she must only prevent Thérèse from meeting that lout alone.

Madame Levasseur had had to think fast and sharply today. She had figured correctly, and she was pleased with herself. She had made the Marquis, who was none too bright, understand how the land lay. The presence of the Procureur had chilled her to the marrow of her bones, but even in front of him she had kept her head, and she deserved real credit for having demanded an autopsy herself. You might say it was already established that the poor fool had died a peaceful, natural death, and she was to be thanked for that.

She had done well; she felt superior — superior to the Marquis, the Procureur, death and the Devil. But it had been a strain, and now she just sat feeling terribly tired and exhausted.

“Get us something to eat,” she ordered Thérèse. “I can’t eat anything,” Thérèse moaned. It was pathetic to see how helpless she looked. “Stupid cow,” the old woman scolded, but without ill will. Warily, she got up to fix something herself. “You ought at least to change your clothes,” she ordered, “and wash the stains out of your dress.” Thérèse stood up to obey. She shrank fearfully away as she passed the alcove. “I don’t know what I’m to do tonight,” she complained. “How can I sleep beside the dead body?” “Well, there you are, you see,” said Madame Levasseur. It was her only reference to Thérèse’s share of the responsibility for Jean-Jacques’s death, and Thérèse understood her.

In a little while the meal was ready, and finally Thérèse also sat down at the table. They began to eat.

They were still eating when there was a sharp knock at the door. Nicolas entered.

Thérèse gave a faint scream, her indolent features distorted with fear. Involuntarily she darted a look at the alcove. She had once heard that a murdered man will begin to bleed in the presence of his murderer, and she squinted, trembling, toward the bed, which was dimly discernible in the flickering light of the candles.

Madame Levasseur had expected that the cur would want to speak to her, but not that he would have the monstrous effrontery to come this very evening. She was dead-tired, and afraid this new strain would be too much for her. But she would have to pull herself together; this dreadful day was demanding one last effort from her. She did not dare fly out at the creature. She must see that he got no chance to talk to Thérèse alone; above all she must make him understand that Thérèse no longer had any power over the papers.

Meanwhile Nicolas had started talking. “It is rather late, ladies,”

he said, trying to give his squeaky voice a proper tone of condolence, "but I felt I could not wait to express my deep sympathy for the terrible and unexpected misfortune that has struck you. Though not unexpected to me, ladies. And in view of the intimacy with you on which I think I may pride myself, and since your light was still burning, I made so bold as to come in. In such a situation, I said to myself, two ladies now unhappily alone without their natural guardian must surely need an experienced protector."

"That is very kind of you," Madame Levasseur answered; "but pray do not be concerned about us. We have our protectors. Very effective ones. Even the Royal Seal."

"My French is a little weak," said Nicholas, "and perhaps I don't quite get your meaning. I suppose our poor deceased left a will. But is that adequate protection? For example, I see here the chest with the famous papers. We all know how concerned the dear departed was about these papers. He was always afraid one of these aristocrats might get hold of them for a crazy whim, or one of these philosophers who hate each other like poison, though they themselves don't know why."

"We are not at all afraid of that, my friend," Madame Levasseur assured him almost pleasantly. "That was just a bee in my poor son-in-law's bonnet, and now it has unfortunately died with him. As for me, I always had only one worry — that common everyday cutthroats were after the papers. Well, my boy, that kind won't trouble me any longer. I've insured myself against them; I've got the Royal Seal against them. At the last moment, while the hand of a low cur was doing away with our poor Jean-Jacques." "It is not proper, madame," said Nicolas in mild reproof, "it is even blasphemous to refer to the hand of Providence as that of a low cur. But I can make allowance for your agitation. Nevertheless, ladies, and in spite of your Royal Seal, I advise you to commit your papers to the safekeeping of an honest, reliable person. Trust them to your tried friend and devoted servant." And he approached the chest.

When she saw this, all Madame Levasseur's cunning and composure deserted her and her pent-up rage erupted. She did her best to raise her toneless voice, to shout. "Keep away from that chest!" she hissed. "You blackguard! You cur! You filthy groveling swine! You're even more brainless than disgusting. Don't you understand yet? While you were committing your stupid, stinking butchery, we were signing. You've been outswindled, you fathead!" It was grotesque

and horrible the way the old woman struggled to raise her voice and only a high-pitched yapping came out. She continued more calmly: "If you'll kindly take the trouble to go to Senlis, Mr. Clever Horse Trader, and call on the royal notary Maître Gibert, you can ask to see the document. And if you understand the King's French you will realize that now I, and I alone, can dispose of the papers; I, Widow Levasseur. Thérèse can do nothing without me. You've gone to all this trouble here for nothing, my little man. For nothing! You won't get a single sou out of it, I tell you. What you'll get at best is the gallows or the wheel."

Suddenly Thérèse began to jabber as though out of her mind. "This is a dreadful thing you've done, Monsieur Nicolas. I never asked you to do it, you can't pretend I did. Why, it's simply terrible!"

Nicolas appeared calm, except for the way his flaring nostrils twitched. His colorless eyes gave Thérèse a swift, malevolent glance, then he turned his attention to the old woman again, a polite, if slightly twisted, smile on his lips. "See what you've done, madame," he said in his squeaky voice. "You've turned the poor girl's brain. First you speak of the bloody hand of Providence, and now you're pointing the finger at me. As I say, I make allowance for your agitation, but I'm not Providence, I am simply one of Monsieur le Marquis's servants — as well, of course, as the future founder of a stud *à la* Tattersall. I confess, by the way, that this stud seems to have been brought much closer to my reach by our philosopher's regrettable demise. It's an ill wind that blows nobody good."

With remarkable calm the old woman answered, "I know what's making you so brash, my boy. You think that if I let things take their course my Thérèse will be in for a bad time, too, and so I'll have to shield you. But maybe you're on the wrong track again. The prospect of seeing you on the wheel is tempting, my boy, and worth a high price."

Nicolas replied, still quite coolly, "I know you're a clever old lady, madame. You'll think twice before deciding you can afford any such amusement." But he realized that she had indeed not gone to Senlis to see the sights, and abruptly he was overcome by overpowering rage and disappointment at the miscarriage of the plan that he had carried out with such speed and daring. His face became a mask of fury. "Shut up, you old jade," he roared at her. "Do you think I'm afraid of your toothless mouthings? I know how to ride an old nag

like you." He advanced toward the chest. "You see, here goes your treasure!"

Madame Levasseur threw herself in his path. It was pitiable to see the fat, puffing old woman trying to stop the sinewy young man. She tried to scream and could not.

In utter desperation she clutched Thérèse by the arm. "Scream, you goosel!" she implored hoarsely. "He's stealing your money. He's stealing all you have to live on! Go on, scream!" Thérèse saw her mother's face tense with rage, fear, and determination. All the awe and respect she had felt for this woman ever since she was able to think and feel overcame her, and she began to scream. She screamed piercingly in her full, rich voice.

Nicolas let be at once. "Brainless," he said. "Here she is, tossing away the chance of a lifetime. But I knew it all along — brainless."

He had himself fully under control again. "It's quite clear you are too upset at the moment, ladies," he said politely, "to recognize your real well-wisher. Therefore I will take my leave now, once more expressing my deepest condolences."

"Good-bye, my good fellow," said Madame Levasseur, "and also on Thérèse's behalf, good-bye. If I catch you with her once more, I'll show you what's what. Mark my words." But in saying this she had merely given Nicolas the opportunity for an effective exit. "You'd do better to offer your advice to the Widow Rousseau herself, my dear old lady," he said. "It wasn't my father's son who started this love match." He bowed and left.

Without wasting a word on Thérèse, Madame Levasseur went upstairs to go to bed at last.

"Don't leave me alone, Mother," Thérèse whimpered. But the old woman did not pause; Thérèse could not tell if she had even heard her.

Thérèse huddled into a corner as far as possible from the alcove and sat down on a chair, exhausted and empty. But thoughts came against her will. It was unfair of Nicolas to disgrace her like that in front of her mother. She had not run after him; it was a lie. And he did have some feeling for her! No man could make love as he had done with her unless he felt something. These things she understood. It was mean of him to deny it now.

All men were mean. The little Count was mean too. Even Jean-Jacques had been mean, or he would not have done that to her, put-

ting away the children. But she must not think badly of him, with him lying so near and looking so awful.

She sat, dull and stupid, her slow brain refusing to grasp that from now on she was to live without Jean-Jacques, in a way her own mistress, and with money besides. Monsieur Nicolas had brought all this about. He might be hanged for it, drawn, maybe even quartered. They had quartered Damiens; she recalled with a shiver how terrifying the pictures and the exact descriptions of it had been; and Damiens had not even killed the King, he had merely intended to. If Nicolas had had no feeling for her he would never have risked such horrible things. He had done it for her sake, that much was certain. The thought gave her dull satisfaction.

She sat there musing drowsily. Nicolas was wonderful at making love; you couldn't deny him anything. It was a good thing her mother was there. Without her their money really would soon be up the flue. Her mother had often beaten her, but just now when she had felt her mother's hand on her arm and her mother had looked at her, all her weakness had vanished and at once she had been able to scream.

For the next few days she must stay close by her mother and must not see Nicolas alone. It was a pity, for he loved her. That was the only reason why he could not wait for Jean-Jacques to pass away by himself. Poor Jean-Jacques.

She would have liked to sit in the big armchair, but tonight she did not dare; it was Jean-Jacques's armchair. So she continued to huddle on the little chair until at last she dozed off uncomfortably.

Chapter 3 Belated Repentance

ALTHOUGH FERNAND was tired out from the emotions of this dreadful evening, he passed a sleepless night. Remorse consumed him. He blamed himself for having failed to give Jean-Jacques unquestionable loyalty, as Monsieur Gerber had urged. Instead he had been unfeelingly critical of Jean-Jacques, even worse than Martin Catrou.

Fate had singled him out to receive the most intimate thoughts of the world's wisest man, but he had not loved the Master enough. His heart had been sluggish; he had been dull and unobservant and had obtusely forfeited the unprecedented privilege.

At the crack of dawn — and day came early at this time of year — he hurried out of doors and went to the clearing. He relived every gesture, every word of his last meeting with Jean-Jacques. In his mind he heard clearly the music of Jean-Jacques's speech, music that had soothed the mad turmoil within him. He saw Jean-Jacques's deep-set, lively eyes fixed upon him, heard the last words he had spoken — that deep, emotional voice telling him: "Man is good!"

He, Fernand, was not good. And not even wicked. He was something worse — halfhearted lukewarm, callous. From pure laziness, from fear of embarrassment, he had failed when it came to the test, and had not protected the Master as the inward voice had bidden him.

He must do something. For the dead man at least he must do something.

He went in search of Nicolas. He feared the encounter, feared his own impulses. He had an insane desire to knock the fellow down and trample on him. But he must see him, and challenge him.

He found him in the stable and called him. "What can I do for you, sir?" Nicolas said. "Where were you yesterday?" Fernand demanded imperiously. Feigning mild surprise, Nicolas replied, "Do you mean to suggest, sir, that I should have taken better care of Monsieur the Philosopher? I would gladly have done so. But Monsieur le Marquis had ordered me to keep out of the deceased's way, and if I remember rightly you yourself impressed that on me."

The urge Fernand had dreaded overcame him, the longing to kill the fellow with his own hands. With a touch of familiarity Nicolas went on, "I was glad to have more time for the horses, the Rousseau ladies being away." "And were you in the stables all day?" Fernand asked. "Possibly not the whole day," Nicolas replied with insolent civility, "since there is unfortunately less to do here than Monsieur le Marquis promised me."

Fernand could restrain himself no longer. With his riding crop he struck Nicolas across the face.

Nicolas was strong. With one hand tied behind his back he could have given this skinny aristocrat a drubbing he would remember. But he had the sense to realize that in a fight with a lord a stableboy

would always get the worst of it; and with this bad business hanging over his head he would have to be careful. "I should have thought you had learned a little moderation from the philosophy of the deceased," he said, "but I see that sorrow over his loss has driven you partly out of your mind."

Fernand spoke softly, between his teeth. "You killed him, you scum, you murderer. You killed Lady, too."

Once again Nicolas denied himself the pleasure of giving this fop a rough answer, and remained cool. The little Count was a simpleton who could not anticipate the consequences of certain actions, so Nicolas would have to point them out to him. "When you are again in a condition to think logically, sir," he said, "you will realize yourself that there can be a perfectly natural explanation of Monsieur Jean-Jacques's regrettable demise. But if it should turn out that there has been foul play, it seems to me suspicion would first fall on people as have rummaged secretly in Monsieur the Philosopher's papers, especially when these people are said to have shown a human interest in the dead man's wife too."

Once more Fernand saw red. Thérèse had betrayed him to the lout. Probably Thérèse was implicated in the dreadful deed — in fact it was almost certain. The bloodstains on her dress danced before his eyes.

Yet his rage was impotent. The threatened danger did exist. If Nicolas came under suspicion, his own liaison with Thérèse would be investigated; Thérèse would be involved; he himself would be involved. In imagination he could already hear the mortifying uproar that would break out all over Europe.

He was powerless to fight the scoundrel.

With an abrupt movement he turned and walked away.

Nicolas grinned and spat noisily. The action pained him; his whole face burned. But he went on grinning. Not the gallows, not the wheel — just the lash of a whip was all he had to pay. And it was a price he paid gladly for those papers of Jean-Jacques. For he was sure of Thérèse, and with her of the papers, no matter how wildly the old woman threshed about.

Fernand felt choked with disgust and a dull gloom at having got himself mixed up in this dirty, murderous business. Then his rage returned. Even if the whole world were against him, he would not let the criminals escape scot-free with their booty.

But first he must find out how deeply Thérèse was implicated.

Yet, even if he wrung an unequivocal confession from her, what could he do? Could he bring such shame upon his own father? And what about the Master? Could he contribute to making him appear the poor fool and weakling that his detractors called him?

But what if these doubts were no more than pretexts and evasions to enable him to avoid a difficult task?

If only he did not have to go through all this confusion and bewilderment alone! If only he had Gilberte and could pour out his misery and remorse to her!

When he reached the château he found visitors there. Monsieur Robinet had come in person to convey to his neighbor condolences at the death of Jean-Jacques. Gilberte was with him.

When Fernand caught sight of her his heart stood still. He gazed at her. She did not speak, but her eyes told him that it was she who had prompted the visit. For the moment Fernand forgot the dead man. He exulted: 'all is well.'

Monsieur Robinet had been speaking, and now he turned to Fernand. "My sincerest sympathy to you also, Count," he said in his creaking voice. "I know you were his special friend; it must have hit you very hard." Slowly, with annoyance, Fernand turned his eyes from Gilberte and looked into Monsieur Robinet's square, red face. Monsieur Robinet once more addressed the Marquis. "Tell me, monsieur," he said in an animated, confidential yet sympathetic tone, "is it true that he removed himself from a world that did not suit him?" Fernand thought this hale and hearty gentleman who stood between Gilberte and himself even more unpleasant than usual. Before his father could say anything, he answered with a vehemence bordering on impropriety, "No, monsieur, it is not true." "No offense meant," Monsieur Robinet remarked amiably, "but everyone is whispering that there's something rather odd about his sudden demise." When the only response from the Girardins was an embarrassed silence he went on briskly, "For myself, I certainly wish him an untarnished memory. As a philosopher he had his merits. To be sure, when he was alive people used to wonder how a person who couldn't manage his own affairs would be able to deal with the affairs of the whole world. But that's all changed now. Revolutionary philosophers are acclaimed as soon as they are dead and can no longer create disorder."

Fernand could bear such frivolous talk no longer. He stood up. Often, on Monsieur Robinet's previous visits, he and Gilberte had

left the two older men alone, and he hoped that she would be willing to do so this time.

And in fact she rose and followed him out of doors.

When Gilberte heard of Jean-Jacques's sudden death, and then the shocking rumors, all that had come up between Fernand and herself was swept away; there remained only aching pity and a deep anxiety. What in heaven's name would Fernand be doing next? It was her duty to go to him and to stop him from doing something foolishly noble and irretrievable.

They walked along the narrow path side by side, and Fernand did not dare to look at Gilberte. Because she was so long silent the old fear came back to him. "Fernand!" she said at last, and her voice compelled him to look up. "Fernand!" she repeated, and said no more; her large eyes had become murky. Timidly, cautiously, he took her hand. She looked away from him but did not withdraw her hand. He pressed it and she returned the pressure. He did not dare to kiss her, but he felt that their bond was much closer than ever before — now after all these ugly events.

For a long time they walked in silence. The world vanished for him. He would have liked to walk this way forever, holding her good, large, firm hand — to go on walking like this tomorrow, the day after, the rest of his life. It never occurred to him that Jean-Jacques had said something of the sort.

"Well, speak to me!" she said at last. He was startled out of his sweet abstraction and pulled himself together. Again and again during those days of solitary misery he had gone over it all with her in his imagination, had accused and excused himself. He was about to do so now. But she said, "Don't speak of that! Never, never again!" She recalled him to the reality of Ermenonville: "Tell me what happened here."

This reality was harsh, yet not nearly so confusing now that he had Gilberte to confide in. "Monsieur Robinet was wrong," he said morosely, bitterly. "It was not suicide; it was murder. That fellow killed him — Nicolas, the stableboy — because of Thérèse. He doesn't even deny it."

Gilberte was overcome with rage. They must be destroyed, both of them — that cruel servant and the woman too. Handed over to the police. Hanged! Broken on the wheel! But even as she thought this she realized that then Fernand also would be drawn into the maelstrom, and she remembered why she had come. "Does anyone else

know of this?" she asked practically, "Has anyone spoken of it?" "No one has spoken of it," answered Fernand, "at least not to me. But many will suspect it. And I must avenge him!" he continued grimly, hotly, looking very young. "It's unthinkable that the murderer should go unpunished and on top of all should make off with Jean-Jacques's money and Jean-Jacques's wife."

Gilberte had been afraid that Fernand would feel this way; she would not have loved him had he not. Again a muted rage welled up in her. Would they never hear the last of this wretched woman? But again her practicality triumphed. Her common sense had been greatly sharpened by the hardships of a childhood spent with her actress mother. She would have to damp Fernand's ridiculously overzealous conscience. She must prevent him from acting indiscreetly for the sake of the dead Jean-Jacques.

"I gather from all you've told me," she said, "that Jean-Jacques himself would certainly have pitied this woman's foolishness. He would certainly not have suffered her to be brought to court or to the gallows." When Fernand made no reply, Gilberte laid her hand on his shoulder. "Let him rest," she urged. She was younger than Fernand, but she talked to him as if she were the elder. "Don't stir up this foul mess! Let the vile man and the low woman go away together if they want to!" There was a frantic note in her voice. "We are not their keepers!"

Chapter 4 The Inquest

JUST AS MONSIEUR de Girardin had feared, no one believed that Jean-Jacques had died a natural death. The sight of the bloody corpse had stimulated the onlookers' imagination, and from Château Ermenonville sinister rumors spread far and wide. It was said that there had been frequent quarrels in the pavilion because of Thérèse's behavior and that Jean-Jacques had committed suicide on that account. Spiteful persons maintained that Thérèse had dealt her hus-

band the fatal blow during one of these quarrels. Others claimed they had seen her carrying on with young men in the bushes.

Goodman Maurice, proud because he had been the last person to speak with the great man, assured everyone how well Jean-Jacques had looked and reiterated that he had intended to go peacefully back to his work and certainly had not been planning death by his own hand. Maurice stressed that the Marquis had not let people near the body. Farther Gauchet, too, who had often had disagreements with the Marquis, thought that the latter might have done more to clear up the affair.

These and similar rumors sped to Dammartin and Senlis, to Louvres and to the great city of Paris.

The gentlemen whom Girardin had informed by special messenger had not yet reached Château Ermenonville when an unexpected guest came to the pavilion — Sergeant François Renoux. He had spared no cost in coming post-haste to comfort his mother and sister. This time he could enter the pavilion without tedious precautions; the dead man would not send him away.

“It must have been a terrible blow,” he told his mother and sister, “to find him lying there all dead and cold. Of course, sixty-seven isn’t a bad age, especially for a philosopher who overtaxed his brain all his life.”

François went to the deathbed in the alcove. Madame Aubrun had been there very early to lay out the body. She had washed away the blood, but the deep, gaping wound was still visible. Sergeant François was either unable or unwilling to see it. “Farewell, Jean-Jacques,” he said in ringing tones. “You were sometimes a bit queer in the upper story, particularly — I regret to say — where I was concerned, but you were a good comrade in the fight for a good cause.” He stood to attention and saluted as he had so often saluted a dead comrade about to make the last journey. Then he went back to his mother and sister.

Madame Levasseur stroked her beloved son’s hand. It was a happy result of an unhappy event that she could once more feast her eyes on his splendid figure. True, he was not wearing the impressive uniform of the recruiting officer, but the simpler one of a sergeant. His plans had fallen through, he informed her casually; the authorities had despicably raised the amount of the required bond. But whatever uniform he wore, Madame Levasseur was delighted to have him

here. He was the very man to protect her and Thérèse from the scoundrel in these first perilous days.

"At least you have one small consolation in your great misfortune," Sergeant François observed presently. "There ought to be plenty of pelf from now on. Now my brother-in-law's daffy notions and supersensitive scruples won't interfere with our converting his philosophy into cash." And he looked greedily at the chest which contained the manuscripts.

Madame Levasseur did not like the sound of that. "Of course we're going to cash in on the papers," she said evasively, "but none too soon, I'm afraid. You know how legal business is, my dear François. First of all the estate must be signed, sealed and delivered to us, and that takes time." The Sergeant had an idea. "Wouldn't it be best, Mama," he suggested, "if I were to take charge of the chest meanwhile? I have my contacts; I could get the matter under way in Paris right now."

With mounting apprehension the old woman fended off the proposal. "The publishers definitely won't give us a sou till everything is legal and shipshape. I know those birds. But at the right time I'll have my say with them, don't worry." The Sergeant scarcely troubled to conceal his disappointment. "Very well, if that's what you think," he said. "Actually of course, I'm the head of the family now." "When the time comes, my dear boy, I certainly shall consult you," the old woman said hastily to placate him. But her resolution to visit Maître Gibert immediately after the funeral was strengthened. And as soon as possible she would deposit the papers somewhere else, where they would be safe from that vicious Nicolas and also from her dear son who unfortunately was all too generous and irresponsible. It was hard on an old hen like herself to have to keep her chicks under her wing when they had long since outgrown chickhood, but it was fortunate that she was still capable of it.

Meanwhile the gentlemen whom Monsieur de Girardin had notified arrived at the château: Doctor Lebègue and the sculptor Houdon. Monsieur Ducis, the dramatist, was also there — the man with whom Jean-Jacques had spent his last night in Paris, writing the handbills for the *Dialogues*. And Baron Melchior Grimm, the famous philosopher, one of the creators of the *Encyclopédie*, turned up too. Once a close friendship had linked Jean-Jacques with the Encyclopedists, with Diderot and, above all, with Melchior Grimm; but amity had later changed into bitter antagonism, and Monsieur de Grimm was

as unwelcome to the Marquis as Monsieur Ducis was welcome. However, Girardin could hardly turn away from the deceased a man whose word in matters of literature and taste was law all over Europe and whose relationship to Jean-Jacques was known to all the world.

In addition to these friends, the surgeons, doctors, and officers of the law who were to perform or witness the post-mortem had appeared at the château. They were all lavishly entertained. The majordomo and the domestics wore black jabots; their faces were solemn, their voices subdued.

Before the autopsy Monsieur de Girardin conducted Jean-Jacques's two closest friends, Lebègue and Ducis, to the deathbed. He expounded to them the explanation of Jean-Jacques's death. "It cannot have been otherwise," he concluded.

The other two were silent. Disbelief was plain on Ducis's honest, rugged face. He liked to find the laws of tragedy operating in all events; he had heard about the rumors, and he knew that his dead friend had had many enemies. After a pause he said noncommittally, "A grandiose and sinister fate overshadowed Jean-Jacques from birth to death."

Lebègue believed Girardin's naïve explanation still less. When he saw the body he was filled with a burning rage and grief. He had loved Jean-Jacques, this poor helpless creature, so childlike for all his years, with his powerful brain, his big heart, his weak eyes and bodily infirmity. He was certain that evil hands had brought about this death and that the women were mixed up in it, although perhaps unwillingly. He felt intense bitterness, for this man would have had many years of life and work ahead of him had he been better looked after and advised. And instead, Jean-Jacques had met so miserable an end. Yet he appreciated Girardin's attitude and was inclined to help him. Doctor Lebègue was a man of the world. A sensational trial in connection with Jean-Jacques's death would bring scandal on Ermenonville, sully Jean-Jacques's memory and impair the effect of his books. When it came to setting forth the findings of the post-mortem, Lebègue would have a decisive voice. For the sake of posterity he would not hesitate to certify a natural death. He would lie — they would all lie. It was pitiable: like so many of the scenes in which poor Jean-Jacques had been the helpless center, this last reckoning with his body would be an absurd, dishonest farce.

The Marquis's interview with the sculptor Houdon was embarrassing too. The celebrated young artist who had been called to

Ermenonville to take the death mask was disconcerted to see the shattered temple. "Couldn't art do anything to help?" asked Girardin. Houdon's face grew darker still. "Of course, I don't mean that the wound should be made invisible," the Marquis hastened to add. "But after all, it was mere accident that the Master cut his head open in falling. Must his countenance be forever disfigured by this mischance? Should not the death mask show posterity Jean-Jacques's noble face as it really was?" "I will see what can be done," the sculptor replied coldly.

With his two Italian assistants he proceeded to take the death mask.

At the appointed time, three o'clock, the post-mortem examination took place. As the dead man had wished, there were ten persons present: five doctors, four government officials, and Girardin. Of the medical men, three were surgeons: Chenu from Ermenonville, Bruslé from Montagny, and Castérès from Senlis, then two physicians: Doctor Villeron from Senlis and Doctor Lebègue of the Faculty of the University of Paris. The four officials were Procureur Bonnet, Mayor Martin, Lieutenant of the Police Blondel, and Police Sergeant Landru, all from Ermenonville.

The room was hot, the air heavy with the scent of the many flowers. The dead man's clothes were removed. He lay there pitifully naked, with the gaping wound in his temple.

The flowers afforded a painfully grotesque contrast to the work of the commission. Monsieur de Girardin could barely conceal his agitation. A distasteful business, thought Lebègue. Of all the doctors present, he had by far the highest reputation. "Would you care to begin, my dear colleague?" he said, turning to Doctor Castérès.

The autopsy took nearly two hours. The doctors conversed in subdued tones, with much use of Latin technical terms. They knew what was expected of them; moreover, some members of the commission had already committed themselves.

The Marquis sat on a small chair in the corner. Lebègue observed that for all his self-control he was in an agony of suspense. After a while, before the autopsy was finished, Lebègue dryly told him, "My colleagues seem to agree unanimously that it was a case of apoplexy of the brain."

A long report to this effect was drawn up. It was in five sections and was signed by two doctors and two officials as experts, and by the others as witnesses.

Chapter 5 Inhumation

GIRARDIN WAS CERTAIN that only one resting place was worthy of Jean-Jacques — the island of the tall poplars. He even seemed to recall that in an emotional moment Jean-Jacques himself had told him he wished to be buried there, opposite his beloved willow tree.

The Marquis arranged that the burial should take place at midnight; it was just at the time of the full moon. The peasants on his estates received a summons to station themselves with torches on the shores of the lake and on the knolls round about it. Anyone else who wished might come; torches for everybody were made ready.

Only the two women and Jean-Jacques's closest friends were to accompany the funeral barge to the little island itself.

When the coffin was carried out of the pavilion, torches glimmered on the shores of the lake and all the hills around it.

There were three boats which rowed out upon the lake to the sound of muted music. In the first boat was the coffin, escorted by Girardin and Fernand. The second bore Thérèse and Madame Levasseur. In the third were Lebègue and Ducis, likewise Baron Grimm, whom the Marquis could not very well exclude. Slowly the boats rowed the short distance to the island across the shimmering moonlit water. The crowd was perfectly still; the peasants had been instructed to maintain the strictest silence. The only sounds were the gentle music, the beat of the oars, the cry of startled water fowl, the chirping of crickets, and the croaking of frogs.

Most of the villagers who had gathered around the lake were slow-witted folk. They had had no conception of what the dead man had meant to the world. Now that so many people had come from Senlis and even from Paris, they realized that he must indeed have been somebody. All the more reason for them to disapprove of their seigneur's protecting Monsieur Jean-Jacques's foul murderers.

Goodman Maurice in particular expressed his resentment in vehement whispers. It was disgraceful that the Marquis was doing nothing to avenge the bloody death of this great friend of mankind. Had some aristocrat been done in, the Marquis would long since have had at least two dozen persons thrown into the dungeons. The seigneur was sinfully arrogant. He professed to be a freethinker, but when it came to actions he didn't care a jot for Jean-Jacques's philosophy. Jean-Jacques, for example, had taught that there was no difference between the Marquis and the villagers — liberty, equality, fraternity. Damn it! — it wouldn't have hurt the Marquis to have invited one of Jean-Jacques's friends from the lower class, Maurice himself, say, to come onto the island as a representative of humanity.

Another who was full of rebellious thoughts was Martin, the son of Widow Catrou who kept the village store, Fernand's friend and age-mate. Granted, for an aristocrat Fernand was a decent fellow, but he was an aristocrat nevertheless, and at the crucial moment he was found wanting. He had bragged about how deeply he revered this crazy philosopher of his and then looked on calmly while one of his people bashed the man's head in. And now he wasn't lifting a finger to bring the murderer to justice. And the judges were strangely lax, though they were usually all too eager to discharge the duties of their office. And yet Martin was fond of Fernand and felt sorry for him. After all, there was not much Fernand could do if the seigneur, his Papa, for some sinister reason had decided to hush the thing up. But it was a bloody shame all the same. Besides, you couldn't get round it — this fellow Jean-Jacques had been something more than a fool. When Fernand had accused Martin of shooting his mouth off without having read anything of Jean-Jacques, the remark had hit home and Martin had set to work at once to catch up on his reading. And while a lot of what he read had struck him as high-flown, there was much that was damned clear. 'The despot has no right to complain if force dethrones him. Force upheld him, force casts him down: the oppressed oppress the oppressor. The circle is complete: everything follows its natural course.' It took guts to publish a thing like that in the realm of His Most Christian Majesty and his gendarmes.

Among the many strangers attending the funeral was the young law student from Arras who had visited Jean-Jacques during his last days. As he stared at the barge carrying the revered dead man across the glittering water, his expression was even more determined, more fanatical than when he met the Master for the first and last time.

Jean-Jacques had been bitter on that particular day; he had expressed biting scorn for a world which hated and persecuted any honest searcher after truth, and he had not been wrong. In his heart the young student silently uttered a sort of prayer for the dead: "The tyrants have so blinded humanity that it hates you, the friend of mankind, and sees in you a fool and a fiend. But we young people resolve to follow you along the arduous road to insight and truth, and there are thousands of us. I swear to you that we will compel the ignorant to open their eyes, to love you, and to reap the glorious harvest that you have sown."

Monsieur Gerber, too, was full of exalted feelings, though of a different kind, as he gazed after the funeral barge from the small point of land with the willow tree. He had banished from his consciousness the terrible appearance of the corpse. Henceforth he would remember only the image of the man who used to stroll quietly in the gardens, musically proclaiming words of benign wisdom. Gerber had been more affected by Fernand's doubts than he had cared to show; he himself had not been entirely free from such doubts. But now they were forever dispelled, and in his heart of hearts this unassuming man, without admitting it to himself, felt relief that the sight of Jean-Jacques in the flesh could no longer confuse him. Now the great work would live independently, separated from the man. Only his wisdom would remain to spread and bear fruit forever.

Monsieur Robinet and his granddaughter were also watching the gliding barge. There was a tiny hard smile on Gilberte's large young mouth. From the moment of his arrival in Ermenonville the man now being rowed to his grave had brought her nothing but trouble. He had come very close to turning her whole life upside down. He may have been a great philosopher, and she was sincerely sorry for Fernand for having lost him in so gruesome a manner. But his abandonment of his children was shameful; there was no getting away from it. She would be able to read *La Nouvelle Héloïse* with a purer enjoyment now that the man himself was no longer there.

Monsieur Robinet observed Gilberte's tiny smile by the light of the moon and the torches. Ever since her father, his only son, had perished on a journey to the West Indies to inspect his plantations, Monsieur Robinet had given his heart to no one else. Gilberte was all he had. He knew her through and through; he never asked questions, never persuaded, but led her by gentle hints. He had naturally been aware that she had quarreled with Fernand, presumably about

Jean-Jacques. He guessed what was going on in her mind now and his face, too, wore a faint smile.

The boats had reached the island. Madame Levasseur climbed out somewhat laboriously, aided by Lebègue and Ducis. No retainers or gravediggers were on the small island; the grave had already been dug. Girardin and Fernand lifted out the coffin while others made fast the boats.

They gathered around the open grave. Thérèse placed herself next to Fernand, for was he not closest to her? But he did not look at her, and this filled her with dull resentment. A man who had had doings with a woman ought to show her a little sympathy after such a terrible experience.

Fernand was in fact scarcely aware of Thérèse; he looked grimly down and he looked into his own heart. Now, in a few minutes, in a few seconds, would sink beneath the earth the last remains of the man who had given the world the greatest, the most important, intellectual discoveries of the century. That man had been by no means old and decrepit, neither in the flesh nor in the spirit. He could have gone on writing and teaching things profound and vital — and Fernand himself was to blame that this keenest of hearts and minds no longer existed.

Monsieur de Grimm, representative of the great Century of the Enlightenment, stood and passed judgment on the dead man and on himself. Of all those present at the funeral he was perhaps the only one who could justly assess Jean-Jacques's tremendous achievements, and the tremendous harm he had done. Grimm himself and the other true philosophers, the representatives of reason, had supported Jean-Jacques with all the means in their power, had given him advice and affection. It was Diderot, after all, who had suggested to him the notion of the doubtful consequences of civilization, the very notion which had subsequently made Jean-Jacques famous. Their advice to him had been sound; they had tried to temper his anarchic lack of moderation, call him back to order and discipline. But he was one of those patients who spit in the face of the doctor who prescribes a disagreeable medicine. So now Jean-Jacques had died this ugly, dirty, violent death. Probably those two vulgar women had something to do with it. All his life Jean-Jacques had paid more attention to their silly jabber than to the sensible advice of France's foremost intellects. Grimm himself and Diderot were always warning him; they had predicted that these two women would ruin his life.

How consistent it was — a stupid death had in fact put an end to a stupid life. Yet it was small satisfaction to Monsieur de Grimm that he had been right; he would a thousand times rather have been wrong. As he stood over the open grave, sentences of the obituary he would write on Jean-Jacques began to form in his mind. He would make a wonderful elegy of it, pages of enduring prose; the only question was whether in this lament for the dead he should refer to the dead visionary's somber end.

They began to lower the coffin. The music had ceased; there was silence save for the lapping of the waves, the cry of startled birds, the gentle breeze in the trees.

The silence was rudely interrupted. Thérèse gulped and sobbed, gave a loud sniff, and lapsed into a childish blubbering and wailing.

Gently they let the coffin down into the grave, Fernand assisting. He was burying the man who had honored him with his friendship, a great man, the greatest in the world; and Fernand himself had spurned his friendship and called him a fool. It was he who was the fool. Vividly the memory came back to him of Jean-Jacques's child-like gentleness, of how he had aroused the echoes in the wood, and had joined in playing with the puppet theater. He felt as if he were putting one of his puppets back into the box; in a moment the lid would fall shut. But this was no puppet; it was Jean-Jacques. Till now Fernand had borne himself bravely like a man, but he could do so no longer. Although he knew that everyone was looking at him, his father, Gilberte, his friend Martin and the other boys from the village, he began to weep. The tears streamed down his face. Gilberte looked up at him. Her tiny smile had long since disappeared and she too was weeping.

The three boats rowed back. But Monsieur de Girardin stayed alone by the grave on the island and abandoned himself to his grief, that sweet melancholy which he had so often heard his dead friend extol. Verses came to him in praise of the dead; very simple verses, but he knew they were in the spirit of Jean-Jacques, a fitting epitaph for a great man who would now be a guest at Ermenonville forever.

Then, as Girardin had arranged, some of his men came with plaster, sand, and an urn. They erected a memorial, a sort of altar. Girardin helped with the work; with his own hands he shaped the Master's burial mound.

The work did not take long. Alone once more, Girardin lingered

over the grave which was now his most valued possession — in gentle, surging grief. Not till the sun had risen did he go home.

Chapter 6 A Knotty Legacy

MONSIEUR DE GIRARDIN's sense of duty allowed him only a few hours' sleep. Jean-Jacques's fame was now entrusted to him; on his skill and care depended how long the dead man's work would live.

First of all he must take charge of the manuscripts in order to protect the great legacy.

Negotiating with the women was a disagreeable task. Madame Levasseur's hostile look stuck in his mind. But he overcame his reluctance and went to the pavilion early in the morning.

It worried him that the chest was no longer in its place; Madame Levasseur had moved it into her bedroom. He took the offensive at once. "You will recall, madame," he said, "your promise that I should have a say in editing the works our beloved Jean-Jacques left behind." Madame Levasseur realized what he was getting at and secretly rejoiced. If the Marquis took charge of the papers they would be safe from both Nicolas and François. But she did not betray her relief; she wanted to squeeze as many sous as possible out of her sole possession. "Yes, I think I do," she said with circum-spect hesitation.

"The first thing to be done," the Marquis proceeded, "is to ascertain what unpublished works are in existence. I think, madame, it would be best if I examined the manuscripts with that in view." "Sir," Madame Levasseur answered, "I know that you mean nothing but good toward poor Jean-Jacques's widow and his old mother-in-law. But if I am to hand over the papers to you, you must promise to be quick in looking through them. The fact is that we need money, and at once. The survivors of a famous man must keep up appearances, and you know how poor we are." "Have no fears about that,

madame," the Marquis hastened to reply. "As far as the financial exploitation of the manuscripts is concerned, my lawyer will take care of your interests as if they were my own. As for your immediate requirements, I regard myself in honor bound to take care of my illustrious friend's dependents. How much money do you need for the immediate future?"

After brief reflection Madame Levasseur replied, "Two hundred louis." The Marquis had difficulty in hiding his uneasy surprise. But he only swallowed and said, "Then I shall send for the papers. My men will bring with them a draft on my bank in Senlis, Valette et Fils. I advise you to deposit the money with them, as it is so large a sum." He bowed and left. Within the hour the draft was brought and the manuscripts taken away.

Madame Levasseur informed her son François that Monsieur de Girardin had sent for the papers to examine them for their philosophical value. The Sergeant looked glum. "I told you so, Mama," he complained. "You ought to have left this business to me. Once one of these grand gentlemen sticks his spoon into the porridge there's nothing left for an ordinary chap but the empty plate." "The Marquis won't do us in the eye," Madame Levasseur said placatingly. "He was always well disposed toward Jean-Jacques, and anyhow for a grand gentleman like him the money to be got out of the writings doesn't amount to a fart."

The Sergeant remained unsoftened. As he wasn't needed here, he declared ungraciously, he would return to Paris at once. Would his mother lend him ten livres for the trip? "Don't be in such a hurry to go, François," Madame Levasseur begged. "I shall certainly be needing your advice during the next few days. Stay here a while and you'll be able to take back for your affairs in Paris not ten livres but five-and-twenty louis." François's face cleared. "Really, Mama?" he inquired. "Isn't that just dummy ham to tempt your poor mouse with?" "What do you take your old Mama for?" retorted Madame Levasseur, offended. "Do you think I would bilk my own dear son?" "Twenty-five louis, then?" François asked once more. "Yes," said the old woman. And the Sergeant said, "Done."

On the following day Madame Levasseur and Thérèse drove to Senlis. After giving the ladies his formal condolences, Maître Gibert informed them that Monsieur Rousseau's death unfortunately complicated the drawing up of the document which the ladies desired. The law regarded the Widow Rousseau as an entirely different per-

son from the spouse of the living Monsieur Rousseau; he needed further data and would have to redraft the document from start to finish. Also a much larger fortune was now involved and in such case the law provided for higher fees. He would have to make the ladies a new price, obtain further information from them, and he would need a few more days' time.

Madame Levasseur could barely hide her annoyance. But that was how it was; the whole world was a forest, with a bandit hiding behind every tree. There the fat fellow sat, quietly underlining his boredom by drumming with his thick, lazy fingers, and squeezed them dry — a helpless old woman and her daughter, two poor widows. But there was nothing she could do. She knew her daughter. Thérèse wanted to have things tied up so that she couldn't chuck away everything on that lout of hers; but at the same time she did want to chuck it away on him. She wanted to hang onto him, and so there she sat, hoping the document would be drawn up and hoping that it wouldn't be. Madame Levasseur could not afford to wait; she had to have the paper that very day. There was nothing for it but to pay this fat scoundrel of a royal notary the price he asked.

The dreadful event had told on them, she declared; they did not feel up to making another journey to Senlis. They wanted to settle this troublesome business today, even if it should cost a few sous or even a few écus more. They had a little shopping to do in the town — mourning clothes and so on — and would Maître Gibert do them a favor and have the document ready to be signed and sealed by the late afternoon.

The notary looked forbidding and replied that he did not know whether this was possible; he happened to have two other urgent cases. The old woman asked him bluntly how much it was going to cost. There was sharp haggling over the probable size of Widow Rousseau's fortune; then the notary casually mentioned that he ought really first to ask them to produce Widow Rousseau's marriage license so that he could check the validity of Jean-Jacques's marriage. In short, whereas he had at first asked *eighty* écus he was now asking *two hundred*. *Six hundred* livres! With the greatest difficulty Madame Levasseur succeeded in beating him down to *four hundred fifty* livres.

When the ladies returned to the notary at the appointed time the document was not yet ready. Several clerks were working on it, they were told, and still had almost an hour's work ahead of them.

Madame Levasseur had done a good deal of waiting in her long life, but seldom had waiting been harder on her than now. The clerks brought the pages as they finished them; the notary examined them attentively and gave them to Madame Levasseur to read. She did not understand all of it; there was so much lawyerish language, Latin and other solemn foolishness in it. But she supposed that had to be, and on the whole it seemed to her a satisfactory document.

At last the whole thing was ready. "One moment, please, mesdames," Maître Gibert said. He withdrew, and reappeared in his cap and gown. And although Madame Levasseur had already seen through the fat extortioner, he now was a completely different person to her. He was the Royal Notary, he was the Law. The Law stood before her and her poor simple Thérèse; the whole sacred might of France and the King was shielding her from that rapacious wolf Nicolas.

With official solemnity the notary asked, "So, mesdames, you, Widow Levasseur, and you, Widow Rousseau, you understand what this document contains and are desirous of ratifying it by your signatures?" "Yes, monsieur," said Madame Levasseur, and, "Yes, monsieur," parroted Thérèse. Maître Gibert turned to Madame Levasseur. "Would you, then, please be so good as to inscribe your name here — your maiden name, and the name, or rather names, of your deceased husbands." Madame Levasseur signed. "And now you, if you please, madame," the notary told Thérèse, "would you, too, give your maiden name." Thérèse was confused and failed to understand. "Write: 'Thérèse Levasseur, Widow Rousseau,'" her mother bade her sharply. "Quite correct, madame," the notary said approvingly. Clumsily and laboriously Thérèse penned her name. A clerk brought a taper and sealing wax. Palpitating with joy and breathing heavily, Madame Levasseur looked on while Maître Gibert melted the wax. Greedily she sniffed the smell of the heated wax and with triumph in her eyes watched his fat hand press the seal into the hot wax.

Now that scoundrel Nicolas had done her poor son-in-law in for nothing. His wickedness would be no more useful to him than a comb to a bald man. It had brought him nothing but sleepless nights, rancor, and nagging fear that the hangman and his wheel might catch up with him after all.

Madame Levasseur's days, on the other hand, were full of contentment and she did not regret the hundred and fifty écus that she had had to pay the notary. She had built a tall, solid fence that

would keep her cow of a daughter from running off into the woods.

It did not particularly worry her when one night she noticed Thérèse slipping furtively out of the house. Let the slut tumble in the hay with her lout if she felt like it; at least she could not plaster him with her louis d'or.

But Madame Levasseur was mistaken; it was not Nicolas whom Thérèse had gone to meet. It was Fernand.

Yes, at last the young Count had approached her again — somewhat reserved, by the way, even grim — and had asked her to meet him. So it only had been her imagination, at the funeral, when she had felt that Fernand no longer cared for her. Happy that they were making up, she had at once said yes.

Meeting him tonight, she made instinctively for the familiar path to the willow tree. But to her surprise he chose another path which led up to the Temple of Philosophy.

He had made this rendezvous with her because he wanted to find out once and for all whether she had known about the murder. If she had, then in spite of Gilberte's advice he would bring both criminals to book even if he himself were to perish. He owed it to the Master, and to Truth itself.

They sat down. Below them in the uncertain moonlight was the lake and the island of the tall poplars. Thérèse had longed for someone to whom she could talk about the dreadful thing. Here was her opportunity. She compressed all that she was dumbly feeling into the plainest possible words. Before he could even begin with one of his carefully prepared sentences, she spoke. Simply and sincerely she voiced what she had thought to herself over and over again: "Isn't it dreadful?"

Hearing her speak with such naïve sincerity, Fernand knew that his mission was already fulfilled. He realized that she had had nothing to do with the murder, that she had been just as cruelly surprised by it as he himself.

He had disposed of one burden only to shoulder another. What attitude should he adopt toward the murderer now? If he took action against him, Thérèse too would be dragged down, a Thérèse whom he had himself seduced, and whose betrayal of the Master had certainly been no worse than his own.

How stupid she was! What a simple, happy world she lived in as a consequence of her stupidity.

Jean-Jacques had recognized her simple-mindedness and depicted

it with benevolent contempt. He had even had words of praise for it. Gilberte with her unfailing common sense had been right: Jean-Jacques would have forgiven Thérèse; just because of her stupidity he would have absolved her of all blame.

But Fernand was not Jean-Jacques; he was no saint, and he felt he must at least tell her what he thought about her. In a low voice he said grimly, "And to think that it is our fault!"

"Ours?" she asked in genuine astonishment.

Of course, she did not understand what he meant and it was hopeless to try and explain it to her. A dull, impotent rage seized him. This lump of sheer stupidity was the reason why the world had been deprived of its greatest teacher! He looked at her coldly in the uncertain moonlight. Below them was the lake and the island. He could no longer understand what he had seen in her.

She sensed his hostility. He was angry again, as he had been at the funeral, and she had absolutely no idea why. "Say something nice to me," she begged him, and took his hand.

He drew it back. "Listen to me," he told her sharply. "I forbid you to meet that scum, that murderer. You are not to see him again, never!" Now she understood his anger, and she was almost happy. So he had figured it out for himself that Nicolas had done the dreadful deed for her sake, for love of her. Her young count was jealous.

"I deserve to have you talk to me like that, Fernand," she said submissively. "But when I began going with Monsieur Nicolas you hadn't come yet, and I was very lonely and my life wasn't easy; I told you that. If I'd known that you were going to come to help me in my loneliness then I wouldn't have gone with Monsieur Nicolas. But now this awful thing has happened and if someone did it, he did it for me. So I can't be hard on him; you must see that, Fernand. I am still all muddled. Give me time. I haven't met him since it happened. I haven't spoken to him once." As he said nothing, she repeated, "Give me time, Fernand." And with clumsy raillery she concluded, "After all, with Jean-Jacques scarcely under ground you wouldn't want to do it with me right away, would you?"

Below them lay the lake and the island. He looked at her with revulsion. "Do it with you?" he asked. "I don't want anything to do with you. You are not to soil the dead man's memory. You are not to lie with this cur by his grave, a stone's throw from his grave. That is all I want from you. And I shall never want anything else from you again. Never! Now do you understand?"

She understood. And now a dull hatred gleamed in her animal eyes. "So that's what you are!" she said. And she searched for words of abuse, put them together into unwieldy sentences and spoke them with relish in her husky voice. "First you mess around with me and then you say nasty things to me. And you call yourself a count, a future seigneur! I'm sorry for every minute I let you mess about with me. You ought to be ashamed of yourself! And you poked around in his writings, too — you gentleman, you aristocrat! Always in secret, always underhanded. Do you know what you are?" she fumbled for words. "You're a sneak, a coward, a milksop, that's what you are! And you think you can order me about! But you can't! I will do it with Monsieur Nicolas whenever and wherever I choose. He's not as mean as you are. He knows what a gentleman does when he loves a woman. I belong to him, not to you!"

He had risen to his feet. She remained seated in the uncertain light, motionless; the words emerged so slowly from her large mouth that he had time to grasp it all. He had read the *Confessions* and he understood. She was grateful to the stableboy because he had killed her husband for her sake. Fernand recognized, as the Master had, her utterly innocent depravity.

She looked him full in the face. He could not endure her proud, contemptuous gaze. In his eyes were rebuff, hatred, disgust, fear. With a brusque movement he turned away and left her.

All these days Nicolas had been lurking around the pavilion. But Thérèse had felt it would be indecent to meet him so soon after the horrible event. After her quarrel with Fernand she avoided Monsieur Nicolas no longer.

She loved him with all her being. Her love transported her, and she invented pet names for him. She called him 'Colas, my Colas,' and playfully, 'my darling pug nose,' or even, 'my Mister Tattersall.'

Chapter 7 *The Dangerous Truth*

MONSIEUR DE GIRARDIN read the *Confessions*. He was startled, repelled, fascinated. He found it difficult to control his agitation. The same man who had written the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, who had strolled about Ermenonville in tranquil melancholy — this same gentle man had been scorched by such murky fires.

And if he, Jean-Jacques's friend, was so profoundly disturbed by the *Confessions*, what effect would they have on the thousands who would read them with tepid, cold, or outrightly hostile feelings? How all these enemies and obscurantists with their dirty minds and dirty thoughts would root among Jean-Jacques's secrets; what vile things they would shout from the housetops! No, he must not abandon these dangerous truths to the benighted rabble.

But had not Jean-Jacques wanted the work to be published after his death? Who was he, Girardin, to withhold from the world against the Master's will this new, terrible and exciting message?

He let Jean-Jacques's friend Ducis read the manuscripts. The poet was startled by what they revealed, and he shared the Marquis's doubts.

Meanwhile it developed that Jean-Jacques had entrusted copies of the manuscripts to certain friends in Geneva: Pastor Moulou and Monsieur Dupeyron, who was half American. He had given these gentlemen instructions to publish the works after his death, which they now proposed to do. The Marquis appealed to them with eloquent letters, trying to dissuade them. But Pastor Moulou cited Jean-Jacques's unqualified honesty and his express wishes in the matter and pressed for immediate publication of the *Confessions*. After much arguing back and forth a proposal of Ducis's was adopted. They decided to embark on a great new Collected Works, the last volume of which would contain the posthumous writings. Girardin was immensely relieved; publication of the dangerous truth had been put off for at least three years.

He had reckoned without Madame Levasseur.

Meanwhile several publishers had approached Thérèse with a view to acquiring the literary estate, and Madame Levasseur urged the Marquis to sell the manuscripts now when they would go like hot cakes. Monsieur de Girardin explained his own ideas about their publication. She realized at once that if his plans were followed it would be years before she could lay her hands on any fat sums, and she objected. "But if we do not wait," the Marquis retorted indignantly, "we shall endanger Jean-Jacques's fame; all his friends are agreed on that." "We two poor widows can't indulge in any such delicate considerations," protested Madame Levasseur. "We need our money. We've had to wait long enough because of my son-in-law's quirks. I'm not letting any more philosophy stand in our way now."

Vexed by the old woman's opposition, the Marquis replied, "You force me, madame, to touch upon a matter I would rather not have mentioned. There are passages in the manuscripts which could hardly enhance the reputations of yourself and your daughter."

The old woman was furious. First Jean-Jacques had been a lifelong burden to Thérèse with his repulsive malady; he would have been dead and gone years ago if it hadn't been for her. Then he had robbed her of her children. And now, in return for all this, he was insulting her from the grave — the fool, the philosopher! But she controlled her feelings and said calmly, "These disreputable passages need not be published. They could just be left out. My son-in-law is dead and won't notice."

Girardin was outraged. "Madame," he replied sharply, "there can be no question of pruning or distorting Jean-Jacques's works. No publisher would stand for such a thing. I myself would never permit it, nor would any of his friends." "Very well," said Madame Levasseur unperturbed, "so the disreputable parts stay in. People like us will swallow many a rotten egg for a pile of louis d'or."

Girardin regarded Madame Levasseur with mounting fury. While she and her daughter had not directly had a hand in Jean-Jacques's abominable end, they were the immediate cause of it. And now this fat, grasping old crone wanted to rob the dead man even of his fame. The time had come to speak plainly. "I have already informed you, madame," he began, "that His Britannic Majesty's Exchequer has not yet replied to my question as to whether continued payment of your deceased son-in-law's pension will be authorized. Nor has the Lord Marshal decided whether to continue paying the allowance he used to

give him. After publication of these memoirs, which are so injurious to you and your daughter, you would hardly be able to count on receiving any more money from either source."

Madame Levasseur perceived bitterly that it was tough for common folk to stand up for their rights against a grand gentleman; the highborn pack stuck together. But she still did not give up her case. "Now we see," she complained, "how stranded we are by the loss of our dear Jean-Jacques." She fixed her hard little eyes on the Marquis. "And to think," she said slowly, softly, emphatically, "how easy it would have been to avoid this loss!"

As she had hoped, this touched the Marquis on a raw spot. He had swallowed the old woman's silent reproach at Jean-Jacques's deathbed, but he had no intention of putting up with outspoken insolence. "What's that?" he asked her sharply. "Please explain yourself!"

The old woman did not flinch. "What is there to explain?" she answered, and there was unmistakable scorn in the knowing look she gave him. "I'm no judge and no priest and no philosopher, and what's done is done. But I warned you in good time, sir; remember that, please. And if you'd listened then to the advice of an old woman, a person of no standing, of course, but one who knows the world and keeps her eyes open, many things would have turned out differently, sir."

For a moment the Marquis almost choked with rage over this disgusting attempt at blackmail. But he kept a grip on himself. She had hoped for a speedy inheritance and the manuscripts were all she owned; it was understandable that in such a situation so vulgar a person might lose her head and put together all sorts of queer tales. For the moment the main thing was that there should be no gossip about the *Confessions*. He would have to stop her vulgar mouth with money; and after all, in caring for the women he would be acting in accordance with Jean-Jacques's wishes. "I appreciate your difficult situation," he said stiffly, "and excuse your exaggerations. I am willing," he offered haughtily, with barely concealed dislike, "to assume responsibility for the payment of the English pensions until further notice. You may regard that as an additional advance on the manuscripts."

Madame Levasseur had doubted all along that the payment of the English pensions would be continued; she was surprised and delighted at the Marquis's offer. She said, "Please forgive an old woman

who has had so many troubles in life, if at times she is a little outspoken. I've known all along that you mean well by us two poor widows and won't leave us in the lurch." And she withdrew, well satisfied.

Girardin for his part felt he too had done well. He had acted as Jean-Jacques's faithful friend and as the faithful custodian of his work.

He stood looking at Houdon's death mask. A profound, melancholy peace lay upon the face, a peace which made doubly terrible the deep gash, the mark of the wound, the fearful cavity which extended from the lined forehead all the way down the right temple. Vividly the Marquis recalled the conversation he had had with the sculptor when he saw the mask for the first time. "You cannot patch up the — er — unevenness on the right side a little, monsieur?" he had asked in an unusually tentative tone. "No, monsieur," Houdon had answered shortly. Since Girardin had read the *Confessions* the wound had gaped more menacingly than ever. Heaven knew what tales the scandal-mongering rabble would fabricate, what sinister interpretation they would put upon the gash, once they had the chance to nose around in the Master's life history.

Fabricate? Suddenly it hit him — the realization that there was nothing to fabricate. He had been deceiving himself all this time, had deliberately shut his eyes. Why, hardly an hour ago he had tried to dismiss the old woman's horribly explicit words as a blackmailing lie. Now, all at once he knew: these 'fabrications' were the truth. This fellow Nicolas had — 'Speak out,' he commanded himself — *had* killed Jean-Jacques.

His knees went weak; he had to sit down. He was to blame; the old woman was right in putting the blame on him. He should not so recklessly have disregarded his intuition that time he had found his secret keyboard disarranged. And he had been warned a second time when the dog had disappeared, and yet a third time when the old woman with her plain common sense had asked him to get rid of the fellow. He ought to have acted then; he ought to have sent the brute away.

And yet, was he really to blame? Had he not had good reason to regard the rumors concerning Thérèse as sheer gossip? Had not Jean-Jacques himself had faith in her? The *Confessions* showed it. Ought he to have been cleverer than the Master?

Yes, he ought to have been just that. Jean-Jacques had a right to

believe. It was Jean-Jacques's mission to be perspicacious in big things, not in trifles, not with regard to this slut of a Thérèse. But he, Girardin, who knew the ways of the court and the world and had commanded an army, he had no right to be less clever than old Madame Levasseur.

What should he do now? What could he do? Even if he had seen the whole thing as clearly when he stood over the body as he was seeing it now, he would have had to lie and keep silent. Once he had allowed Nicolas to stay, once he had made that initial mistake, he was committed to further lies and further silence and to a hundred other contemptible, dishonest actions in order to suppress the truth.

He could not punish the murderer, but he could do one thing: he could put an end to the woman's sinister association with him. He could dismiss him in disgrace.

He summoned Nicolas.

Curtly and sternly he asked whether Nicolas was still performing services for the ladies at the pavilion. With insolent civility Nicolas answered, "Yes, sir. As there is little to do in the stables I devote part of my time to the ladies." "Are you on friendly terms with the Widow Rousseau?" the Marquis asked bluntly. "Widow Rousseau is not averse to me," Nicolas answered. Then with a faint grin he added coolly, "I'd be getting in my own way if I failed to cultivate the friendship."

"You are to leave Ermenonville!" Girardin snapped at him. "Today!"

Having got away with it for so long, Nicolas had thought that the whole business would flicker out like a tallow candle — a bit of a stink, and then it would be forgotten. Probably that bitch of an old jade had been keeping after the boneheaded Marquis. Be that as it may, for the time being Nicolas had to admit defeat. He answered impertinently, "If you imagine my going will enhance Monsieur the philosopher's reputation —" He shrugged his shoulders. The Marquis raised his stick. Nicolas did not flinch. "You can't thrash out of me my friendship with the Widow Rousseau, sir," he said politely.

"My bailiff will receive instructions to arrest you," Girardin rapped out, "if you trespass on my property." "Don't worry, sir," said Nicolas, "I've seen all I want to of the sights of Ermenonville."

Now that Girardin had swept this ordure out of his house, the nearness of the women began to fill him with almost physical aver-

sion. Unfortunately, he could not very well chase Jean-Jacques's widow and her mother from Jean-Jacques's last resting place without causing a scandal. But at least he wanted them out of the pavilion, out of his sight.

The Swiss chalet was ready, the little house he had had built for Jean-Jacques. The women were invited to move into it.

For the last time, filled with sweetly melancholy thoughts, Girardin sat upon the tree stump on the edge of the forest from which Jean-Jacques had once watched his house being built. It was ignominious and absurd that these women instead of Jean-Jacques should be taking possession of it. But here they would be out of sight.

They moved in, and henceforth Girardin avoided the neighborhood of the Swiss chalet.

Chapter 8 Expulsion of the Evil One

GIRARDIN HANDED over to Fernand the herbaria which the dead man had so lovingly arranged. They had come into the Marquis's hands together with the manuscripts. But botany had lost its charms for Fernand; he was not able, as the Master had been, to evoke living memories of people and events from dried plants.

In his memory Jean-Jacques was growing in stature, but — in his heart of hearts he had to admit it — his outlines were becoming more and more indistinct.

He tried to dissociate the sense of his own guilt and failure from his grief over the Master. Since his father had driven Nicolas away, many a complication had unraveled itself. And now that the women had moved into the Swiss chalet so that he rarely saw them, he was able for hours and even days on end to forget Thérèse and the ghastly matters connected with her. He readily allowed Gilberte with her sound common sense to convince him that the whole mess was over and done with.

At times, however, when he looked at the death mask, he would

again be assailed by the burning desire to expiate, to do something. The death mask with the gash, not the solemn portrait bust, was the real Jean-Jacques.

He noticed that the villagers, too, were still whispering about Jean-Jacques's death. Often they would fall silent when Fernand passed by.

Once he asked Martin Catrou straight out, "What is the matter with you? Why are you always whispering? And why do you stop when I come near you?" Martin grinned. "Can't you figure that out for yourself?" he asked in his sharp, strident voice. "They're talking about that dead saint of yours, of course." "And just what have they thought up?" asked Fernand with an unsuccessful attempt at irony. "Thought up?" said Martin, lifting his broad shoulders. "Why, exactly what the whole country is thinking up." Fernand reddened. "May I ask you to speak a little more plainly," he challenged Martin, and as the latter stood silent, merely studying him with his black, intelligent, mocking eyes, he said imperiously, "I'm asking you to tell me." "If you use that tone, Count Brégy," Martin answered, "then I think we'd better call off our pleasant conversation for today." "Do tell me, please!" Fernand entreated him. "Must I drag each word out of you?"

Martin looked at him. Fernand, although no fool, was dense about certain things because he was an aristocrat; but he couldn't be so dense as not to know what all the world knew. "Do I really have to tell you?" Martin asked again. "Tell me, go on," Fernand insisted. With a shrug, Martin replied, "Well then, if someone croaks like that or has been croaked — then, so people think, and I think, and the whole world thinks, somebody ought to strike a light and look into it a little more closely. You haven't looked into it. First you thought worlds of him, but then, when your stableboy bashed his head in, you simply shoveled him under and that was the end of it. You see, we don't care for that sort of thing, we ordinary people." Fernand had known exactly what the people were saying, but now that he was hearing it in so many words it was such a shock that his expressive face was contorted with horror. "Bashed his head in? Our stableboy?" he stammered foolishly. So much stupidity or hypocrisy, or both, irritated Martin. "Who else?" he asked brutally. "Everyone knows that your saint's wife was hot for the English stableboy and the saint was in their way. They wanted to get rid of him. It's as plain as the nose on your face."

Fernand stared at Martin with helpless rage. Martin, annoyed at

his friend for being so damnably naïve, yet at the same time sorry for him and feeling rather helpless himself, elaborated, "She was hot for more than one, that lady."

Fernand was shaken to the depths of his being. So Martin knew everything. They all knew everything. Stupidly he thought to himself, '*Piget, pudet, poenitet.*' He clapped his hands over his face in shame.

Martin was sorry for him. At the same time he was glad that he had told him what's what, the aristocrat. And while he was about it, he went on, "I don't know what your sort think about such things, but we of the lower class think it's a stinking scandal. First he goes and does Jean-Jacques in, that English stableboy with his impudent mug. Then, over the grave, he carries on with the man's wife, and you just stand by and look on. Well, we say it stinks to high heaven. I tell you, one of these days somebody's going to catch the swine when he comes away from her and beat him black and blue."

Fernand stared at his friend. "But our Nicolas is gone," he said, disconcerted. "My father sent him away long ago." Martin was scarcely less surprised. "Oh, you sweet innocent!" he mocked. "Of course he's here, the bastard. Where are your eyes? He's at Condé's: It's not very far from Condé's to your place."

This was monstrous! But Fernand believed Martin. The Prince de Condé was fond of playing tricks on his father.

He roamed wildly in the woods, burning with rage and shame. Even the peasants felt that they should do something, and he himself did not lift a finger. Was he made of stone? He would put a stop to that depraved female's fornicating with that lout, over the grave. Even if he had to shoot him like a mad dog.

He went straight to Girardin.

"You ordered your English groom off your estate, Father," he said. "But our friend the Prince de Condé has taken him on. He's still hanging around the neighborhood and meeting Madame Rousseau."

The bailiff of Ermenonville had already informed the Marquis in his daily report that a certain Nicolas Montretout was still in the neighborhood. The bailiff had been about to go on when Girardin had interrupted him to ask, "Has he been seen in Ermenonville?" And when the bailiff had said no, Girardin had been satisfied. He was annoyed with his son for forcing the affair to his attention again. "Stupid rumors," he said. "You vex me." But Fernand persisted: "They are not rumors. That fellow never stopped seeing the woman."

Everybody knows it; everybody's talking about it. You must do something, Father. I beg you to do something about him, something that will stop him once and for all."

His son's insistence and accusatory tone irritated the Marquis. Never before had Fernand presumed to criticize his father, and his friendship with Jean-Jacques was not sufficient explanation for such audacity. The boy must have more potent, more personal reasons. All at once Girardin remembered how Fernand would sometimes slip away from the dinner table and from Jean-Jacques. So that was it! Fernand, too, was mixed up with that trollop.

Almost with relief he vented his anger on his son. "And why, may I ask, are you repeating these rumors to me?" he demanded sternly. "How dare you lecture me?" Fernand blushed deeply and made no reply. Girardin went on remorselessly, "Have you anything to confess to me, Count Brégy?"

Fernand was thoroughly exasperated. He had overcome his own reluctance, had done his unpleasant duty in informing his father that the murderer was still swaggering about openly enjoying the fruits of his evil deed — which was a disgrace to Ermenonville. And the seigneur of Ermenonville replied by suggesting that Fernand's own motives were suspect. He felt ashamed for his father.

He recalled the petty tyrannies his father had practiced for years, how he had badgered and harassed him in order to subdue his spirit. He remembered how his father had broken his violin, and he thought of the dreadful years in the Military Academy to which his father had insisted on sending him. Suddenly an absurd, ignominious episode long buried in the past came to his mind. Once when he had gone on a hunt and was already deep in the woods, his father had sent a man riding after him with the order that he was to return at once. "Monsieur," his father had said to him, "you forgot to close the door of your room. Close it, and then you may go back to the hunt."

On the other hand his father had also shown his love for him in many ways. He had taken him along on that journey through Italy and Switzerland, although a young boy must have been a good deal of a nuisance on such a trip. And shyly, almost covertly, he had found a hundred different occasions for displaying tenderness toward his son.

Fernand now looked at his father angrily, critically, but at the same time with love, for he perceived all too clearly from Girardin's tightly controlled features that he too was suffering. He was a man

of pride and principle. Certainly the desire to expiate the evil deed burned as hotly in him as in Fernand himself.

But concern for the prestige of Ermenonville loomed large, overshadowing everything else. The seigneur of Ermenonville could not allow a scandal over Jean-Jacques's death to stain the honor and glory of his house.

"I am waiting for an answer," Girardin said.

Haltingly, courageously Fernand confessed: "Yes, I myself have been terribly guilty in having relations with this woman. But for that very reason," he continued passionately, "it's vital to me to see this fellow driven away once and for all. He must not be allowed to hang about here, soiling the Master's memory. Perhaps it is impertinent of me, Father, but once more I beg you fervently: put an end to this disgrace! It is breaking my heart." And wildly, his features drawn, he concluded, "It's no longer possible to breathe the air of Ermenonville."

No one had ever before used such language to the Marquis. No one had ever had to remind him to protect his honor, and the last person from whom he would tolerate such reminders was his own son. His hand rose to hit Fernand. Then he saw the death mask. His hand dropped. Consciousness of his own guilt surged up in him.

But he would never admit this guilt to anyone else. He searched for stern words to rebuke his rebellious son. And failed to find them. Mildly, wearily, he said, "You are bewildered by your grief for Jean-Jacques, my son."

Once again Fernand understood his father's perplexity. After a long pause he asked in a low, courteous tone, "What have you decided, Father?" Girardin answered, "I shall go to Paris, to the Chief of Police."

The Chief of Police, Monsieur Lenoir, showed no particular surprise when the Marquis urged upon him the deportation of his erstwhile groom John Bally, alias Nicolas Montretout. He had a large file brought in, and after referring to it remarked, "I see that we considered deporting the fellow when you first discharged him. But we dropped the idea when His Highness the Prince de Condé took him on. What you have just told me, my dear Marquis, changes the situation. We are at war with England; an Englishman with as bad a reputation as all that has no business on our soil. I will order his deportation."

The Marquis was agreeably surprised at how easy it had been.

But it bothered and puzzled him that the Chief of Police seemed to know all about the events at Ermenonville. So Paris had not been deceived by the certificates of the doctors and officials. Had he not undertaken too much in pledging himself to conceal the sinister circumstances of Jean-Jacques's death from the world and posterity?

Nevertheless he had gained his immediate objective. The murderer would have to disappear.

Only a few days later Nicolas did in fact receive an order signed by the Chief of Police in person, giving him one week to remove himself from all the lands subject to the Most Christian King and not to set foot on them again on pain of severe punishment.

Nicolas spat noisily and whistled between his teeth. He had to admit that the old hag and that puffed-up Marquis had put one over on him. He had to take it.

But Mister John Bally was not the man to give up anything he'd set his mind on. For the time being he would leave the country, but sooner or later the war would end, and then all this would be forgotten and he would come back and fetch the woman, and with the woman the papers and the money.

The first thing to be done was to make sure of Thérèse. He must put his brand upon her.

As soon as night fell he went to the ch[^]let. The women were just about to lock the house and go to bed. When she saw Nicolas enter, Madame Levasseur was momentarily panic-stricken. The ch[^]let stood isolated in the park, far from the ch[^]teau; the loudest screams for help would be unheard.

"Good evening, madame," Nicolas said politely. He turned to Thérèse: Good evening, my angel. I want a word with you." Thérèse, too, was afraid. Something serious must have happened or Monsieur Nicolas would not have come here, especially at this hour. At the same time she was proud of his daring in showing himself in Ermenonville for her sake. "I want to speak to you alone," Nicolas went on. But the old woman had recovered from her fright. "Get out of here, you dog," she commanded calmly and quietly. "You see, my Thérèse?" Nicolas said. "Your mother doesn't want our conversation to take place in her presence either. Just as I suggested. Come on, then."

For all her love for Nicolas, Thérèse was terribly afraid of him. He must want her to do something fishy. She was ready to do anything for him; but still, it was good her mother was there.

"You stay here, Thérèse," the old woman said quietly. "And you

get out, you scoundrel." Nicolas came a little closer. But Thérèse moved a step nearer to her mother, and when the old woman took her hand she clasped her mother's hand tightly.

Nicolas shrugged. "The old woman has quirks," he commented. "One minute she wants us to talk outside, and the next in here. I'm a man of the world; I respect old age. All right, let's stay here. To be sure I'd have particularly liked to tumble in the hay with you tonight, Thérèse, my beloved. The fact is, you won't be seeing me for a while. This is a farewell call."

"You want to go away?" Thérèse asked. Her heart leaped into her throat. Never before had she thrilled with such deep awareness of how much she loved this man. If this wasn't the great love which the songs told about, then there was no such thing. She had thought she loved Robert, the butcher's apprentice, but that had been nothing compared to this. She was thirty-eight and had thrown away her life in the serving and the nursing of Jean-Jacques. Now the great love had come to her and she could enjoy it; no one stood between them any longer. She even had money. And now he wanted to go away!

"You want to go away?" he mimicked her. "I don't want to go away in the least. I've *got* to go away, because of you. Your darling beau, that young cavalier of yours, got us into this mess!" Suddenly all his savagery burst out. "That's what's come from carrying on with that greenhorn. Now he's jealous and is hiding behind the police, that lousy, lily-livered aristocrat!"

Madame Levasseur's heart was singing paeans of rejoicing. So she had brought it off after all: the scamp had to go, and she would stay! She took a firmer grip on Thérèse's hand, inwardly imploring her to have just a little sense, just for a few minutes more, and then they would both be safe and so would the money and nothing could happen to Thérèse again. The old woman steeled herself. She held a silent dialogue with Thérèse; implored, scolded, exhorted — all with the pressure of her hand. And she felt that Thérèse for all her lust was afraid of the fellow and trusted her mother. Thérèse would stay where she was: he would fail.

A little hoarsely Thérèse asked, "When have you got to leave and when will you come back?" "I'm going tomorrow," he said, "and I don't know when I shall come back." "I'll wait for you," she promised, "or perhaps come after you. Someday I'll be free." He enjoyed it to the full: there she was spilling out her heart to him; there she

was clinging to her mother's hand and wishing her dead. Now he felt he had her. She *would* wait.

"Of course it would be nice if we could celebrate my farewell outside," he tempted her. Her whole body cried out for him. She leaned toward him, but the old woman's hand helped her to keep her head, and she clung to that hand. He shrugged.

"The war won't last forever," he said, "and then I'll come back." And he added, "See to it that in the meantime the old lady doesn't throw away too much money on her pet, our sergeant from America. How much money is there, anyway?" he asked brutally. "Wouldn't you like to know!" the old woman sneered at him. "You've got to pull out, and you're not sure it's worth your coming back. You see, your Thérèse hasn't the faintest idea how much it is. And anyhow, it's so tied up that no miscreant can get at it." "You underestimate my devotion, madame," said Nicolas. "I will come back. I'll take the chance. Whether it's a lot or a little, Thérèse and I belong together."

"And you don't need to be jealous of the young Count, Monsieur Nicolas," Thérèse assured him. "I was taken with him for a time — I must admit that. But ever since you —" she fumbled for the right word — "since you did that for me, I've known where my heart belongs, and now I'll never look at anyone else." "There's a good girl," Nicolas praised her. In his words the old woman could detect all the contempt he felt for her poor Thérèse.

"Well, since there's nothing doing in the hay tonight," he remarked, "I suppose I may as well be off. I'll let you know my address." "Yes, do write to me," Thérèse begged, "write often!" "I write a miserable French," he answered, "and even if it were good you couldn't read it." "I'll find ways of working it out," Thérèse answered humbly. "I doubt that," he said. "If others aren't to understand it I'll have to express myself damned cleverly, and I'm afraid you haven't much in the top story, my beloved." "I'll understand you, my Colas," Thérèse assured him.

"I'm not a count, nor a rich man," he said, "but I've brought you something as a farewell present." He came quite close to her. "Give me your hand," he asked. "No!" her mother commanded. "Give me your hand!" he ordered her for the second time. And now she desired only to do his will, even at the cost of her poor soul. She freed her hand and held it out to him.

"I won't hurt her," he told the old woman. "Here," he said condescendingly to Thérèse, slipping a ring on her finger, "This is a be-

trothal, do you understand? A marriage. It's at least as valid as your union with the departed. Now you belong to me," he declared, "and I belong to you in a way." "Yes, Colas, my dear Colas," Thérèse replied obediently. She was trembling all over with happiness, pride, and fear. This was the most important event in her life.

Chapter 9 Royal Comedy

KING LOUIS, the sixteenth of that name, sat in his library at Versailles studying secret reports from Lenoir, his Chief of Police. The twenty-four-year-old monarch was fond of reading and doted on government records.

He came across an item to the effect that a certain John Bally, alias Nicolas Montretout, groom to the Prince de Condé, formerly groom to the Marquis de Girardin, had been deported. Bally's association with the widow of the late writer Jean-Jacques Rousseau had given offense; and he was moreover an Englishman.

The young King had an excellent memory. He distinctly recalled the confidential reports he had read on this man Rousseau's death. There had been doubts as to whether the writer had really died of apoplexy. Sinister rumors had been mentioned, and this English groom's name had come up even then.

Louis sat at his desk, bulky and awkward. With one hand he was supporting his large head with its fleshy cheeks and receding forehead. His shortsighted, slightly bulging eyes were fixed pensively on the porcelain statuettes of the great dead poets which adorned his desk — La Fontaine, Boileau, Racine, and La Bruyère. He had had the delicate figures made in his own factory at Sèvres. Those were writers after his own heart, believing in God and in God's appointed order. Writers like these no longer existed. He had to contend with rebels and atheists, with Voltaires and Rousseaus.

He meditated on the evil seed these philosophers had sown. It had sprouted well and sprung up in rank profusion. They had cor-

rupted his court and his capital city with cynicism and heresy. His nobles were amusing themselves with the rebellious spirit rising all over the world; they were playfully sawing away at the branch on which they sat. His ministers had persuaded him to conclude an alliance with the rebellious British provinces of America against his English cousin. It was the road to destruction he had let himself be driven onto. But he was too weak; he could not stand out against the general will. 'The General Will' — was he not himself employing a phrase Rousseau had thought up? He knew that in the end he would even be sending troops to help those seditious Americans against their King whom God had set over them. All this — he saw it, but he alone — would ultimately turn against himself.

It was a proof of divine mercy that these two revolutionary philosophers had to die an ignominious death so soon after one another. Voltaire's corpse had been smuggled away secretly by night and buried with indecent haste, and fortunately the disreputable circumstances of this burial continued to taint the memory of Voltaire. And then the other heretic had died an inglorious death — murdered by his wife's lover.

Immediately after Rousseau's death Louis had considered ordering an investigation. But his Prime Minister had raised questions. The philosopher was held in honor all over the world, he had argued; his renown was one of the glories of France. So now they had deported the murderer in order to keep the rebel's memory unstained. Was it not his duty as the Most Christian King to make public the facts about the heretic's sordid death? Would not this counteract the unwholesome allure of his writings?

When Chief of Police Lenoir next had an audience with him, the King remarked, "I see, my dear Lenoir, that you have deported a groom who had an affair with the widow of that fellow Rousseau. Haven't you acted a little hastily? Won't this deportation hamper the investigation into the rumors about that bothersome philosopher's death?" "We have in our possession," Lenoir replied, "an unimpeachable certificate, signed by respected doctors and officials, attesting that Monsieur Rousseau died of apoplexy." Louis nullified the certificate with a sweep of his hand. "And have you discovered the actual cause of death?" he asked. "What about that groom? Isn't he said to have killed him? Has it been conclusively proved that he is innocent?" Lenoir answered circumspectly, "Conclusive proof, either of one sort or another, would be hard to come by. And there are

patriotic citizens in France who regard this lack of proof as an advantage to the country." "*Justitia fundamentum regnorum*," Louis observed. "And the Archbishop of Paris does not regard it as an advantage, I imagine. I don't recall having given orders to desist from legal proceedings." After a short silence the Chief of Police said, "If you wish, Sire, I will send the confidential reports to the Public Prosecutor with the request that he report to Your Majesty." "Thank you, Lenoir," said Louis.

A few days later Doctor Lebègue appeared at Ermenonville in a state of unwonted agitation. He greeted Girardin hastily and informed him that there was something in the wind which concerned them both. Girardin looked up, perturbed. Doctor Lebègue explained: "Don't be surprised, my dear Marquis, if an investigating commission turns up in Ermenonville by special order of the Procureur Général. The King feels it is desirable to clarify all questions regarding Jean-Jacques's death. I heard about this from Doctor Lassone, the court physician." "But everything has been clarified!" cried Girardin in alarm. "There's the certificate — your certificate — isn't there?" Lebègue shrugged his shoulders: "*Regis voluntas suprema lex*." "Are we never to be done with this wretched affair?" Girardin moaned. "Surely they can't start legal proceedings on the strength of idle gossip." Offhandedly, Lebègue replied, "In such cases they usually exhume the body."

The idea that police officials might cross the lake to the island of the tall poplars, shove the gravestone aside, rudely thrust spades into that hallowed soil, and snatch the body from its coffin to mutilate it further — this horrible picture threw Girardin into a panic. "What can I do?" he asked Lebègue in desperation.

"The King is slow-moving," the doctor answered. "It will take him a while before he makes up his mind to order the investigation. We must take advantage of the interval. Persons who are close to the King must do what they can to influence him. Jean-Jacques is fashionable, and the Queen's circle follows the fashions. Aren't you related to the Marquis de Vaudreuil? The Queen does what Vaudreuil tells her to."

Girardin made a sour face. There was no love lost between himself and his cousin Vaudreuil. Vaudreuil, frivolous and superelegant, was a courtier through and through. Girardin regarded his literary and philosophic leanings as sheer affectation. Vaudreuil, for his part, made fun of his country cousin's intellectual aspirations. "I don't see,"

Girardin said uneasily, "how I could induce Vaudreuil to intervene in criminal proceedings in which the King is interested." "It could be done indirectly," Lebègue suggested. "Vaudreuil and the Lilac Coterie dote on the *Nouvelle Héloïse*. The place where Jean-Jacques spent his last months and where he is buried might well have a piquantly sentimental attraction for these ladies and gentlemen. Vaudreuil would hardly refuse if you were to invite him to visit Ermenonville again — with the Queen."

Girardin saw what Lebègue was getting at. Vaudreuil stood high in Marie Antoinette's favor; she always accepted his suggestions. And once the Queen visited Jean-Jacques's grave it would be out of the question to desecrate this grave by scandal. Jean-Jacques would be left in peace forever. And so would Girardin.

He drove to Versailles. As he had anticipated, Vaudreuil's reception of him was ironical and condescending. It was painful to have to ask a favor of this dandy, but Girardin swallowed his pride and did so. As his cousin was aware, he said, it had always been his humble and fervent hope that the Queen, the creatress of the Trianon, would come to see his Ermenonville. And now that France's most illustrious philosopher was buried on the soil of Ermenonville, the Queen might herself wish to visit the gardens.

Vaudreuil enjoyed the spectacle of his country cousin straining to act courtly. He understood the situation. Fat Louis's idea of stirring up a scandal over Jean-Jacques's death struck Vaudreuil as being in bad taste, and the thought of playing a trick on Louis appealed to him. To stand by Jean-Jacques's grave with the elegant, laughter-loving Queen would be a piquant situation, a parable fraught with irony. Even now he smiled to himself at the thought of how this pilgrimage would touch the hearts of all Europe. The school-books of the future would tell the edifying tale of how the young Queen Marie Antoinette and her lord-in-waiting had decked the seditious philosopher's grave with wild flowers.

"You are right, Cousin," he said. "Her subjects will certainly be grateful to the Queen for honoring the shades of their beloved philosopher. I will warmly recommend your invitation to Madame," he promised graciously, "and I am as good as certain that Madame will accept. My cousin, you may expect our visit in the near future. Madame will pay her respects to Jean-Jacques's grave and express her condolences to his widow."

This last touch was a sudden inspiration. It would spice the joke,

would be high comedy — royal comedy — if the Queen of France condoled with the person who bore most of the guilt for the philosopher's sordid death.

Girardin was outraged. He would have liked to slap his cousin's smooth, cocky, handsome face. But unfortunately what Vaudreuil suggested was logical and seemly; Girardin saw no way to reject it. Moreover, with this diabolic inspiration his cousin was unintentionally rendering Girardin another service. For once Her Majesty had graciously condescended to speak to the instigator of the crime, Thérèse would cease to be the instigator, and the crime would never have taken place. "Thank you for your helpfulness," Girardin said. "I shall await with respectful eagerness further word from Her Majesty."

And in fact, a few days later the Queen with a small retinue drove up to the gates of Ermenonville.

After breakfast she set out on a tour of the park. In Gabrielle's Tower, Girardin gave a short concert for her; songs by Jean-Jacques, mostly unpublished ones, were played. The tall, blond, radiantly youthful Queen was delighted with the simple melodies. She even sang one of the songs at sight; she was musical and had a pleasant voice.

After this they went down to the lake and the Marquis rowed Marie Antoinette and Vaudreuil across to the island. A full three minutes they stood by the grave in silence. Then, as planned, the Queen of France decked the simple memorial with wild flowers.

"Pretty," she remarked. "Pretty and full of atmosphere. Here he can rest peacefully. I have had parts of the *Nouvelle Héloïse* read aloud to me," she informed Girardin. "I have even written and told my mother the Empress about it. She wasn't very pleased. All the same I fully intended to hear more. But you know, my dear Marquis, how my time is taken up. I never get around to the things I like best. Now, after having stood by this grave, I shall certainly go on with the book. Remind me of it, please, my dear Vaudreuil."

Later, gracefully seated on Jean-Jacques's grassy bank under the willow tree, Marie Antoinette received the homage of the village youth. She was used to such occasions, and while a girl dressed in white recited verses, she listened with an air of friendly attention, and thought about something else.

But now Vaudreuil turned to Girardin and declared that it was nearly time for them to start back, and that Her Majesty wished to

express her condolences to Jean-Jacques's bereaved relatives.

An almost imperceptible mischievous smile crossed the Queen's face. Vaudreuil had told her the story of the great philosopher's unfortunate marriage. How he had married some poor creature, had sent her children to the orphanage, and had finally, because the woman had hated him ever since, been disposed of in some shady way by his wife and her lover. The story had to be suppressed, Vaudreuil had explained, because Jean-Jacques was one of the glories of France; but it was true, and an interesting case. Marie Antoinette had agreed with him, and she had come principally to see this fateful creature.

The women had at first refused to believe it when they were told that the Queen wished to see them. Even Madame Levasseur, usually so composed, was excited. As for Thérèse, for the first time it dawned on her what it meant to be the Widow Rousseau.

So there they stood, and this was the Queen.

Marie Antoinette regarded the woman with interest and a faint shudder of distaste. This man Jean-Jacques had written such a pretty and touching, and famous book; great ladies had vied with each other to have affairs with him; and then he went and lived with this vulgar, uncouth person and let himself be killed by her lover. How odd. Marie Antoinette would have liked to examine the person through her *lorgnon* to see whether there might possibly once have been something attractive about her. But that would not be seemly, so near the grave. The Queen could not even write her mother that she had been here. Though her mother would undoubtedly hear about it all the same and would send the Austrian Ambassador to give her a respectful but emphatic lecture. Her dear fat Louis would grumble too. But it was piquant to be talking to the woman, and she looked forward to telling her friend Yvonne and the other members of the Lilac Coterie about it.

"I have been to your husband's grave, my dear," she said in the serious, kindly, yet not too condescending tone she employed to indicate her sympathy with the common people. She had learned from her mother how to deal with such people. The Hapsburgs knew far more than other monarchs about the art of being affable. "What a frightful blow to you," she went on. And then she added in a low, confidential voice, "I have heard of what you have had to suffer because of your husband's somewhat rash philosophy. For all his greatness he was rather odd in some ways. I can imagine what you must

have felt, madame, when you lost your dear little ones."

'He must have been a great man after all, our old fool,' thought Madame Levasseur, 'or the Queen wouldn't be making such a fuss about him. The papers are sure to go up in price now. I hope the Marquis gets that across to the publishers. If only Thérèse wouldn't behave quite so stupidly! She could at least cry a bit, the cow!'

But Thérèse just stood there dumbly in a blissful stupor. 'What a gracious fine lady she is,' she thought. 'And so pretty! And her cavalier, he's so elegant and handsome. And they've all come to see me! What an honor! A pity Jean-Jacques didn't live to see this. And what a shame Monsieur Nicolas isn't here to see it!' But still she found no words.

"Yes, madame," Madame Levasseur came finally to her daughter's aid, "my dear Thérèse has been through a great deal. But then he was a great philosopher, after all, our poor Jean-Jacques, and so we had to put up with his penchants. I always told my Thérèse: 'What you are suffering is for the glory of France.'"

'I must think of something agreeable to say to this dreadful old woman too,' thought Marie Antoinette, 'or I'll never hear the end of it from Vaudreuil.' "At least you have your dear mother," she told Thérèse. "That is always a great solace, as I know from my own experience. When I am in a difficult situation it always gives me strength to think of my mother, the Empress in Vienna." "Yes, madame," said Thérèse, and kissed her hand. And Madame Levasseur assured her, "For all my remaining years I shall pray for Your Majesties, for you madame, and your High and Mighty Mother."

So ended Marie Antoinette's visit to Ermenonville.

In coming here, the Queen herself had set the seal upon Lebègue's report concerning Jean-Jacques's death. There was no further reason for hope or fear that the gash in the dead man's temple and on his death mask would be investigated again.

Chapter 10 Fernand Sees the Light

SINCE THE murderer was deported, Fernand thought his task was done and the air of Ermenonville pure once more.

The comedy by the grave showed him how mistaken he was. The Queen of France, in a gracious, sisterly gesture had extended her hand to the woman who shared the guilt in the Master's death! In the light of this charming and utterly depraved performance Fernand had realized that the murderer was not alone to blame. He had been confident that no one would move against him, and he had been right. The mighty ones of the land had shut their eyes to the ghastly deceit surrounding the death of the most truthful of all men. They had, moreover, deliberately falsified the manner of his dying, shrouded it in a fog of lies. The truth was not wanted; everyone was conspiring to trample it underfoot.

This perception shook Fernand like an earthquake. His whole world collapsed.

Heretofore he had not given much thought to his future; it was already marked out for him. After a few years in the army or in the diplomatic service he would retire to the country, to Ermenonville or one of the other domains. With Gilberte at his side he would manage his estates by modern methods, seeing to the physical and spiritual welfare of his tenants and peasants. Above all, he would read and think, possibly even write.

Now he saw that this could not be. He could no longer endure living in Ermenonville. He could no longer endure his father who was trying by paltry expedients to patch up Jean-Jacques's shattered image. Nor could he endure the gardens whose artificial serenity and peace were given the lie by the murdered man's grave. He could no longer live in this landscape which was hallowed, possessed, cursed and tainted by Jean-Jacques's experiences and his own.

Nor was it Ermenonville alone. He began to question the value of all this philosophizing and subtle introspection. Sitting still, reading and meditating about life and the world and one's own soul was not enough. More than anyone else Jean-Jacques had grasped the world and its relationships in the round. He had looked more deeply than anyone else into his own heart. But he had been blind to the real life all about him. He could fly but he could not walk.

The gulf between Jean-Jacques's life and Jean-Jacques's teachings struck Fernand as more frightful than ever.

Without philosophy you could not take part in making life meaningful. But philosophy, theory by itself, was not enough. Theory had to be tested by reality, made to conform to it. You had to lay hands on solid, physical reality, rub up against it, let yourself be buffeted and abraded by it. You had to learn from your own sweet and bitter experiences what was wholesome and what was not.

This was what Jean-Jacques had taught. His Saint-Preux did not kill himself in his despair; he went forth to a life of action, took part in the great voyage around the world.

He himself must go out into the world. Alone, without tutor and attendants. His journeys with his father to England, Italy, and Switzerland, those sheltered, academic tours, had been no help to him at all. He must see the real world, not the world of guidebooks. Must see it with his own eyes, feel it with his own hands

Of course Gilberte would not be happy about his being away for years. Yet she would understand. She must understand.

The very next day he went to talk with her.

If you looked at Jean-Jacques's death mask from the left, he explained, it was noble, sublime, serene. If you looked at it from the right, there was the deep gash — and all tranquillity had fled. This cleft cut not only across Jean-Jacques's temple, it cut across the whole of France. Here were two incompatible truths. No one could help seeing this: what should be and what actually was, were now far apart.

Fernand paced back and forth. His words were tumbling over each other. There was so much that he had discovered and had to tell her, and he wanted to say it all at once.

Gilberte did her best to understand him. "So you no longer believe in Jean-Jacques?" she summed up practically. Fernand was horrified that he had expressed himself so badly. "But of course I believe in him!" he cried. "More than ever. But his teachings have remained

words. People parrot them, mouth and chew on them, but no one acts by them. I had not found the way from words to reality either. I only went dreadfully astray."

Gilberte did not understand what he was getting at. She asked bluntly, "And have you found the way now?"

In a blaze of illumination Fernand suddenly saw. Just running off anywhere in the world was not enough. A part of the world, a definite part, was calling him. "There are people who are acting by Jean-Jacques's teachings," he declared, afire with resolution. "Not here; away across the sea. I want to go to them. I am going to them."

What mad idea had he got hold of now! Gilberte looked at him and pondered silently. This war somewhere in the wilderness might be the right thing for the American rebels with their Washington and their Franklin, but surely not for a Count Brégy, the future seigneur of Ermenonville. All very well to hope fervently that the Americans would win, but that didn't mean you had to throw your lot in with them and endure all that hardship and dirt and danger. Almost involuntarily she shook her head.

Happily, Fernand ranted on, "So you see, there was some point after all to my going through those two awful years at the Military Academy. There is a Providence; Jean-Jacques was right about that too. In the end, evil and stupidity have their purposes." He became aware of her disbelief and disapproval and redoubled his efforts. "You must understand me, Gilberte! These frivolous dandies at Versailles, this queen with her fancy Trianon, this corrupt Court with its stale perfume of the vanished glories of the past — all that is no life. The people who fritter away their time there are no good for anything but coining *bons mots*, dancing gavottes, and play-acting in pastoral idylls. All that is dead and rotting. None of these ladies and gentlemen has the slightest idea what the common man is, or even that he exists. I was right in always refusing to go along with that nonsense." And he concluded boyishly, yet with manly defiance, "Now I know where I belong. Now I know what I have to do!"

'*Ça y est* — so there it is,' Gilberte thought. That was what her mother had always said when, as frequently happened, she found herself facing a calamity; it was one of the first phrases the little Gilberte had picked up. 'New troubles pour out of a clear sky,' she thought, 'but something of this kind was bound to come of his crazy devotion to that wicked old fool. And unfortunately with him it's more than mere words; he's stubborn and fanatical.'

"And what about me?" she asked quietly but with bitter anger. "Am I, too, part of what's 'dead and rotting'?"

For a moment Fernand was disconcerted. Then with a pretense of firmness he said, "You will come too, of course."

Gilberte considered Fernand unusually intelligent but not exactly practical. That he could be so unrealistic had not occurred to her. "Have you considered how we are to do this?" she asked, trying to conceal her anger. "There is war and wilderness over there. I can't imagine that they would have any use for me. You say it's a long way from the teachings of your Jean-Jacques to reality. Maybe you'll be going astray again in joining those people over there."

He was hurt at her saying 'those people over there,' and even more hurt that she had said 'your Jean-Jacques.' She was drawing a line between them. And at the same time she was not altogether wrong; it *would* be difficult to carry out his plan.

After a pause he said rather lamely, "If we recognize what is right and desire it strongly enough, everything else can be arranged."

This vague nonsense was the last straw. "And suppose I can't 'arrange it'?" she asked. "If I stay here, will you go all the same?" That sounded more challenging than she had intended. She was afraid he would say, 'I will stay here,' and afraid he would say, 'I will go.'

Fernand said, a little haltingly, "When the decision came to me I thought it a matter of course that we would go over together."

Gilberte realized that they would quarrel if the conversation continued. "Think it over, Fernand," she said. "Think it over quietly. I'll think it over too."

Fernand lay sleepless that night.

He searched his memory for remarks by Jean-Jacques which might confirm his decision, comments on America and the fighters for freedom. He found none. At table the Master had conversed on many topics, but seldom on the vital topics of the day. He had indeed taught: 'Go to the roots and everything is connected with politics.' But while the whole world rang with the struggles of the American insurgents, he had scarcely given this struggle a thought. The Master had really been concerned — startled, Fernand had to admit it — only with his theories, with plans for his building. How the building was to be constructed from these plans had not interested him.

Were not these thoughts blasphemy? Had not enough injustice been done to Jean-Jacques already? Was even he to betray Jean-Jacques and question his teachings?

Fernand got up and stole out of the house. He went down to the lake and rowed over to the island of the tall poplars. There he knelt by the grave and sought enlightenment from the dead.

'*Vitam impendere vero* — Dedicate your life to Truth,' Jean-Jacques had adopted these proud, uncompromising words of Juvenal, and inscribed them boldly above his *Confessions*. As Jean-Jacques's faithful disciple Fernand must stand by his own truth.

He rose. Important decisions had to be made by yourself; no Master, no philosophy could help. When the going was hard you were thrown back on your own intelligence, your own heart, on yourself alone. No one helped anyone.

He went home. He was not in need of advice, neither from the dead nor from the living. Even Gilberte would not dissuade him. He would carry out what he had resolved.

Hitherto his life had been lived for him; from now on he would live it himself.

In the morning, as soon as he saw his father, he would inform him of his decision, his irrevocable decision. He would not wait until he had seen Gilberte again.

He found his father in a mood of serenity. The unpleasant comedy that Girardin had been forced to stage was over and done with. From now on he could devote himself undisturbed to the cult of Jean-Jacques. It was in such a mood of tender exaltation and tranquil melancholy that Fernand found his father.

Succinctly Fernand informed him that he had decided to adopt the cause of Jean-Jacques's disciples, the American freedom fighters. He was going to serve in General Washington's army. He asked for his father's blessings and assistance.

Thus rudely jolted out of his agreeable melancholy, the Marquis decided to treat his son's request as an extravagant youthful fancy. He answered simply, almost gaily, "You have gone mad, my dear Count."

Fernand held himself in check. "Do you call it mad," he asked, "to try to apply Jean-Jacques's principles to real life?" Monsieur de Girardin shrugged. "You can't apply Jean-Jacques's principles to real life as easily as that," he lectured his son. "Jean-Jacques was not particularly interested in crude reality; he was concerned with the nature of things underlying the surface."

It exasperated Fernand that his father, to refute him, should bring up the very notion that Fernand himself had just discovered

with such chagrin. "Are Jean-Jacques's teachings to remain no more than nebulous feelings, then?" he asked rebelliously. "Is his wisdom to be nothing but elegant décor?"

Girardin remembered how Fernand had demanded Nicolas's dismissal. On that occasion the boy had made him feel like a school-boy who had failed in his lessons. He was almost glad to have caught his son out in such a colossal folly. "My boy," he reproved him, but still gently, "I see you have misunderstood the nature of philosophy. Philosophy poses problems; its function stops there. To find the solution to these problems is a matter for the individual. The right solution can only be found if the pupil immerses himself, with love, reverence and" — he raised his voice slightly — "self-discipline, in the Master's teachings."

"That is exactly what I have done, Father," Fernand said quietly but firmly. "I have drawn from Jean-Jacques's teachings the conclusions that apply to myself. They are logical conclusions. The Declaration of Independence of the United States is based upon Jean-Jacques's doctrines. The demands of the *Social Contract* are better fulfilled in the American Republic than anywhere else on earth. If I contribute in a modest way to what is being done over there, I shall be living according to the wisdom of Jean-Jacques." With mounting fervor he concluded, "That is how you taught me to live, Father."

Girardin regarded his son in silence. This was open rebellion. Nevertheless he was still reluctant to assert his paternal authority. He considered practical arguments that might bring Fernand to his senses. Since the alliance with the United States had been concluded, no doubt a French army would be sent overseas. That would be some time away. If Fernand should want to join this army, the matter would bear discussion.

But before Girardin had finished considering this, before he had a chance to speak, Fernand lost his carefully preserved composure. "Please, Father, don't treat me like a puppy," he burst out. "I know I'm young. But young people understand Jean-Jacques better than others. He once said himself that only the young could fully understand him."

At this point Girardin's patience gave out too. "Are you telling me I don't understand Jean-Jacques?" he retorted angrily. "Are you setting yourself up as his official interpreter? I suppose you think you have an option on him because of your philanderings with that female, his wife. You are impudent, my boy, more than impudent."

He drew himself up and pointed his stick at his misguided son. "Enough of this! I order you, do you hear me, I order you once and for all to give up such silly, immature ideas!"

"Thank you for this interview, Father," Fernand said. "Now I know your opinion." He bowed and withdrew.

Chapter 11 Fernand Acts

GILBERTE HAD not been able to fall asleep that night either; she was thinking over what Fernand had told her.

So life here was dead and rotting! Certainly there was much that was empty and affected, and sometimes in the midst of the flurry in Paris or at Saint-Vigor she had sensed why Fernand despised the Court and the city. But most of the time she had enjoyed life there with all her heart. To take part in that commotion year in, year out would be unbearable; Fernand was right about that. But wasn't it settled that most of the year would be spent in the country? And she enjoyed being in the country, with Fernand.

It was easy for him to talk. He had been born on top; he had no idea what it meant always to be on one's guard, always to be struggling. He made fun of the pilgrimage the two of them would have to undertake in Versailles to obtain the King's permission for their marriage. But she herself looked forward joyously to this pilgrimage: when it was over she would be rid of her bastard-nobility. The burden would fall from her; she would enjoy the rights which made life pleasant. She recalled the distress and humiliation her mother had had to go through because she had not belonged to the privileged class. She remembered how terrible she herself had felt a short while back at the foundling hospital, and she could have cried for joy when she thought of how smooth a path would open out before her own children.

Of course it was wonderful that Fernand had such bold ideas and

she loved him for it. He had no truck with the sham, and everything about him, good and bad, was genuine. Once they were living together she would be able to talk to him about everything, even about the ultimate, most intimate things, fantasies and notions she scarcely dared acknowledge even to herself. No, she didn't need any America or any adventures. Once they were together her life would be rich and exciting enough.

And if Fernand found life here in France so devoid of quality and purpose, couldn't he try to give it purpose? Couldn't he try to make reforms here? To make it unnecessary, for example, for men like Jean-Jacques to put their children into foundling homes?

Suddenly, unthought for, that song of Jean-Jacques's came to her:

The lover who gave me joy
Has sailed for a foreign land.
For New World treasures he forsook
His love, and death defied.
Why seeks he joy across the sea
That he here already has?

She was seized with sudden fury against Jean-Jacques. He had brought misfortune to everyone. Even from the grave, that mad fanatic was trying to rule her life.

She understood Fernand. She understood that he must always go the whole way, and by the most direct route. But even though she understood him a hundred times over, her whole being rebelled against his plan. She loved him as much as one human being could ever love another and here he was ready to plunge into war, ready to run off into the wilderness, on account of the theories of a crazy old man. And what was to become of her? How was she to bear waiting for him? And what if he — if something happened to him?

She wept and raged. Her mind turned this way and that, seeking some loophole, some conclusive argument. Her inner battle went on till sleep came.

The next day Fernand rode over to Latour in a mood of cheerful resolution. Now that the die was cast and he had spoken to his father, everything was clear and simple. Gilberte would scarcely be able to accompany him; she was right about that. But she would understand his intentions. Her lucid mind and her brave spirit would accept the delay as he was accepting it.

Gilberte turned pale with anger as he reported on his interview

with his father. Fernand had acted and committed himself as if she simply did not exist. She was wounded to her very heart.

With an effort at calm she asked him, "And what do you mean to do now?" Prepared for this question he replied, "There is the inheritance from my mother. I shall raise a loan on it in Paris, arrange for my departure, and in four weeks, at the most, be at sea."

Gilberte asked, as she had asked yesterday, "And what about me?" "We marry before I go, of course," he replied. Very quietly she asked him, "And will the King give his consent if your father does not give his?" "In that case we'll marry without anyone's consent," he answered without hesitation, "and I will renounce Ermenonville. I never shall betray Jean-Jacques's philosophy or my own." "And what do you think my grandfather will say?" Gilberte pursued her questioning. "Or do you want me to renounce my inheritance as well?" She spoke with bitterness. How forthright would she have to be before he saw what sacrifices he was demanding of her? She would not admit to herself that his mind was made up already. She wanted him to decide again, now that he was face to face with her. But she was afraid of his decision, wanted to defer it, wanted an ally against him. Before he could reply she went on, "The first thing we must do is talk to Grandfather." Fernand demurred. "What would be the point?" he asked. "Monsieur Robinet would have no sympathy at all for my ideas." "Grandfather loves me," Gilberte countered, "and he knows what you mean to me. If anyone can help us it is he." Fernand, still unconvinced, agreed.

When Gilberte came to her grandfather with the story of Fernand's plan, Robinet saw himself saddled with a knotty problem. He knew that Gilberte's lot in the world would not be easy, because she belonged to the lowest category of the nobility, the *noblesse bâtarde*. Hence he had welcomed the idea of her marriage to a Girardin, for it would relieve her of this handicap. He had no objection to Fernand as his granddaughter's husband. He was even pleased at the young man's opposition to the conventions and mode of life of the aristocracy. Highly as Monsieur Robinet esteemed the practical value of the aristocracy's privileges, for the bearers of these privileges themselves he had nothing but robust and thoroughgoing contempt.

Therefore he had every reason to approve of the young people's marriage. But if the boy were to go to America and stay there for a long time the marriage would be even more to his liking, for he would not be losing Gilberte's company. He loved the girl and could

not imagine life without her. On the other hand he knew how the separation would tell on his Gilberte.

Cautiously he inquired, "How will you feel if your young Count really goes to America?" "He wants us to get married first," Gilberte said without enthusiasm. Then, helplessly, impulsively she added, "Please give me your advice and assistance, Grandfather."

Monsieur Robinet sat there, square, solid, dependable. There was even something like a smile on his broad red face. Gilberte had told him about Fernand's clash with his father and Robinet was secretly gloating over the Marquis's troubles. It served Girardin right for hobnobbing with his wild philosopher. Now he would have to turn all sorts of logical somersaults, this believer in freedom, before he could make freedom unsavory to his son. But Robinet was sure the Marquis would do his mental gymnastics, would turn heaven and earth to keep the lad from embarking on this escapade. "I think, my child, we'll be able to make the young gentleman see reason," he comforted her.

Fernand was invited to luncheon at Château Latour on the following day.

"Before I go off for my nap, my dear Count," said Robinet after the meal, "there are one or two questions I would like to ask you. I hear you want to leave us, that you want to go to America and join the rebels. What are your motives for this?" Fernand was not prepared for the old man's dry civility. But he gathered his wits together and answered, "I want to help in the realization of Jean-Jacques's great principles." "When Jean-Jacques himself thought it necessary to flee," Robinet argued mildly, "he didn't go to the land of freedom but to your father in Ermenonville." "Jean-Jacques did not need to preach his ideas to the Americans," Fernand answered promptly. "They had been understood there already. Jean-Jacques's task was to proclaim the idea of freedom; our task is to carry it into effect." "You are an excellent debater, monsieur," Robinet acknowledged, "but as to the situation in America you are not well informed. I have business interests in the West Indies and a competent agent in Philadelphia. I know from reliable reports what America needs. She does not need volunteers, she needs money. You'll be doing America and the cause of freedom a greater service, Count Brégy, if you send them a few thousand livres than if you go over to them in person."

Fernand recalled what the Sergeant had told him, Madame Lévassieur's loud-mouthed son. There was a grain of truth in Monsieur

Robinet's words. Aware that his argument was taking effect, the old man continued, "You will answer that you are counting on the impression your act will make — a gentleman of your rank, heir to Ermenonville, going to join the rebels. You will call attention to the prestige which accrued to the Americans from Monsieur de Lafayette's daring action. But while Monsieur de Lafayette's gesture made sense at the time, it would now be a superfluous one. Before long the King will be sending the Americans a trained and equipped army. Why don't you wait until then and join this army? So much is certain, Count Brégy, you will be helping the cause of freedom very little if you go off into the jungles now. You will only cause our Gilberte sorrow and anguish."

Fernand listened, his face bleak. It was reason that Monsieur Robinet was advancing: the dry, cold reason of Grimm and Diderot, Jean-Jacques's enemies. Fernand had nothing to set against this cold reason save the dictates of his heart. But these dictates were all that mattered, nothing else, and Gilberte would understand.

"I cannot counter your logic, monsieur," he said frankly, "but I beg you to try to understand me. All that has happened in Ermenonville — Jean-Jacques's dreadful death and everything connected with it, and finally the Queen's visit — has wrought havoc within me. I know that what has happened and is still happening is a texture of falsehood. It's wrong. Everything is wrong in this country. But of this I am more certain than anything else: Jean-Jacques's philosophy is not just something for Sundays, and I must try to live by his teachings. It's no good using reasoned arguments against this feeling of mine. I must do something. It's for my own sake too that I'm going across. I can't go on just trifling with ironic remarks about the falseness of our society. I'm done for if I go on living like this. I must act. I must fight. I *must*. Please understand me!" he begged, almost in despair. He was talking to Robinet, but his words were meant for Gilberte.

Gilberte was conscious of his distress, yet she was thinking, 'He talks only about himself. And what about me? What is to become of me?'

Monsieur Robinet had done his best. He saw that arguments were of no avail against Fernand's puerile nonsense.

"When do you intend to leave France, monsieur?" he asked practically. "As soon as possible," Fernand replied. "In a month at the latest." "And what do you propose to do about Gilberte, Count

Brégy?" Robinet asked. "I have always thought of your relationship with my granddaughter as a kind of engagement. What is to be done about that if you are to be away for an indefinite time?" "What I thought," replied Fernand, "was that Gilberte and I should marry first." "You ride at full gallop, sir," observed Robinet. "And what then? Assuming that this marriage takes place, do you propose to consummate it before you go off to fight for freedom?"

Gilberte blushed at her grandfather's plain speaking. But she was grateful to him for making Fernand see what was at stake. She loved Fernand, she belonged to Fernand. And Fernand belonged to her. He belonged to her!

"When a man goes to war," Robinet went on, "he must be prepared for anything. Have you considered, Count Brégy, that Gilberte might find herself a widow at the age of eighteen or nineteen?"

Fernand had already been overcome with shame and anger at the coarse old man's crudity in summoning up a picture of himself lying in bed with Gilberte. Now he burst out, "It is not polite to bury me before I'm dead, monsieur."

Monsieur Robinet remained unmoved. "I'd be a poor guardian for my Gilberte if I left her in the lurch out of mere politeness," he observed. He drew himself up and assumed a businesslike tone. "I will put it bluntly, sir. I gave my granddaughter permission to marry you and I shall stand by my word. But the assumption was that the heiress of my properties and fortune would be marrying the future seigneur of Ermenonville. A marriage without the King's consent is out of the question. I do not want to have you reproaching my Gilberte someday with, 'I renounced Ermenonville for your sake.'"

Fernand considered. At best it would be three or four months before he could obtain the King's consent. "If that is how you see it, monsieur," he said stubbornly, "then unfortunately we'll have to postpone our marriage till my return." Robinet brushed Fernand's words aside with a wave of his hand, "You can't seriously expect such a thing of Gilberte, Count Brégy," he said. "Let me sum up the position: if you marry Gilberte now, with the royal consent, then you have my permission. If you go to America without having married Gilberte, then the engagement is broken."

Fernand swallowed. He was very pale. Obviously Robinet was forcing him to choose between America and Gilberte.

"Please consider, sir, what I have explained," Robinet concluded,

once again very polite, "and let us know, shall we say within three days, what your decision is."

Gilberte, too, had grown pale. Fernand looked at her broad, open face. Hoarsely, with an effort, he brought out, "Monsieur Robinet has said, 'Let *us* know your answer.' Does Monsieur Robinet speak for you too, Gilberte?"

'Now he must decide,' she thought bitterly, triumphant, and tense with fear. 'Or must I decide? No, he! He must decide! Grandfather is right. What he wants to do is folly and sheer madness!' "Yes, Fernand," she said aloud, "Grandfather speaks for me too."

Fernand bowed to Robinet. "I can give you my answer now, monsieur," he said. "I cannot take your advice. I cannot." He spoke sullenly, with helpless rage; the words dropped from his mouth like stones, each one separate from the other. "Adieu, Gilberte," he said, and left the room abruptly.

Three days later he went to Paris. With difficulty he raised money, with difficulty he procured passage, and took ship for America.

PART THREE

*JEAN-JACQUES
AND HIS HEIRS*

PILGRIMAGE TO THE GRAVE

THE VILLAGE AND THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

EXIT MADAME LEVASSEUR

GILBERTE AT VERSAILLES

THE SUITOR'S RETURN

FATHER AND SON

THE OTHER GILBERTE

WHOSE JEAN-JACQUES?

THE GRIEVANCES OF THE TOWN OF SENLIS

JEAN-JACQUES'S PEOPLE

FLY OVER THE WORLD, TRICOLOR!

LOYALTY, BUT TO WHOM?

Go to the roots and everything
is connected with politics.

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

Do not talk to me of Fate!
Politics is Fate.

NAPOLÉON

Chapter 1 Pilgrimage to the Grave

STUNNED BY his grief and anger at Fernand's desertion, Monsieur de Girardin threw all his energies into the cult of the dead Jean-Jacques.

He ordered a tombstone in Paris to replace the provisional one and began to refashion his Ermenonville into a framework and background for the grave. Once again rising ground was leveled and little hillocks raised; there was much planting and weeding and felling of trees. Sayings of Voltaire were removed and words of Jean-Jacques carved in their place. Jean-Jacques's favorite haunts were unobtrusively yet unmistakably marked out, and everything led to the shrine, to Jean-Jacques's grave on the island of the tall poplars.

An even more pressing task than the reorganization of the gardens was the publication of Jean-Jacques's works. Girardin was thoroughly familiar with the literary estate and he had the Master's own authentic interpretations of obscure and seemingly contradictory passages; he felt he ought to have a decisive voice in the matter. The other editors, however, the gentlemen in Geneva, by no means always fell in with his views. Pastor Moulton, in particular, proved quarrelsome. It became evident that they would have to talk things over, and the Pastor promised to come to Ermenonville in the near future.

In spite of all these activities, Girardin could not always escape an oppressive sense of loneliness. He bitterly missed his rebellious Fernand. And there was not even Monsieur Robinet to pick quarrels with. Robinet had taken his granddaughter abroad for a long tour; apparently it was not easy for Mademoiselle de Latour to get over the separation from Fernand.

Often the Marquis would conduct imaginary disputes with Fernand; he would recall, word for word, that last decisive conversation. He had been absolutely right. Should he have given ground to the silly boy? But it grieved him that he could dispute with Fernand only in his imagination, and he asked Count Vergennes, the Foreign

Minister, to instruct the French envoy in Philadelphia to keep an eye on the lad.

There was one person to whom the Marquis could confide his cares: Monsieur Gerber. Gerber was still there; he had surprised Girardin by proposing of his own accord that he remain in Ermenonville to help with the editing of Jean-Jacques's works. The talented young man would surely have had no trouble finding an attractive post, but he preferred to share the elderly Girardin's rustic solitude. He wished nothing better, he declared, than to dedicate the rest of his life to the shades of Jean-Jacques and the study of his teachings, and for that purpose what worthier and more suitable place could be found? From Jean-Jacques he had learned once and for all what the world ought to be like; further exploring its reality was no longer worth the trouble. Girardin gladly accepted his offer.

He took his meals with Monsieur Gerber, exchanged reminiscences of Fernand with him, discussed the alterations of the gardens, the editing of the Collected Works. To his surprise the young man, for all his shyness, expressed decided opinions. He too knew his Jean-Jacques, he too had heard interpretations of obscure passages from the Master's own lips, and sometimes he met the *'autòs épha'* of the Marquis with an *'autòs épha'* of his own. At which the Marquis would look stern or make some offended, ironical reply.

On one occasion he remarked that Monsieur Gerber's language was rather out of place when addressed to the man whose salt he ate. Whereupon Monsieur Gerber stayed away from the next meal, and from the following ones. On the third day the Marquis sought him out. He was not hard to find, for he was sitting under the willow tree playing his violin. Monsieur de Girardin declared that perhaps he had been rather violent in defense of his version, but that Monsieur Gerber had also displayed a lack of gentleness unbecoming to a disciple of Jean-Jacques. "So let us be friends once more," he concluded, transferring his stick to his other hand and holding out his right to Monsieur Gerber. Gerber deliberately laid his violin down on the grass and took Girardin's hand.

Pastor Moulton from Geneva made his promised visit. Paul-Claude Moulton was of the same age as the Marquis: a gentleman of placid temperament and slow, impressive eloquence. He brought his manuscript of the *Confessions* with him, as well as letters from Jean-Jacques which might serve to explain various passages. When the two manuscripts differed, the Marquis always favored the less dis-

creditable version. But Pastor Moulou sternly insisted that Jean-Jacques's motto, 'Devote your life to Truth,' had not been empty talk, and that the dead man's friends must not deny the Master. Monsieur Gerber generally sided with Moulou. Girardin was secretly infuriated by these two border-Frenchmen, the Swiss and the Alsatian. But he had to yield, particularly since, to his discomfiture, Moulou was able to produce lengthy and extremely cordial letters from Jean-Jacques.

While Moulou was still at Ermenonville an event took place which Girardin had been awaiting eagerly for a long time: the tombstone was completed. It was a simple and dignified altar with classic lines, at one with the island and the gardens. On it, in relief, were scenes recalling Jean-Jacques's works, especially *Émile*. There were joyous and grateful women and children whom Jean-Jacques had freed from the bondage of foolish prejudices; there was naked Truth bearing the torch of Enlightenment; there was Nature in the guise of a mother suckling her children. On one side of the altar was the inscription, '*Ici repose l'homme de la nature et de la vérité*' — 'Here lies the man of Nature and of Truth'; on the other, Jean-Jacques's motto, '*Vitam impendere vero.*'

Secretly the Marquis had hoped that Fernand would come back for the dedication of the tombstone. Through the French envoy in Philadelphia he had kept Fernand informed of the progress of the work on the memorial, and he had even postponed the eagerly awaited installation. But no word came from Fernand.

Present for the dedication were the artists who had executed the memorial, Hubert Robert and Lesueur; the sculptor Houdon; and Lebègue and Ducis. Then there were Moulou and Gerber, and Girardin had naturally been compelled to invite the women.

The little memorial stood in the midst of the tall, slender poplars, blending with its surroundings with a serene nobility. It was entwined with evergreen and ever lovely periwinkle, the dead man's favorite flower. When Thérèse caught sight of the fresh greenery she gulped and gave a loud sniff.

Girardin and Ducis spoke. They were at pains to be brief and unpretentious. Even Moulou, famous preacher that he was, limited himself to two simple sentences.

A few days later Moulou set out on his return journey to Geneva. When he said good-bye, the Marquis could not refrain from asking, "I suppose you have heard the rumors concerning our friend's death?"

"Yes," said Moulto. "Of course it is all the purest nonsense," Girardin observed. Moulto said nothing. "I dismissed that groom nevertheless," Girardin went on, "so that the rumors should have nothing to feed on." Moulto made no reply to this either.

Among the many who made etchings of the grave was the celebrated Jean-Michel Moreau, Keeper of the Royal Engravings. Soon the island of the tall poplars became known all over the world, and the poplar was henceforth regarded as the tree of freedom.

Pilgrims thronged to the grave. A Paris newspaper wrote, 'Every religion has its holy places; now philosophy too has its shrine: Jean-Jacques's grave. Half of France has already gone on pilgrimage to Ermenonville, and many people have taken a vow to make this pilgrimage to the Gallic Mecca an annual event.'

The Royal Princes came; the Prince de Ligne and Gustav the Third of Sweden came; accompanied by his grandson came the Ambassador of the United States, Benjamin Franklin — *l'ambassadeur électrique*.

Among the countless visitors some were so fervent in their adoration that the gardens began to suffer. No one wanted to leave the island without a souvenir. The flowers around the grave were plundered, the poplars robbed of their lower branches; a fragment was even broken off the altar itself. The Marquis gave orders that visitors must be accompanied by one of his gardeners and that anyone wanting to cross to the island must obtain written permission. An Englishman who failed to get permission swam across the lake fully clothed in order at least to have touched the island where the dead man rested.

Eugénie Maillart, the young and radiantly lovely actress whose enchanting gaiety was winning her such great successes at the Théâtre français, was completely carried away as she stood by the grave. Her happy face clouded; she burst into tears and asked Girardin's permission to come here often for solace and to gather strength for her taxing profession. "To give others joy," she said, "you have to suffer and wear yourself out." She also asked Monsieur Girardin whether she might erect a similar gravestone on her estate in Normandy, Roche Saint-Quentin.

Two young people, the Abbé Gabriel Brizard and Jean-Baptiste de Cloots, Baron of Val-de-Grâce, wandered rapturously for days in the gardens, reading Jean-Jacques's works and reciting from them.

Impressed by their devotion, Girardin offered to row the pair over to the island himself. Emboldened by so much kindness, they asked if they might offer up at the grave a sacrifice of love and hate, explaining that they wished to burn there the lampoon which the abominable traitor Diderot had written on his dead friend, the 'Essay on Seneca.' The Marquis agreed.

Early next morning the two young pilgrims, the Marquis, and Monsieur Gerber rowed over to the island. The Abbé and the Baron kissed the altar repeatedly, prayed silently, and strewed flowers over the grave. They kneeled. While one of them struck fire with flint the other tore the pages concerning Jean-Jacques out of Diderot's book. The flames leapt up, and now the Baron threw what was left of the book into the fire. Black smoke traveled up the sides of the memorial. "So may all memory of malice and slander go up in smoke!" they cried with passionate indignation.

Soon after this a visitor of higher rank than any of the previous guests came to Ermenonville. He called himself quite simply Count Falkenstein, but this count, as everyone knew, was the Queen's eldest brother, the Holy Roman Emperor Joseph the Second.

Girardin regarded Joseph as the most progressive monarch who had walked the earth since Marcus Aurelius; he sincerely admired him and received him with profound emotion.

The Emperor's manner did not belie his reputation. He conversed with Girardin as with an equal, listened with interest when Girardin quoted some of Jean-Jacques's sayings, exchanged views about the *Social Contract* and, though a royalist by profession, proved to be even more progressive than Girardin.

After lunch the Emperor asked his host with disarming candor to permit him to take his projected walk alone, for he wished to enjoy Jean-Jacques's solitude. Girardin pointed anxiously to the threatening thunderclouds, but Count Falkenstein observed that he was used to all kinds of weather when climbing in his Alps, and he insisted on going. After about an hour, sure enough, there was a cloudburst. Girardin was torn by doubts as to whether he should send assistance to his illustrious guest. He gave orders, then countermanded them. An hour later Count Falkenstein reappeared, soaking wet and smiling. He said that at the height of the downpour he had taken shelter in a grotto. He borrowed some clothes from the Marquis, and they parted greatly pleased with one another.

Henceforth the Marquis called the little cave 'Joseph's Grotto' and placed in it this inscription,

Wanderer, stay thy steps and see
Lo, this grotto small but free,
Vouchsafed fame when in its lee
Crownèd worth found sanctuary.

Chapter 2 The Village and the Social Contract

A DROP OF bitterness was mixed with Monsieur de Girardin's pleasure over Joseph's visit. Joseph had declined to spend the night in the château and had had the camp bed which he took with him on his travels set up at Goodman Maurice's inn.

The Emperor liked the simple house; part of its roof was thatched with straw, which reminded him of the cottage of Philemon and Baucis. Goodman Maurice, for his part, was torn this way and that by conflicting emotions. It was a tremendous honor that the Holy Roman Emperor should deign to sleep beneath his roof, but Jean-Jacques's philosophy had filled him with a citizen's pride and he was unwilling to attend Joseph more zealously than any other guest. Yet when the Emperor stroked his little daughter's cheek and benevolently asked her name, Maurice could no longer contain himself. "What an honor! What an honor!" he stammered. "How pleased our lamented Jean-Jacques would have been by such affability!"

After dinner Joseph questioned him about his experiences with Jean-Jacques, and when the innkeeper told him he had read all the Master's works seven times, he asked his opinion of the *Social Contract*. The Emperor listened attentively and from time to time made such remarks as, "An interesting point, my good man," or, "That's not bad at all."

If the Marquis boasted an inscription in his grotto, Goodman Maurice was not going to be outdone. He asked Monsieur Milliet, the poet of Senlis, for an appropriate poem. Monsieur Milliet obliged, and a plaque was set into the wall of the inn with verses commemorating Joseph's visit. They began:

Thou who to the palace a simple hut
Preferredst, sublime prince and philosopher.

And ended:

O lord and father of the blessed Germans.

And soon the inhabitants of Ermenonville knew these verses by heart.

The conspicuous plaque displeased the Marquis. In fact Goodman Maurice was a constant source of annoyance to him. The inn had been called The Chestnuts from time immemorial, but now a painted sign in bright colors, depicting Jean-Jacques taking a walk, identified the place as the Auberge Jean-Jacques. Prompted by Goodman Maurice, the villagers would tell strangers how fond Jean-Jacques had been of sitting in the garden of this inn. Many of the pilgrims visited the now historic spot, and the visitors' book which the self-important innkeeper installed soon contained many of the great names of the land.

It was Maurice's habit to sit and talk with his guests. He would regale them with sayings he attributed to Jean-Jacques and with amusing, sentimental little anecdotes. He would also maliciously whisper dark hints about his great friend's death. The guests listened, suitably horrified and touched, and they fed the ducks and fishes which Jean-Jacques had fed. The Prince de Ligne gave Goodman Maurice money so that he would not serve up these creatures to his guests but let them die a natural death.

Maurice's whispering campaign was as unwelcome to Madame Levasseur as it was to the Marquis. And with her usual energy she set about putting a stop to his troublemaking. She went to the inn.

Black and dignified in her mourning dress, she sat, spangled by light and shadow, under the chestnut trees of the little garden. She ate an omelette, drank the yellow wine, and fed the fishes. Goodman Maurice hovered around her uncertainly. "Come here, monsieur," she commanded. "Come and sit with me. I hear you're doing quite good business thanks to my son-in-law's passing away." "I think in my

modest way I can claim to have been his friend," Maurice answered. "People know that and set store by it, and that is why they come to me." As Madame Levasseur was silent, he went on challengingly, "My friend Jean-Jacques's abrupt end shook me to the core. Just after he had been chatting with me and seemed so hale and hearty." "An abrupt end, you say," Madame Levasseur countered. She continued to feed the fishes, but the down on her upper lip quivered with her panting breath. "An abrupt end, and maybe some people say a suspiciously abrupt end. The people of Ermenonville say all sorts of things, once they start talking. Maybe you'll live to hear people whispering that you were mixed up in this abrupt end, since it has turned out so much to your advantage."

Maurice stared at her in amazement. "But everyone knows — " he began indignantly. "And everyone also knows," Madame Levasseur interrupted him, "how hard hit my daughter and I were by this terrible blow to our hearts as well as our purse, and yet there's more than one tongue wagging about us two defenseless widows."

Maurice sweated and said nothing. Madame Levasseur shifted her bulk closer to him and spoke persuasively. "You ought to help us, monsieur. You could, you know. A lot of people come here to sit under your fine chestnut trees and talk; a good innkeeper hears more than the police. Why don't you find out who is responsible for this idle gossip and then tip me off. I'd like to set the seigneur's bailiff onto these cursed blabbermouths. You owe us that much, Goodman Maurice; you were my dear son-in-law's friend. And my Thérèse has long been thinking of bestowing some little memento upon you out of his effects." Her hard little eyes were fixed on him, earnest, sad, expectant.

"You are very kind, madame," said Maurice. "But now that we're talking as one person to another like this," he went on, gathering his courage, "I'd like to speak frankly to you. After all, there was something fishy about the demise of our lamented philosopher. You must admit it yourself, madame." "Maybe so, maybe not," Madame Levasseur conceded. "My son-in-law was always complaining about his philosophical enemies as you know, and I had my ideas about his sudden demise myself. But after all, no one was there, and the legal gentlemen have decided that it was a natural death, an apoplexy of the brain, and her Majesty the Queen has confirmed this in person, so to speak, by the gracious visit of condolence she was pleased to pay my daughter and me. And when the Law and the Queen have

spoken, a Goodman Maurice and a Madame Levasseur will probably do better to keep their mouths shut."

She broke off. "I must go home," she said. "How much do I owe you, monsieur?" "Nothing, madame," Goodman Maurice replied. "It was an honor. And if you really meant what you said about the little memento, then I shall give myself the pleasure of paying you and your daughter my humble respects. I've always wanted to see the châlet to which the unfortunate deceased so much looked forward."

Within two days Maurice presented himself at the Swiss châlet. There was a subdued, solemn, and yet pleasant conversation about Jean-Jacques. "To think he couldn't live to see this house," Goodman Maurice lamented for the tenth time.

When he left he took with him the dead man's dressing gown, snuffbox, walking stick, and his worn-out sheepskin-lined straw slippers.

Henceforth Maurice showed certain favored guests these souvenirs of his friend and master. With pounding hearts and reverent fingers they handled the relics, and even wished to purchase one or the other of them. But Goodman Maurice refused to be tempted though the sums offered were high. He would not be like Villette, the husband of Voltaire's adopted daughter, who had sold to an English collector the most generous heart that had ever beaten in France, the heart of the dead Voltaire, together with the burial urn, for three hundred louis d'or.

But when Goodman Maurice saw how disappointed the pilgrims were he asked himself whether he was justified in offending Jean-Jacques's admirers. He had similar snuffboxes and slippers made and sold them, well satisfied to have the genuine relics remain in his own faithful hands.

While the innkeeper now spared the women, he intensified his malicious persecution of the Marquis, and all Ermenonville repeated his stories.

For the Marquis de Girardin was not popular with his peasants. It was true that their enlightened seigneur had remitted many of their taxes, *corvées*, and imposts, but then again in small ways he was self-willed and unjust, even tyrannical. And now that Jean-Jacques was no longer there, the Père la Tapette in him came increasingly to the fore. This embittered his peasants. Furthermore, though he treated his *mainmortables* well, he did not free these

serfs, and this fact was resented by his tenants and free peasants as well as by the serfs themselves.

What caused Girardin to cling to his privileges was not greed but a patriarchal sense of duty. Without his strong paternal guidance these stupid, half-animal creatures would surely perpetrate the worst possible crimes against themselves. It made him bitter that he was unable to exact from these stubborn people the respect and affection which was his due, and that the silly, spiteful talk about his responsibility for Jean-Jacques's death persisted.

Now one of his serfs, the farmhand Trouelle, had asked permission to give his daughter Pauline in marriage to a free peasant. As it happened, the young man did not even live on one of Girardin's own estates but on land belonging to his hated neighbor, the Prince de Condé. Girardin hesitated for a long time. Finally he conquered his own feelings. He would see what sheer kindness could do. He decided not only to allow Pauline Trouelle's marriage, but to free his serfs once and for all.

He summoned a delegation of peasants to the château to announce to them his magnanimous decision.

When they were assembled in his great hall he began by telling them that, not without misgivings, he was prepared to consent to Pauline Trouelle's marriage with her Josèphe Carteret. Then he took a deep breath before embarking on the great speech which he had prepared.

Whereupon the peasant Michel Desportes awkwardly stepped forward from the group, scuffing the shining parquet floor with his clumsy sabots, and opened his mouth. The seigneur, he began, had often been kindhearted to the poor and lowly and, after all, he had taken in Monsieur Jean-Jacques, the friend of all mankind. And, after all, many other lords, chief of all their Most Christian King himself, had set their serfs free and made them like other people and given up that part of their privileges. Of all their High and Mighty Seigneur's rights these were the ones that rankled most. So what about it? Wouldn't Monseigneur, too, feel kindly and say: Away with all that?

Girardin had taken a step back. It vexed him to have to yield under pressure what he had intended to give out of the generosity of his heart. He made no reply.

And then the old peasant Antoine Monnier, whom everyone called Grandfather Antoine, began to speak. Ever since Monsieur Jean-

Jacques had been among them, he began in his quavering old voice, they would sometimes sit together and one of them who knew how to read — Schoolmaster Harlet or Goodman Maurice — would read aloud from Jean-Jacques's works and explain it all to them. Nor would they have ever had the courage respectfully to put it up to their seigneur if it didn't say in Jean-Jacques's books — and here he quoted the way he probably quoted the Bible — 'What matters is to define the respective rights of ruler and ruled and draw the boundary where the duties of the ruled end and their natural human rights begin.'

Now Girardin became incensed. First his son had defiantly misinterpreted Jean-Jacques's teachings, and now his peasants had the temerity to quote Jean-Jacques and give him advice. This came of pampering them. But he would put them in their place. '*Quos ego!*' he thought to himself. But then it occurred to him how Monsieur Robinet and Cousin Vaudreuil would make fun of him if he angrily rebuffed his peasants' attempt at philosophy, and he controlled himself.

"I do not think, my friends," he lectured the delegates with a somewhat wry smile — "I do not think Goodman Maurice's interpretation is quite what our Jean-Jacques meant. You see, his book on the social contract is based on the idea that the individual parts of the state should co-operate with each other like the organs of the human body. Here our Jean-Jacques had in mind an episode from Roman history. The Romans were a great and virtuous people of antiquity. The Third Estate revolted, and a member of the First Estate, a certain Menenius Agrippa, drew the rebels' attention to the functions of the respective organs. One estate must be the brain, another the belly. Now, surely you're not trying to tell me you represent the brain?" He disliked having to dispute with the rabble, and he was unable to keep a note of scorn out of his voice.

Again it was Michel Desportes who answered. "No," he said with blunt good humor. "We're the belly, and we know it. If only the belly had a little more in it." And they all laughed.

The Marquis did not laugh. Their laughter had a disagreeable ring: there was a spiteful, dangerous sound to it. And all of a sudden he saw his peasants' faces as they really were. If they seemed stupid faces, a large part of this stupidity was assumed, and behind it was hostility, cunning, and danger.

"No offense meant, Monseigneur," said Grandfather Antoine pla-

catingly. "I daresay we're putting ourselves forward, and we haven't much philosophy, only what we think out for ourselves. But" — and here his old voice quavered — "as we clodhoppers say: our own dung smells sweeter than our neighbor's roses."

Girardin was by now quite determined not to have wrested from him the very thing he had been ready to grant of his own accord. They parted in bad humor.

For days Girardin raged inwardly. They behaved, these peasants of his, as if Jean-Jacques had been their guest, not his. After all, the *Social Contract* had not been written for clodhoppers but for those who were entrusted with the general welfare.

There was one person whom the Marquis suspected of the most vicious misinterpretations of Jean-Jacques's doctrines. That was Martin Catrou. He had never really cared for the sly young fellow with the impudent face and darting eyes, and he had been displeased at Fernand's choosing him to be his particular friend.

Martin himself had been impressed by the way Fernand had pulled himself together and gone to join the lovers of freedom across the sea. Obviously Fernand had been directly influenced by Jean-Jacques, and that fact gave Martin considerable food for thought. By nature thorough, he now immersed himself more deeply than ever in Jean-Jacques's books.

Much in them still struck him as wild and eccentric, but he kept finding ideas that were new, remarkable, and revolutionary. It was incredible that these aristocrats should have stood for this man's presence among them — that they should even have revered him. For to Martin himself the books only provided new reasons for being hostile and mistrustful toward the gentry. Jean-Jacques taught that all good things came from below, from the Third Estate, the people, whereas the bigwigs had to be forced to submit to the General Will.

Martin chafed more and more at the narrowness of Ermenonville. He went to Schoolmaster Harlet and kept after him until the schoolmaster approached the Marquis and urged him to find a clerical job in town, preferably in Paris, for the intelligent youth. Since the sight of Martin reminded the Marquis painfully of Fernand, he would ordinarily have been glad to get him out of the way. But the recent delegation gave him pause. Had not his peasants just demonstrated how easily the lower orders could have their heads turned by philosophy? And young Catrou was by nature too forward. For the present the Marquis refused to say either yes or no.

A minor incident helped him to make up his mind. Among the prerogatives he especially insisted on were the ancient fishing rights on his estates. He allowed his people to fish his waters, but reserved the right to buy a part of their catch for his own kitchen. Now he learned that Widow Catrou had been selling fish in her shop without showing them to his staff first. Her lies and excuses merely aggravated the Marquis's anger, and since the lease of her shop had expired he rented it to another applicant. The woman and her son already had a hard life, and this action made it even harder. The villagers grumbled and muttered.

Girardin was unhappy. He had wanted to abolish serfdom and his stupid peasants had compelled him to retain it. And now this unreasonable widow forced him to take her shop away from her. He was the kindest master in the world, but appearances were against him and his peasants were complaining. The chief reason for this was that they were busying themselves with Jean-Jacques and constantly misunderstanding the perfectly clear words of this wisest of men.

It was against his principles to revoke an action once taken. Yet he was sorry to have had to punish Widow Catrou so harshly. With quick resolution he had a word with Maître Bouvier, his Paris lawyer, and the lawyer agreed to take Martin into his office.

So Martin Catrou and his mother moved to Paris.

Chapter 3 Exit Madame Levasseur

THÉRÈSE FREQUENTLY visited her husband's grave. She was afraid the dead man might be angry with her because, before Nature, she had married his murderer. She begged Jean-Jacques to forgive her and tried to persuade him that it was not meant unkindly, nor directed against him personally.

Sitting under the willow tree on the anniversary of his death, vacantly gazing across the lake to the grave, she saw Girardin approach and, at the sight of her, turn round and retrace his steps.

It was scandalous, the way the Marquis treated her. At least on the anniversary of Jean-Jacques's death he might have treated the widow with greater courtesy. "If we were good enough for the Queen," she later told her mother indignantly, "then there's no call for him to turn up his thin nose. Let's clear out and leave him alone in that dull coop of his."

Madame Levasseur sighed at hearing her daughter talk her usual rubbish. "Of course the Marquis is trying to get rid of us," she never tired of explaining. "But Widow Rousseau's place is in Ermenonville by her husband's grave, and that's that. Once you stop being the mourning widow," she would keep hammering into Thérèse, "you're no better than dirt. And not a sou, not a penny will you get from the King of England or the Lord Mareschal. The grave is your manger, you cow."

The sulky mood she now was in after the Marquis's insulting behavior was rare with Thérèse. As a rule she was quiet and lax and seemed content with life in the lonely ch[^]alet. To her satisfaction Madame Levasseur observed that Thérèse was not fooling around with men.

Yet she could have had men easily enough. Widow Rousseau was an interesting personality; many men showed themselves eager to dally with her, and she too sometimes felt like tumbling in the hay. But she fought the feeling down. She was waiting for her Colas.

Twice during these years he sent secret messages to her, assured her that he would certainly return, commanded her to wait and not get into mischief.

She obeyed.

As a respectable and well-conducted woman she felt she was above reproach, even from her dead Jean-Jacques. Of course his sudden death was not her fault at all, yet Jean-Jacques might hold it against her, since Monsieur Nicolas had done it for her sake.

It certainly could do no harm for her to try to placate him. She did more than pay him frequent visits: she carefully tended his canaries, changing the water in their little cups and daily plucking for them that little reddish plant called *mouron*, their favorite food.

Months passed and lengthened into years, and Madame Levasseur felt that her end was approaching.

She summoned up all her strength and drove to Senlis to see Maître Gibert and make her final dispositions. The lawyer was a vulture, but he knew his business. She frankly explained to him her

fears and her intentions. Even from the grave she wanted to take care of her son and daughter; though already well on in years, both of them needed supervision. Would the lawyer draw up a will, she asked, providing for François twenty louis each year, and no more? Most important of all, would Maître Gibert do everything he could, both by legal measures and by personal admonition and persuasion, to prevent Thérèse from marrying again? Widow Rousseau she must remain, living by and dependent upon Widow Rousseau's annuities. The lawyer was to see to this with all the means at his command, and he was to pledge himself to do so by solemn oath in the name of God and St. Yves, the patron saint of lawyers. For this Madame Levasseur was willing to pay a decent fee.

The panting, corpulent, sick old woman's firm words and indomitable will impressed Maître Gibert. He thought her proposals full of maternal good sense, and furthermore he had a high opinion of Jean-Jacques's books. Of course there was no such thing as a legal instrument which could keep the widow tethered to her stake. All the same he was determined to do his best, for a fee of five louis per year.

Back in Ermenonville, Madame Levasseur lay down to die.

Sergeant François came, and wept without restraint when he saw his mother. "You are provided for, my good, brave boy," she comforted him. "You are to get an annual allowance. And when I'm out of purgatory, which I hope will be soon, I shall go round to all the saints and give them no peace till they help you put your good ideas to work."

She was already having difficulty in talking when she had her final conversation with Thérèse. She impressed upon her that she was not to go to Paris, no matter what rosy prospects François might appear to have. And she was not to marry, under any circumstances, not even if that fellow of hers came back — the filthy dog. For the last time she explained to Thérèse, "You have money only so long as you remain the Widow Rousseau. And when he sees you have no money left, your life won't be very pleasant, my child, and maybe not very long. Stay by the grave," she commanded her. "Stay the Widow Rousseau." Then the death agony began.

Sergeant François himself reported his mother's passing to the Marquis. He suggested that the old woman be buried beside Jean-Jacques, whom she had tended so faithfully. "For God's sake, not that!" the Marquis burst out.

The Sergeant was outraged by this aristocratic haughtiness. De-

terminated to do the thing in style, he ordered a first-class funeral for his mother. All the clergymen in Dammartin took part. Goodman Maurice insisted on speaking the eulogy for Jean-Jacques's mother-in-law. He lamented her tragic fate. Jean-Jacques's enemies, he said, had defamed the loyal old woman who had worn herself out caring for him, and they had tried to bring about a breach between them. The people of Ermenonville were moved. The Marquis, who attended the funeral, listened impassively.

In the Swiss chalet brother and sister talked things over. François told Thérèse he wanted to take her to Paris with him. She replied that their mother had ordered her to remain by Jean-Jacques's grave. François maintained that the law entitled him to decide where she was to live since he was now head of the family. Still with the same quiet obstinacy, Thérèse replied that she would stay, no matter what the law said. If she did, François pointed out, he would have to keep her very short of money; there was no doubt that they inherited together and that as head of the family he had the right to administer the estate. As to that, Thérèse replied calmly, Maître Gibert would inform them. François realized that he could not get the better of her. He was offended. "We shall live to see the day," he told her gloomily, "when you will come to me in Paris, ragged and dirty and begging me for help. I shall not refuse you a plate of soup and a roof over your head, for I am a soldier and a generous man. But I shall never quite be able to forgive you your lack of faith in me. And now give me two écus for the return journey." With that he left.

She stayed on in Ermenonville. It was fitting and her duty that she should do so. She was convinced that Nicolas was going to come for her there.

Not that she felt comfortable in the Swiss chalet. It was haunted by ghosts — by Jean-Jacques's spirit and her mother's. Neither of them was pleased with her for intending to live with Nicolas; her mother in particular scolded and threatened. Again and again Thérèse showed her the ring which Nicolas had given her. Was she not wedded to him by virtue of that ring? But her mother refused to be satisfied.

Again the stranger who had come before brought a message for her. Monsieur Nicolas would soon be returning. She should stay where she was and wait. And not get into mischief. Those were his strict orders.

Thérèse was happy. Sometimes she dressed herself with care, so that her beloved would not surprise her in an unkempt condition. Then she would sit by the hour in her best clothes, staring at the ring with a dreamy, vacant smile.

Chapter 4 *Gilberte at Versailles*

THE GENTLEMEN in Geneva were not willing to delay the publication of the *Confessions* any longer. In spite of his fears that publication would provoke more ugly attacks on Jean-Jacques, Girardin was obliged to yield to their decision.

The *Confessions* were published.

The effect of the book was quite different from what Girardin had anticipated. Readers were stirred by the uncompromising way in which Jean-Jacques laid bare his life and soul. They admired his fanatical zeal for the truth. In the *Confessions* they found revealed the deep source of many emotions and thoughts which had hitherto baffled them. The man who here portrayed himself combined the noblest heart with a personality which was touchy to the point of madness. The former quality aroused love and respect; the latter, compassion. From now on, they felt, it was permissible to voice thoughts which they had not dared to utter even to themselves, to express attitudes they had scarcely acknowledged even to themselves. The *Confessions* exalted Jean-Jacques's fame to the skies.

Gilberte de Latour was in Paris when the book appeared. Monsieur Robinet brought her a copy. That evening she was to have attended a ball at the Marquise de Saint-Chamond's. She made her excuses, retired immediately after dinner, and read.

She lay in bed, and the candlelight played over the words that revealed the life of this man Jean-Jacques.

She read quickly and avidly. But from time to time she lowered the book and closed her eyes. Then she could hear Fernand speaking about the selfsame characters. To her inner ear, his voice was clearly

audible and his words and the printed words merged together.

She found each page of the *Confessions* more distasteful than the last. Her first impression of Jean-Jacques in the hall at Ermenonville had been right. Here he was proclaiming for everyone who cared to listen that he was a poor wretch, obscene and ridiculous; a miserable, unhealthy, unappetizing creature.

And this was the man before whom people went down on their knees! Were they blind? The 'Man of Truth,' they called him. Couldn't they see that every word was false? The individual page sounded convincing enough in itself, but the very next page would state the opposite. This Jean-Jacques was simply unable to speak the truth. Events lost their reality for him even while they were happening. He was driven hither and thither by his emotions; everything fluttered and flimmed. Were such flutterings, such lack of focus, to be called philosophy? If so she wanted no part of it. It was plain humbug.

She closed the book, blew out the candles, tried to sleep. The song 'The Lover Who Gave Me Joy Has Sailed for a Foreign Land' went round in her head.

There she was, thinking about Fernand again. And moreover in the words of that silly song of Jean-Jacques's. A hundred times she had commanded herself to stop thinking about him. She was through with Fernand. He had sold himself heart and soul to the false prophet, was throwing away his life on a crazy scheme. She was not going to throw away hers as well. It was finished.

Of course it was not finished — how could she fool herself? On the long journey with her grandfather through Switzerland and Italy she had asked herself at every lake and mountain, at every town, what Fernand would say to it. And why was she suddenly so interested in the New World? Why was she reading so many books about America?

It was cruel of Fernand to send absolutely no news. To his father, at least, he might have written more frequently. At every meeting with Monsieur de Girardin, Grandfather always inquired politely after Fernand. But the Marquis had little to report — his son was chary with news. When the French auxiliary force under General Rochambeau arrived in America, they had all hoped Fernand would be transferred to this army. But the obstinate boy had stayed with General Washington's troops. His father's pleas evidently fell upon deaf ears.

She should have gone to the Marquise de Saint-Chamond's ball after all. She usually had a wonderful time at balls. And was there anything wrong in that? Fernand thought that a girl who liked balls was an empty creature, but why should she not enjoy the company of clever, cultured, elegant people?

Mathieu was sure to be at the ball, was sure to miss her. She ought to be nicer to him, and not keep him in this suspense. A full year had passed since his father had died and Mathieu had inherited the numerous titles and dignities, the two tumble-down castles and the debts. He could solve all his troubles by taking one of the important posts in the army or the diplomatic service which were open to him as the Haut et Puissant Messire Mathieu-Marie Comte de Courcelles. If he had not accepted one of these posts it was for her sake. As a general he could be sent off to some provincial city; as ambassador to some foreign court. But he wanted to stay in Versailles where he was close to her. He did not speak or make an offer, for he was as proud as Lucifer. But she knew he needed only a sign from her and he would speak.

How much longer should she keep him dangling? If he was wooing her it was certainly not to mend his fortunes with her money. She knew from Monsieur Robinet that he had turned away from other wealthy heiresses.

Yet he would have to wait a while longer. The armistice with England had been concluded. Now there was nothing to keep Fernand in America. Not that his return could change anything. But he was entitled to one last talk.

When Monsieur de Girardin next visited Château Latour he told them that his son was not returning with the French army as had been expected. Fernand had gone to the West Indies instead, to Saint Domingue, where he planned to settle. Perhaps the Marquis had not meant to spring the news, but his heart was too full. Gilberte pressed her lips together and said nothing.

That night she imagined for the tenth time what life with Mathieu would be like. No doubt he would wish to pursue his career. However, she was by no means willing to live in the provinces or abroad. She might consent to spend a few months of the year in Paris and in Versailles — she would even put up with the strict ceremonial of court life during those months, as Mathieu would certainly want her to do. But she would like to spend the greater part of the year in the country, at Saint-Vigor or Latour or one of the dilapidated castles.

She would have to make her wishes in these matters quite clear to him.

She wrinkled her brow. She would not have needed to make that sort of thing clear to Fernand.

Next day she spoke to Monsieur Robinet. She had kept Mathieu de Courcelles waiting for years. Most of her friends were already married. She thought she loved Monsieur de Courcelles. Did her grandfather advise her to marry him?

Robinet had difficulty keeping a calm expression on his square red face. Here it was again — the same old quandary as when Gilberte had told him of Fernand's plan to go to America. He had no objection to a marriage between Gilberte and Mathieu, but he was even less able than before to imagine how he could live without her.

In his customary tone of gentle irony he observed, "It is not easy for me to give such advice, my child. I should be very sorry to lose you. You see, I have a certain stake in the matter."

"But Grandfather," she replied impulsively, "it's out of the question that I should live away from you. Of course we would live with you, or you with us." Robinet smiled to himself. For all their well-bred friendliness he and the ultra-aristocrat Mathieu were not exactly congenial. "I scarcely imagine that Count Courcelles will appreciate living under the same roof with me," Robinet answered. "That's something else I shall have to make clear to Mathieu," Gilberte told herself.

Aloud she said, "If you really have no objections, Grandfather, then your great-grandson will be called Monsieur de Courcelles." On her face there was that tiny hard smile which Monsieur Robinet had observed at Jean-Jacques's funeral.

Monsieur Robinet hesitated a moment. Then he said, "In that case your son will also be called De Saint-Vigor, my child. Saint-Vigor once belonged to the Courcelles, and if it reverts to a De Courcelles the title reverts with it." Gilberte reddened with mixed pleasure and embarrassment. Saint-Vigor was a domain with several villages; Monsieur Robinet's wedding present was a costly one. "Thank you, Grandfather," she said.

When Gilberte next met Mathieu she took occasion to ask, "What do you think of my grandfather?" Rather cautiously he replied, "Monsieur Robinet is a very clever and successful man of business, as all France knows." "I love my grandfather," Gilberte declared warmly and with unusual emphasis. "I would never leave him. Under no circumstances. Do you understand, Count Courcelles?" Mathieu

seemed surprised, then thoughtful, then a little sad. "I understand," he answered with a low bow.

She proceeded: "Furthermore I should expect my husband, whoever he may be, to spend at least half the year in the country. Is that asking too much, Count Courcelles?" "It is asking a great deal," Mathieu answered, but when he saw her face he quickly added, "but not too much." "Would you, for example, agree to such an arrangement?" Gilberte asked. Mathieu again considered for a while, then said gravely and resolutely, "I would." "Thank you," said Gilberte.

Mathieu hardly dared to realize the implications of this talk. He looked at her almost stupidly, scanned her good, brave face, so fresh and wholesome, which was now overlaid with a smile of shyness. Then he came to life as Gilberte would never have thought possible. He seized her, kissed her. He knew how to kiss. She trembled.

Was she happy? She *was* happy. This time *she* had chosen, of her own free will, not without reason, yet not without heart either.

An interview took place between Monsieur Robinet and Count Courcelles to arrange Gilberte's financial settlement. It was a lengthy, embarrassing interview. Mathieu was reluctant to accept the sums which Monsieur Robinet considered necessary to ensure a carefree future for the couple. Robinet told his granddaughter with a sigh, "He is an aristocrat of the best type, your Mathieu. Very decent and properly limited."

As Mathieu belonged to the *noblesse de parage* and could show thirty-six quarterings while Gilberte, as a member of the *noblesse bâtarde*, could only show one, their marriage had to be endorsed by the royal family and cabinet ministers if the children were to retain the privileges of the father. Numerous memoranda and petitions had to be presented before the young people were allowed to appear in Versailles to obtain the necessary signatures.

In the weeks taken up by these matters Gilberte often remembered how Fernand had made fun of these formalities, particularly the long and complicated pilgrimage through the Palace of Versailles in which the ceremony culminated. Fernand lived with his head in the clouds and was bitterly mistaken. Gilberte's presentation to the King and the Court would not be a ridiculous farce. It would be a triumph. By this one gesture she would be raised from the crowd of the lowly, burdened with duties and obligations, into the ranks of the free, the privileged, she and her children, forever. She was not going to have this day spoiled by any man's mockery, whether from

far or near. She was looking forward to the eighteenth day of March, which was to be her great day.

Monsieur de Ségur, the Minister of War and a relative of Mathieu's, had undertaken to submit their marriage contract to the King for signature. Two terribly tedious hours were spent in the anteroom among countless people attending the *lever*. At last the portly Swiss guard struck the floor with his halberd and called out, "*Le contrat!*" And now the moment had come: Mathieu, Gilberte, and Monsieur Robinet, escorted by Monsieur de Ségur, were allowed to enter His Most Christian Majesty's bedchamber.

Gilberte threw a rapid glance at Mathieu. He looked handsome and distinguished and certainly saw nothing absurd in the many ceremonies he must go through.

The King was sprawling lazily at his dressing table while his hair was dressed and powdered. The magnificent room was full of people. Monsieur de Ségur, leading Gilberte by the tips of her fingers, brought her before the King. Mathieu and Monsieur Robinet followed. "Sire," said the Minister, "this is Mademoiselle de Latour, the future Countess de Courcelles, if it pleases Your Majesty to append your signature to the marriage contract." The King examined Gilberte idly with sleep-puffed eyes. "So you are Mademoiselle de Latour," he said. "Very well, then." The Minister of War passed him the contract, and a lord-in-waiting handed him the quill. Gilberte, emerging from a deep curtsy, greedily watched the plump white hand as it wrote. '*Ça y est,*' she thought to herself. She was conscious of nothing but joy — uncontrollable joy.

Louis had signed. "Very well, then," he said, barely stifling a yawn. "So now you are Countess Courcelles. My congratulations."

They proceeded to the apartments of the Queen. Marie Antoinette scrutinized the bride's gala attire with an expert eye and saw at once that it came from the hands of Mademoiselle Bertin, her own modiste. "That must have cost a pretty penny, my dear," she observed with a smile, and signed.

Through countless rooms, up countless stairs, and along endless corridors, past Swiss guards, past lords-in-waiting and dignitaries spiritual and temporal, they made their way to the apartments of the King's brothers, the Count of Provence and the Count of Artois. Then to Mesdames, the King's three aunts. And then to the Duke of Angoulême. This prince was seated on a rocking-horse, shouldering his saber. He was four years old. He wrote his signature slowly,

painstakingly, and Monsieur Robinet observed, "He's the only one in the entire Royal Family who writes a legible fist."

This done, the solemn small procession betook itself to the Minister of Justice and Keeper of the Great Seal, Monsieur de Miromesnil. He affixed the King's Seal to the document and added his own signature.

It had now been settled legally and for all time that Count Mathieu de Courcelles was entitled to marry Mademoiselle de Latour, possessor of only one quartering, without forfeiting his titles, dignities, and privileges. And upon marriage Gilberte de Latour became the possessor of three quarterings while her first-born son would come into the dignities and titles of his father.

Chapter 5 The Suitor's Return

IN THE DEAD of night a loud knocking startled Thérèse out of her sleep. She sat bolt upright and knew, with a thrill of joy, that it was he.

And he it was. He stood there grinning. "Here we are again, my sweet," he squeaked, as if he had been away no more than a day. Radiant, she feasted her eyes on him. He had put on a little weight, but he was still lean, and his eyes still twinkled merrily above his pug nose.

He submitted to her embraces and patted her graciously on the behind. She was aware of his sinewy body, inhaled his masculine smell, and the years of separation were as if they had never been.

She ran excitedly to and fro in her bare feet. "Shall I get you something to eat?" she asked, altogether his good old stupid Thérèse. "Later perhaps," he answered. "But I wouldn't say no to something to drink." Yes, she had something — the raspberry cordial Goodman Maurice had presented her with when she gave him Jean-Jacques's writing materials.

Nicolas sat in the broad armchair, the departed's favorite seat, and

looked at the familiar furniture. "It's nice to be here again," he observed and settled himself more comfortably, taking possession.

He had had to be cautious about skulking to the chalet. But on the whole his return had not been particularly risky. Since the treaty of peace the French and English governments had proclaimed an amnesty which probably covered his deportation also. It was time, he had thought, to pay his dear betrothed a visit. The old mare had given up the ghost; she could no longer kick. The papers she had guarded so stubbornly now belonged to Thérèse, which meant to him. So he had crossed the Channel. The Prince de Condé had hired him again without hesitation, he was living nearby, and here he was.

It tickled him to sit lounging in his predecessor's chair and talk. He had heard about the *Confessions* in London and had read the English translation. He had laughed loud and long at Monsieur the Philosopher and his foolish wisdom. What stories he told about this Thérèse of theirs! A fat lot he knew! In any case here he sat, John Bally, also known as Nicolas Montretout, no philosopher but hale and hearty, and the writer lay in his chilly grave, famous and dead.

Nicolas was keenly aware of the blissful happiness with which Thérèse was bustling about him. So his absence had only bound her more closely to him. He ate and drank and told himself with a chuckle that he could lick all the seven wise men. The Marquis had built the chalet for that fool of a philosopher, but the boss in it now was Nicolas. He sat there graciously submitting to Thérèse's caresses. "Business later," he told her. "First we want to enjoy each other," and he took her off to bed.

After which he heard her report. She had no capital, only annuities paid to her by the Marquis. That struck him as fishy. Why hadn't she received any cash for the manuscripts? And where did the Marquis come into the picture? "You're of age," he said with a scowl. "You don't need a guardian, or if you do, you've got me now. How about it, old girl?" he asked her good-naturedly. "Shall we get married? It's true you only have annuities, but I'll take you."

Her heavy heart leaped with joy and fear. She had waited so long for this moment. She was more than willing to give up her renown as Widow Rousseau and become plain Madame Montretout, even though no Queen would come to condole with her then. Since Nicolas had risked so much for her sake, even his precious young life, it was only right that she too should make some sacrifice for him. But she was aware of Jean-Jacques's and her mother's ghosts; they were

standing by the bed, shadowy yet real, and her mother was warning her, 'If he discovers too late that you no longer have any money, he'll knock you on the head too.'

She raised herself on one elbow. "As far as I'm concerned, the sooner the better," she said, and as they were lying in the dark he could not see that she was smiling the timid and coquettish smile of a little girl. He waited in the darkness. "But —" she went on, moving fearfully a little away from him — "but perhaps you won't want me any more, Monsieur Nicolas, when you've heard everything there is to tell." "What is there to tell? What's all this nonsense?" he said with the old roughness which she so much loved and dreaded. "Strike a light," he added irritably. When she had obediently done so, he looked at her sternly and said to her, "Come on then, talk! I don't understand." "I don't really understand it either," she replied plaintively. "That's just the trouble. My brain's only a poor thing and you'll surely be able to understand the whys and wherefores much better than me. If I marry again I don't get any more money, it seems. But let's go to Maître Gibert. He knows all about it."

"A certain somebody has made another colossal blunder, I can see," Nicolas growled. He got up and put on his clothes. "Don't be cross, Colas," she begged humbly. "I'll do everything you want me to do."

They went to see Maître Gibert. The notary made no effort to conceal his mistrust, or his aversion to Nicolas. "Do you really wish me, madame, to furnish Monsieur Montretout with the details of your involved finances?" He spoke so officially that Thérèse was frightened. Clearly neither Jean-Jacques, nor her late lamented mother, nor the good Lord Himself approved of what she was doing. But she summoned up all her courage and in a hushed voice said, "Yes, monsieur."

Maître Gibert remembered the solemn oath that he had given the fat old woman, and he determined to make the thing as difficult as possible for this stupid, lewd female. "I need a written declaration from you," he said, "to release me from my obligation of professional secrecy." Even that did not deter Thérèse. She signed the lawyer's cumbersome statement, and Maître Gibert had no choice but to speak.

It appeared that the annuities from the English patrons were paid through Monsieur de Girardin and that they were contingent upon their receipt in person by Widow Rousseau. Even the payments for the rights to Jean-Jacques's works were arranged in the form of annuities entrusted to Monsieur de Girardin for payment.

The interview was tedious and painful, for Maître Gibert made plentiful use of technical terms and Nicolas would not rest till he was acquainted with the smallest detail. Finally he asked with insolent bluntness, "And what is the position if Madame Rousseau remarries?" "I would most strongly advise my client against so doing," answered Maître Gibert, looking at Thérèse severely. "In that event the annuities from the English patrons would certainly cease, and it is also very doubtful that the publishers would continue their payments."

Now Nicolas's rage burst forth. "Is there no longer any law and justice in France?" he retorted. "It is precisely because law and justice exist in France, my good man," the lawyer loftily informed him, "that I am advising my client against contracting a fresh marriage. For Madame Rousseau's claim to the inheritance is doubtful and is being contested by a nephew of the deceased. And here I must touch on a rather painful matter. By his own account Monsieur Rousseau married Madame 'before Nature.' Whether such a marriage confers legal rights is questionable, to say the least. Only the support and prestige of Monsieur de Girardin have prevented the courts from declaring Madame Rousseau's marriage invalid."

Nicolas remembered certain passages in Jean-Jacques's book and his ready mind recognized the force of the dead fool's foolish *Confessions*.

Thérèse for her part said almost triumphantly, "There you see, Colas, I told you so." Nicolas gave her a furious look, thanked the notary frostily for his information, and they took their leave.

For Nicolas the night was devoted to scheming and reflection. So even while she rotted in her grave that vile old hag was interfering with his plans. But perhaps she had miscalculated. If she had found herself a foxy lawyer, he would find himself a foxyer one. He spat noisily.

Armed with a recommendation from the Prince de Condé, he went to Paris and called on the Prince's lawyer, Maître Labouret. The latter had a suggestion to make. Nicolas should get Thérèse to appoint him her *homme d'affaires*, her *homme de confiance*, that is, she should give him power of attorney. Then he could probably capitalize on one or the other of the annuities, and he could certainly raise a loan on them.

Nicolas was rather pleased by the idea. He explained to Thérèse that unfortunately Maître Gibert was right; she must stay in Ermenonville, play the respectable Widow Rousseau, and tend Jean-

Jacques's grave. So the pretty wedding was out of the window. But if not her spouse, he could become her *homme de confiance*, and that too was an intimate connection. This sounded good to Thérèse. So she would be doing nothing to disgrace her dear departed, but at the same time she could enjoy her Colas, though not publicly. "Then everything stays as it is," she summed up.

"Not quite, my beloved," Nicolas told her. "You wouldn't want your husband — for that is, after all, what I am in spite of that Maître Gibert of yours — you wouldn't want him to give up his wonderful Tattersall which can make life so glorious for us both. But for that I must live in Paris." "Can't I come with you, Colas?" Thérèse asked timidly. "It's like talking to the wall," Nicolas growled. "I've been telling you all this time you've got to stay here." Seeing her crestfallen expression he said consolingly, "Don't take it so much to heart, my sweet. Naturally I'll visit you here from time to time and we'll enjoy our love."

Later he said, "I'll tell you something else. We're going to take a trip to Paris together soon. We'll have the documents drawn up. It's as good as a marriage — you'll see how solemn and handsome it will be."

Sure enough, next week they went to Paris, though they traveled separately and with the utmost secrecy. Nor was Thérèse allowed to stay in the same lodgings as Nicolas. He put her up with a Madame Beccari in the Ruelle Louis, a little street tucked away in the parish of Madeleine.

Next day they went to Maître Labouret, and numerous documents were signed and sealed.

It was a complicated and impressive transaction, and Thérèse well remembered how she and her mother had had to sign for Maître Gibert. This time it was even more awe-inspiring, for Maître Labouret was wearing the zimarra — an old-fashioned robe which made him look like a dignitary of the Church. All the feelings of which she was capable stirred in Thérèse: she was thankful to God for having arranged matters so that she was not directly violating her mother's command and at the same time keeping her Colas; she was proud of her lover for having managed everything so cunningly that he was in a way her husband and yet she remained the Widow Rousseau. But for all her happiness and pride she felt afraid of her mother, and in the hissing of the candle flame as it softened the sealing wax she heard that low, toneless, insistent old voice.

Then she signed. This time she had many signatures to make, but she had learned how to do it at the ceremony at Maître Gibert's, and many times she dutifully inscribed, "Thérèse Levasseur, Widow Rousseau."

Having sent her back to the châtelet, Nicolas threw himself energetically into his business. He was able to buy some good horses at favorable prices. The Prince de Condé's recommendation brought him clients. The times were propitious for his undertaking: there was a craze in Paris for anything English. The grand gentlemen liked his expert manner and his combination of boldness and servility. Matters were shaping up promisingly.

A surprise visitor turned up: Sergeant François Renoux. He greeted Nicolas with noisy exuberance, embraced him, admired the stables and riding school. Nicolas regarded him suspiciously. And before long the Sergeant began to make significant references to Nicolas's unexpected prosperity. "My little finger tells me," he observed archly, "there's money of the Levasseur family invested here, and as the head of the family I think I have a right to know what sous and écus are feeding these wonderful horses."

Nicolas was not minded to let this rascal squeeze anything out of him, but on the other hand a quarrel with Thérèse's brother might have awkward consequences. The proprietor of the Montretout riding establishment found a way out of the difficulty by giving the strapping fellow a job. François was lazy; he frequently stayed away from work on one pretext or another. But he had his uses; his breezy flow of talk amused the customers. Besides, Nicolas kept him on short rations.

Nicolas was not stingy, but he had to be careful. His running expenses were high; his receipts were for the most part on paper. His best customers, young men from noble houses, took their time about paying, and if he pressed them for the money, they and their powerful friends turned nasty.

He saw how dependent he was on Thérèse's remaining annuities. So he paid occasional visits to Ermenonville. He usually arrived late at night, secretly and unannounced, but he always found a Thérèse who was waiting for him and whose face lit up gloriously at the sight of him.

He did his best to keep his visits to Ermenonville a secret. They became known nevertheless. The bailiff informed Girardin that that

fellow Montretout was spending the night from time to time with the Widow Rousseau in the Swiss chalet.

The Marquis thought it no longer advisable to take action openly against the rogue. On the other hand he now had the longed-for excuse to get rid of Thérèse, who was repulsive to him. He wrote her coldly that he owed it to the memory of his friend Jean-Jacques to protect his resting place from undignified incidents in which Jean-Jacques's widow was involved. He must ask her to find a place to live outside of Ermenonville.

Thérèse was seized with panic. Her mother had ordered her to stay by Jean-Jacques's grave. Nicolas, too, had insisted on it. To go away would be to flout the will of her dear departed. She hardly dared think what Nicolas would say. Most dreadful thing of all, she would lose her money — these mysterious, incomprehensible annuities — and with her money, so her mother had predicted, her Colas's love. How would she go on living?

The best thing would be to consult Nicolas immediately. She went off to Paris with the Marquis's letter in her pocket. Her one concern was to get to Nicolas's establishment as quickly as possible. She had to ask her way, since she had never been to this Tattersall of his. Once there, the first person she met was her brother François. When he saw the despair that was written in her face he greeted her boisterously: "Didn't I tell you the day would come when you'd run to your brother miserable and in rags? Didn't I tell you so?"

When Nicolas caught sight of her he did not trouble to conceal his surprise and fury. What was the fat old fright doing in his elegant establishment? She would drive his customers away. He pushed her into a corner, and when she began to explain he sharply told her to shut up and stop bothering him. He ordered her to go to Madame Beccari in the Ruelle Louis; he would visit her there in the evening and then they could talk. And now she must be off. His severity reminded her of her dear mother and in itself reassured her.

That evening she told him what had happened and showed him the letter from the Marquis. He brooded darkly. Then he explained to her that under no circumstances could he have her here in Paris. And she must stay near the grave; for they could not yet afford to do without her annuities. When she asked him plaintively where she was to go, he replied that he would find her some place to live in the village of Plessis. Plessis was next to Ermenonville and belonged to his patron, the Prince de Condé.

"Plessis," she repeated despondently. "Plessis." "From there," he told her, "you can easily visit the grave once or twice a week. And Monsieur le Marquis would hardly turn you away from the grave," he added grimly. "Plessis," she repeated once again. "There I'll see even less of you."

He, however, was now on the trail of a pleasing idea, and he became more cheerful. "Don't moan, my beloved," he consoled her graciously. "In a year's time, half a year maybe, my Tattersall will be bringing in so much that your annuities won't amount to a fart. Then I'll bring you to Paris and we'll live like lords. We'll get married, we'll say good-bye to the crumbs from the tables of the rich and show our love to all the world."

What was giving him so much satisfaction was the prospect, in fact the certainty, of getting his hands on the papers after all, the papers the old jade had done him out of. Girardin's dirty trick was a good pretext for getting the papers away from him.

"For a start," he declared, "we're going to give his lordship an answer to his arrogant letter — an answer that'll take some skin off his hide. I'll dictate it to you. Your late husband's papers belong to you, there's no doubt about it, and it's time he gave them back to you, the swindling jackanapes. You're not to stir from Ermenonville before you've got your property back!"

Nicolas could not write French and knew that Thérèse only spelled by ear, so that the letter would be hard to understand. But that would only make the writing sound tougher, give it more of an air of simple, primitive hurt feelings, and the high and mighty Marquis would fume at having to hand over the precious papers to the writer of such a letter.

Nicolas should have been in his Tattersall early next morning, but he took time off to dictate the letter to Thérèse. He selected his words with vindictive relish, and she set them down slowly, laboriously, in her crude spelling. 'I would not have expected Monsieur de Girardin to slander Jean-Jacques's widow in this way,' she wrote. 'You call me names. You say I am unworthy, and you give me a mouthful about your friendship with my husband. Your mouth may be full of him. I have him in my heart. I say *you* are unworthy. You took the papers away from me. Be so good as to give them back to me — all the papers, also the music and the *Confessions*. They don't belong to you. All right, I am leaving your house and I am taking nothing with me that belongs to you, but I am not going before I get what belongs

to me. I am and remain with all respect, monsieur, whatever names you call me, for all my life your faithful Widow of Jean-Jacques.'

Nicolas, as he dictated, and Thérèse, as she wrote, were both highly delighted. The stuck-up Marquis could stick this letter up his . . .

Once again Nicolas impressed upon Thérèse that under no circumstances was she to leave Ermenonville without the papers. Then Thérèse went back, delivered her letter at the château, and sat down in the châlet to wait.

The Marquis was furious when he received the scurrilous letter. The writings had been printed, of course, and faithful copies made, but he was sentimentally attached to the manuscripts. Yet what could he do? Unless he wished to involve himself in a long and scandalous lawsuit, he would have to part with the manuscripts. One last time he got them out, regarded them with emotion, stroked them fondly, tied them up, said good-bye to them, and sent them to the unworthy woman.

Suspiciously, Thérèse examined the thick packages of writings to see that they were all there. Then, getting ready for moving, she wrapped the *Confessions* in one of her petticoats, the *Dialogues* in another, and in a third the music of the songs Jean-Jacques had composed during his last days, the *Consolations*. And now she would have to move.

Nicolas had rented her a house in Plessis belonging to a friend of his, a certain Sieur Bessat. The village of Plessis was unattractive; the house had a thatched roof and was extremely simple. That did not disturb Thérèse; the main thing was that it was less than an hour's walk to the grave. And the rent was low — eighty livres a year, dilapidation included.

Goodman Maurice and Sieur Bessat helped her to move. Maurice accepted for his trouble a trifle here and there — things worthless in themselves, yet precious souvenirs to him and to others. But the larger part of the household goods — the simple wooden chairs with rush seats, the piano with the B that always stuck, the beds with the blue-and-white covers — now stood in Bessat's house in Cemetery Lane at Plessis. The engravings hung on the walls: the forest of Montmorency, the lame beggar being fed by children. Nor was the cage with the canaries missing. And the papers lay once more in their chest.

Nicolas came, looked around. It was the same furniture, though it

looked rather shabby here. On the other hand, here you could be your own master; there was no Marquis to interfere. And there was the chest, no longer empty. With satisfaction he opened it, handled the papers, laid them back again. There was no old jade in his way now, nor any Marquis; the papers belonged to him, in spite of everything. Perhaps they were a little worn: they had been turned into horseflesh — fine English thoroughbreds; but he felt certain that if the wind should ever blow colder they would provide shelter.

He had good reason for considering the possibility. His business could fold up overnight. The young gentlemen with the great names, his debtors, fed him with promises — someday their fathers would be dead. Yet it would not be advisable to take matters to court. Every penny of the annuities had already been mortgaged or capitalized, and his patron, the Prince de Condé, helped him with everything but money.

Nicolas was a man of inspiration, boundless energy, and granite ruthlessness, with that resourceful selfishness which normally assures great profits — but he was not lucky. And now Dame Fortune struck him such a blow that he was knocked flat. The stallion Lucky Strike threw him so unluckily that he broke his pelvis. It was the end of his career as the best riding master in Paris.

For a time Sergeant François tried to keep the Tattersall going as Nicolas's agent. But the creditors demanded their money, there was no help from Maître Labouret or the Prince de Condé, and on top of it all Sergeant François got involved in a brawl with one of the young gentlemen who owed them money. A nasty story appeared in the newspapers and Nicolas was forced to abandon his establishment.

He withdrew to Plessis and his mistress, Thérèse. There he sat and looked at his sole property, the chest with the papers.

He lived thereafter with Thérèse in Plessis, in Sieur Bessat's house, amongst Jean-Jacques's furniture, in the vicinity of the grave. He was a cripple, and even in the foreign tongue, a biting, blustering talker.

Once more Thérèse had a man to look after. And she did so with limitless devotion. She admired her Colas. Everything about him was great, even his misfortune.

Chapter 6 Father and Son

TERSELY FERNAND informed the Marquis that if it were agreeable to his father he would arrive in Ermenonville in about three weeks.

Girardin held the letter in trembling hands. Fernand in England, perhaps already in France! Fernand here in three weeks! Monsieur de Girardin suddenly felt old and weak, happy and unhappy, not equal to the excessive joy and certainly not to the momentous decisions he now had to make.

Seven long years, two thousand five hundred days and nights he had been waiting for this letter. When the armistice with England came he had hoped that Fernand would return. For months he had hoped Fernand would be drawn home by longing for Gilberte. And even when with a torn heart he had attended Gilberte's wedding, he had against all reason continued to hope that the memory of Jean-Jacques, nostalgia for Ermenonville, and possibly even affection for his father, might entice his son home. Then he had been confronted with the news that Fernand had bought plantations in Saint-Domingue in the West Indies, squandering the greater part of his mother's money, and moreover had had his head turned by a Mademoiselle de Traversay — a girl of noble birth, it was true, but born on the islands; that is, a Creole. And still in his foolish heart he had not been able to give up hope.

And now he held this letter in his hands and gazed at the few lines and the signature: 'Your loving and respectful son, Fernand de Brégy,' and he was pulled this way and that by surging happiness and wounded pride. Fernand had not even thought it worth while to inform him whether he was coming alone or possibly with the De Traversay family, those Creoles. Should he, as father, soldier, and mentor accept such lack of consideration without reproof? But if he reproved, might not the stiff-necked boy change his mind?

He drafted an answer both welcoming and reproaching his son;

felt the answer to be clumsy and considered asking Monsieur Gerber to write it, but rejected the idea and finally wrote himself; felt the letter to be too unguarded, much too affectionate as well as three times too long, and sent it off.

In the weeks that followed he tried to make up his mind what his attitude should be toward the rebel, the insurgent, the apostate who had joined the company of traders and had stepped down into the Robinet class — the prodigal son. But Fernand could hardly be called a prodigal son. He was returning with military laurels and newly acquired riches; his West Indian plantations had increased in value. How then should Girardin receive him? Kill the fatted calf or be the stern father?

Then one day the major-domo, quite overwhelmed with emotion, announced: "Monsieur the Count Brégy has arrived." And Girardin rushed into the hall and saw the Fernand he knew, as well as a totally different Fernand, brown, hardened, and manly. Was this his boy whose cheeks had been smooth only yesterday? Girardin forgot all his resolutions and embraced his son, hugged him, kissed him, and stammered, "Fernand!" and, "Is it really you?" and, "Fernand! My Fernand! My son!"

Fernand for his part had also kept wondering what attitude he should adopt toward his father. From head to foot his father was a man of yesterday while he, Fernand, was a man of today, of tomorrow even. He felt himself mature, while his father was to him a beloved, headstrong child who was constantly trying to interfere with him. He had made up his mind to be patient, but not to allow the loosened ties between them to become too close again. But now, in the familiar room at Ermenonville, seeing his father looking so much older than he had imagined and recognizing the grief of seven years engraved upon his joyful, quivering face, Fernand also could not help himself; he felt nothing but love.

Girardin accompanied him to his room. On the way up he noticed that Fernand had a limp, slight, but a limp for all that. To his anxious question Fernand told him he had been wounded quite soon after joining the army. At first it had looked rather bad and he had taken care that his father should not hear of it. Girardin was touched by such thoughtfulness and felt ashamed at ever having doubted his son's love.

Now that they were together he hoped Fernand would tell him everything. But Fernand talked only of the events of the last few

days. As custom required, he had gone to Paris and Versailles to report his return. The ministers had received him most graciously; Monsieur de Ségur, the Minister of War, had even held out the prospect of supplementing his American colonel's commission with a French one.

Since for the time being that was all Fernand had to say, Girardin himself began his tale. He spoke of Emperor Joseph's visit and of the crowds of pilgrims, and he insisted on showing Fernand the alterations he had made in the gardens.

Fernand walked along beside his eager, eloquent father. He did not find it easy to show the expected enthusiasm. Yes, here was the landscape of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, Jean-Jacques's Nature. It was affecting; it invited you to indulge in dreams and reveries; but was it not at the same time faintly ridiculous? Fernand, who had seen the vast forests and rivers of the New World, had grown beyond these gardens; they seemed a plaything to him, like the marionettes of his boyhood.

It was a relief to him when his father left him alone at Jean-Jacques's grave.

All through the arduous campaign and the ups and downs of his years in the West Indies Fernand had often pictured to himself how he would feel when he stood at this grave. And now he was unmoved; the place failed to stir him.

He was much more deeply moved at seeing Monsieur Gerber again. Always a thin man, his tutor now looked older than his years and had grown even gaunter and frailer; his hair was sparser and he blinked his eyes more than ever. He was shaken by the meeting with his former pupil. "May I embrace you, Fernand?" he asked shyly, and he blinked and smiled and was hard put to it not to cry. "Who would have thought it?" he kept saying in German, and could not take his eyes off Fernand.

Fernand was struck to see how like his Jean-Jacques Monsieur Gerber had become. Obviously he had set Jean-Jacques up as his ideal, without reservations — as presumably everyone sets up an ideal by which to live — and perhaps unconsciously had modeled himself upon him.

"Yes, dearest Fernand," Monsieur Gerber said. "Now you have what Plato calls the years of apprenticeship and travel behind you. How manly you have grown!" he marveled. "Of course, it has been seven years." And, "Your philosophy has grown manlier in contact

with the real world too, has it not?" he asked. It was meant to be a joke, but it sounded like a challenge.

And Fernand, too, distinctly recalled the conversation in which Gerber had implored him not to doubt the Master. Gerber had been both right and wrong, and instead of answering the question Fernand in his turn challenged his former teacher: "My dear Monsieur Gerber, weren't you, too, shocked by the *Confessions*?"

It was remarkable that after seven years the two of them should be continuing their discussion where they had left off. "I never expected," Gerber defended himself, "that the soul of such a great man would present so calm and peaceful an appearance as in Ermenonville. The *Confessions* increased my humble respect. The words of the introduction are sound and solid as granite. In all history there is no other work of such magnificent truthfulness."

Fernand was amazed. Surely Gerber must know of the gulf between the facts and Jean-Jacques's presentation of them. "Weren't you surprised," he asked cautiously, "to find Jean-Jacques's view of his wife so different from the reality?" Monsieur Gerber replied unhesitatingly, "Jean-Jacques was true. Whether the reality is true I don't know. He had the right to fashion the world according to his vision. His world is real." He repeated the sentence in German, rolling the words on his tongue. "Jean-Jacques's world is more real, more compelling, more enduring than the so-called real world. Reality will have to change."

Fernand was touched by Monsieur Gerber's deep, unshakable faith. Later, alone, he meditated on the Alsatian's words. 'His world is real.' Fernand tested the sentence by his own experiences. His experiences in America had been hard. There had been few great moments, but many wearing days spent on distasteful trivialities. He had seen but little fulfillment, and experienced countless disappointments. Jean-Jacques's noble savage had turned out to be a mirage. A little more freedom had been won, but he had seen no sign of equality or fraternity.

Once, in a downcast mood, he had drawn up a balance sheet of his American experience and had actually concluded that virtually nothing had been achieved. In the United States the irresponsible, reckless, extravagant arrogance of the aristocracy had been replaced by bourgeois avarice and hypocrisy. That was the outcome — after enormous sacrifices — of bringing Jean-Jacques's vision to reality in America.

And yet Monsieur Gerber's Jean-Jacques was no less true than his own. If Jean-Jacques had been a different person to everyone when alive, how much more so must he be in death. Even transcending the personal aspect, Monsieur Gerber was right. You had to distinguish what was eternal in Jean-Jacques from what was commonplace. It was wrong to dwell on the frailties that dragged him down to common humanity; rather, you had to cherish the nobility in him which compelled you to raise your eyes to his heights. The great passages in Jean-Jacques's great books blazed forever like the stars. Jean-Jacques's blindness in everyday matters was ordained by Providence for the good of mankind; had it not been for that, he would not have seen the great things so clearly. His blindness had harmed only himself; his vision had been for the good of all.

In the park one day Fernand met a fat old woman dressed in black, obviously coming from Jean-Jacques's grave. She looked at him as if expecting him to recognize her, seemed about to say something, but then went on her way. Later it occurred to him that the woman had been Thérèse. He shook his head at himself, no longer understanding how he could have been so madly in love with her. For years he had scarcely given her a thought. What had passed between them was over and done with; it no longer concerned him.

Even when he heard that she was living in Plessis with that fellow Nicolas, the news left him strangely cold. He tried to goad himself into hatred of Jean-Jacques's murderer, remembering that, had it not been for this creature, the greatest man who had thought and written in the French tongue would still be alive. But the memory of the murderer now aroused in him only a faint disgust.

A few days later Fernand had his first serious conversation with his father about his personal affairs. Ever since Fernand's arrival his father's happiness had been overshadowed by questions. How long would his son stay? Would he stay at all? What about the Creole woman? At last Monsieur de Girardin took heart and asked, "You were on our West Indian islands for quite some time, weren't you? Wouldn't you like to tell me about it?"

Fernand had already made up his mind to tell his father about his life in Saint-Domingue, but he was vexed at his father's not waiting for him to introduce the subject himself. In Philadelphia, he began, there had been a great deal of talk about the abolition of slavery. Unfortunately it had never gone further than talk. He had therefore wished to see for himself how the French legislation on

slavery, the Code Noir, was working out in the West Indies. "Fundamentally, Father," he said with a smile, "it was you who sent me to Saint-Domingue. It was you who once got me to study Raynal's work on our Indies."

Girardin would have preferred to hear about Fernand's personal affairs, but his son went on expatiating upon this general topic. On the whole, he declared, the West Indian planters treated their slaves more humanely than the planters of the southern mainland. The Cercle des Philadelphes in Cap François did a great deal of good. He himself was on the governing body of this league of friends of mankind and had been trying to demonstrate on the very large plantation he had acquired on Saint-Domingue that you could actually get more work out of the colored people by gentle treatment.

Somewhat irrelevantly the Marquis observed, "I suppose you've heard that I freed our serfs. I am even thinking of renouncing the fishing rights." But he was still waiting for Fernand to say something about Mademoiselle de Traversay, the Creole, and about his own plans. He waited in vain. Fernand went on talking about the Code Noir.

Fernand was tempted to bring Hortense de Traversay to France and to marry her. But he said nothing about her. He was not clear in his own mind what he ought to do and he did not want to decide in haste. He had come back to France precisely in order to consider everything quietly and by himself.

Chapter 7 The Other Gilberte

GILBERTE'S MARRIAGE was working out. She liked Mathieu; she felt certain that he loved her with body and soul; and this certainty was comfortable. He did insist pedantically on their both meeting their various obligations at court, and this she felt to be tiresome. On the other hand, without the slightest protest, he conscientiously kept the promises he had made her.

Nevertheless she did not see as much of her grandfather as she

would have liked. This was not Mathieu's fault; it was Monsieur Robinet's. He prized Mathieu's straightforwardness and reliability as much as Gilberte did; precisely because of it he was unwilling to force his presence upon his son-in-law. "Well, child, are you happy with your count?" he would ask his granddaughter. And she would answer, "Of course, why not?"

When Monsieur Robinet noticed a change in her, he asked her whether she would like to stay at Latour until her confinement. Gilberte knew he wanted her near him when the child came into the world. But this was one wish she could not grant him. She had promised Mathieu to be in Saint-Vigor, near Versailles, at the time of the confinement. According to custom, the Queen would then ask how mother and child were doing, and she would send a personal representative to the baptism.

Everything went well. The child was born at Saint-Vigor, weighing seven pounds, and from the day of its birth it was a Countess Courcelles with eleven quarterings, who when presented at court would have entree to the Queen's bedchamber.

The little countess received at baptism the unusual name of Marie-Sidonia, which was traditional in the Courcelles family. The Queen, who in her way was fond of lively young Gilberte, drove over to the baptism in person, and besides the customary gifts she gave a tiny Pekinese puppy from her own lapdog's new litter. Mathieu was proud of the honor. Gilberte conceded that the little dog Pompon was amusing and would look pretty enough on her lap or as a plaything for the baby, but the thought of how Fernand would make fun of it spoiled her pleasure. She never took to the puppy.

The Courcelles were staying at Saint-Vigor when the news of Fernand's return became known. Gilberte had a faint hope that he would call on her and was disappointed when he went to Ermenonville without seeing her.

She and Mathieu had been planning to pay a brief visit at Latour in three weeks. Now she declared that her grandfather was longing to see little Marie-Sidonia and that she would like to go at once. Their period of attendance at court was not yet up; Mathieu was dubious. When she insisted he answered, with a bow, would she please go to Latour with the child and he would stay in Versailles to complete his term of duty. This was just what Gilberte had wanted.

Robinet knew his granddaughter to a hair; he understood why she had come early this time. Casually he remarked that Count Brégy

had returned and that in spite of their former disagreement he thought the lad might have paid his respects. Soon afterward, when Fernand still did not come, he remarked that of course there was no reason why they should not drive over to Ermenonville.

Shortly after Fernand's return the Marquis had remarked to him that he saw a good deal of Monsieur Robinet. But Fernand had mastered his feelings and asked no questions about Gilberte. He said nothing even when his father told him that Gilberte was at Latour. But he blushed. Seven years had not taught him to control his features.

His account of the motives that had taken him to the West Indies had been less than half of the truth. Philosophy had been only one of the motives; Hortense de Traversay's presence had been another; but there had been a third, stronger than the other two. He had wished to postpone his return to France, had wanted to put Gilberte to the test, to keep her waiting. If she waited long enough he would, he had decided, forgive her. Now, when he heard that Gilberte was so close by, he realized with painful clarity that he had gambled wantonly and deservedly lost.

Be that as it may, he was not going to crawl. He was not going to run to her after the way he had been humiliated at Latour.

Then what he had feared and perhaps also hoped happened: coming in from a walk he found two visitors in conversation with his father — Monsieur Robinet and Gilberte.

Suddenly he was a boy again. Time had turned back: Jean-Jacques had never been in Ermenonville, Fernand had not gone to America nor had Gilberte married. The Gilberte of yesterday and a week ago had come to visit them with her grandfather, as always without forewarning or formality. And Fernand and Gilberte signaled to each other with their eyes, as they always had, and they knew they would now stand up and leave the elders to themselves.

They did stand up and leave the elders to themselves. They strolled in the gardens.

Presumably they had made conversation inside the house, talked trivialities; presumably they were talking conventional trivialities now also; but if so, they were unaware of it. The first words Gilberte consciously spoke and Fernand consciously heard were, "What have you done to your foot, Fernand? I hope it isn't serious." There was so much tenderness and solicitude in her voice that he blessed the Englishman or Hessian whose bullet had struck him.

He said little. Gilberte did the talking. "You've grown so mature, Fernand," she remarked. "I expected that, and yet it surprises me." And, "Everything is changed, yet not changed," she said. And this, too, was idle talk — or had it a special meaning?

"I had a good many problems to contend with," Fernand said at last. He spoke with an effort; he did not want to be overcome by the feelings of the moment. In the past, Gilberte had not understood his problems; she had never understood or wished to understand him, and he could not help reminding her of it. "Yes, you've rubbed up against the world," Gilberte replied, and her quoting his own words to her both annoyed and flattered him. "And you have had many adventures," she went on, and no one, not even she herself, could have said how much she said in jest, how much in earnest.

"Yes, I've had some remarkable experiences," Fernand replied dryly. "Problems appear quite different in reality from what they do in books." Now he was back on his favorite subject, and he was happy. He spoke about slavery and what Franklin had said on the subject, and the views of Washington and Jefferson, and how the situation was quite different on the French islands from what it was on the mainland of America — simpler and yet more complex. He spoke about ideals and things as they were, and he grew excited and was the old boyish Fernand, and he limped a little and was a wonderful and alarming person.

In Gilberte's presence Fernand had felt all his old feelings for her; alone again he found his way back to reason and his philosophy. Apparently she took it for granted that the past was dead, and was able to enjoy the happiness of the moment. Such simple happiness was denied to him. He could not forget that she had linked herself more closely than ever to that dangerous, irresponsible circle from which he himself had escaped. Today she had no more understanding of him and his world than she had had in the past. She had uttered not a single word of doubt or regret. He had talked himself hoarse trying to explain the problem of slavery to her; she had asked no questions and had shown no interest. He even thought he had detected a tiny smile around her mouth — a hard, unkind smile — and the more he tried to recall what this smile was like, the more spiteful it seemed to him.

Now he knew what he must do. He would go back to Saint-Domingue immediately. He looked forward to his work there and longed for Hortense. He saw Hortense de Traversay now as he had

seen her for the first time in the ballroom of the Governor's residence, saw her come gliding in, tall and slender and so young, her smooth face gleaming with pallor beneath her powdered hair, her shoulders emerging delicately from her bronze-colored gown. The cool way in which she had looked at and through him with her large amber eyes, the way she had asked in her high, mocking voice after his master, Jean-Jacques — all this had captivated and excited him. To be sure, she was insanely proud, this daughter of ancient French and Castilian nobility, but there were times when she intuitively understood him, when she became his Julie, and those sublime hours compensated tenfold for the suffering and gnawing vexation she sometimes caused him. It would be glorious to bring her to France, to show her this wonderful country to which, for all its decadence, the future belonged, to enlighten her in his own and Jean-Jacques's spirit. He would not be such a fool as to lose his Hortense by 'putting her to the test' and needlessly making her wait. He would return to Saint-Domingue. Tomorrow, the day after tomorrow at the latest, he would inform his father that he was going to the West Indies to bring home his bride.

And he would also go to Latour tomorrow and inform Gilberte of his decision. He was not afraid to tell her to her face what he meant to do, that all was over between them and this was farewell forever.

Instead of riding to Latour on horseback he went in a carriage, dressed in his uniform. It was not Fernand going to Gilberte; Count Brégy was formally paying a farewell visit to Madame de Courcelles. He rather expected some awkward moments; he might even be obliged to see Gilberte's child and admire it.

He found a natural, fresh, lovable Gilberte dressed in country clothes. "I hope I don't have to dress up for you, Fernand," she said jokingly, and he felt rather foolish wearing his splendid uniform and his sword. She chattered gaily as she had done in the days when they had been really close. What had given him the idea that she had changed? When she smiled, her smile was not hard and unkind; it was the smile of the *Nouvelle Héloïse* and he felt he had been foolish, blinded by crazy hallucinations.

She talked about the friendship between her grandfather and the Marquis. Girardin was forever dinning into her grandfather's ears that he ought to remodel the gardens at Latour according to his principles. But Monsieur Robinet categorically refused. If he wanted Nature it must be real Nature; if he wanted a park then it must

have yew and box and fountains and geometric flower beds. He would not give a sou for Monsieur de Girardin's imitation Nature. They were always twitting each other, these two old gentlemen, and at the same time they couldn't get along without each other. Gilberte told her story merrily, lightly, but not without sympathy.

She said nothing about her Mathieu or her little Marie-Sidonia or about the Queen and the little dog Pompon. Nor did she ask after his Creole, though naturally she had heard of Mademoiselle de Tra-versay. Nor did she mention past differences.

Fernand listened to her chatter, apprehending less the sense than the sound of her words. But once she said, "Isn't Monsieur Robinet a wonderful man?" and this he caught, understanding at once. It was her delicate way of reproaching him for having left her, and what reproach could have been more delicately put? His heart was heavy, yet elated, for it had learned wisdom. It would really have been better for them both if he had followed Monsieur Robinet's advice and waited until the French expeditionary force left.

But no, that was nonsense. He had had to act as he did. Yet he could not escape the thought of how differently everything would have turned out if he had been more reasonable in those days. Gilberte and Hortense merged in his mind. He rode around his West Indian possessions with Gilberte. She admired the vastness of his estates — they seemed utterly limitless — and she had him explain why he did one thing thus and another thing so. She smiled appreciatively, fondly, with a trace of ironical amusement at his enthusiasm.

When they parted that day they were very close to each other.

He did not speak to his father about leaving. Instead he wrote to Hortense that the situation in France compelled him to stay there for the time being; it might be years before he could return to Saint-Domingue. He wrote cordially, matter-of-factly, as a friend rather than as a lover.

The next time he went to Latour, Gilberte did not receive him alone. Mathieu had arrived. Gilberte, not in the least embarrassed, treated Fernand as her dearest and closest friend. Mathieu, too, accepted him as an intimate friend of the family. Fernand, however, showed uneasiness.

And when little Marie-Sidonia was brought in, and the dog Pompon, Gilberte became a complete stranger to him, one of the ladies of Versailles.

He left Latour profoundly confused. Had he been dreaming when

he was there last? Once more he was shocked by the realization of how greatly the image of the same person could vary in his mind. He could picture all at once a former Gilberte and a later, new and different one, and still another one, and then others, but never these images would merge.

He tried to avoid seeing Gilberte, but he could not help meeting her frequently. Most of the time he was reserved and uneasy with her.

Then again all the emotions of earlier days would overcome him; he would forget Mathieu's existence and would have to remind himself forcibly of all that stood between them.

Gilberte found he had not changed, and even though he tried hard not to have her come too close to him, he had evidently broken with his Creole on her account.

Once, when she was alone with him, the child came in. Marie-Sidonia was, according to custom, heavily and formally dressed in a very grown-up style. Her manner, too, with its doll-like solemnity, had something adult about it. Gilberte noticed that Fernand was regarding the child thoughtfully and remarked that she herself would prefer to rear the child to be noisy and natural as she and Fernand had been. But Mathieu and her grandfather insisted on Marie-Sidonia's being brought up with the stiffness proper to her station; in view of the encroaching disorder and unrest, they said, it was all the more important.

Fernand looked at Gilberte, looked at the child, and said nothing. But Gilberte saw how much he disapproved of her, and the tiny hard smile appeared on her face.

Chapter 8 Whose Jean-Jacques?

SINCE FERNAND'S return, lavish hospitality was once more the order of the day in the Marquis's house. Philosophers, writers, and progressive noblemen visited, as well as most of the 'Americans' — Frenchmen who had championed the cause of the fighters for freedom

in the English colonies. The American Ambassador, Thomas Jefferson, also came several times.

Conversation at Ermenonville chiefly revolved around domestic politics. The finances of France were in a bad way. The two privileged classes, the nobility and the clergy, were not only exempt from taxation but collected for themselves a great part of the taxes in the form of feudal levies, while the majority of the populace of this rich country lived poorly, in fact miserably. Already disturbances had broken out here and there. A fundamental shake-up was needed, a reform of the kingdom root and branch — a revolution.

The free-thinking gentlemen in Monsieur de Girardin's circle of friends regarded a revolution as inevitable. But they believed it would be a peaceful revolution. They already perceived signs of progress on all sides. Enlightened ministers were trying to restrict the prerogatives of the privileged classes; a welcome evolution was going on. The revolution would be in the hands of the philosophers and political scientists; it would come from above. The King himself was well-meaning; liberal advisers would ultimately prevail on him to proclaim a constitution and equal rights for all.

Fernand did not believe this. Practical experience had taught him that halfhearted proposals and cautious regulations could accomplish little against the tenacious opposition of a determined ruling class. The well-meant measures of a few highly placed individuals were not of much use; even the liberal Emperor Joseph could not get far. The feudal system of the kingdom would have to be completely abolished, and this could be achieved only by those who suffered physically and economically from the present system. The fundamental shake-up could come only from below, from the masses, the people.

For centuries the lower classes had fatalistically accepted their misery as something unalterable. But now Jean-Jacques had come along and shown that another social order was perfectly possible. The lower classes had heard about it; they knew Jean-Jacques by name and had a dim idea of his teachings. They were beginning to wake up, to rub their eyes, and when they came wide awake they were going to throw off their oppression. Jean-Jacques's state was coming, but there would not be anything very philosophical about its making.

When Fernand spoke in this way he met with astonished, incredulous looks. Was he in earnest? Was he expecting a bloody revolution such as England had had in the previous century? No, in this en-

lightened France of theirs that sort of thing was impossible, his friends maintained. They would put through the needed revolution peacefully and keep it on the right track.

One night Fernand and his father attended a soiree in Paris given by Madame de Beauvau, widow of the field marshal. Members of the Académie and ladies and gentlemen of the Court were there, and once again the conversation turned on how far the teachings of Voltaire and Jean-Jacques had already been realized. Progress could be seen everywhere; the dawn of an Age of Reason was at hand. "We shall all of us live to see this happy revolution!" someone cried.

Among the guests was a fine-looking elderly man named Cazotte, a respected author who wrote charming narrative poetry. Monsieur Cazotte was a mystic; he believed there were people who could foresee the future and that he was one of them. He had listened silently to the conversation for a while. "Certainly, ladies and gentlemen," he now put in, "you will live to see this great, glorious revolution of yours, but you will not outlive it. Most of you will perish by it, and in a most horrible way." There was laughter. "How could that be, under the guidance of reason and philosophy?" "It will be precisely in the name of philosophy and on the altars of reason that they will sacrifice you," he replied, and in terrifying detail he described how this or that member of the company would perish. "Do you mean to say that Turks and Tartars will rule in France?" someone asked. "By no means," answered Monsieur Cazotte. "The philosophers will rule. The judges who pronounce your sentence will mouth the same maxims that you have been spouting for the past hour. With quotations from Diderot, Rousseau, and Voltaire you will be sent to your deaths." "Enough of these melancholy jests!" the hostess commanded. "Just one more question," one of the guests pleaded. "How will you yourself fare, Monsieur l'Abbé?" he said, turning to Monsieur Cazotte. "You have all read your Josephus," was the reply, "so you surely remember the incident of the man who walks around wailing on the walls during the siege of Jerusalem. For days on end he wails, 'Woe, Jerusalem! Woe is me!' till finally he is felled by a shot from the besiegers." Monsieur Cazotte bowed and departed.

His prognostications were much discussed in Paris and Versailles, and caused considerable amusement. Fernand was not amused. Were all these friends of his blind? Not that he believed in prophecies and things of that sort; like the others he was averse to any form of mysticism and superstition. Yet he and the whole company had been

uncannily affected by Cazotte's words; for all sensed that the man had spoken not only out of a prophet's faith in his intuition. Deeply felt insight into the condition of the country had also inspired him. His words should at least have prompted his hearers to consider the possibility that their own ideas might be wrong. Fernand's friends were so clever; they had studied their philosophers and read their historians, ancient and modern; their arguments were phrased smoothly, elegantly and convincingly. Yet couldn't they see what was under their noses? Could it be that, although they saw the broad picture, they were blind to what was all around them — the wretched, the oppressed, who were beginning to use their minds and were about to fight?

For Fernand it was not a matter of belief. He knew that what was coming could not be channeled like the little brooks at Ermenonville; it would be a great flood which would sweep many to destruction, possibly himself also. But he was prepared to accept the great revolution in whatever form it came, and he wanted to help bring it to pass.

There was no point in arguing with sophisticates about Jean-Jacques's theories; they knew them already. It was a matter of simplifying them, making them comprehensible to the people, getting the people to act by them.

But in order to do that you must share the traits of the people. You had to be one with the masses, one with the people. Fernand had never belonged to the people. Looking back now on the bitter years in the Military Academy he could see what the others had resented in him. There had always been too much inborn aristocratic pride in him. And no matter how chummy he got with the village boys, and no matter how hard he tried, he had always remained Count Brégy, their future seigneur. This last barrier standing between himself and Martin Catrou was never removed.

Only in America, in the army, had things been different. There, during the hard years of the war, in battle, in danger, there had been genuine comradeship between himself and the others.

That he was a stranger among his own people was brought painfully home to him when the Ile-de-France region suffered terrible floods. The gentle little rivulet Nonette became a turbulent river; the gardens of Ermenonville were inundated; water threatened the harvest of peasants and tenants on all the Marquis's estates. The Marquis organized, gave orders, went without sleep, and helped the

peasants by supplying extra hands, implements, and money. Fernand observed with astonishment that they did not appreciate it. The people were unwilling to see that his father was exerting himself almost beyond his strength for their sake. They remained as suspicious as ever: to them the seigneur and his son were strangers.

Oh, if he only could succeed in breaking down the walls which stood between himself and the others! Fernand longed for close contact with the others; he longed for friends, enemies.

He knew about the common people from books, from casual conversations, from shared dangers, and from vague intuitions. But still he knew nothing about them. The common people always reacted differently from what one expected. Fraternity! He must become like the people if he wished to be in truth their brother.

The first step was to get to know them.

By good luck the town of Senlis was seeking a consultant to represent the town in its frequent dealings with the higher authorities and to advise the individual townspeople and peasants of the neighborhood. Fernand volunteered for the position.

The Marquis dropped gentle hints that Fernand might do better to enter the Ministry of Finance or the Ministry of War, where he could be sure of rapid promotion. But since Fernand would not hear of it, Monsieur de Girardin did not press the matter. In fact, he showed that he understood his son's motives. He praised Fernand to his friends as a sincere disciple of Jean-Jacques who was seeking out the common people and preferred the modest affairs of the good little town of Senlis to brilliant court posts.

Fernand took his new job so seriously that he moved to Senlis. He lived there, not in one of the many empty mansions of the nobility, but in an old, unpretentious farmhouse on the edge of the town.

The dignitaries of Senlis — the bishop, the president of the district court, the mayor — were flattered to have the future seigneur of Ermenonville among their fellow citizens. The *beaux-esprits* of the town, its historian, its poet, its gazetteer, all hoped to see him take part in their social life. But his self-appointed profession completely absorbed him. He associated solely with artisans in need of his advice, with peasants, shopkeepers, and clerks. He attempted to help them not only in legal matters but also in the problems of their daily lives. With humility and determination he struggled to win the friendship of the little people.

And in Senlis he met again the friend of his youth, Martin Catrou.

Martin had learned a great deal from Maître Bouvier in Paris. True, he had not been able to obtain an attorney's diploma; he had not been young enough for the long and tedious course of study. In point of fact he was no more than a glorified clerk who knew his way around in the law. But his familiarity with Jean-Jacques's works enabled him to dress his arguments effectively in philosophy, and he was successful in cases where accredited attorneys failed.

He soon acquired the reputation of being one who helped good men to obtain justice in spite of bad laws.

He would advance his arguments firmly, bluntly, in a clear, strident voice. His brusque directness, his reliance on the strength of logic, his inflexible refusal to compromise, soon won him many friends and followers.

Among these was a certain Jeanne Maupetit. Jeanne's father, an obstinate, hardheaded citizen of Paris, had engaged in a dispute with a nobleman, had been defeated and had died in prison. Jeanne was not exactly pretty, but she was efficient and intelligent; her father's fate had taught her philosophy. To her Martin was a man who not only talked about Jean-Jacques's teachings but lived them, and she became his disciple. Her fanatical faith made her beautiful in his eyes. He married her.

Jeanne had been able to salvage some money from her father's misfortunes. Hence Martin was free to accept cases of the oppressed against the privileged where his clients could pay him little or nothing at all.

A certain Sieur Vieillard, citizen of Senlis, to whom Martin had given sound legal advice, urged him to settle in Senlis. The suggestion intrigued Martin. He liked the idea of working in the town which was so familiar to him, where he had lived in obscurity, regarded as one of the least among the people. Settled here, he soon won admiring friends. He was elected to the Town Council.

And there, in the Senlis town hall, Fernand met his friend Martin once again.

Fernand had assumed, of course, that his friend would have changed in the intervening years, yet he was amazed at the mature, broad, solid, confident, experienced Martin who confronted him. It made Fernand feel like an adolescent again. He stared at him. "Is that you, Martin?" he said foolishly. "I believe it is," Martin answered. Grinning, he took stock of Fernand with his dark intelligent, mocking eyes. He noted the keenness of his face, the furrows above his nose, his embarrassment.

Both were delighted to have met each other again, yet mutually suspicious. From the first moment their old relationship was restored, the old friendly enmity.

Fernand also had been taking stock of the other man. Martin was dressed as of old, with exaggerated carelessness. His hair grew low on his broad forehead and was combed down even lower. His whole appearance was militant and rebellious.

"Isn't it odd that we haven't met sooner?" asked Fernand with slightly forced cheerfulness. "So you think that too, Count Brégy?" the other replied in his clear, strident voice. "What's this, Martin?" said Fernand with affectionate reproach. "Why so formal?" Martin observed that Fernand limped slightly as he walked up to him. "Of course," he said, "I know. You've done your bit for us little people meanwhile." But there was warmth behind his mocking words.

"You must come to see me," said Fernand. "We've got much to tell each other. Come to dinner." "May I invite you to visit me?" Martin returned. "My wife would be delighted, I know, and my mother would be glad to see you again too." Fernand had heard of his father's quarrel with the Widow Catrou, and hesitated for a second before he said, "Of course I'll visit you if you would rather have it so." "All right," said Martin, "in that case I'll come to your place tonight."

During Fernand's absence in America, Martin had been eager for every report about him and had rejoiced when he heard something to Fernand's credit. But since Fernand's return to France, Martin had been vexed with him more often than pleased. Everything he did went to prove that he had not learned much in America. What he was up to in Senlis struck Martin as ineffectual dilettantism, pure tomfoolery. But Fernand was born an aristocrat and that was all there was to it; being smart came easier to Martin. He would have to be lenient with his boyhood friend. On the way to Fernand's house he made up his mind to curb his tongue and not to needle Fernand.

At first all went well. But then Fernand began to talk about his clients — artisans and shopkeepers — their troubles and their everyday affairs. He spoke with feeling; he behaved as if he were himself one of the lower class, and this rubbed Martin the wrong way. Here Fernand had been in America and it still had not dawned on him that he had no more place in the world of the common people than a cow in the Académie. Grandfather Popaule and Goodman Michel with whom he was so thick reckoned in sous while he reckoned in louis d'or. A born aristocrat should not try to force himself upon the people.

"It's nice here," said Martin, "and not at all pretentious. I must admit," he went on spitefully, "I was surprised you didn't move into the Palais Lévis." This palace was the family seat of the ancient family of the Dukes of Lévis, and the Lévis were friends of the Girardins. "What on earth would I have done in the Palais Lévis?" asked Fernand, more amused than annoyed. "Well," Martin returned, "the chapel alone would be a daily delight to a nobleman." The chapel contained a thirteenth-century altarpiece representing the then Seigneur de Lévis, who traced his ancestry back to Levi, the third son of the Patriarch Jacob: the Seigneur de Lévis was kneeling before the Blessed Virgin, and she, by means of a scroll issuing from her mouth, was graciously bidding him: "*Couvrez-vous, mon cousin.*"

Fernand laughed good-naturedly. "I know Gaston de Lévis well," he replied, "and I can assure you he makes fun of the altarpiece as much as you and I do." Serious once more he laid his arm across Martin's shoulders and said chidingly, "Why this silly talk? Why are you always baiting me? What have I done to you?" "Nothing but good," said Martin mockingly, trying his best to keep the rancor out of his voice. But red spots appeared on his forehead. "You people have always done nothing but good to me; nothing but charity. First your father showed my mother who was master, but then he turned philanthropic and sent me to Paris to serve my apprenticeship. If I've got anywhere today the seigneur can say he was responsible. He dispenses favors, he lets the light of his countenance shine even upon me. I don't want favors!" he burst out in a strident voice. "I want my rights, the rights I was born with, those your Jean-Jacques talked so much about." Fernand was silent, and Martin went on, "He is not your Jean-Jacques. He has nothing to do with your favors. He has to do with our rights. He belongs to us, Jean-Jacques."

And now Fernand too grew red in the face. He would have liked to tussle with Martin as in the old days, but he did not wish to be hotheaded as his father had been when he took Widow Catrou's shop away from her. "Have you ever realized," he quietly replied, "that you're far prouder of belonging to the people than our sort are of our birth?"

Martin did not take this up. "I thought Jean-Jacques a fool," he admitted. "I made fun of him, and when I think of how he used to wander about Ermenonville like a St. Francis it makes me laugh even today. And the *Nouvelle Héloïse* is trash. You Girardins can keep it, as well as all that 'Nature' of his. The Jean-Jacques who wrote that

belongs to you all right. But the *Inequality* and the *Social Contract* — all that will always be Chinese puzzles to people like you, no matter how much you declaim about them. Only people who come from down below can catch on to that Jean-Jacques. And that, my dear fellow, is why he is *our* Jean-Jacques.”

Martin was annoyed with himself. To be sure, he was right: his friend could no more understand the hard truths of the *Social Contract* than he himself could rave about the emotional moonshine of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, simply because he had always been hungry while all his life Fernand had had his belly full. But this was something he could not explain to Fernand and so ought not to have got involved in the argument. “Tell me about America,” he said, to change the subject. “They say the whole spirit has evaporated and privilege has only changed its name. Tell me about it, please.”

You must not judge what had happened in America by European standards, Fernand began. In America there was no Paris, there were no big cities, the people had no seigneurs to contend with, but Indians and the elements. Moreover, those who had seriously wanted the revolution had been greatly in the minority, at any rate in the early years, and there had been fewer enlightened members of the privileged class than over here. Which only made the victory more significant. That exaltation did not last forever, that greed and petty jealousies crept forth again, was only human, was only natural.

“So you are disappointed,” Martin summed up practically. Fernand hesitated for a moment. Then he said, “Much has been achieved. And it remains a great example.”

By the time they took leave of each other they had talked themselves back to cordiality and were looking forward to their next meeting.

But though they resolved to be patient with one another, they quarreled repeatedly when they had to discuss affairs of the town of Senlis and of individual citizens, and each used words intended to wound the other.

They remained friends, but even the people of Senlis sensed the latent conflict. Martin’s adherents were suspicious of Fernand; Fernand’s adherents were suspicious of Martin.

Fernand labored humbly and unremittingly to win his common people, and soon many saw him not as a capricious protector but as a sincere friend. But those words of Martin’s had bitten deep; there was a kernel of truth in them — more than a kernel. A part of Jean-

Jacques was shut away from him; a part belonged to the 'others,' to the people.

Chapter 9 *The Grievances of the Town of Senlis*

A GREAT RUMBLING passed through the land: the States-General had been summoned for the first time in one hundred and seventy-five years. The government had got itself into such dire financial straits that it no longer dared to draw up a budget without the consent of the people.

The States-General, the *Etats Généraux*, consisted of delegates from the two privileged classes, the nobility and the clergy, and from the Third Estate — the unprivileged bourgeoisie. Now a significant progressive innovation was introduced: the Third Estate was granted a total of as many delegates as the two privileged classes together. Moreover, the delegates were to be elected by popular vote and every tax-paying Frenchman above the age of twenty-five was eligible to vote. For the first time since the Roman Republic gave way to the rule of the Caesars, for the first time in almost two thousand years, a people — and it happened to be the people of the greatest nation of Europe — were going to determine the nature of their economy by their own vote.

A storm of hope swept through the country.

All Communes were accorded the privilege of entrusting their deputies with definite orders, with *cahiers* listing their desires and grievances.

The Town Council of Senlis requested Count Fernand Brégy and Sieur Martin Catrou to draw up its *cahier*.

The two men began to argue at once. Fernand thought he had learned something from his experiences in Senlis. He wanted to stress a sharp presentation of specific abuses. In particular, he wished to

demand in firm language the building of levees along the river Nonette, the abolition of certain highway rights and tolls, and above all, restriction of the royal family's hunting privileges.

Martin smiled at this. He knew all about the Girardins' interminable squabble with the Capitainerie Royale over the Prince de Condé's hunting privileges.

Martin himself did not hope for much from this meeting of the States-General, for all the preliminary fanfare. He took it for granted that concessions in minor matters would be used to buy the consent of the people's deputies to new heavy taxes. Then they would be sent home. The whole business would be a solemn farce, and after it was over the two privileged classes would be as firmly seated as ever on the backs of the Third Estate. But just because he anticipated this, he felt that it would be a shame to waste time on trivialities. Instead, essential reforms must be demanded: the separation of executive and legislative power, and responsibility of the ministers to the people — in short, a binding constitution. Now that the Third Estate for once was being given a chance to speak to the country and to the world, they must all — and especially the small communes — pound away at this basic demand.

After a great deal of contention Martin and Fernand agreed on a text which put the main emphasis upon the demand for a constitution, but which also clamored for the elimination of specific abuses.

The town councilors of Senlis murmured their respect for the logic and eloquence of the memorandum. They had no objection to the impervious tone in which the demand for a constitution was couched; but they exchanged worried looks over the aggressive language describing the Capitainerie Royale's violation of the rights of others. Such a tone might provoke the Prince de Condé into acts of spite, possibly into taking active punitive measures against the town. However Fernand insisted on the wording of his text, and his good friend Martin backed him up. Finally the town councilors requested that both gentlemen sign the *cahier* as acknowledgment of authorship, and it relieved their minds to see the signature of the future seigneur of Ermenonville on the document.

The meeting of the States-General was opened with a magnificent ceremony. It was a fine day in May, and the Parisians had come out to Versailles by the thousands to witness the historic spectacle. In a long procession the Court and the twelve hundred deputies paraded through the gaily bedecked streets of the town to the church of Saint

Louis for divine worship. Reactionary court officials had thought up a petty trick to stress the gulf between the privileged classes and the citizenry: the deputies were required to appear in the ancient costumes of the estates, such as had been worn at the last session a hundred and seventy-five years ago. Consequently the nobles and prelates marched along in old-fashioned costumes made of cloth of gold, silk and brocades, while the citizens wore the simplest sort of dress, topped by black cloaks. But among the representatives of the nobility many well-known liberals were to be seen. There were also a number of 'Americans,' such as Lafayette and some of his friends; and some members of the nobility — Count Mirabeau, for example — were to be found among the deputies of the Third Estate. In permitting themselves to be elected as representatives of the common people these noblemen were publicly proclaiming their opposition to the Court.

The spectators joyfully took this intermingling of the classes as a grand symbol of national unity. Versailles was filled with hope and confidence on that glorious spring day when the King himself, and the Archbishop of Paris, carrying the Host, walked along in the procession in order to sanctify the impending transformation of the kingdom.

Monsieur de Girardin was bursting with joy and pride. This great reformation was taking place as he had always hoped and predicted it would. Not a savage, convulsive uprising of the rabble, but the sound leadership of France's nobility, men of his sort, was going to translate the ideas of Jean-Jacques into reality.

Fernand, however, caught on to the trick of the costume regulations which made the delegates of the Third Estate feel their inferiority, and he was outraged. He could not forget Martin's skeptical insistence that the privileged classes would stop at no dodges and tricks to cheat the people out of their rights. He felt ashamed of his own resplendent ceremonial attire and watched, infuriated, his Gilberte, driving in the Queen's retinue in the stiff, bejeweled gown of a lady-in-waiting, as motley as a meadow full of spring flowers.

But gradually, as he began to sense how the great demonstration of unity was stirring the skeptical citizens of Paris and even the haughty nobles, his doubts began to dissolve. And finally, when in the church of Saint Louis the progressive Bishop of Nancy officially welcomed the delegates, Fernand firmly believed the great undertaking would succeed. In the very presence of the King the Bishop indicted the prevailing system, pointed to the people's abominable misery, and

quoted the words of the Prophet: 'Thou shalt create new people and the face of the earth shall be changed.' And the whole vast assembly — for the first time in the history of France — applauded and cheered in a place of worship, in the presence of the Host and in the presence of the Crown.

The events of the following week appeared to prove Fernand right and confute Martin's skepticism. When the representatives of the privileged orders employed legal tricks to fetter the delegates of the Third Estate, the latter offered resistance; and when the King ordered their dispersal, they bound themselves by a solemn oath not to separate. They declared themselves the National Assembly. The Court and the two privileged orders had to yield.

Fernand exulted.

But very soon he was to experience how powerful the adversary still felt.

For meantime the *cahiers* containing the grievances and petitions of the communes had been examined. The insolent, threatening language employed by the town of Senlis in protesting against the 'excesses' of the Prince de Condé's gamekeepers had infuriated the Prince. Seeing the signature of that disagreeable young fellow Girardin on the document inflamed his anger.

Over a game of cards he told his cousin the King about the outrage. Louis sympathized with De Condé's vexation. Young Girardin had annoyed him more than once. He had no scruples about spouting the seditious doctrines of that libertine Jean-Jacques; even while still a boy he had become an 'American' and run away from home and father. In signing an atrocious petition on behalf of seditious commoners — he had probably even drawn it up himself — he was betraying his own class, fouling his own nest. Moreover, Louis himself was passionately fond of hunting, and what were things coming to if in addition to surrendering so many prerogatives of the Crown he allowed even its hunting privileges to be curtailed? He would give the young gentleman a chance to reflect on his own impertinence a while. He would have the mutinous fellow arrested by letter and seal, by a *lettre de cachet*, a special royal decree, and taken off to the Bastille.

Two days later Monsieur Robinet and his family turned up at Ermenonville. The old gentleman, who had his agents everywhere, informed the Girardins that the King, at De Condé's instigation, had had an order issued for Fernand's arrest. Fernand probably had no

more than a few hours in which to escape.

The Bastille rose up before Fernand, its massive walls and towers, grim and gray. While danger and hardships held no terrors for him he was nevertheless afraid of the helpless life in those dreary dungeons so full of centuries of accumulated anguish. And he thought of Martin; he pictured Martin's face wearing a wry look of mingled mockery and pity.

All eyes were turned on Fernand. Everyone waited.

The Marquis was terribly alarmed. He was eager to order the carriage out and drive his son over the border himself. But he knew his Fernand's obstinacy, knew that entreaties and good advice were of no avail. He conquered his feelings and said nothing.

But then Monsieur Robinet spoke for him. "Take an old man's advice," he said. "Take your best horse and be off. It does no one any good for you to stay; you only harm yourself. It may be a long time before freedom is won, and it isn't very agreeable to sit and wait for it in the Bastille."

Fernand remembered how Monsieur Robinet had advised him once before. The old man had been right then, and yet he had been wrong. And that was how it was now, too.

"If I were you," Mathieu surprisingly urged him, "I would not dismiss Monsieur Robinet's advice." The effort it cost him to say this was apparent; it meant something when a brave man like Count Courcelles, so particular in matters of honor, advised anyone to run away.

Gilberte said nothing, only kept her eyes fixed on Fernand. He knew she would think it foolish of him to stay, but that she would certainly be disappointed if he fled. Martin's reaction would be similar. Martin would be scornful if he stayed and more scornful still if he went. And was not Martin in just as much danger as Fernand himself? Martin was probably on the way to some safe place already. But he would grin and say, "A Martin Catrou may do things which a Count Brégy may not do."

Fernand thanked his friends for their advice and said he would think it all over.

An hour later an agitated Monsieur Gerber came timidly to him. After several false starts the tutor said that he knew his dear pupil Fernand was still ruled entirely by his heart. But he would like to point out that Jean-Jacques would certainly have urged him to hasten beyond the reach of despotism. More than once Jean-Jacques had

been in the same plight as the one Fernand now was in and had regarded flight and exile as martyrdom enough. Fernand warmly pressed his tutor's hand.

He stayed on in Ermenonville and waited for the bailiffs to bring the warrant for his arrest, the *lettre de cachet*.

Chapter 10 *Jean-Jacques's People*

THE LETTRE DE CACHET of the tenth of July decreeing the arrest of Fernand de Girardin was the last privy warrant which Louis signed and sealed, and it was never carried out. For on the fourteenth of July the Bastille to which Fernand was to be consigned was stormed by the people of Paris.

A tremendous shout of jubilation rang through the country and throughout the world.

Girardin went to the grave of his Jean-Jacques. Gently, overcome by emotion, he told him of the tremendous event: "You have won, Jean-Jacques! The bastion of tyranny has fallen. The General Will, your *volonté générale*, has smashed the shackles of ten centuries. The people have taken their fate into their own hands as you taught that they should and predicted that they would, my friend and Master."

The King's brothers, the Prince de Condé, the reactionary nobles, numerous prelates, and the conservative ministers of the Crown fled across the border. A Te Deum was sung in the church of Notre Dame. At Lafayette's suggestion the red and blue of the City of Paris were added to the white of the royal lilies, the old color of the country, and the red, white, and blue cockade became the token of the new progressive France, the King had to yield to the people's insistence and leave his palace in Versailles and move to the capital. There he stood on the balcony of the Hôtel de Ville, his hat decorated with this same tricolored cockade, and reluctantly showed himself to the cheering Parisians.

One single, powerful emotion now united the whole country, the tempestuous emotion of Jean-Jacques.

In the town of Senlis, Fernand, whom the liberation of the country had rescued from his personal danger, was fetched from his house by a torchlight procession. Another procession fetched Martin. A small platform had been set up in the cathedral square. There Monsieur Milliet, the town poet, made a speech. "Descendant of an ancient noble house," he cried, "with your whole heart and all your fortune you have joined with us, the people." Then he handed him the tricolored cockade, saying, "Friend and pupil of Jean-Jacques, your virtue and your patriotism make you worthy to wear it." Martin was brought to the platform and also hailed, and the two of them were made to embrace each other while the people cheered.

Event crowded on event. In solemn session the National Assembly proclaimed the rights of man to be the foundation of the new France. The feudal system was abolished. Monasteries were seized, ecclesiastical property secularized. A National Guard was organized under the command of Lafayette. The King was forced to stay in Paris with his family.

Elation and confidence reigned, and the spiritual fathers of the revolution were not forgotten. For the Encyclopedists, Voltaire was the moving spirit of the new era; the common people celebrated their Jean-Jacques. Of the millions who honored him as their patron saint, many had not read a page of his books; what stirred their emotions were the rousing slogans he had coined and the inspiring saga of his life and work.

A new pilgrimage to Ermenonville began. There appeared once more that student from Arras, Maximilien Robespierre. After being graduated with honors he had gone into law practice in his home town. He had attracted attention by his political and literary achievements; the town had elected him to its academy, and the province of Artois had sent him as its deputy to the National Assembly. Now he stood at the grave of his idolized Master, his body rigid with the fierceness of his resolve, and promised Jean-Jacques to turn his principles into practice. "To the last, to the last," he vowed.

Another who came to Ermenonville to visit the grave was Baron Grimm. The Marquis could not deny himself the pleasure of twitting the Baron in a friendly way. Monsieur de Grimm and the Encyclopedists had called Jean-Jacques's work confused and contradictory, and now these 'irrational' writings had borne fruit on a vaster scale than those of any other philosopher. "I am the last person to dispute our friend's historic achievement," answered Monsieur de Grimm.

"But is it not the very inconsistency of his principles which attracts the people? His incoherent picture of the weaknesses and inequalities of bourgeois society plays on the emotions; the inert masses are more easily stirred by an appeal to their feelings than to their reason. I only hope," he concluded on a serious and challenging note, "that they will remember Voltaire before it is too late. Voltaire's example alone can prevent excess of emotion from turning Jean-Jacques's freedom into anarchy."

It appeared that the deputies in the National Assembly shared the views of Monsieur de Grimm. Thirteen years after the old regime had denied Voltaire burial in Paris, the National Assembly now decided to exhume the great man's body from the obscure spot where it was buried and transfer it to the Panthéon, the temple of fame.

Girardin heard of this decision with divided feelings. Of course it was gratifying that the desecration of the dead Voltaire should be rescinded, but he could not stand idly by and see such an honor overshadow the reputation of his own Jean-Jacques. He acquired stone blocks from the ruins of the Bastille, and on one of the stones had a portrait of the Master carved in relief with the inscription: "The Creator of Liberated France." He presented this portrait to the National Assembly. To his great satisfaction, the relief was assigned the place above the speaker's tribune, the best place in the chamber.

In any case Monsieur de Grimm's sour admonition did nothing to mar Girardin's pride and pleasure. With all his heart he embraced the rule of freedom and equality. He was not disturbed at having to surrender cherished rights. When the nobility was abolished he deleted his titles and dignities from the official register with his own hand and applied for permission to discard his aristocratic baptismal name René-Louis and substitute the name Émile — after the title of his great friend's great novel, of course.

So it was no longer the Marquis René-Louis, but Citizen Émile Girardin who henceforth made the rounds of his park followed by superintendents and gardeners; and it was no longer the seigneur but Citizen Girardin, property-owner and farmer, who gave advice to his citizen-tenants. The advice, however, still sounded like commands and was underlined from time to time by imperious gestures with the long, flexible cane.

As a matter of fact Girardin now spent far less time in Ermenonville; frequently he went to Paris. There, in his town house, he assembled his friends around him. And he attended many meetings

of the great political clubs. He was most often to be seen in the Rue Honoré, where one of these clubs met in the former church of the Dominicans, or the Jacobins, as they were commonly called.

At Girardin's suggestion a poplar from Jean-Jacques's burial place — a tree of liberty — was planted in the courtyard of this Jacobin Club. The Jacobin Club soon became the most influential political society in Paris, and it was here that Girardin expounded to the new statesmen the doctrines which Jean-Jacques himself had personally confided and explained to him. Girardin stood stiffly at attention on the platform in front of the bust of Jean-Jacques and the tricolor. He spoke with authority; he was Jean-Jacques's representative, the *Præceptor Galliae*.

He made two long speeches in addition to many shorter ones. The first dealt with the reorganization of the army. He was hard put to it to find quotations from Jean-Jacques suitable for his technical disquisitions; the result was something to be proud of. It was the speech of an expert, a philosopher, and a revolutionary. And the Jacobins were impressed. They applauded vociferously; what was more, they decided to send copies of the speech to all departments, municipalities, and patriotic societies for wider distribution.

Encouraged by this success, Girardin worked out his second speech with even greater care. It dealt with the *volonté générale*, the General Will. Girardin explained that the General Will was the fundamental principle of Jean-Jacques's political theory, and therefore he demanded that every bill should be submitted to the people and should become law only when it had been approved by a referendum. It was a well-grounded, well-formulated speech, with every thesis conclusively proved by citations from Jean-Jacques. But this time the Jacobins remained cool. Citizen Girardin's proposals for the reorganization of the army had been practical, had made sense; but what he had to say this time was anemic theory, and if the principles of Jean-Jacques were to be interpreted in such a pedantic and hair-splitting way the revolution was done for. They listened to the speech politely and proceeded with the order of the day.

Girardin was worried. For some time now he had been forced to note that the deputies were deviating from Jean-Jacques's idea. Someone had to remind them of the Master's great principles, and he was certainly the logical person. But they had listened to him as if he were any Dupont or Durant.

In fact, as time passed the legislators departed even further from

the pure doctrine. Jean-Jacques had expressly declared that nothing in the existing order should be altered without necessity, nothing unnecessarily added or subtracted. But the deputies, with savage zeal, were needlessly turning everything upside down.

Sorrowfully Girardin sat under the willow tree and gazed across the water at the grave. What could he do? It was no use to talk to the masses — that much he realized. So he addressed himself to individuals, to the leaders, exhorting them to moderation, reminding them of the General Will. They made some vague reply; no one paid any attention to his advice. He felt like a tedious schoolmaster; for the sake of his past services they listened to what he had to say, but they did not take him seriously.

He withdrew from the clubs and the public meetings. He set to work to expand his speech into an elaborate textbook, *On the Necessity for the Ratification of Laws by the General Will*. With Monsieur Gerber as his audience he indulged in bitter accusations against the Jacobins and plunged more deeply than ever into the study of Jean-Jacques.

He shut himself off from the world.

Chapter 11 Fly Over the World, Tricolor!

UNLIKE HIS father Fernand found the National Assembly's measures anything but radical. The representatives of the people struck him as timid; to his mind they were not proceeding rapidly or energetically enough.

Why were the laws still promulgated from the Tuileries, by the King? Why did the King still have so much actual power — when all the time it was common knowledge that, if not Louis himself, the Queen and her advisers were certainly conspiring with foreign courts against the National Assembly?

And why did the people's representatives not introduce any serious reforms in the colonies? Why did they limit themselves to vague proclamations of sympathy for the natives of both the Indies?

Again and again, in the midst of the tremendous events in Paris, Fernand's thoughts turned to Saint-Domingue. Not only for reasons of political philosophy, nor because he was worried about the estates he owned there. Rather the memory of Hortense was warm and strong in him again, more so than for some time past. Her family would speak with scorn and hatred of what was happening here in Paris. Would Hortense remember him and what he had said to her? Would she understand what was going on? Wouldn't she, too, think him ridiculous?

Perhaps he *was* ridiculous with his hopes and dreams of the happy consequences of the revolution for his beloved island of Saint-Domingue. When the National Assembly had solemnly proclaimed the rights of man he had been sure the tricolor would now fly over French America too, and that the colored people who constituted by far the greater part of the population of Saint-Domingue, those noble savages, who were more than all others the object of Jean-Jacques's love and care, would be freed from their slavery and disfranchisement. Yet nothing had happened.

True, a league had been formed in Paris for the emancipation of the colored people, the Société des Amis des Noirs, and many men of influence and importance had joined it. But the owners of the big plantations and other rich gentlemen who owned property in Saint-Domingue maintained an extremely active agency in Paris, the Comité Colonial, which proved to be both shrewd and successful. The members of the Comité warned against radical laws, kept hammering home to the deputies that emancipation of the colored people would make the Negroes masters of Saint-Domingue, and that the Spanish and English would not tolerate this but would annex the whole island. Cleverly and convincingly presented, these arguments had not failed to make an impression. The National Assembly was fully occupied with reforms in the motherland. To be sure, it declared in vague language that human rights were applicable to all, but when the Governor of Saint-Domingue asked for specific directives regarding the status of the colored people, the Assembly gave such ambiguous answers that everything remained as it was.

Fernand was pained by this halfheartedness.

He had become friendly with Louis-Michel Lepeletier, former Marquis de Saint-Fargeau, who was a member of the executive committee of the National Assembly. Lepeletier was only slightly older than Fernand. With an annual income of over six hundred thousand

livres he was one of the richest men in the country. In spite of this he believed fervently in the tricolor and spoke ardently for the revolution. He himself had introduced the law abolishing the nobility; he had played a prominent part in the introduction of the civil constitution for the clergy, which was being violently opposed by the Vatican; he sponsored every radical reform.

Michel Lepeletier was slightly built and had an unforgettable face: a very sloping brow, a wide, thin mouth, and large, shining blue eyes above a powerful aquiline nose. He was a lover of the arts, at home with the sciences, receptive to everything new. An excellent jurist and at an early age presiding judge of the tribunal in his province, he was unequalled in the clear and logical drafting of complicated laws and ordinances.

In his way of life he remained the great nobleman. He kept a luxurious establishment in Paris with a large number of servants, prized elegant clothes and choice cuisine, had ambitious plays performed on the private stage in his palace. The people usually resented such behavior on the part of the '*ci-devants*,' the former nobles; but the Parisians loved their Lepeletier, and when he drove to the National Assembly in his magnificent carriage they cheered him on his way.

Strangely enough, in the case of Michel Lepeletier, Fernand too was attracted by the aristocratic manner which repelled him in others — perhaps because Michel combined the elegance and delicately ironical wit of the aristocrat with a fanatical belief in progress and a fierce drive to put the revolutionary ideas into practice.

Lepeletier's entire circle fascinated Fernand. Above all he was fascinated by Lepeletier's mistress, Eugénie Maillart, the same graceful actress who had once shed tears at Jean-Jacques's grave. She was still a devoted follower of Jean-Jacques and supported the new order. But Mademoiselle Maillart, whose enchanting gaiety was an ornament of the Théâtre français did not care at all for the talk of virtue, simplicity, austerity. She heartily disliked the many sober-minded, drearily shabby tribunes in the National Assembly. To her the revolution meant her Michel Lepeletier, who combined the democratic fire of the new regime with the wit and grace and elegant refinement of the old.

Fernand had been having fleeting affairs with pretty women. It was more than a passing mood which attracted him to Eugénie Mail-

lant, but he knew that with all her heart she loved her clever, ugly, vital, lovable Lepeletier.

Fernand went to his friend Michel with his worries about the West Indies.

Michel explained to him that there was no sense in enacting an unequivocal law emancipating the Negroes, for such a law could be put into effect only by force, and what troops they had were needed in the homeland. "So the cause of the colonies must be betrayed!" Fernand said grimly. Michel put a hand on his shoulder. "Don't be so impetuous," he said. "We can't emancipate the Negroes just now. But I have often asked myself whether we couldn't at least grant equality to the half-breeds, the mulattoes. So far, however, the citizen legislators have not taken to the idea. Monsieur Robinet and his Comité Colonial are too powerful." An idea struck him. "Aren't you a close friend of Monsieur Robinet's?" he asked. "If he withdrew his opposition we could get the law through. Go to him. Put it to him that in the long run he won't be able to prevent the emancipation of the colored people. Promise him, in my name, that if he doesn't stand in the way of our bill for the half-breeds we will leave him undisturbed for a long time so that he can exploit his blacks for the rest of his life. He is no longer young."

Fernand disliked his friend's opportunism, and the idea of chaffering with Monsieur Robinet was repellent to him.

Strangely enough Monsieur Robinet, who belonged to the privileged and ruling class by virtue of his vast wealth, had supported the revolution. The overturn, he had volubly explained to Fernand, had merely given visible form to a reality already well established. For some time the *haute bourgeoisie*, the upper middle class, had been the real rulers. Of course the nobles had their privileges and strutted about in the foreground with their grand titles; but behind the scenes those commoners who had won riches by their own talents determined the destinies of the state, and the key public offices were occupied by men of the bourgeois intelligentsia. Now the men of privilege had been put to rout and the bourgeoisie had assumed power in name also — that was all.

Fernand was disgusted by this cynical and one-sided interpretation of the great event. But Lepeletier was a judge of human nature; he had frequent dealings with people like Robinet, and his advice was good. However distasteful approaching Robinet might be, Fernand felt he ought to do it.

Monsieur Robinet had closed his imposing palace in Paris and moved into an apartment in an unpretentious house. From this point of vantage he conducted transactions which were both far-reaching and somehow obscure. He acquired properties confiscated from the clergy and the emigré nobility, signed contracts with the quartermasters of the new and ever growing French army to supply provisions, uniforms, and weapons.

In the plain office in Monsieur Robinet's town apartment, now the son of one of France's oldest noble families negotiated with one of the richest commoners in the country the fate of the colored population of Saint-Domingue.

Monsieur Robinet listened to Fernand attentively. Then, shaking a finger at him, he said, "What a sly fellow you are, my dear Count. But the lamb isn't going to catch the wolf this time. 'We're only asking one small concession,' you say. 'All we're asking is the franchise for a few thousand mulattoes.' But you know perfectly well that if you serve *café au lait* you must be prepared to serve it black as well, and if we emancipate the half-breeds today, we'll have the Negroes demanding their turn tomorrow. No, no, my dear Count, nothing doing. If we give an inch we may as well shut up shop, and France has kissed her colonies good-bye."

Fernand sat in gloomy silence. "Now of course you think I'm a stubborn reactionary," Monsieur Robinet went on. "But you do me an injustice. I am prepared to compromise. I'm no more reactionary than your famous liberty-lovers of the Congress in Philadelphia. We too are willing to grant the colored people their rights, but just like the gentlemen in British America, not until the turn of the century, not until the next century." He paused pensively, and all at once, in spite of his fresh, rosy face, looked very old and wise. "Yes, yes, the rights of man," he mused. "Oh, they're a fine thing, the rights of man, but they'll have to bide their time in Saint-Domingue. By the way," he went on in a more animated voice, "the silver lining on the horizon, by which I mean the prospect for human rights in the next century, is making property in the West Indies a risky investment. I'm busy disposing of my plantations right now. My advice to you is to do the same, Count Brégy. I'd be glad to do anything I can to help you." Fernand thanked him dryly, hostilely, and left.

A delegation of mulattoes from Saint-Domingue arrived in Paris to plead the cause of the half-breeds before the National Assembly. The deputation was led by the lawyer Vincent Ogé, himself a half-

breed. Fernand had met Ogé in Cap Français at the Cercle des Philadelphes and knew him to be an intelligent, well educated, forceful man.

The Société des Amis des Noirs was supporting Ogé vigorously. But he and his companions were fobbed off by the representatives of the people with empty promises, and nothing was done.

At Fernand's instigation Lepeletier invited Ogé to dine. Only Michel, Fernand, and Mademoiselle Maillart were present. Lepeletier urged Ogé to speak his mind frankly, and it was strange to see the naïve, rather clumsy mulatto passionately holding forth about democracy and the plight of his people in this elegant company, while lackeys ceremoniously served the choicest foods.

Lepeletier presented a bill to the Assembly which without shilly-shallying granted equal rights to the mulattoes, though not to Negroes. He did so with a heavy heart, he told Fernand, for he feared that even this reform would result in bloodshed. The bill was passed.

The Marquis de Traversay wrote in alarm to Fernand, urging him to detain the mulatto Ogé in Paris. If Ogé returned to Cap Français, De Traversay wrote, and if he and his mulattoes invoked this absurd 'equality of rights' and tried to vote in the elections, the white population would oppose them with violence.

Ogé himself had received threatening letters, but he was determined to go back. He was looking forward to the fight.

Fernand escorted him to his ship. Ogé took with him a flag of the new France, a present from the Société des Amis des Noirs. "I'm taking the tricolor over with me," he said. "And even if the white rabble shoot it to ribbons or burn it, and me with it — I saw it flying."

Full of hope and anxiety, Fernand waited for news from Saint-Domingue. When it came, it was not what he had hoped but what Robinet had predicted and Lepeletier had feared. All over the island on election day the whites had attacked the mulattoes, killing thousands of them. Ogé fled to the hills and organized an armed uprising of the colored people. The well-trained white militia defeated his following. Ogé himself took refuge in the Spanish part of the island.

Worse was to come. Invoking an old treaty, the Spaniards surrendered Ogé to the French planters, who cruelly maltreated him and had him tried by a so-called court-martial. He was sentenced to death, and his execution was made the occasion of a public holiday. From all over the island, men, women, and children came to cheer as they watched the mulatto being broken on the wheel with protracted

refinements of grisly torture, 'as an example to the Negroes.' A member of the Cercle des Philadelphes wrote to Paris: 'Since the execution of Damiens, who tried to murder Louis the Fifteenth, Frenchmen have not indulged in such a hideous spectacle.'

Fernand was in Ermenonville when the news came. In helpless fury he rode over to Latour. He found Robinet with Gilberte and Mathieu. "There you are," he threw at him. "This is what you and your Comité Colonial have done."

Monsieur Robinet answered coolly that the National Assembly was to blame for the violence and bloodshed inasmuch as it had passed the foolish decree despite the warnings of the Comité. "What I'm afraid of now is that in Paris they'll commit more inanities and try to enforce the law instead of repealing it. If that happens, everything will go to pieces over there. You ought to have sold out in time, my dear Count. Now I fear our day is done in the West Indies."

"You are the last person who ought to scoff at me," said Fernand wildly. Monsieur Robinet shrugged his shoulders. "I wrote to Cap Français today," he answered, "urging moderation. But letters have no effect. You have close and powerful friends on the island, my dear Count. You have influence. Go over there. See what you can achieve in person." And with offensive mockery he concluded, "I foresee a black future for our friends."

Monsieur Robinet's shallow taunts struck home. More than once Fernand had considered going to Saint-Domingue. He had heard from Hortense. In her childish script she wrote that she was sad not to be able to talk with him about the ugly happenings on the island; everyone had a different opinion, and she herself no longer knew what to think. She was frightened; she longed to have him near. Monsieur Robinet's words aroused in him a new and violent desire to go back to Hortense. To be sure, the storm that was breaking over their heads in Saint-Domingue was the outcome of their own conceit and stupidity. But could he leave Hortense in danger because her father was a stiff-necked aristocrat?

Gilberte was watching him attentively. He thought he could detect that tiny smile on her face. "You are right, monsieur," he said, and drew himself up. "I shall go to Saint-Domingue."

Robinet was startled. He had not expected to be taken seriously. The fool was quite capable of sailing off to that hell, and then what a dance his Gilberte would lead him! "It was only a silly joke, of course," he said hastily. "You couldn't do a thing there. You would

only endanger yourself and confuse matters still more. Stay here in France. Try to persuade Lepeletier and his friends not to pull any more blunders in the National Assembly. That is the best thing you can do to help your friends in Saint-Domingue."

In Paris, Fernand observed with grim satisfaction that Ogé had achieved in death what he had been unable to achieve in life. Paris was aroused by the events in the West Indies. The Amis des Noirs held large meetings. Pictures of the martyr Ogé and his horrible end were displayed everywhere. A play was written about his noble life and shameful death, and successfully staged.

Without much urging by Fernand, Lepeletier procured the passage of a bill considerably extending the rights of the colored people.

Fernand wished ardently that the National Assembly would send him to the West Indies to put the new law into execution. But when he suggested this, Lepeletier immediately and categorically refused. The law, he explained, was simply intended as a warning to the aristocratic planters; it was purely academic and could not be enforced without an army.

"Send me over, Michel!" Fernand pleaded unreasonably. "I wouldn't think of it," Lepeletier answered. "I won't let you go to your death. A man like you would only make things worse. What we need over there is a hardheaded politician, not a philosopher."

Fernand was crushed: after all he had been through, his friend's still thinking of him as a boy and a dreamer was like a slap in the face. "And in the National Assembly you described the lot of the colored people with a sympathy worthy of Jean-Jacques," Fernand said bitterly. "I wanted to get the law enacted," Lepeletier patiently explained, "I never believed it could be enforced."

"I am going to Saint-Domingue, unofficially if necessary!" Fernand persisted with childish obstinacy.

"Be reasonable!" Lepeletier said. "You know yourself your impulse to go isn't only due to grief over Ogé, or to mere philosophy either. You're thinking of that girl you courted over there. Don't go in for hollow gallantry! Don't travel thousands of miles and expose yourself unnecessarily to danger to stand by a lady who can certainly escape more easily without your 'help,' and who has in all probability reached safety long ago. Don't be such a *ci-devant*, Fernand!" he concluded, emphasizing every word.

Fernand felt he was being ridiculed, but he also sensed that Michel was right, right in a much deeper sense than Monsieur Robinet. And

yet he rebelled emotionally against the 'cowardice' that was expected of him.

Mademoiselle Maillart entered the room. "Our friend is unhappy," Michel informed her, "because I won't let him go and be killed in the West Indies." He had noticed how deeply his words had wounded Fernand, and decided to tell him now the news that he had meant to keep till later. "Soon, Fernand," he consoled him, "you will have the opportunity to influence the destiny of Saint-Domingue here in Paris much more decisively than you could over there."

Fernand looked blank. "He doesn't understand," Michel told Mademoiselle Maillart with a smile. "He is too modest." Then he explained: "You know there will be a new election shortly, and Eugénie thinks that in the new legislative assembly there ought to be room not only for virtuous commoners but also for a few *ci-devants* who cherish the new ideals but who speak and think with the old good grammar and logic and act with the old good manners." Fernand had risen, too moved to speak, and Michel went on, "Yes, my friends and I have suggested putting you up as a candidate and, my dear Citizen Girardin, I am sure you will be elected deputy."

Fernand had blushed deeply with surprise and joy. He felt pride that, in spite of everything, his friend thought him fit to be one of the legislators. But he was even more deeply moved by another consideration. Michel would not have proposed him without being sure he was acceptable to the people, that his activities in Senlis had won their confidence. Fernand could not have imagined a finer compliment. The people did not reject him; they accepted him as a brother.

"What do you think, Eugénie?" Michel asked the actress. "Our Fernand will make a good legislator, will he not?" "Oh, excellent," Mademoiselle Maillart smilingly replied. "A man of flesh and blood among all these Brutuses or Lycurguses."

Chapter 12 *Loyalty, but to Whom?*

SENSATIONAL NEWS spread all over the country: the King had attempted to flee, he and his family, under a false name and using forged passports. He had tried to reach the northeastern frontier intending to return triumphantly to Paris at the head of foreign troops and to drive out the National Assembly. But his flight had been a ludicrous failure. The patriotic postmaster of a tiny village had recognized the King from his portrait on the banknotes, and with the help of a few other worthy citizens had promptly detained the carriage. Patriotic virtue had frustrated the schemes of the *ci-devants*. Louis had been brought back to Paris, and now he and his family were literally being held captive in the Tuileries. Sentries were posted all over the palace, even outside the bedchambers of the King and Queen.

This tremendous event widened the breach between the citizens of the old and of the new France. The many who had not yet made up their minds now had to take a stand. Did they owe loyalty to the nation, or to the King who, for selfish motives, had planned to open the country's gates to the enemy?

The former Count Courcelles was among those who now found themselves up against this thorny problem. Mathieu was progressive; he had welcomed the summoning of the States-General and the storming of the Bastille and he had condemned the behavior of those of his peers who had fled across the border. They had betrayed their country and left their King in the lurch. But when the King was compelled to sanction actions which he clearly disapproved of, and was forced even to commit them himself, Mathieu began to see the émigrés' point of view. They were right, the King *had* been overpowered; not the people, but a pack of ambitious malcontents, had taken over the government of France. Every court in Europe was actively aiding the émigrés who were assembling at the frontier, on the German side of the Rhine, at Coblenz. A large

army was being equipped to enforce the restoration of the absolute monarchy in France.

And now the King had tried to take his place at the head of the émigrés; he had given them and their aspirations his approval. Mathieu's was a calm temperament, but his blood boiled at the thought that the will of the Most Christian King had been frustrated by a petty postmaster. One of the rabble had been able to force the ruler of the world's oldest kingdom to turn back ignominiously.

Pathetic details of the King's return journey came out. He and his family had had to drive slowly along dusty roads in the terrible heat, slowly and yet more slowly, and from far and wide crowds had come to stare at the King who had tried to betray his people. Paris had sent officials to escort him. They crowded into the cramped space of his coach, and the King and Queen had to swallow the dust of the roads and breathe the sweaty exhalations of their guards and listen to the abuse of onlookers. An enormous crowd awaited the King's arrival in Paris. The National Guards were drawn up in a double line; they stood at attention with arms reversed as at a funeral. There was a portentous silence, for it had been announced that anyone cheering the King would go to the pillory; anyone abusing him, to prison.

Mathieu could imagine how the proud and beautiful Queen must have suffered from these humiliations. It was said that her hair had turned white during the four days of their pitiful return journey.

What should Mathieu do? Since his wife was the granddaughter of the influential Robinet, who was on good terms with the deputies, he was hardly in any personal danger if he stayed in the country. If he left France, however, he was no better than a beggar; by law his and Gilberte's properties would be confiscated. There were many bitter tales of the émigrés' wretchedness and their beggar's pride. And once he crossed the border he could not return to France on pain of death.

But could he stay here? Had he not sworn allegiance to his King? Was it not his duty to join the army of émigrés who were preparing to restore the King to his rights?

Escaping from France had been difficult enough before, but now the frontier guards had been reinforced. Flight with Gilberte and the child would be risky. Mathieu wavered. But he concealed his thoughts and doubts from Gilberte, intending to decide the problem for himself.

Monsieur Robinet, however, read his mind.

Monsieur Robinet himself had no intention of leaving France. He felt secure, and it would be a shame to abandon his prosperous business affairs. On the other hand the failure of the King's attempted escape showed that not only Paris but all France was on the side of the revolutionaries. The other crowned heads of Europe would have to recognize that fact. They would have to take steps to protect themselves against the fate of their cousin Louis. A war between democratic France and the absolute monarchs of Europe was consequently unavoidable, and Monsieur Robinet wanted to play it safe in this war. So he hoped Mathieu would side with the émigrés. For in case of a revolutionary victory Monsieur Robinet would have to his credit his loyalty in sticking it out at home; in case the Royalists won he could point to the fact that his granddaughter's husband had helped fight for this victory.

Naturally he did not mention any of these considerations to Gilberte. But he did tell her that after the recent events he would fully understand it if Mathieu joined his friends outside the country.

Gilberte herself had been aware that her husband was deliberating some such plan.

She had honestly done her best to decide where she herself stood in relation to the happenings of the past two years. Many things repelled her, but then again the force of events and perhaps also Fernand's passionate enthusiasm had swept her along. When she talked to Mathieu about public affairs, which she seldom did, she could not help noticing how much of Jean-Jacques's philosophy she had made her own in spite of all her mocking. Moreover she herself came from the people; she knew from experience how hard a life without privileges was. It did her heart good to see that the artificial walls between the classes had been broken down, that the whole nation was One People. From time to time, of course, she felt ridiculous. For, renouncing her dearest wish, she had embarked on the adventure of this marriage in order to acquire privileges for herself and her child, and no sooner was this achieved than privileges were wiped out and little Marie-Sidonia was a 'citizen' like any other. It was remarkable how Providence had thumbed its nose at her and how in the end the fool's wisdom of old Jean-Jacques had been justified. The King's recent flight and capture had greatly excited her. She felt a rather quizzical affection for the slow, good-natured King and his pretty, amiable Marie Antoinette who possessed all the

qualities which Fernand abhorred. And if the people treated even the King and Queen so rudely, what risks might not Mathieu, the child, and she herself be running? Not only had she lost her privileges, she was again one of the disfranchised.

She had turned the matter over and over in her mind. Though not timid, she did not wish to see Mathieu and the child exposed to needless suffering. On the other hand she was reluctant to leave the country and run away from the great events. Fernand would rightly regard her as weak and fainthearted.

So when Monsieur Robinet advised flight she took her time before answering. "If Mathieu suggests emigrating," she said at last, "you will come with us, of course, won't you, Grandfather?"

This was not at all what Monsieur Robinet had in mind. He had been dreaming of having Gilberte and the child to himself without the chilly presence of Mathieu. "I said nothing about myself, dear child," he said, "nor about you and Marie-Sidonia."

"I shouldn't think of letting Mathieu go alone," Gilberte answered promptly and defiantly.

"I *would* think of it, my child," Monsieur Robinet said kindly. "If Mathieu goes, he goes to war — you must realize that. And it's no longer the custom, nor is it advisable, for women to follow their men into battle." He put it bluntly: "If he feels obliged to cross the Rhine then if I were you I would neither hinder him nor offer to go with him." "You mean I am to let him go alone?" Gilberte repeated incredulously. "He himself could scarcely ask anything else of you," Robinet answered. "To cross the frontier with a woman and a small child is a difficult and dangerous business."

Shortly afterward Mathieu did in fact suggest leaving France. Though prepared for this question, Gilberte, normally so staunch and steady, was thrown into confusion. Marie-Sidonia was in the room. Well-behaved in her grown-up clothes, she went up and down the room pulling a toy lamb behind her. "I can understand your wanting to join the army, Mathieu," Gilberte said at last. "But what is to become of us — of me and the child?" He looked at her uncomprehendingly; it had never occurred to him that she could let him go by himself. She added, "Dare we expose the child to the danger of crossing the frontier?"

Her words had a ring of uncertainty, and Mathieu knew that her argument was half pretext. He looked at her with more sadness than

reproach. For all his love and faithful devotion, he realized, he had been unable to win her.

At that look she felt choked with pain. At the same time she thought with melancholy irony, 'No one is ordering him to go. If he cares more for his wretched King than for me, then let him go. I won't hold him back. I didn't hold the other one back either.' She was bitter, defiant. But the pain did not diminish, and since he failed to reproach her she reproached herself. She had not been granted the strength to love — not this man, not even the other.

Mathieu quickly took refuge in his good manners. "What is your opinion, madame?" he asked her. "Do you advise me to go?" And with an effort he added, "Alone?"

"If you must go, Mathieu — " Gilberte faltered.

Mathieu left a few days later, in the simplest of clothing and with forged papers.

PART FOUR

*JEAN-JACQUES
AND THE PEOPLE*

THOSE THAT ARE LUKEWARM WE WILL EXCORIATE

THE WIDOW ROUSSEAU

NICOLAS RIDES AGAIN

THE CONSPIRACY OF THE KINGS

A BITTER JOY

SINISTER GUESTS

MAIDEN SPEECH

NO FALSE HUMANITY!

LA TERREUR! LA TERREUR!

THE SUSPECTS

Better is a youth of humble birth and wise than an old king who is a fool unable to take care of himself. For through a rebellion the youth may come to rule, even though he is born poor in his country. I saw all the people flocking to the side of such a youth, who was to stand in the old king's place.

ECCLESIASTES

The soldiers of the French Republic felt they alone were reasonable beings. In the eyes of these Frenchmen, the inhabitants of the rest of Europe, who were fighting in order to keep their chains, were either pathetic fools or knaves who were allowing themselves to be bought by the despots.

STENDHAL

Chapter 1 Those that are Lukewarm We Will Excoriate

LIKE MANY other towns, Senlis had its Jacobin Club on the Paris model. In it the politics of the district were decided. President of the club was Martin Catrou.

As often as he could he went to Paris for inspiration and advice. For there was one man there who had grasped the seemingly contradictory teachings of the Master in all their ramifications and could translate them into living politics. This man was a member of the National Assembly, but it was through the Jacobin Club that he preached his doctrines and wielded his influence, and because of him the club was now almost as powerful as the National Assembly itself. This man was Maximilien Robespierre, the student who had visited Jean-Jacques shortly before his death. When Robespierre's crystalline, incisive voice rang out, when he made one of his speeches burning with icy logic, then the bare, ugly church in the Rue Honoré where the Jacobins met became for Martin the heart and shrine of France.

This slight, meticulously dressed man whom Martin so intensely admired had few personal friends. With his followers he was distantly polite. But now that Jean-Jacques was dead and buried on the island of the tall poplars many of the most fiery patriots, including Martin himself, saw Robespierre as the preacher of the true gospel, the high priest, the apostle of the creed. Had Jean-Jacques himself been addressing the Jacobins he could not have expounded his principles with more conviction than Robespierre, nor more convincingly applied them to the political problems of the day.

Martin sought to acquaint his Jacobins in Senlis with the ideas of Maximilien Robespierre. Like Robespierre he himself combined a fanatical faith in Jean-Jacques's teachings with a coldly logical drive to pursue ideas remorselessly to their conclusions. Like Robespierre he despised all halfheartedness and halfway measures and he shared

the other man's eternally vigilant distrust of the former nobles, the *ci-devants*. He warned his people in Senlis that, in addition to the army which the fugitive aristocrats were assembling against the people of France, there were countless enemies still left in the country itself. Until the old order was torn out by the roots the goals of the revolution would not be attained.

Martin did not, however, deliver lectures with the icy elegance of the great Jacobin of Paris. He used pungent popular phrases, addressing his patriots of Senlis in their own language and interpreting Jean-Jacques's arguments with crude vigor.

Fernand, who showed up at the club from time to time, had his doubts about Martin's speeches. Martin quoted Jean-Jacques all right, but he gave the Master's words a dangerous meaning. There were already too many people who had let the new order go to their heads and who could not understand that law and justice still existed, that they could not do as they pleased. Martin's speeches drove them still further along the road to irresponsible acts.

Once after Martin had made a particularly radical speech he said to Fernand, "I suppose you think all this is way off?" "Yes," Fernand answered, "I have my doubts, but I can't sum them up in a few words. It's a pity we've seen so little of each other lately," he added politely. With a touch of malice Martin replied, "But you've got that Lepeletier of yours." Fernand was pleased that Martin was jealous of Michel. "I'd like nothing better than to have a good talk with you," he answered warmly. Martin invited him to supper.

The Catrous' house was shabby. Martin lived and worked in three rooms, together with his mother, his wife, and their child. The place smelled of cooking and humanity, the child was screaming. The food was prepared without love or artistry. "You must be content with what common people have to offer, Citizen Girardin," said Madame Jeanne.

Martin ate hastily, indifferently, without manners. "You can speak freely," he told Fernand. "Jeanne knows we are old friends." "Yes," said Jeanne and turned her hard, expressive face to Fernand with a look that was not precisely friendly.

Fernand's heart was heavy with anxiety at this time. Bad news had come from Saint-Domingue. The whites had refused to accept the decisions of the National Assembly and the Negroes and mulattoes had united. Turmoil and revolution raged on the island. The plantations in the north of Saint-Domingue, where the De Traver-

says had their estates, had been plundered, destroyed, burnt to the ground. Many whites had been killed. Hortense and the Marquis had supposedly fled into Spanish territory, but the reports sounded vague and it was a bad sign that there had been no news from the Traversays themselves for so long.

It was of these oppressive matters that Fernand spoke. Now, when it was too late, he declared bitterly, the National Assembly had decided to make a stand, and instead of at least sending troops to restore order they were actually thinking of repealing the Colonial Law so that the colored people would lose their rights again. "I'm not acquainted with conditions in Saint-Domingue," said Martin. "Few people are. Why don't you go and restore order there yourself?" he challenged Fernand. "You are known there. And your friend Lepeletier should be able to get you full powers to act as you see fit."

Fernand's expressive face twitched. So Martin regarded his activities here in France as superfluous. "My friend Lepeletier," he retorted triumphantly, "feels I should be serving the revolution better by staying here. He wants me to stand for election to the next National Assembly."

Lepeletier was well thought of even by the Jacobins, and Martin was surprised. What Fernand had just told him excited him; patches of red appeared on his forehead. The women also looked up. There was a short silence. Then, instead of making a direct reply, Martin observed, "It will be a good thing when the old Assembly is dissolved. It hasn't achieved much." "All the same," answered Fernand, "when it is dissolved it will have produced a constitution based upon the rights of man." "What little good there is to that constitution," Martin said, "has been achieved by four or five men against the opposition of the remaining twelve hundred." "Aren't you being hard on the twelve hundred?" Fernand asked. "Twelve hundred Jeans and Jacques's don't make one Jean-Jacques, you'll grant me that," taunted Martin.

Widow Catrou looked on admiringly while her son spoke his mind to the fine gentleman, and a thin cackle of laughter emerged from her puckered, toothless old mouth. Jeanne, too, gave her husband a look of satisfaction and respect. "May I give you a little more wine, Citizen Girardin?" she asked in her harsh voice. Fernand read distrust and hostility in her intense eyes.

Martin went on eating. "This doesn't apply to you, nor to Lepele-

tier," he observed with his mouth full, "but you can't deny there are too many *ci-devants* in the National Assembly — the sort that with the best will in the world remain the slaves of their birth, their money, their grand titles. When they address each other as 'citizen' it sounds like another way of saying 'count' or 'marquis.' We've seen the way that Lafayette of yours has been flirting with the *ci-devants*, and when the people themselves decide to reach for the rights of man he gives the order to shoot."

Madame Jeanne and the old woman set about washing the dishes. Martin and Fernand sat over the wine.

"I tell you," Martin resumed, "not a single one of the laws passed by this Assembly has any teeth in it. The despotic old regime clapped four hundred thousand people in prison year after year. We nearly had a taste of that ourselves, you and I. And year after year fifteen thousand were hanged. This National Assembly has abolished the death penalty and let all its enemies flit across the border. The King himself almost got away."

Jeanne looked up from her dishwashing, scornfully awaiting Fernand's reply. "I'm not a member of the Assembly," he said half jokingly.

"No one said anything about you," Martin returned. "And as a candidate you can count on my support. But don't fool yourself. The new Assembly isn't going to make a clean sweep either, nor a real revolution. That must come from elsewhere, from below. It must be made by the people, in the clubs. And there's where it will be made."

This was exactly what Fernand himself said when arguing with the moderates among his friends; but now he contradicted Martin: "Overthrow nothing of the existing order unnecessarily" — Jean-Jacques wrote that, in case it interests you," he said, and was annoyed with himself because the words sounded as though his father had spoken them. "But it is necessary," Martin answered hotly. "And I know someone, and so do you, who could prove to you why it is so, and in Jean-Jacques's own words." Fernand shrugged.

Martin regretted having been so brusque. When he was with Fernand he always behaved like a boy with a chip on his shoulder. Yet he respected Fernand and was fond of him. It was something for a man who was born to be the seigneur of Ermenonville to embrace the cause of the common people so honestly and courageously.

Martin walked Fernand home and in his clumsy way did his best

to show affection for him. And as a result of these few moments of awkward friendliness Fernand caught a glimpse, behind the Jacobin leader Catrou, of the old Martin, his boyhood chum.

But that did not take away the sting of truth from Martin's words. Martin had spoken not for himself alone but for everybody. The King's flight had aroused fresh suspicion of the *ci-devants* among the whole people. The hostility of Citizen Jeanne Catrou was not the hostility of one Jeanne but of all the Jeannes. Fernand was still an alien. The people would never accept him as their brother.

To Fernand's sorrow and anger, the National Assembly, shortly before its dissolution, actually did repeal Lepeletier's law emancipating the slaves, and replaced it by ineffectual recommendations whose net effect was once more to deprive the colored people of their rights. He was gripped by a burning eagerness to make good this disgrace. If he should actually be elected he would try to transmit to the other legislators his own ardent desire for justice.

But he was less and less able to believe he would win the election.

Lepeletier tried to build up his confidence. Was not he himself, in his whole bearing and manner of life, far more remote from the Jacobins than Fernand? Yet in spite of that the masses accepted him as one of themselves. Written and oral reports from the department of the Oise showed Lepeletier that people there had genuine confidence in Fernand.

But Martin's doubts affected Fernand more than Lepeletier's faith, and Fernand remained despondent.

All the greater was his joy when he was elected. So the keen-eyed *petits bourgeois* of Senlis and of the villages and hamlets round about believed in him! Out of twenty candidates they had chosen him! Martin was wrong: the people did accept him as their brother!

Chapter 2 *The Widow Rousseau*

ALL THIS TIME Nicolas and Thérèse had been living in Plessis.

During those last years of the old regime Nicolas had sat around

the inns of Plessis and Dammartin holding forth in a caustic, arrogant manner. He knew the world, and his drinking companions enjoyed listening to his amusing, vicious talk. Whenever Thérèse received her annuities he went off to Paris for two or three days; the miserable pittance which an ungrateful world doled out to the wife of its greatest philosopher lasted no longer than that.

The people of Plessis, except for those who drank with Nicolas, were not overfond of their new neighbors. They disapproved of Thérèse's living with the fellow who had done in her husband. The women called their children to them when they encountered her. Nicolas swore and threatened; Thérèse remained indifferent. She was quite satisfied with the way of the world now that she had Nicolas living under her roof as her *homme de confiance*.

Once every month she went to the cemetery at Ermenonville to visit her mother; every week she went to the grave on the little island to bring flowers to her husband. She tended his canaries conscientiously, gathered chickweed for them, and when they died, bought new ones.

The people of Ermenonville also grumbled. But gradually they grew accustomed to the sight of the aging woman making her slow, silent pilgrimages to her dead and then very likely dropping in at the Auberge Jean-Jacques to order an omelette and a glass of the dark-yellow wine, to feed the animals as her dear departed had done before her, and to conduct a sluggish conversation with Goodman Maurice.

Once while Nicolas was in Paris the parish priest of Plessis came to Thérèse with some sharp words concerning her illicit union with Monsieur Montretout. This alarmed her, and when Nicolas had slept off the effects of his Parisian carouse she timorously suggested that they marry. Nicolas flew into a terrible rage and struck her with his crutch.

Two days later the canaries had disappeared. Thérèse thought of Lady, the red setter, and how terribly upset Jean-Jacques had been. What a good thing it was that he could never be upset again. Later she asked Nicolas for permission to buy some new canaries. "It's enough for you to take flowers to the late lamented," he growled.

When the stupid people stormed the Bastille, Nicolas was outraged. He sympathized with the aristocrats. He had always got on better with the grand gentlemen than with the *canaille*, and it was

a personal vexation that his powerful patron, the Prince de Condé, had thought it best to take a trip abroad. Of course the trip would not be a long one. Mob government couldn't last; the rascals would soon see how foolish they had been; the ringleaders would be hanged and quartered by the thousands. "No mercy for the rabble!" he trumpeted.

But the émigrés showed no sign of returning, and in the inn at Plessis people began objecting to his harangues. The idiots there parroted the old rubbish about the rights of man and called him a toady. The world was getting stupider, drearier, duller every day, and this goddammed rabble-ridden country made him want to puke. He wished he could have gone back to London, but how was he to scrape along there, martyr of the equestrian art that he was? Here at least the annuities came in regularly from Geneva.

He still went to Paris now and then. In the vicinity of the Palais Royal he loafed around in obscure taverns with like-minded cronies, the lackeys and hairdressers of the *ci-devants*, the waiters who had lost their jobs in fashionable eating places as a result of the new order. Paris had gone to the dogs. People went around on roller skates instead of on horseback, and in place of the exquisitely depraved pleasures of the good old days people amused themselves with a children's game called *jou-jou*.

When he was in Paris, Thérèse sat alone in Sieur Bessat's shabby little house. The wind that blew incessantly over this flat countryside rustled through the broken thatch. There she sat, stout, idle, looking older than her years. She breathed heavily, her enormous bosom heaving — a *lourdaude*, a clumsy, doltish creature, the people called her. She dozed, cheeks sagging, mouth half open, heavy lids drooping over her eyes. Then the wind made her start out of her doze. Her hands were cold. She fetched herself a muff. She would have liked to light a fire but she shrank from such extravagance, fearing harsh words from her Nicolas.

With a faint sigh she got up to dust the house once more, for the wind repeatedly covered the wretched furniture with a fresh layer of dust. She looked over her clothes — one of her favorite occupations. They lay in chests, hung in closets: short skirts, petticoats of Vaucluse linen, a black taffeta coat, a pair of silk gloves, a pair of everyday gloves; above all, a collection of bonnets of linen, lace, and muslin, with and without ribbons, all in vivid colors. Fondly she surveyed the clothes. She had had them a long time, had se-

lected them with loving care. Many men had cast hungry glances at her when she wore them. Now they were too tight for her, but there had been no skimping on material; they could be let out, and let out again. She took out a dress and began sewing. And she thought of the materials that were then in fashion, striped florence, solid-colored pekin, sicilienne, and nankin, and pretty tunics à la *Zulime*, worn with gilets à la *Turque*. She pondered what she should do now. Should she get her warmly lined, comfortable house shoes like those her lamented Jean-Jacques had worn? Or should she dress up so that she would not look so slovenly when her Colas came back?

She dressed up slowly, painstakingly, even used a little make-up. Then she pulled one of the rush chairs up to the table; she did not dare to use Jean-Jacques's wide, comfortable armchair — that was reserved for her Colas. She sat down, propped her head on her hands, and waited. She had learned to wait, had spent the greater part of her life in waiting. Waiting was not unpleasant; experience had taught her that in the end the expected event, the expected man came.

Around her was the familiar furniture. There were the beds with the blue-and-white covers. Even the piano was still there. Nicolas had wanted to sell it, but because the price offered had been so low and because he loved her so much he had finally kept it. The canaries were there no longer, but their cage was, and the engravings still hung on the walls — the lame beggar, and the Forest of Montmorency which she knew so well, though Montmorency itself was now called Émile in honor of her Jean-Jacques. And the chest was there too, with the writings lying inside. One document had been added to them — a letter in which the Prince de Condé assured his dear Nicolas Montretout what an outstanding equestrian he was.

She sat at the table and waited, dozed off, and waited again. Things became blurred in her mind. The furniture had always been the same and she no longer knew whether she was in Paris in the Rue Plâtrière, or in the pavilion at Ermenonville or in Sieur Bessat's house in Plessis. Once she started up, thinking she heard her mother calling her, but it was only the wind. Then she began to wonder whether she should not give her husband the catheter, and Jean-Jacques and Nicolas merged into one person and she no longer knew whether to rub his back or pass the catheter for him. She had been looking after someone all her life. It had become a cher-

ished habit, and she would feel deprived should she no longer have to do so.

She could not buy herself any of the pretty new materials. Nicolas would curse and scold and beat her if she so much as hinted at anything of the sort. But she did not need dresses. Everyone called her a *lourdaude* and said she was simple-minded. Maybe she was, but she had not done so badly. She, the *lourdaude*, had hooked the two most famous men in France — Jean-Jacques, about whom they were making even more of a fuss now than during his lifetime, and Nicolas, who had had the finest horse-dealing business in France, his famous Tattersall, and who was run after by the fine gentlemen as much as Jean-Jacques had been. Everybody in France had been wild about these men of hers, but it was she who had had them, and both men had loved her, and one had killed the other for her sake; and she had had fine gentlemen, too, and life was good, and she waited. Nor did she ever wait in vain. He always came back. She smiled, a sly, stupid, happy smile and everyone and everything became a blur and she waited and the thatch on the roof rustled in the wind.

Chapter 3 Nicolas Rides Again

NICOLAS AND THÉRÈSE received a visit from a man who had dropped out of sight for years. It was Citizen François Renoux, the erstwhile Sergeant Renoux, Thérèse's half-brother.

He had become quite shaky; it obviously cost him quite an effort to behave like his old, noisy, confident self. But he managed it.

He talked about the times. He was very much in accord with them, was wholeheartedly a revolutionary. He had always cherished his dear brother-in-law Jean-Jacques's ideals, had even been one of the first to fight for them over in the forests of America against the mercenaries and the bribed wild Indians of the British tyrants.

While he rattled on he was looking around the shabby house.

With satisfaction he saw that in spite of everything the familiar furniture was still there, above all the familiar chest. "Is there anything left in it?" he could not restrain himself from asking. "Yes," Nicolas replied scornfully, "a letter from the Prince de Condé to your humble servant." But Thérèse, seeing her brother's disappointment, assured him proudly, "It's all still there, all the papers. The Marquis tried to pinch them from us, but Nicolas spoiled his game for him." "That's what I've always said, our Nicolas has a good head on his shoulders," said François appreciatively. "Is that what you've come all this way to tell me, you old scoundrel?" Nicolas asked.

Whereupon François drew himself up and made a speech: "You have not behaved very well to me, my dears, neither you, my sweet sister, nor you, my — let's say, brother-in-law. But I'm not one to bear grudges. I regard myself as the head of the family and I promised our dear mother on her deathbed to look after you. I have just visited our dear mother's grave and I felt I could tell her: You can rely on Sergeant François Renoux; he keeps his promises, rain or shine."

"Leave out the trimmings," said Nicolas truculently, "and tell us in the King's French what's the trick card you've got up your sleeve."

François suppressed him with a sidelong look of dignified contempt and proceeded, "I'm well acquainted with the Deputy Chaplain. I think I may call myself his friend. What a man! A faithful priest of Nature and Reason, a genuine disciple of our good Jean-Jacques. The Jacobins are proud to number him among their leaders. He used to be a Capuchin monk, as you know. He was vicar-general to the Bishop of Blois, but he shed the old prejudices as easily as a snake its skin and today he philosophizes with the best. He's fond of literature, wild about Jean-Jacques, and would be delighted to meet Jean-Jacques's widow. He's read in the *Confessions* about her simplicity, loyalty, and virtue and he has also heard a great deal of praise of her from me."

Nicolas grinned. "You see before you," he said, "a man who has been on good terms with plenty of fine gentlemen, even with princes of the blood, and has helped them into their saddles. Do you think I'm going to run after a lousy deputy of the *canaille*? After a Capuchin? All Capuchins stink."

"I wouldn't blow so hard if I were you, my dear brother-in-law," François retorted. "No Jew would give a sou for your erstwhile

princes, but this *ci-devant* Capuchin can spirit up money with his little finger. I wouldn't say from the looks of things that money's been falling like snow around here. Maybe a snow storm will start if Widow Rousseau is willing to tickle Legislator Chaplaine's chin."

"I can see you're hoping to squeeze a tip out of Chaplaine by pimping for my Thérèse," Nicolas said contemptuously, "and I'm supposed to sit here rubbing my poor arse all by myself. No dice."

"What low thoughts!" Sergeant François replied. "I know the kind of fellow you are. Naturally, I described you to Legislator Chaplaine in as glowing colors as my conscience permitted. Citizen Chaplaine is looking forward to the visit not only of Jean-Jacques's widow but of her trusty business manager."

So Nicolas and Thérèse traveled to Paris at Sergeant François's expense to be introduced to Legislator Chaplaine.

He proved to be a fat, grubby, jovial man. His shirt was open at the collar, revealing his strong neck. His sturdy legs were clothed in a pair of rough trousers. From his father, who had been chef to a rich abbot, Chaplaine had inherited a taste for good food. In fact he was addicted to all forms of good living. He surrounded himself with costly things: his house was full of fine paintings by well-known masters, of precious glassware and all kinds of exquisite bric-a-brac. For the relics which he had learnt to venerate in his early youth he now substituted choice curiosities; above all, literary items—manuscripts and costly old books. He was filled with a greed for life and devoured knowledge, art, women, and succulent dishes. His imagination was riotous. He was always on the alert for adventure. He had unearthed a conspiracy on the part of some émigré noblemen whose agents met secretly in Château Bagatelle. He had the men arrested and brought to trial. Once he was ambushed by thugs in the pay of the Count d'Artois and other *ci-devants*. They managed to wound him, though not fatally. Since this attempt on his life Chaplaine's popularity with the masses had risen to even greater heights.

There was no lack of good orators in Paris these days, and Chaplaine was among the best. His style combined the eloquence of the ancients and the fanaticism of a crusader with a simple, heartfelt manner reminiscent of Jean-Jacques. The masses hung upon his words.

He felt a burning interest in anything which had to do with Jean-Jacques. Thérèse and Nicolas showed him the thick packets of fine

paper covered with the Master's delicate, powerful characters. His eyes lit up. Tenderly he stroked the pages with his fleshy hands.

As for Thérèse herself, he accepted her as a kind of living relic. He was touched by her being a *lourdaude*, slow and clumsy in body and mind. He mustered all his powers of persuasion to urge this simple-minded, broken-down woman who had been Jean-Jacques's companion to stay near him in Paris, together with her business manager and her manuscripts. He himself would stand all the expenses.

Nicolas spat heavily with satisfaction. Hadn't it been a great idea of his to demand the return of the manuscripts from the Marquis? He congratulated himself. His instincts never let him down. He always managed to make something out of the worst turns of fortune. Anyone else would have discarded the papers like a sucked orange. But he had gone to some trouble over them, had got them back by means of an artful letter. Sure enough, new blessings were sprouting out of the old exhausted soil.

Thérèse for her part was dumb with astonishment and gratification when she saw how the new Paris honored her Jean-Jacques. Here was Citizen Chaplaine — who after all had been a clergyman and as such ought to know — speaking of her poor husband as if he had been a saint. So did everyone else. Busts of Jean-Jacques were everywhere. His portrait was in all the shop windows. Memorial plaques had been put up on the very houses where she had lived with him — in the Rue de Grenelle and the Rue Plâtrière. People might look at her with indifference, even with contempt, but their expressions soon changed when they learned that she was Jean-Jacques's widow. They became as reverent as if they were in a church.

Numerous articles about Thérèse appeared in the papers. There was even a book written about her. She was drawn and painted. The most popular of these pictures was an etching showing Thérèse wandering by the lake at Ermenonville in a bare autumnal landscape. Far in the background could be seen the island of the poplars, and the grave, but the scene was dominated by Thérèse herself — a large melancholy figure walking along with her hands in her muff: a distinguished elderly woman in a bonnet, with a suspicion of a double chin. 'Jean-Jacques's Companion,' the etching was entitled, and it sold like hot cakes. Thérèse was very much moved when she saw it. So that was she, Thérèse! Everyone had looked down at her, called her a *lourdaude*, a fool — and now it turned out that she was a famous

lady. What a shame Jean-Jacques wasn't alive to see how they were honoring his faithful companion! What luck that her Colas could see it!

This cult of Thérèse aroused Fernand's indignation. His own affair with her was finished and forgotten, but he was offended by this grotesque profaning of the Master's memory. After some hesitation he asked his friend Lepeletier whether he should do anything to put a stop to it. Lepeletier cynically advised against it. The whole affair amused him. "Jean-Jacques himself would certainly approve of Thérèse's having an easy life," he observed, "and what is more, a dead mouth grins, but it says nothing. By revealing that the touching stories about Thérèse are lies you will merely damage Jean-Jacques's memory and yourself. Prove to a believer that his relics are a forgery and he'll turn, not against the relics, but against you."

So, fostered by Chaplaine, the cult of Thérèse flourished. A friend of the deputy, the well-known playwright Bouillie, set to work on a play about her, to be entitled 'Jean-Jacques and His Spouse.' He went to see Thérèse to ask her about her life with the Master. When he discovered how inarticulate she was he turned to Nicolas, who recounted a good many affecting anecdotes of his own and Thérèse's intimacy with Jean-Jacques. The play was put on in the former Théâtre italien, now known as the Théâtre de l'Égalité. The audience dissolved in tears. Thérèse had to embrace and kiss a bust of Jean-Jacques while the crowd cheered. It was a prodigious success.

During Nicolas's conversation with Bouillie, the playwright, there had been a good deal of talk about Thérèse's children whom Jean-Jacques had committed to the foundling home. Of course Jean-Jacques's action could be excused in part by the absence of freedom, equality, and fraternity under the old regime, but still, it stained the radiance of his memory. Nicolas decided that Thérèse must forget the injury Jean-Jacques had done her, must sacrifice herself and make amends for Jean-Jacques's much criticized act. She had the original manuscript of Jean-Jacques's songs, the *Consolations*, put up at auction, and turned the proceeds over to the foundling home. The inmates of this institution, who were now known as the 'Enfants de France,' marched out in their plain uniforms, the tricolor on their hats, to thank Thérèse. On this occasion, too, many tears were shed.

And now Nicolas planned his masterstroke. Counting on Deputy Chaplaine's gratitude, he instructed Thérèse to present him with her

manuscript copy of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*. On his thirty-fifth birthday she handed him the manuscript.

Jean-Jacques had made four clean-cut copies of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*. This particular one had been written with loving care for a noblewoman, one of his beloved, but he had then fallen out with her and kept the copy in his chest. Now Thérèse presented it to Chaplaine.

Her fleshy features twitched as she placed in his hands the creamy white pages covered with graceful lettering. She had sat with Jean-Jacques as he wrote those pages. She remembered quite distinctly how her mother had grumbled at all the trouble and expense of getting him the blue ink, the sheaves of gilt-edged paper, the fine sand. And he must have read bits of it aloud to her; he had read everything to her. Then there had been the disputes over the papers. Nicolas had given them timely warnings, but her mother had refused to let him have the papers and so that villainous *ci-devant* Girardin had stolen them. But her good, clever Nicolas had got them back again. And now she was giving the pages to this nice deputy. That was Nicolas's wish, and Nicolas always knew what he wanted.

Chaplaine thanked them with manifest delight. When he was alone he stroked the pages, read a few with rapt emotion, and then with tender care laid them away in a splendid ivory case which had once served as a container for some charred bones of St. Lazarus. It had come into his hands after the sequestration of Church property.

Nicolas had calculated correctly. Deputy Chaplaine's gratitude went beyond fine phrases. He was a representative of the nation, and he saw to it that the nation reciprocated the gift of Jean-Jacques's widow.

One winter evening there appeared at a session of the National Assembly Thérèse Levasseur, wife 'before Nature' of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The gates which separated the public from the deputies were thrown open, the representatives rose from their seats, and Thérèse was conducted to the place of honor.

Deputy Chaplaine mounted the speaker's rostrum. He hailed Jean-Jacques as the father of the revolution. He extolled Thérèse as Jean-Jacques's loyal helpmeet and companion, as his Eurycleia and his Martha.

Then he moved that she should be paid an ample pension.

Chapter 4 The Conspiracy of the Kings

FERNAND TOOK PRIDE in being a member of the new Legislative Assembly. It included among its deputies famous scholars, brilliant speakers, reformers burning with ardor and energy. Moreover, most of these new legislators were young, scarcely older than Fernand himself. When — since Periclean Athens and Scipio's Rome — had such a group of sincere and gifted men directed the affairs of a state?

The new Assembly set to work immediately to revise the tepid, vague decisions reached by the preceding National Assembly and issue firm, clear decrees for the nation to obey. In rapid succession it enacted laws which even a Martin Catrou had to admit had teeth to them. It clapped into prison any members of the clergy who refused to swear allegiance to the new regime. It confiscated the entire property of all the fugitive nobles and threatened with death those who failed to return within forty-five days.

Mingled with Fernand's satisfaction at all this was the bitter realization that not even those enlightened and resolute deputies felt strong enough to grant the rights of man in the colonies. Little news came from the West Indies, but this much was certain: a large part of the white population had been killed, and as neither he nor Robinet had had any word of the fate of Hortense and her father, they feared the worst. This intensified Fernand's ardent desire that so much sacrifice be not in vain and that the slaves in the West Indies be at last emancipated. In the Assembly he demanded the re-enactment of Lepeletier's law and complete emancipation for the colored people. He himself wanted to be sent to Cap Français with full powers to put the law into effect. But no one would hear of it. "My dear fellow," he was told, "first we must consolidate the revolution at home. We don't have to look for a war across the seas; we have one here, right on our own frontiers."

And so it was. The émigrés had made the city of Coblenz head-

quarters for the counterrevolution. There, on German soil but on the border of France, they were gathering military strength, while Austria and Prussia supported them with all their power. The leaders of the new France believed that the King himself was conspiring with the émigrés and foreign courts and was urging them to attack the liberated nation.

Many of the delegates thought they should issue an ultimatum before the kings of reactionary Europe fell upon France. They demanded a preventive war. Fernand was a fervent partisan of this view. "Let us warn Europe," he cried in the National Assembly, "that ten million Frenchmen, armed with the power of the sword, the power of reason and of the spoken word are capable, if further provoked, of transforming the face of the earth and toppling all thrones."

The Assembly several times sent delegations to the King demanding that he make war against the princes who were conspiring against the new France.

Fernand himself was the leader of one such delegation. Nowadays there were many gaps and threadbare patches in the old court ceremonial. But in the Tuileries as in Versailles there were still long corridors and spacious anterooms with Swiss guards, and with lords-in-waiting bowing low. Fernand observed the forms and kissed the King's plump hand. Louis sat there limply, the heavy lids fluttering over his protuberant eyes. It was easy to see how he hated having to treat with these rebels instead of having them locked up in the Bastille.

While he presented the demands of the legislative body in a carefully framed, respectful yet menacing address, Fernand watched the King's plump, tired, strained face and knew what was going on behind that sloping forehead. This man, Louis of Bourbon, loved his country and his people and felt it his duty to do everything he could for his France. But he was also a king, descendant of a long line of kings, and felt it his duty to do everything he could to restore the absolute monarchy ordained by God. His duty was to the Lilies as well as to the Tricolor; he wavered this way and that and he was a poor, sad, pitiable, and extremely dangerous man.

Louis in his turn was inspecting Fernand, the insolent son of that old fool who had once taken it into his head to provide Jean-Jacques with a comfortable refuge. The young man had already got his foot shot up while with the American rebels, but that hadn't taught him his lesson. Now he had the nerve to come limping up here to demand

that his King make war on his brothers, the kings of Europe. It was easy enough for young Girardin. He was by nature and profession a rebel and a traitor; that was how God had made him. He would pay for it in hell, but on earth at all events he knew exactly what he had to do, lucky fellow. Providence had made things more difficult for Louis himself. Once again he would have to stave off this rabble with half-promises.

Speaking slowly and hesitantly he assured them that he would give the proposals of his loyal National Assembly his benevolent attention. Fortunately, he thought, he had sent secret dispatches that very week to his cousins the Holy Roman Emperor and the kings of Prussia, Spain, and Sweden asking them to unite their forces to defeat the rebellion in France, lest the evil of anarchy spread through all Europe.

But the King could not put the National Assembly off forever, and when Austria and Prussia concluded an alliance directed against the new France the Assembly forced him to consent to settling the issue by force of arms. Amid wild enthusiasm and with only seven dissenting votes, the National Assembly decided on war.

The whole populace was infected by the zeal of its legislators. The kings of Europe had conspired to rob the country of the freedom it had won. France would crack the robbers' skulls. Almost never in its thousand years of history had the nation plunged into a war with such conviction of the justice of its cause. Countless volunteers rallied to the flag, the tricolor of free France.

Citizen Girardin, the former Marquis, was equally wild with enthusiasm. Louis's flight had shocked him; it had severed the bond between crown and people. But now that Louis had broken the long-standing pact with Austria and declared war on his wife's homeland, on his wife's nephew, all his earlier mistakes and weaknesses were redeemed and a new unity created between the people and their King. The noble-minded, enlightened King had put his country's fate higher than the interests of his own house, had yielded to the *volonté générale*, the General Will. A great step forward had been taken along Jean-Jacques's road.

Citizen Girardin reported to the officers in command of the French armies, Generals Lafayette, Rochambeau, and Luckner. He pointed out to them that once before, in the Battle of Hastenbeck, in the Seven Years' War, he had fought victoriously against the Duke of Brunswick, now commander-in-chief of the enemy's armies. He de-

clared his eagerness to take part in the present campaign. But Lafayette declined his offer on the ground that there were too many *ci-devants* in the high command as it was. Girardin was deeply humiliated, but he kept the insult to himself; he did not even speak to his son about it.

All he could do was inspire others with his own enthusiasm and he was so successful at this that his department provided a disproportionately large number of volunteers. To each volunteer he gave twenty-five livres for travel expenses and footwear, and when he had drummed up a sizable contingent of volunteers he held a celebration at his château. He made a rousing speech: If he had been able to defeat this Duke of Brunswick, with soldiers subjected to a tyrannical discipline, how much more glorious a victory would be won by an army of enthusiastic volunteers.

In his heart Girardin was by no means confident of victory. Since the beginning of the revolution there had been frequent shake-ups in the high command. Many experienced high-ranking officers had joined the émigrés. Would this improvised, ill-disciplined army be able to stand up to the armies of the European coalition with their long training and expert command?

And in fact, enemy troops invaded France. The first skirmish took place near Lille. At the very sight of the Austrians the French had run away screaming, "We are betrayed," and had murdered their general. To the south, Piedmontese regiments crossed the frontier. To the east the fortresses of Longwy and Verdun fell. The allied commanders were jubilant: this was no campaign, it was a stroll to Paris.

These disasters at the front threatened the internal order. The people did not believe their army was weak; the cunning spite of the leaders alone was to blame for the defeats. The people saw every *ci-devant* as a traitor, and in their eyes the King was the greatest traitor of them all.

Once before, the masses had forced their way into the Tuileries. That time they had chided the King rather good-naturedly for his disloyalty and had made him accept their fraternity and wear a revolutionary cap. Now, after a violent speech by Deputy Chaplaine, they stormed the palace a second time. This time there was less amiability. Many persons were killed, and the King was forced to flee. He was transferred to the Château du Temple, which was a virtual jail.

Disorders were common in Paris, and the authorities tolerated the

disturbances. The prisons were stormed; the masses set up people's courts; *ci-devants* who were held in special hatred were tried and condemned to death. The statues of former kings that adorned many of the city's squares were smashed while the populace sang patriotic songs and shouted with joy. Destroying statues was not always an easy job. Several bronze kings and their bronze steeds proved very tough, and one Louis the Fourteenth killed a singing woman as he fell. The crowd handed the bronze arm of a Louis the Fifteenth to their beloved Chaplaine, who added it to his collection of curios. Even the popular Henry the Fourth, who for so long had stood on the Pont Neuf looking out across the Seine, succumbed to the same fate.

Girardin's belief that man was good, which had already been sorely tried, now gave way utterly. Alas, things had turned out just as that unpleasant Monsieur de Grimm had predicted: the government by the people, which had been Jean-Jacques's dream, had turned into that mob rule which the Master had so much abhorred, into ochlocracy. Man was and always would be a barbarian.

Even Fernand, though he clung to his hope of ultimate victory, was sometimes perplexed by the course of events. He was particularly shaken by the defeats on the battlefield. The greater was his astonishment when his friends Lepeletier and Martin Catrou took these defeats with complete sang-froid. They even welcomed them. In the Jacobin Club, Martin Catrou exulted: "It is a blessing that the war has taken this turn. In this way freedom will be consolidated and purified of the last traces of despotism.

"The only danger lay in those old generals of yours," he explained to Fernand, "Royalists at heart — Lafayette and all the rest of your dubious 'Americans.' If they had been victorious they would have marched back to Paris, strangled the revolution, and reinstated the Most Christian King with all his old rights. Now the army, the army of the people, has taken the war into its own hands. They have kicked out your Lafayette and replaced the questionable generals with reliable revolutionaries. Now the true has been separated from the false. Long live defeat!" he cried with grim satisfaction.

"But the enemy is on the way to Paris!" Fernand objected. Had hatred and suspicion so blinded Martin that he could not see the terrible reality threatening them? Martin shook his head with a superior air. "Now that the people themselves are conducting the war they cannot be defeated. The enemy will not reach Paris, I assure you."

In the atmosphere of these defeats and disturbances the authority of the Legislative Assembly was weakened. It was loudly echoed that the constitution was no longer adequate. A new constitution must be drawn up: a real social contract founded upon reason and truly revolutionary, which would lay down once and for all the legal status of the individual in relation to the state. Writs were issued for another election of deputies.

Fernand stood as a candidate again. But this time he too was made aware of the general mistrust of *ci-devants*. He was not elected. Martin Catrou was elected in his place.

Only seven *ci-devants* were elected. Among them was Michel Lepeletier.

Fernand was not jealous. But it galled him that the masses should accept Lepeletier and reject him. Lepeletier made not the smallest concession to the times. He drove to the Jacobin Club in his splendid carriage, elegantly and richly dressed, and frequently with a bejeweled woman at his side. Sometimes when people had to get out of the way of his carriage they showed a disposition to be hostile; but once they recognized their Lepeletier he was loudly cheered. Why was it that he himself, Fernand, remained the *ci-devant*, the stranger, in the people's eyes? Why was it denied him to become a link in the chain, a brother among brothers?

The day of the newly elected Assembly, the Convention was convoked; the former representatives declared their function at an end, and went in a solemn line to meet the new representatives, and escorted them to their council chamber.

Thus dismissed, Fernand betook himself back to Ermenonville.

Chapter 5 A Bitter Joy

AT THEIR VERY first sitting the delegates to the Convention declared the monarchy abolished and proclaimed the Republic. They resolved to draw up a much more radical constitution based on the *Social*

Contract. They even introduced a new calendar, which began at the year one of the one and indivisible Republic.

It was significant that the course of the war took a turn for the better on the day the Convention first met. On this, the first day of the Republic, a battered French army, exhausted and ill equipped, won a decisive victory near the hamlet of Valmy over a hostile force armed with the most modern weapons of war. The armies of the allied kings were driven into precipitate flight. In quick succession the soldiers of the Republic overran Verdun and Longwy, took Speyer, took Mainz and Frankfort, penetrated into Savoy, poured into Holland and Belgium.

These victories took the whole of Europe by surprise.

To Monsieur Robinet, too, they came as a surprise — a disagreeable surprise. He had not had a very high opinion of the aristocracy, but even so, he had never imagined that they could fail as miserably as this.

And he profoundly disapproved of the course of events in Paris. His political philosophy was simple: Public affairs should be in the hands of a few who had proved their competence by the acquisition of riches. Granted that the majority of the Convention consisted of men who were rich and prudent — in a word, of bourgeois; but even with these men in the saddle, the influence of the mob was becoming stronger and stronger. No good could come of this. The mob had even less brain than the nobility.

Yet Monsieur Robinet was convinced that the well-trained allied armies were bound to win in the end. And till that day came he meant to stick it out in France. He would be failing in his duty to his granddaughter and great-granddaughter if he did not take advantage of the marvelous business opportunities which now offered themselves.

To stay was not without its dangers. Most of the tax-farmers who had not scuttled to safety were behind bars. Of course Robinet himself had been clever. He had not, as so many others had done, assumed the title of one of his estates. Now he made himself entirely inconspicuous. He closed up his châteaux and his hôtel in Paris. He lived quietly and unassumingly with a handful of servants at Latour. And he contributed lavishly to all the institutions of the new France. He was almost sure that they would not touch him.

He looked on calmly when Saint-Vigor was confiscated but immediately had the château and estate bought back by a man of his.

He relied on middlemen to transact all his business. He bought up everything that came his way, purveyed to the army on a large scale, all through middlemen.

But when the happy day came, when, as was inevitable, the united Royalist armies entered Paris in triumph, then his granddaughter's husband, that fine soldier Count Mathieu de Courcelles, would be among the victors, then he, Robinet, would come forward and make it clear that in the absence of his heroic relative he had faithfully and profitably looked after his interests.

Then something happened which upset all his plans. News came that Mathieu de Courcelles, who had been covering his regiment's retreat with his own battalion, had fallen for the Lilies of France.

When Gilberte heard the news she turned to stone. Monsieur Robinet had never dreamed she could become so pale. He stroked her cold hand. She drew her hand away and left the room. He knew what was in her mind: she was blaming herself and him for this senseless death of a decent human being who had loved her.

For two days she did not appear at all. He had food sent up to her, which she barely touched. On the third day she came down. They sat together for a while in silence. Then she said, "It hurts, Grandfather. It hurts wickedly."

When Robinet thought of his future this normally self-controlled man was overwhelmed with futile anger. Suddenly he realized that he had stayed, not to increase his wealth, but because he had wanted to have Gilberte and little Marie-Sidonia to himself.

It would be madness to court further danger. It might be an eternity before the rest of Europe managed to clear up the scandalous state of affairs in France, and in the meantime the fools here in Paris were capable of God knew what! Monsieur Robinet was in danger, Gilberte even more so as the widow of an enemy of the Republic. They must leave France.

But he knew Gilberte. Intelligent though she was, she had let herself be infected by the crazy new ideas, the trashy thinking of the old fool who was lying over there under his poplars. She would be reluctant to go, would insist on staying, would offer a thousand arguments — all but the real one. For the real reason was that wretched fanatic, that dreamer, that halfwit young Girardin.

Such were Monsieur Robinet's thoughts when Fernand was announced.

The news of Mathieu's death had thrown Fernand into great con-

fusion. He had borne Gilberte's husband no ill will. Working on war preparations, he had never given a moment's thought to this good, brave man whose conscience had driven him out of the country. The revolution had caused the deaths of more important men, yet Fernand had an uneasy feeling that he was in part responsible for this death.

Robinet did not trouble to conceal his anger at the sight of Fernand. The young coxcomb, assailing his own interests and those of his friends! He was the fellow who had introduced the measure calling for the confiscation of émigré property. He was the fellow who had goaded his country into the internecine struggle which had cost Mathieu his life! "Now you see what comes of your philosophy, monsieur!" he greeted him. "You babble about Nature and peace, about equality and fraternity, and then you make civil war! Poor Mathieu! But he at least knew on which side he belonged."

Fernand was surprised to see the old gentleman whom he had always regarded as the embodiment of cool self-interest so carried away by his feelings. "Your grief is pardonable, monsieur," he said. "I am not going to debate with you. I have no wish to anger you still further. I have come to express my sympathy with you and Gilberte, my sincere sympathy," "That won't bring Mathieu back to life," said Robinet with bitter mockery.

Gilberte was standing in the doorway. Her face above the black gown was paler than Fernand had ever seen it. She remained standing by the door, regarding Fernand wordlessly. Fernand was not able to speak either. For once again a new Gilberte was confronting him, and yet the earlier one.

In her groping efforts to emerge from her torpor Gilberte had come to some strange rationalizations.

Though she always contradicted her grandfather when he spoke of the ultimate victory of the monarchy, deep in her heart she had never fully believed in the stability of the Republic. She had learned from her mother's example to regard the great, the privileged, the representatives of power as a permanent institution, as a kind of fate. They were there forever, like the earth's primeval rocks. It was inconceivable to her that a kingdom which had lasted for more than a thousand years could be permanently destroyed by that foolish old Jean-Jacques and her own lovable but slightly crazy Fernand. She had always thought of her Fernand's philosophy as a sort of hobby-horse which the obstinate enthusiast had taken it into his head to

ride into the forests of America and onto the tribunes of the Paris revolutionaries. But that this wooden toy should come to life and remain alive seemed absurd to her. Nor could she really believe that after she had given up so much and fought so hard for her privileges her child would not, after all, be a Countess Courcelles but a simple commoner.

Mathieu's death had rudely jolted her out of this secret belief. Her good, sensible Mathieu, one of those indestructible great ones of the earth, was defeated and dead; and Fernand, the dreamer, the eternal boy, the wise fool, was here, alive and in the right. Events had proved his folly wiser than Mathieu's and her grandfather's common sense. The world as she had known it had come down with a crash, and Gilberte had no solid ground to stand on. She was paralyzed, lost, done for. She had made the wrong choices at every turn. Fernand was not a boy and dreamer; rather she was a silly little girl who had rejected the man who had generously tried to build her a bridge into his new world. How stupid she had been!

Now, when she saw Fernand take two steps toward her, embarrassed yet manly, his slight limp only emphasizing how firmly he stood with both feet on the ground, she began to weep uncontrollably. She dissolved in a sense of her own inferiority; yet it was good to feel inferior to him.

Fernand had never seen Gilberte in tears. He was surprised, embarrassed, overjoyed. He did not dare to speak nor to fondle her, even though he felt as close to her now as he had so often felt long, long ago.

Robinet was still in the room, but they had forgotten him. He watched them standing there absorbed in each other. He was no moralist, and dignity meant nothing to him. Yet though absolutely nothing happened he had a feeling that this scene was something unseemly. For the first time in his life he failed to understand his granddaughter. The news of Mathieu's death had hurt her deeply, and now here she stood unable to take her eyes off this other man. Robinet felt it was his duty to say something; but he was afraid that then he might lose her. He felt very old and misunderstood and crept quietly out of the room.

"I am dreadfully sorry," Fernand said at last. "It is very, very hard for you." These were miserably inadequate words from a man whose eloquence had carried away the Legislative Assembly, but Gilberte gave him a grateful look and all at once he understood why Gilberte

had not wanted to let him go to America and why she had married Mathieu, and with gladness he saw that she now felt she had been mistaken all along.

The child, the nine-year-old Marie-Sidonia, came into the room. She was dressed in black. She had had to discard all the manners she had so arduously acquired; formal obeisances and low curtsies were no longer allowed. But in the long, heavy black frock which made her look like a grown-up — and in the presence of Fernand — she suddenly became the little Countess Courcelles again and mechanically she swept Count Brégy a curtsey.

Even now Fernand and Gilberte found little to say to each other. But Fernand began abruptly to talk about Saint-Domingue. News from there was scarce, and dreadful when it came, he said. He had friends there, one young lady very dear to him, and he was afraid his friends had died in the abominable war between whites and blacks.

Gilberte knew quite well why he was telling her this. And just as a moment ago he had found only trite words for her, she now said simply and sincerely, "Yes, these are bitter times for us all."

Once more there was silence between them. Little Maria-Sidonia sat solemnly by. The lapdog Pompon, who had run to fat, panted asthmatically.

When Fernand left, they still had not said much to each other. Yet he felt as if he had had a long, confidential talk with her, as in the days of their closest intimacy.

The new times had brought them together. The revolution had severed Gilberte's connection with the Court in a terrible manner and shown her with cruel clarity where she belonged. She could now properly call herself Citizen Courcelles; she had reached her goal, but he was happily aware that he would reach it, too.

Chapter 6 Sinister Guests

THE CONVENTION numbered seven hundred and forty-nine members, all professing the principles of Jean-Jacques whose image,

carved out of the stone taken from the ruins of the Bastille, looked down upon them. All desired to create the kind of republic he had envisioned. Yet they differed widely on the ways to achieve this aim. Many of the deputies were citizens of standing; not a few were men of substance. In the early years of the revolution they had been 'radicals'; now they were moderates. They shunned violence; when it was unavoidable they used fine words to lend it an appearance of law and order.

There was a small minority, however, less than a hundred out of the seven hundred and forty-nine, who were determined to see Jean-Jacques's principles victorious at all costs; to achieve full equality using any and all means, including violence and apparent injustice.

In the Manège, the building in which the Convention sat, these determined democrats occupied the highest, the uppermost seats. Deputy Chaplaine, who was one of them, with his fondness for the figurative called their part of the hall 'La Montagne,' the Mountain, and so the party was called thereafter.

The undisputed leader of the 'Montagnards' was Maximilien Robespierre. Martin Catrou, who had had no hesitation in choosing his seat among them, observed with admiration and a respect not un-mixed with pity the changes which this onerous task had wrought in Robespierre. When Martin had first heard him speak at the Jacobin Club the expression of his mouth had been kindly, his eyes mild, his brow smooth and clear. Now his lips were almost always compressed, his forehead lined; his eyes when they were not hidden behind greenish spectacles wore a look of fixed introspection. When Maximilien smiled it cut Martin to the heart; his rare laughter had a harsh, bitter sound. The superhuman task of leading this small select minority of the virtuous up the steep path conferred tremendous power on Robespierre and laid upon him a breathtaking burden.

There was another among Martin's radical colleagues for whom he had from the beginning felt the greatest respect. This was Antoine de Saint-Just, at twenty-five, the youngest of the deputies. Tall and very slender, he always was dressed with scrupulous elegance. A cravat almost foppish in material and color encircled his high collar, above which rose an oval face of girlish delicacy. Large, gray-blue eyes shone above a Grecian nose; the brows were thick and extremely arched. His ash-blond hair was combed slightly forward on his forehead and fell down to his shoulders. Saint-Just had exquisitely

gentle manners. His gestures were restrained almost to the point of stiffness, but a fierce interior fire flamed in his enormous eyes, checked only by extreme self-discipline and the rigid exercise of reason.

Saint-Just attended every session of the Convention but never took the floor. He attracted attention nevertheless. He was remarkable enough for his external appearance; Robespierre's friendship made him more so. They frequently entered the chamber together and frequently left it together.

It cost Martin an effort to address Saint-Just, but he did so. Saint-Just subjected the short, awkward young man's hard, clever face to an arrogantly long examination. When it was over at last he replied politely, practically, exhaustively. Martin beamed with pleasure. Saint-Just had accepted him.

The two young deputies exchanged visits. When he moved to Paris, Martin had taken lodgings in an ugly house in an ugly part of the city. The elegant Saint-Just climbed the worn, rickety stairs, entered the rooms crammed with furniture all in the worst of taste, and Martin felt himself honored as never before in his life.

The Convention had abolished the Monarchy, but the moderate majority was reluctant to decide the fate of the King himself. More and more vociferously the people were demanding that Louis, the tyrant and traitor, should be dealt with once and for all.

For Robespierre it was settled that Louis Capet, as he was now called, after the name of his dynasty, must die. Louis's death would of course alarm the other kings of Europe into intensifying their war efforts, and all the fainthearted people in the Convention and the nation would raise a great hue and cry. But such objections were overborne by the arguments to be found in Jean-Jacques's books. Louis must die. Only then could the Jeans and Jacques step into his shoes, and Maximilien had sworn to the Master that they would.

In his logical way he expounded his reasons to Saint-Just. Saint-Just took the words out of his mouth. Calmly and precisely they added up the arguments in a concord which came from the heart. These two serious young men smiled at the depth of their mutual understanding.

They went to Ermenonville to seek strength from the Master for the battle they were to wage in his name.

Slowly and without talking they walked through the garden. It was autumn: statues and temples stood bleakly in the denuded park

under a gray sky. Maximilien recalled how he had walked along these same paths with Jean-Jacques during his last days on earth; how Jean-Jacques had talked to him about botany, the most delightful of the sciences, and then, bitterly, about the human beings who misunderstood and hated him because of his love for humanity. Now, Maximilien felt, he was understanding Jean-Jacques fully for the first time. Any man who truly loved humanity must expect to be hated, for he must commit actions which but for that love would be unthinkable crimes.

They reached the lake. On the little island under the tall, slender, leafless poplars the grave was visible — a sight that filled them with deep emotion and awe.

Saint-Just sat down on the bank under the willow tree and let his friend row over to the island alone. His olive-green coat wrapped about him, Maximilien Robespierre stood, bareheaded, erect, and alert before the bare, gray-white altar that rose up from the island, sharply outlined against the autumn sky. The man upon whose shoulders Providence had placed the burden of Jean-Jacques's heritage stood there, slight and motionless in the damp, chill wind, his pale, fleshless face, under a painstakingly neat coiffure, turned toward the stone under which his master lay.

He looked composed; yet he was shaken to the depths of his being by the magnitude of his mission: to destroy Louis so that Jean-Jacques might live. Principles of uncompromising severity laid down in Jean-Jacques's works crowded into his mind: 'In the best days of the Roman Republic neither the Senate nor the Consuls nor the people would have thought of exercising clemency.' And: 'The man who has broken the social contract is no longer a member of the state but a public enemy and as such must be exterminated.'

It was precisely Jean-Jacques's tenderness which had driven him to such cruel sternness; the very logic of his humanity had given him his embittered strength. And now this harshness born of love for humanity lived on in Maximilien. France's thousand-year-old throne had tumbled, and he would be acting wholly in the spirit of his tenderhearted Master if he were to tumble the occupant of that throne after it into the void!

As they walked back through the gardens he imparted his thoughts to Saint-Just. Jean-Jacques's love for humanity had been Janus-headed, he said. Toward the individual with his private cares Jean-Jacques had been as kindly as his *Vicar of Savoy*; toward the state

and its citizens he had shown the severity of the *Social Contract*. Nor did he hesitate to grant the individual what he denied the citizen. In this sublime single-mindedness lay his greatness. Certain philosophers and politicians, the moderates, the Girondists, were people of such supple intelligence, of such good taste and immense culture, that they saw too many sides at once; their very gifts were their weakness. If you wanted to go forward you must keep your eyes on the road ahead. Too much philosophy was weakening. The Republic needed men who were strong because of their very single-mindedness.

Later, on the ride home, Saint-Just told his friend about some of the thoughts that had gone through his head as he sat under the willow tree. Was it not odd that the precious bones of the father of the Republic should rest here in this out-of-the-way place under the care of a silly old *ci-devant* who behaved as if they were his private property? Was it not contrary to reason and the dignity of the Republic that Voltaire's remains should lie in the Panthéon while Jean-Jacques's remains were shut away from the people in Monsieur de Girardin's park?

Saint-Just's argument was sound. Jean-Jacques had a right to the Panthéon; Paris and the people had a right to Jean-Jacques. But deeply engraved on Maximilien's memory was the picture of himself, fifteen years — no, a thousand years younger, strolling at Ermenonville with Jean-Jacques. For him the memory of Jean-Jacques was bound up forever with these gardens. He could not imagine the Master apart from the trees, the hillocks, the little lake. "You are right, Antoine," he said. "But I had it from Jean-Jacques's own dear lips how deep was his love for the gardens of Ermenonville. Paris and the world at large need no reminder of him. They are reminded daily by the victory of the armies that have sprung to life from his books and his ideas. Let us leave his body to rest under the trees he loved. *Jaceat ubi jacet.*"

Saint-Just took Robespierre's refusal in good part. But the latter regretted having had to say no and was eager to give his friend a sign of his affection and regard. "I am going to suggest that in the debate on the King's trial you speak for us, Antoine," he told him.

Saint-Just's pale, set face lit up. The whole country was expecting Robespierre himself to reply to the majority speaker and call for a trial. For Maximilien to assign this task to him was a mark of the highest confidence. Surely in the whole course of history no orator

had ever had a grander subject than revolutionary France's demand for the extermination of their traitorous despot. The young man's burning patriotism and burning ambition merged into one great flame. It had cost him much in will power and self-discipline to sit and listen for so long in silence at the Convention; now his friend whom he so much admired was rewarding his patience.

"I will speak, if you wish me to, Maximilien," he said. And after a pause he added, "Thank you, Maximilien."

Chapter 7 Maiden Speech

THE DEBATE WHICH was to decide the King's fate began on a dreary November day.

Spokesman for the moderate majority was a deputy from the Vendée, Charles-Gabriel Morisson, a widely known jurist. In a polished and brilliantly logical speech he demonstrated that in spite of the King's monstrous and sanguinary crimes neither the law of the country nor the eternal principles of justice would allow his being put on trial. The laws he had violated had been passed only after his crimes. The Convention's task was to put the Monarchy on trial, not the King's inviolable person. If the Republic was concerned with its own safety, it should keep the former King in close custody or banish him from the country by legal means.

Everyone expected that the Montagne party would put up Robespierre to reply to Morisson's impressive speech. Instead a young man took the floor who was as good as unknown, who had never spoken before: a deputy from the department of the Aisne — Antoine de Saint-Just.

Slowly he mounted the nine steep steps of the tribunal. He stood there beneath the flag of the Republic. Jean-Jacques looked down at him from his plaque; on the wall behind him a large tablet surrounded by fasces, the symbols of power over life and limb, proclaimed the rights of man. Two enormous candelabra with countless candles illumined his pallid face.

Without a trace of nervousness Saint-Just laid the text of his speech down in front of him, adjusted his cravat, looked round the hall, and began:

"I propose to show you, citizen-legislators, the absurdity of this inviolability which Morisson claims for the former King. On the contrary, the sovereign people has a perfect right to base its treatment of Louis Capet on the public good. I declare, and shall prove, that the King is to be regarded and treated as an enemy. We are not here to indulge in subtle legalistic argument concerning his actions, but to fight him to the bitter end."

The moderates were agreeably surprised that the opposition should make the task so easy for them. These cultured, skillful writers and speakers could scarcely help smiling at the self-confidence of the inexperienced young man's introductory remarks. They would be able to demolish his case effortlessly, with good-natured irony.

"It is our business to establish a republic," Saint-Just went on. "And republics are not established by legal pettifoggery. A mind that perceives too many nuances, a too highly developed moral sense, are qualities detrimental to the march of freedom. Generations to come will be surprised that the eighteenth century was less progressive than the century of Caesar. In those days the tyrant could be disposed of in broad daylight while the Senate sat, without any other formality than twenty-three blows of the dagger and with no legal sanction other than the freedom of Rome."

The Manège held two thousand persons; three thousand were present. They listened with bated breath; there was profound silence in the hall and galleries. The moderates' confidence began to evaporate.

Yet what the speaker was saying was by no means novel, it was the Montagnards' familiar wrong-headed, violent interpretation of Jean-Jacques's teachings. What was new, however, was its form — the classical calm with which this young man delivered his sanguinary demands. He did not declaim vehemently like the other members of his party. On the contrary, the words fell quietly, coldly, incisively from his girlishly delicate lips. His alabaster countenance remained expressionless. It was impossible to ignore this deputy's unusual eloquence. The youthful Saint-Just carried away even his opponents with his icy fire.

Martin Catrou listened enthralled. These were his own thoughts that his friend Saint-Just was uttering, and the thoughts of Maxi-

milien Robespierre, but how different they sounded, how new and razor-sharp, as they fell from these lips. They spoke the deadly logic of the Republic; back of them could be heard the inexorable tramp of the revolution.

"Can a people on the very threshold of freedom afford piety toward the memory of its chains?" Saint-Just now asked. "What sort of a republic do you think you will set up, citizens, if the axe trembles in your hands? The nations and peoples do not administer justice according to the principles of dusty lawbooks; the nations and peoples hurl deadly thunderbolts. Citizens! The court which is to sit in judgment on Louis Capet is a court-martial. There is no middle way: either you restore the tyrant to his throne, or you strike off his head."

The three thousand listened in utter silence. They gazed spell-bound at this young man whose every word demanded one thing only: *'La mort, la mort! Death, death!'*

Interrupting the speakers of the Convention with applause or expressions of disapproval was forbidden. But the people in the galleries could not contain themselves; they cheered Saint-Just and shouted in frenzy, *"La mort, la mort! Death to the tyrant!"* The president put on his hat to restore order. The crowd roared on. The young man raised his hand. His delicate fingers succeeded where the president had failed: there was silence.

"This man," Saint-Just declared, "raised troops secretly, in secret proscribed all good, brave citizens, in secret kept his own officials and envoys. He regarded the citizens of a free people as his slaves; he is responsible for the murder of the countless numbers who fell at Nancy, on the Champ de Mars, in the Tuileries."

The moderates had already realized that their cause was lost. This elegant young gentleman's quiet words had sealed the King's fate. Alas, they, the moderates, had only reason and statesmanship behind them, while behind the Montagne party stood the people in their unbridled, murderous frenzy.

"Put him on trial, citizens!" Saint-Just concluded. "At once! Tomorrow! Do not delay! Prudence and sound statesmanship demand it. Louis must die so that France may live."

Howls of "Death, death, death!" filled the hall.

Robespierre had listened without jealousy as his own arguments, even his own turns of phrase, were voiced by Saint-Just. His good friend was clearing the way for equality and fraternity — Jean-

Jacques's way — so that all could march along it. Maximilien was more satisfied than if he had spoken himself.

Chapter 8 No False Humanity!

THE WHOLE COUNTRY took an excited interest in the King's impending trial. The Convention was swamped by a flood of threats and pleas; many offered to die in Louis's stead. It was clear that millions were still loyal to the King. Which made the Jacobins all the more vehement in demanding his death.

Fernand saw Lepeletier almost daily at this time. He was both shocked and fascinated by the way his friend had remorselessly thought out the idea of revolution to its logical conclusion. Injustice to individuals was a necessary consequence of that glorious, ultimate justice which was the essence of the revolution. "I am heart and soul in favor of the revolution, though it should destroy me," Lepeletier declared.

Even in the great controversy which now arose over what was to be done with the deposed monarch he did not allow himself to be confused by emotions. Fernand on the other hand recoiled from the idea that Louis should die. As a boy he had kissed the King's hand; since then he had seen and spoken to Louis many times up till that day on which he had urged him in the name of the National Assembly to declare war. And was not the whole French people as emotionally bound up with Louis as he himself was? Louis was the last of sixty kings of his line; for a thousand long years the people's destiny had been inextricably linked with that of the Capets. This dynasty had given France one common language and made her a nation.

Lepeletier waved Fernand's objections aside with a good-natured gesture. These arguments were nothing but false humanity, he said. With cold-blooded matter-of-factness he showed Fernand that Louis must die because his death was politically necessary. If he were kept imprisoned he would remain the focal point for every antirepublican

movement in France or elsewhere. "We can't abolish the Monarchy," Lepeletier observed in his quiet, pleasant, tenor voice, "and permit its most effective symbol, the King, to remain alive. The very moment we deposed Louis we decided in effect that we must exterminate him. There is hardly any distance between the last step down from the throne and the first step up to the scaffold."

Lepeletier had no personal liking, as Fernand was well aware, for the men of the Montagne party, for Robespierre and Saint-Just; he was fond of poking fun at their inflexibility. He was far more at home with the moderates, the Girondists, those brilliant and resourceful orators and philosophers. But in questions of practical politics he felt that the Jacobins were right. "Every politician must long ago have realized what has to be done with the King," he said. "Robespierre and Saint-Just saw it all clearly. Our friends the moderates were too clever, with the result that they now face the dilemma: which should they sacrifice, the King or the Republic?"

Having unanimously declared the former King guilty, the representatives of the people were now deliberating his punishment.

The session began in the morning, lasted all day and night and a large part of the following day; then, after an adjournment, it again occupied a day and most of the night. An audience of more than two thousand sat tightly packed in the galleries. Ladies in their best attire with lists of deputies in their hands counted the votes, marked off here, and crossed out there.

The first deputies to be called were those from the Haute Garonne. There was absolute silence as the first one said: "*La mort*, death." And the second said, "*La mort*." And the fifth, "*La mort*."

Then the twelve deputies from the Gironde were called, among them the best known of the moderates. Their leader, Vergniaud, had assured his friends yesterday that he would never vote for Louis's death. Now he declared, "As a statesman I was for allowing the people to decide. The Convention has determined otherwise. I submit. My conscience is clear. As a lawyer I vote for death."

One after the other, in an atmosphere of extreme suspense, the deputies mounted the tribune to record their votes, embroidering their verdict in a variety of ways. One said, "Death within twenty-four hours," another, "Death, perhaps already too late to save the Convention's honor." Deputy Duchâtelle, who was seriously ill, had himself carried up to the tribune on a stretcher, voted for the King to be spared, and himself died the same night, which amused some

people. One deputy who had fallen asleep with fatigue was wakened to record his vote, sleepily said, "Death," and fell asleep again.

There was utter silence as the former Duke of Orléans, Louis's cousin, now known as Philippe Égalité, mounted the tribune. He had given his friends a solemn promise that he would abstain from voting. Now he came puffing up the steps, in manner and appearance absurdly like his cousin Louis, and declared, "He who injures the sovereignty of the state must die. *La mort.*"

Fernand was particularly anxious to know what his friends Lepeletier and Martin Catrou would do. Up till the last he irrationally expected that Lepeletier would not send to his death the man who had given him high office and in other ways never showed him anything but good will. But in his even, pleasant voice, Lepeletier said: "*La mort.*"

Lepeletier was followed by a number of deputies who voted for life imprisonment or for postponing execution and submitting the death sentence to a popular vote. Many deputies, even many radicals, voted this way. The scales rose, the scales fell; the outcome was hard to determine.

There was an Englishman sitting as a member of the Convention of the French Republic, a certain Thomas Paine who had played a decisive part in founding the American Republic. Since Louis's crown now lay in the gutter, he said, Louis himself should be banished, and to the United States of America. There, burdened with the memory of the crimes he had committed as king of France, he would learn from constant observation of the well-being of the American people that not monarchy but democracy was the proper system of government.

At last Martin Catrou was called. Fernand leaned forward. In his clear, incisive voice Martin said, "Death. That's all."

The secretary of the Convention counted the votes. It took a long time; they were counted three times. The air in the packed hall was foul with fumes from the stoves, the braziers, the thousands of candles. The people were uneasy; they wanted to get up and go out into the night for a breath of fresh air. But they stayed lest they miss the moment when the verdict was announced. And upon those thousands waiting in suspense Jean-Jacques looked down from his bas-relief.

At last, at two-fifteen in the morning the president mounted the tribune. He announced that of 749 members 28 were absent; accordingly, of the 721 members present 361 would constitute a majority.

The vote for imprisonment, banishment, or deferment of the death penalty was 360; for immediate death — 361.

There was a fearful silence in the hall. So the King was condemned to death by *one* vote.

The president put on his hat and announced, "The sentence which the representatives of the sovereign people have pronounced upon Capet is therefore immediate execution."

Still there was no sound. Then a few isolated voices cried, "Long live the Republic!" But almost no one joined in.

Fernand stood up and stretched his stiff limbs. The old wound in his foot was bothering him. He felt stupefied. By a majority of *one!* If his friend Michel or his friend Martin had voted differently, the King's life would have been saved.

Lepeletier, after the interminable session, slept late into the day. Toward evening he went to the *Traiteur Février* in the Palais Royal to listen around in this elegant restaurant and find out what people thought of his action. The King's supporters, all the moderates, and even some of the Montagnards had expected him to vote in favor of sparing Louis. Undoubtedly they would not understand why he had had no scruples about sacrificing Louis, whose cause was already lost, rather than be a traitor to his own reason. Certainly, since the King's life had depended on a single vote, many people would call him a Judas because he had voted for the Republic and against the King.

He was greeted by friends when he entered the restaurant. He ate and chatted. One or two people remarked that it was a bit unfortunate that just his vote should have decided the death penalty. Others praised him, rather too fulsomely, for his courage. It was all just about as Lepeletier had expected. He did not stay long, for he was still tired out from the interminable sitting. He said good night to his friends.

In the neighborhood of the Palais Royal a number of variously disguised malcontents and fugitives had found secret hideouts with mistresses, tradespeople who had supplied the Court, and sympathizers of all kinds. Among these partisans of the Monarchy was one of the King's halberdiers, a certain Lepâris. He nursed a particularly fanatical hatred for the Duke of Orléans, that arch-traitor who had condemned his own cousin, the anointed King, to the scaffold. All day long he had been lurking near the Palais Royal, where the Duke lived, in the hope of meeting and killing him. But Orléans was worn

out with the strain of the sitting; he stayed at home and slept. In the evening the halberdier Lepâris, an imposing, well-dressed figure, went to look for the Duke in the Restaurant Février. He did not find him. He did, on the other hand, catch sight of Lepeletier's well-known, ugly, hated face. Here was another who had had favors heaped upon him by the King and had then betrayed him. The halberdier approached Lepeletier as he was paying his check at the cashier's desk. "Are you not Monsieur Lepeletier?" he asked. Lepeletier agreed that he was. "Did you not vote for the King's execution?" he asked further. "Yes, monsieur," Lepeletier answered. "I voted as my conscience bade me. But what business is that of yours?" "Here is your reward, Judas!" cried Lepâris, and drawing a dagger from under his coat, he stabbed Lepeletier in the side. He died within a few minutes.

That day Fernand, too, slept long. In the evening he went out to look for Michel. He came upon a great crowd outside his friend's house, and heard what had happened. He felt faint and sick. He went into the house and saw the body, saw also their mutual friend Jacques-Louis David drawing the dead man. He refused to grasp what had happened, grasped it nonetheless — grasped that his great friend, Michel Lepeletier, with his cynicism, his fanatical rationalism, had met with a death that was the logical conclusion of what his life had been.

Fernand went to the Jacobin Club in the Rue Honoré. Defiant and triumphant, Martin Catrou told him, "Your friend was a good man, and he's even more useful to the Republic dead than alive. Until tonight the martyr was Louis Capet; now it will be Michel Lepeletier."

Fernand understood what he meant. The King had passionate supporters in Paris, men willing to die for him; great demonstrations had been expected, perhaps even open rebelling. The senseless murder of a people's deputy who had no more than done his duty had turned all sympathies toward the dead man. Now Paris talked more about Lepeletier's sudden and tragic end than about the death which awaited the King. Lepeletier was the martyr of the Republic.

The Jacobins were quick and vigorous in exploiting the assassination. That very night they issued a manifesto. 'Citizens,' it ran, 'this dastardly stroke was directed not against the life of an individual but against the whole nation: against freedom, against the sovereignty of the people.' That same night, too, it was resolved that the dead martyr was to be carried in state to the Panthéon and that

a statue was to be erected in his memory in the Place Vendôme. A bust of him was to be placed in the Convention next to those of Brutus and Jean-Jacques. A section of Paris, a street, and a public square were to be named after him, as well as several communities, large and small, throughout the country.

King Louis said good-bye to his family that night. He dined with his confessor. Then he read the newspaper, the *Mercure de France*. Then, in Hume's *History of England* he read the chapter describing the execution of Charles I. He had begun work on a translation of this book and regretted not having finished it.

He was leaving a good deal unfinished. In his thirty-eight years of life he had done much that he ought not to have done and left undone much that he ought to have done. He ought not, for example, to have helped the rebellious English provinces of America against his cousin the King of England. And he ought, for example, to have dealt with those rebels and heretics Voltaire and Rousseau before it was too late. Had he done so, everything would have turned out differently. He had paid too much attention to the words of his advisers instead of listening to his own divinely inspired inner voice, and his advisers had been deluded. Most of his nobles had been deluded. They had dug their own graves, and his own as well.

But he did not wish, on his last night on earth, to indulge in regrets or accusations. He felt he could justifiably claim that before every momentous decision he had labored mightily, had searched his conscience, listened to his advisers, consulted the examples of history. His intentions had always been for the best, and one of these days his Frenchmen and posterity would understand that.

He shut his eyes. Then it occurred to him that in the morning he must not forget to take out the money that he had left in the pocket of his coat and add it to the fee of his defending counsel, good, brave Malesherbes. Then he fell asleep. He slept deeply and well.

Next morning the whole country, the whole world, looked on as Louis was driven to the Place de la Révolution and led onto the scaffold. The smallest detail was noticed, recorded, preserved. And when, at twenty-three minutes past ten o'clock, the executioner Sanson seized Louis's severed head by the hair, raised it aloft, and strode around the scaffold displaying it on all four sides to the people of Paris, a tremendous cry went up from the city: "Long live the Republic!" Thousands of people stampeded onto the scaffold and fought

to dab handkerchiefs, scarves, pieces of paper in the blood. One man, completely beside himself, sprinkled drops of blood from the scaffold onto the people below and screamed: "They told us the King's blood would be upon our heads. I baptize you! I baptize you! And so it is upon our heads!"

Escorted by gendarmes and officials of the Commune of Paris, the King's body was taken to the nearby cemetery of Madeleine de la Ville l'Évêque. There the body, with the head between its knees, was lowered in a sort of basket into a very deep pit, the bottom of which was covered with a thick layer of unslaked lime. A second thick layer of unslaked lime was poured on top of the body, and then a third, so that not even the gold of all the potentates in Europe would be able to produce the smallest relic from the remains of this last of the Louis'.

In the meantime preparations were being made for transferring Lepeletier to the Panthéon. The painter David, France's foremost artist, had been ordered to take charge of the funeral rites.

Carefully embalmed, the corpse was displayed to the people in the Place Vendôme. Pale, naked but for a cloth thrown over the lower parts, the body lay on an elevated bed of state, the wound gaping in its side.

Borne aloft on a high ceremonial carriage of antique design, the body was taken through the streets of Paris. Two children stood at the dead man's feet, each carrying a torch pointing to the ground. Venerable old men in togas, bearing palms, walked before the carriage; veiled young girls carrying flowers surrounded it. Before the funeral procession moved off, the president of the Convention mounted the carriage and placed a wreath of oak leaves on the dead body. All the deputies of the Convention, all the members of the Jacobin Clubs, and every patriotic society and branch organization in the city of Paris took part in the procession. Everywhere were banners veiled in crepe, muffled drums. Lepeletier's bloodstained clothing was carried in the procession. Huge placards extolled the murdered man's writings and acts, his penal code, his book entitled *Free Education for All*, the many laws which bore his name. Even larger placards recorded in enormous letters for the benefit of the citizens of Paris the last words which Lepeletier was said to have spoken: 'I am glad to shed my blood for my country. The blood of patriots is the seed of freedom.' And above all this, in mournful triumph, towered the bed of state with the corpse whose bloody, gaping

wound was more eloquent than any words written, sung, or spoken.

Fernand waited for the procession near the Panthéon.

His heart was full of grief and bitter knowledge. This death, too, like that of the King, was a consequence of Jean-Jacques's ideas. He thought of all the clever remarks, resigned, skeptical, and at the same time confident, that Lepeletier would have made about his own death. He had been a true freethinker, the enemy of all moral hypocrisy — a very human pupil of Lucretius and Jean-Jacques. Fernand could hear Michel declaring in his quiet, pleasant voice: 'I am heart and soul in favor of the revolution, even if it destroys me.' They had certainly dressed up these simple words of his in a theatrical guise. How Lepeletier would have laughed at these Jacobins for hailing him as a Brutus, a hero and a martyr.

How much misinterpretation there was on all sides concerning Jean-Jacques and his work! How many lies! And this last journey that his dear friend was making in Jean-Jacques's name, how incredible and tragically heroic, how grotesquely false it was! But Lepeletier would not have refused to make it. For these lies and errors were a source of life.

The procession had reached the Panthéon. The choir of the Grand Opera sang a hymn in honor of the dead man. The corpse was put into a coffin and ceremoniously lowered into the vaults next to the body of Voltaire.

Chapter 9 La Terreur! La Terreur!

GIRARDIN SHUDDERED when he heard of the King's death. On the day the horror took place he shut himself into his study. He did not eat, could not bear to see anybody.

To restore his tranquillity he went to Jean-Jacques's books and read some of the solitary, melancholy reveries. He grew calmer. In the midst of this sea of madness and cruelty his Ermenonville remained an island of wisdom and peace. Here was Jean-Jacques's Nature and here his sacred remains lay at rest.

Then Girardin was overcome afresh with rage at the King's murder. He brooded on the horrible event. For days he gave way alternately to profound depression and frenzied, impotent rage, and then again to grief and despair. But he gave no outward indication of his anger and sorrow, and resisted Monsieur Gerber's timorous efforts to induce him to talk.

Only when Fernand came did he give vent to his distress and bitter disillusionment. And now that he was letting himself go in the presence of his son, his angry lament over the great injustice to the King became grotesquely mingled in his mind with irritation against the revolutionaries for all sorts of petty misdemeanors that were insignificant compared with this one monstrous crime, but which concerned him personally. If the mob did have to destroy the bronze statues of the kings, they might at least have spared that of Henry the Fourth, whom they themselves referred to as 'the Good,' and who had founded Ermenonville.

And now, finally, he also told his son how Robespierre and Saint-Just had offended him when they came to visit Jean-Jacques's grave. On that occasion he had felt it his duty to invite them to sit down at table with him; but they had brusquely and contemptuously declined. He had not told a soul of this insult, but it had rankled, and now his anger was coming to the surface. Perhaps one could not prevent the Jacobins from infesting Jean-Jacques's last resting place, but why must they add insult to injury in being rude to him, the grave's custodian?

Then he reverted to the grand issues and bewailed them in grandiloquent phrases.

Fernand listened sympathetically, without interrupting him. Only after a pause, did he gradually begin to defend the men of the Convention. Granted that many of them were vain, uncouth, and violent. But on the other hand their hatred of tyranny and their eagerness to help the oppressed were beyond doubt sincere. The Jacobins' achievements outweighed their worst crimes. Privilege had been abolished, inequality had ceased, the people's state, the Republic, had become a reality.

But Girardin continued to carp. The reasonable voices of the handful of talented leaders were being drowned out by loudmouthed demagogues. The real rulers were the mob of Paris: in other words, stupidity and ignorance. For what their good friend Madame Roland

used to say was certainly true: the larger the mob, the longer their ears.

But at this point Monsieur Gerber intervened. Monsieur le Marquis was right: much of what was happening seemed arbitrary, foolish, harsh and cruel. But if you considered the events of the past years as a whole, you could not escape the joyful realization that in spite of everything mankind was progressing according to the laws of a grand, benign necessity. "In spite of everything, the course of the revolution is following the teachings of Jean-Jacques," he cried. "Do not let the bitter harshness of the revolution destroy your faith in Jean-Jacques, messieurs!" he implored them, his eyes glowing with an inner fire. His two listeners were silent. They realized with something like consternation how very much Monsieur Gerber, although so much younger, resembled the dead Master.

What everyone had foreseen happened. After the King's execution the allies sent new and larger armies against his murderers. The Republican armies were thrown back. Once more the enemy was on the soil of France.

And now the Convention announced: 'We decree *levée en masse*. We shall enlist every citizen in the service of the army.'

Girardin was carried away by the lofty, fiercely patriotic language in which the decree providing for universal military service was expressed. But then he observed with mounting indignation what severe measures the dictators of Paris were resorting to in order to round up their recruits. They confiscated the property of those who failed to report, arrested their parents, fined any commune which did not hand over delinquents, And now Girardin was assailed by all the painful qualms that a faithful disciple of Jean-Jacques could not help feeling in the face of such a decree and the methods being used to enforce it. Had not Jean-Jacques taught: 'The government may not require the individual to sacrifice himself for the good of the many if he is unwilling to do so'? Were the rights of man then so equivocal?

Fernand defended the new decree. His father might cite Jean-Jacques, but so with equal justification could the authors of universal military service. For had not Jean-Jacques also taught: 'Injustice committed for the benefit of mankind is justice'? And as Fernand sensed that for all his disapproval and hemming and hawing, his father was secretly pleased by the Convention's bold temerity, he went on, "We are more courageous than the Americans were. General Washington, too, demanded the introduction of universal military

service when their newborn freedom was threatened, but his Congress would not grant it him. It has remained for us to realize the dream of all republicans: to weld — by coercion and appeal to reason — a whole people into a militant unity in the fight for freedom.”

His father thought to himself, ‘It is more difficult for me to be fair about this new army than it is for my boy. He did not have to go through my bitter personal experience. He does not know that this new France of ours calls on everyone but rejects us, its most loyal sons.’ For he had still not told Fernand that the army had already rejected him.

He was wrong. Fernand had had precisely the same experience. Fernand had, on the strength of his previous military service, applied for some sort of post as an officer, however humble, and he, too, had been rejected. And like his father he had been silent about this humiliating experience.

So they sat facing one another, estimating the new army’s merits and demerits, both full of bitterness over their rejection, both striving to forget their resentment and to think only of the cause.

Though Fernand was unwilling to admit to his father that he had any objections to the introduction of universal military service, he made no secret of his doubts to Martin Catrou. They were the doubts of a professional soldier. Could these new, untrained troops be effectively absorbed into the existing army? Would these recruits, badly drilled, or even not drilled at all, be able to stand up to the disciplined armies of the allies?

Indeed, the news from the front was bad enough. The soldiers marched enthusiastically into battle with songs on their lips, but when artillery fire began they fled in panic. Defeat followed defeat. The army of the north was pushed aside; once again the capital was threatened. On top of this, large parts of the country were infuriated by the conscription. The Vendée, half of the south, were in outright revolt.

But Martin Catrou was as unperturbed as ever. He refused to grant that these fresh blows were anything but a healthful fever that was burning out all the slag, so that the people could be forged into true unity.

“We are certain to win in the end,” he insisted again and again. “The army of the people will defeat the armies of the allied kings. This is not mere faith, it is mathematical certainty. You should be able to see that, Fernand. The tyrants are working only for themselves,

and improvising from one day to the next; the Republic, and the Republic alone, is capable of conceiving long-range plans and putting them into effect. Our soldiers alone are rational beings; they know their freedom and happiness are at stake. Their opponents are poor fools, half-animals, fighting for the right to keep their chains."

He paced ponderously back and forth among the furniture that crammed his room. "What the revolution has lacked," he announced, "is ardor, inspiration, the need to be even greater than great. True heroism springs only from despair. Now, when the revolution is fighting for its existence, it will show what it is worth." He spoke the words incisively, in his strident voice. In his enthusiasm red blotches appeared on his forehead. Widow Catrou and Jeanne sat and listened, the old woman chuckling with satisfaction, Jeanne with an ecstatic expression.

"I have work to do," Martin announced abruptly, and sat down to his papers. He was making it quite clear to Fernand that he regarded it as a waste of time to explain the glory and grandeur of the Republic to one of so little faith.

He had in truth not a minute to spare. The Convention was working at full speed and without respite, and Martin sat on several committees. Even though it was engaged in fighting for its life, the Republic, with dogged zeal, was introducing countless big and little peacetime reforms. It drafted an uncompromising constitution. It decreed state support for the needy, free schooling, a uniform judicial system for the entire country, compensation for the falsely accused. It established a uniform and easily understood system of weights and measures, introduced the telegraph and many other technical inventions, set up scientific institutes. It established seven great museums. One of these, the Museum of the Nation, was designed to contain memorials of French history and scholarship; a second, the Louvre, was to be devoted to works of art from all over the world.

From time to time Martin allowed his friend to attend sittings of his committees, and the amount of work these committees got through convinced Fernand, more than any of Martin's fanatical speeches, of the strength of the Republic. Draft legislation would be worked out within extremely short time limits, yet at the same time with the utmost carefulness. No words were wasted; arguments would be discussed with icy heat. And the Convention worked in the same manner. It debated and passed with energy and speed measures designed to alter for all time the structure of the state and the life

of the individual citizen — alter these in the spirit of Jean-Jacques. And the amazing thing was that these measures became a living reality from the moment they were signed and sealed.

The new masters were inhuman, brutal. But Fernand had to grant them this much: in an unbelievably short time, this small handful of men had swept millions farther along the path of reason than at any time since history began.

The war was fought by Convention, army, and the people with the same clear-headed intensity. Political commissars were sent to the front to make careful checks on the Republican virtue of the leaders in the field. More generals were dismissed, new executions took place. There remained in command only officers who combined Republican reliability with military ability. The allies had rejoiced too soon. The people's army gave no more ground. It reeled under the blows it received, but it stood firm.

New measures were also taken against the enemies within.

"In the Republic," Robespierre proclaimed, "whoever is not Republican is an alien, an enemy. He does not enjoy the protection of society. The Republic owes this protection only to those citizens who are loyal to it. To its enemies it owes death and destruction. That is what Jean-Jacques taught. The revolution in being is war, and war means the reign of terror. In war, terror is a necessary attribute of virtue; without it virtue would be impotent. And what is terror? Nothing else but summary, severe, inflexible justice."

Accordingly, laws of the utmost severity were passed against 'suspects,' and courts with extraordinary powers were set up — people's courts, revolutionary tribunals — to investigate these suspects and enemies of the Republic and punish them with unexampled severity.

With his mind Fernand understood and accepted this iron dominion, the right of the state, but in his heart he rejected it. At once attracted and repelled, he saw the state as Janus-faced: in one aspect benevolent and full of natural wisdom; in the other, hard and cruel. He loved and admired the grandeur and goodheartedness of the populace, but its brutality he abhorred.

He attended a sitting of the Paris Revolutionary Tribunal. There, in a drab hall, in their everyday clothing, sat the fifteen jurymen, citizens of Paris — workmen, artists, shopkeepers, artisans. At a green table on a small platform sat the three judges. They wore the paraphernalia of their office, the plumed hat with the cockade, and diagonally across their chests the tricolored ribbon with its heavy silver medal-

lion. Above their heads a tablet proclaimed the rights of man; to the right of the tablet a bust of Lepeletier surveyed the hall, on the left a bust of Jean-Jacques.

The defendant sat in a comfortable, if shabby, armchair. There was no jailer in attendance, but National Guards were close at hand.

The defendant was a certain Ménéil-Clermont, a man of the lesser nobility. He had left the country soon after the storming of the Bastille, but had returned before expiration of the time limit established by law, obviously in order not to forfeit his property. Now, however, the new law against 'suspects' called for a rigorous examination of everyone who had emigrated.

The first witness was a tailor by the name of Granval. He testified that in a café known as The Poplar of Freedom the defendant had made blasphemous remarks about the Republic and the Convention. The witness declared he had been sitting at the next table and heard him clearly. The defendant denied this and protested his loyalty to the Republic. He had, he added, on a previous occasion had a quarrel with the tailor over a violet-colored frock coat which Citizen Granval had bungled in the cutting and then overcharged him for. A second witness deposed that the defendant had tried to induce him to sell a piece of land by offering him English money. Citizen Ménéil-Clermont replied that it was not he who had offered English money, but his partner in the deal, who had insisted on being paid in English currency. The transaction was obscure. At any rate, it was certain that the accused had once emigrated to England, and probable that he had smuggled out a part of his fortune at the same time.

In grandiloquent language the public prosecutor declared that the charges against Ménéil-Clermont of harboring Royalist sentiments and having illegal dealings with the enemy had been fully proved and asked that the defendant should be sentenced to four years' imprisonment for insulting the Republic, and, for twice conspiring with the enemy, should twice be sentenced to death. The jury debated long before finding Citizen Ménéil-Clermont guilty. He was sentenced to death.

Fernand could not get the wretched affair of Ménéil-Clermont out of his head. The men who had condemned him, these Duponts and Durants, were presumably amiable men in their everyday lives, men who would listen to reason. But the men who were sending him to the guillotine were not the Duponts and the Durants; they were the voice of the Republic. The Republic was at war; the Republic had

detached itself by deadly acts from the rest of the world, which was vicious and enslaved, and the Republic exterminated all who were in contact with that world.

So the jurymen on the revolutionary tribunals killed; the political commissars in the army killed; the members of the Convention killed — they all killed in Jean-Jacques's name, sincerely convinced that they were putting his teachings into practice. And the bewildering thing was that they were justified in invoking him.

It was from Martin that Fernand had learned of Robespierre's meeting with Jean-Jacques.

So Robespierre too, who was more powerful in France than any king had ever been, and for whom Fernand could not tell whether he felt hatred or admiration — Robespierre too could call himself a friend and disciple of Jean-Jacques.

Which of them would Jean-Jacques himself have recognized as the better pupil — himself, Fernand, or Maximilien Robespierre?

Chapter 10 The Suspects

MONSIEUR ROBINET had proved himself in the face of many perils to be a man of courage, but now he lived in a permanent state of anxiety. This criminally dangerous fanatic whom they had made dictator, this Maximilien Robespierre, had exposed himself as far more loathsomely despotic than any king of France had ever been, for he was attacking the sanctity of private property. 'We are not going to allow the privileges of the nobility to be replaced by the privileges of the rich,' this bloodthirsty lunatic had declared. 'All this freedom and equality of ours is a mockery unless the aim of all our laws and institutions shall be to put an end to the present unjust distribution of property.'

Then, to be sure, he had said reassuringly, 'Have no fear, all you scavengers who think of nothing but money; I shall not lay hands on your treasures.' But the capricious tyrant had forgotten these laudable

promises by the next day, and amid the frenetic cheers of the Jacobins had screamed out across the country phrases borrowed from that other crazy fool who lay buried in Ermenonville: 'When, in a democracy, a handful of people possess far more than the average citizen, either the state breaks up altogether or else it ceases to be a democracy.' And he had added the commentary: 'The rights of man must be supplemented by measures controlling the ownership of property, otherwise they would exist only for the rich, for profiteers and speculators.'

Monsieur Robinet felt as if Robespierre were addressing these words to him personally, as if he were pointing the finger at him, a harmless old man. He feared for his dear seventy-five-year-old life, feared even more for Gilberte, the widow of an aristocrat who had fought against the Republic. He no longer appeared in Paris at all; he dwelt alone with Gilberte and the child, withdrawn from the world, in a gardener's cottage at Latour, living the life of an old peasant.

He would have preferred to pack up at once and be off over the border to Spain with Gilberte and the child.

But Gilberte refused. Perhaps her grandfather was right and they were in danger, but in her heart she felt sure everything would turn out all right. Fernand, too, felt strongly that she should on no account allow her child to grow up among the children of the émigré aristocracy. Marie-Sidonie should be brought up to lead a good, sensible life. Fernand himself was certainly not contemplating flight, though the law against suspects threatened him almost as much as herself. At the same time she was aware that he was suffering over the excesses and injustice. His face was becoming prematurely lined. It even seemed to her that his limp had grown more pronounced. But he never voiced his doubts; rather he spoke with boyish exuberance of how lucky they were to live in such an era.

Girardin often visited Latour, and Robinet came often to Ermenonville. Robinet regarded his association with the suspect *ci-devant* as risky; Girardin was annoyed with Robinet for allowing the fine old Château Latour to go to ruin out of sheer funk. Each found the other unbearably cantankerous, but they visited each other again and again.

There they would sit — old, lonely, disconsolate. The philosophers were to blame for it all, Robinet railed. Girardin pointedly blamed greedy financiers for having brought France to her present pass by blocking necessary reforms. On one thing they were agreed, that no

domination by priestlings and courtiers was as bad as domination by the mob.

Robinet remarked venomously that the nuisance could not possibly last much longer. Even now in Paris they were scraping along only by means of compulsory loans. It was unthinkable that a regime could endure which threatened the very foundations of any community, namely private property. In a few weeks the allied armies would enter Paris and the curtain would fall on this grotesque farce.

Grotesque farce? Girardin demurred. Monsieur Robinet was going too far. Granted, these fellows were barbarians; yet there was something of classical grandeur in the way they refused to accept defeat, but enacted ever more severe measures and redoubled the violence of their attacks on the enemy.

"Classical grandeur!" Monsieur Robinet repeated scathingly. "It's madness, I tell you, monsieur. These classical heroes of yours belong in the madhouse."

But at this point Girardin stood up and pointed his stick at Monsieur Robinet: "And let me tell you, monsieur, I respect this madness, as you are pleased to call it. I call it courage and patriotism."

Robinet shook his head over the stubborn old fool.

He found it even weirder the way young Girardin stayed in the burning house as if rooted to the spot — and moreover, he was to blame for his Gilberte's refusal to move. When a person fought so violently against his own interests he was positively courting disaster.

Once again Monsieur Robinet was right.

For a new mayor was appointed at Senlis in place of the genial Leblanc. The new man was a certain Vincent Huret, a violent, fanatical revolutionary. It outraged him that the two Girardins, those inveterate toadies and lackeys of the tyrant, should be regarded as patriots. They were undoubtedly suspects by definition of the law. A whole crowd of *ci-devants* were making Ermenonville their rendezvous, doubtless in order to hatch conspiracies against the Republic. Citizen Huret denounced the Girardins to the Committee for Public Safety in Paris.

Since Huret made no secret of this patriotic action, Monsieur Robinet heard of the imminent peril. He was conscious of a certain satisfaction and, mingled with all his fear and anxiety, a faint stirring of hope. Now at last the Girardins would see reason and cross the border, and then he would be able to persuade Gilberte to flee also.

He drove at once to Ermenonville with Gilberte. Reported what

he had heard. Urgently advised the Girardins to clear out as quickly as possible. He had agents in the Pyrenees who would help them to enter Spain, he said.

"You are seeing ghosts, monsieur," was Girardin's proud reply. "Do you seriously believe the Republic would lay hands on the man who offered its originator his last refuge?" And for all his brashness Monsieur Robinet did not have the heart to tell the old fool that the rumors involving him in Jean-Jacques's mysterious death were being revived and were increasing the danger. He said only, "This fellow Huret amounts to something in Paris. His denunciation will be followed up, you may be sure. And once a man is in the mill it is not so easy to get out. Be sensible!"

Fernand knew that, as once before, Robinet was giving good advice and that they ought to leave. But everything in him rebelled against the idea. His whole life was by now bound up with his desire to help in founding the new France. He could not run away from the Republic — his Republic. That would be defeat, collapse; his life would be poisoned forever.

"Try to persuade your father, Fernand!" Gilberte pleaded. "You know quite well that if they want to be nasty they can take anyone they please under this new decree."

It was true, Fernand had to admit. But was not Gilberte herself even more in danger?

"A former tax-farmer is surely just as suspect as a former marquis," he challenged Robinet, "and even more so the widow of the émigré Courcelles. Take Gilberte to a safe place!" he demanded with sudden impetuosity.

"And what about you?" Gilberte asked bluntly.

With something of an effort Fernand declared, "I must not go. There are things for me to do here. I must prove that we are not cowards. There are certain people to whom I must prove it!" He was thinking of Martin.

He felt with painful clarity the ambiguousness of his position. He was as devoted to the Republic as Martin or Saint-Just or this new mayor of Senlis. But he was not permitted to serve it. The army rejected him. The government rejected him. He was a suspect. And yet he understood the prevailing mistrust, and he accepted it. "I believe in the people and their judgment," he said, speaking to Gilberte rather than to the others. "I am not going to run away, thereby fortifying unjust suspicions."

"What sort of judgment do you expect from this rabble?" Monsieur Robinet remonstrated desperately. "These people realize that by tomorrow or the day after they will be dangling from the gallows as they deserve. They have lost their nerve and they are venting their senseless rage on all decent folk. Fernand, my dear boy, be sensible! Go to Spain! Do not rush into your own destruction!"

Gilberte said no more. But her anxious eyes remained fixed on Fernand. In a low, tormented, reluctant voice he repeated with bitter determination what his friend Michel Lepeletier had said: "I am heart and soul in favor of the revolution, even if it destroys me."

Two days later the mayor of Ermenonville and the *procureur* appeared at the château with several gendarmes. With some embarrassment they explained to the dismayed major-domo that they wished to speak to farmer and proprietor Girardin and to Citizen Girardin, his son. The major-domo said, "I will announce you, messieurs," and hastened to Girardin.

After a moment of bitter consternation the Marquis composed himself. He dressed with care, letting the officials cool their heels. At last he entered the hall with his gold-knobbed cane in one hand and in the other a copy of the *Social Contract*.

"Good day, messieurs," he said politely. "What can I do for you?" "An unpleasant matter, Citizen Girardin," the mayor replied. "An extremely embarrassing business. Perhaps you would —" He turned to the *procureur*, who, pulling himself together, explained in a strained official manner that they had come on orders from the Committee for Public Safety in Paris. Since suspects had repeatedly visited Ermenonville and there was a possibility that they might be in hiding there, he and the mayor were obliged to search the house. Furthermore, they had come to take both Girardins into custody, since doubts existed as to their loyalty, and since their unsupervised presence and activities constituted a threat to public welfare.

"Why, of course," Girardin retorted with bitter mockery. "I am keeping a Royalist army hidden in my cellar and at the right moment it will be let loose on the country. My house under suspicion!" he burst out. "My house — Jean-Jacques's last refuge! My house, which has been open at all times and as transparent as a pane of glass. Search it, then, messieurs! Get on with your business!"

The officials and gendarmes stood there looking foolish. "What would you have us do, my dear Citizen Girardin?" the mayor apologized. "We are acting on orders." Girardin paid no attention. "I a

suspect!" he went on, and there was such pain in his voice that the officials felt like criminals. "I a conspirator against the public welfare! See here, gentlemen, what my great friend Jean-Jacques had to say about your so-called public welfare." He opened his copy of the *Social Contract* and read: "How much trouble all this talk of the public welfare has already caused! For how much injustice it has served as a pretext!" He thrust the book under the officials' noses.

Embarrassed, the *procureur* drew the order of the Committee for Public Safety out of his sleeve. "See for yourself, Citizen," he told Girardin. "Here is the order. It says 'for immediate attention,' underlined. So we must attend to it."

Girardin glanced absently at the seal of the Republic, on which, ringed round by the words 'Freedom, Equality, Fraternity,' the Goddess of Liberty sat enthroned. "I know you are not to blame, messieurs," he said sadly. "But" — and here he drew himself up and pointed his cane at the officials — "you can take this message to those who sent you: To doubt the civic virtue of the man who afforded the author of the *Social Contract* his last refuge is only possible for men who are bad citizens themselves."

The officials made a cursory search of the house, and drew up a report to the effect that they had found nothing suspicious. They then left a few gendarmes there and informed Paris that the authorities at Ermenonville were keeping Citizens Girardin, father and son, at the disposal of the Committee for Public Safety.

PART FIVE

*JEAN-JACQUES'S
TRANSFIGURATION*

LA BOURBE

'DEATH THEN IS NOUGHT TO US'

MAN IS GOOD

A LINK IN THE CHAIN

THE GODDESS OF REASON

'ARDUOUS ARE THE PATHS ALONG WHICH MERCY GUIDES US'

VOICES FROM THE MIRE

JEAN-JACQUES'S REVENGE

THE BODY SNATCHER

ERMENONVILLE DESERTED

TOMORROW, THE DAY AFTER, AND THE REST OF OUR LIVES

JEAN-JACQUES'S TRANSFIGURATION

*Napoleon, at Ermenonville,
to Fernand de Girardin:*

NAPOLEON: Perhaps it would have been better for the world if Jean-Jacques had never existed.

FERNAND: But, sire, then there would have been no revolution. Then you would not be Emperor of the French.

NAPOLEON: Perhaps it would be better if I did not exist either.

GIRARDIN

The victory of the French Revolution was the victory of a new order of society. It was the victory of bourgeois property over feudal property, of enlightenment over superstition, of industry over heroic idleness, of civil rights over medieval privileges.

KARL MARX

Chapter 1 La Bourbe

WHILE GIRARDIN was allowed to remain at Château Ermenonville under guard, Fernand was taken to Paris for imprisonment. The jail he was consigned to was officially called Port-Libre but was known colloquially as 'La Bourbe,' The Swamp, after the quarter of the city in which it lay. Fernand was brought into the building by way of the Jean-Jacques Rousseau Steps — a strange way for him to enter a prison he thought, and almost smiled.

The inmates of La Bourbe were not badly treated. Posted on every landing was a decree of the One and Indivisible Republic stating that, until sentenced, prisoners had the same right to humane treatment as all other citizens. The Commune of Paris which was charged with the administration of prisons took these words seriously. In contrast to most buildings in Paris, a great many of which had suffered damage in the revolutionary fighting, the whole of this large building with its two wings was in good condition and kept well heated. It was surrounded by a large garden and had a fine view of the Observatory and the open country beyond. The inmates enjoyed every freedom possible within its four walls. They were free to pursue their callings, whether they were tailors, hairdressers, cobblers, or clock-makers. Any complaints concerning conditions in the prison were heard by the head warden, Citizen Haly, who listened patiently and did his best to remedy matters.

Fernand shared a dormitory with seven other prisoners in the section called 'Égalité.' They were quick to accept him and give him what help they could, tipping him off on prison life. They advised him to supplement the diet, though it was not at all bad, with provisions which he could have sent in from outside. He was shown an enormous raw leg of mutton which hung in the window.

The prisoners held in La Bourbe were of every variety — high aristocrats and beggars, Royalists and democrats. Many of them were people of no consequence, picked up here or there. A good number,

however, were persons of rank and reputation in Paris and throughout the country. There were some whose names and accomplishments were famous the world over. The roster of names made Fernand's head swim; it seemed that there must be thousands locked up here. But when he asked Warden Haly how many prisoners there were he was astonished to receive the answer, "Right now you number five hundred and seventeen."

This little world was noisy, colorful, and of a bewildering diversity. There was Boivin, a talkative old bore who took everyone aside to confide that he was secretly a Royalist but that he had the stupid authorities well hoodwinked; they took him for a *mouton*, an informer. Then there was Citizeness Prévôt, ninety-one years old, who was suspected of counterrevolutionary tendencies because she had an income of a hundred thousand livres. Day after day she announced in her shaky voice that she had survived many blows of fate, nor would this be the last of them. There was the good Doctor Dupontet, who not only strove to restore the sick to health but pursued the healthy with advice of all kinds. There was lackey Cuny, who went around in a state of deep dejection, being accused of having stolen from his former master, and who finally cut his own throat, whereupon his innocence was established. There was Citizen Dorival, a hawker at the fair at Saint-Germain, who went about in the uniform of a general and told colorful tales from his past. He was called 'the great Tralala' and was jokingly said to have flown in a Montgolfier, an air balloon, from the Sahara Desert to La Bourbe. There was Gille, the eternal optimist who crept about at night inscribing encouraging messages on the walls to cheer up the others. Twice already he had been sharply reprimanded by the prison authorities and even warned by his fellow inmates that such antics would finally bring him to the guillotine, but he could not make himself stop. There was Citizeness Carlier, whose swollen belly was rumored to be due to a false pregnancy, but who bore a child after all. There was Citizen Duvivier, who had ardently taken up the revolutionary cause soon after the storming of the Bastille. However he had the royal lilies tattooed on his back and had therefore incurred suspicion. He was an elegant and handsome fellow who paid court to all the ladies. And though obviously a philanderer, clearly the ladies were unable to resist the invitation to be shown the tattooed lilies. There was Robin, the former deputy. His political activities in the first National Assembly were long since ancient history, but he continued to defend them with

embittered eloquence. There were streetwalkers who conducted themselves with primness and reserve, and decent housewives who flaunted their charms. There was the celebrated writer Florian, author of *Numa* and *Guillaume Tell*, and Robert Vigée, the lyric poet whose verses everyone knew by heart. There was Citizen Desjardins, a complacent man with an easy manner who preached confidence to the despairing and then suddenly threw himself out of a window. And in the midst of all these people — the hypochondriacs and optimists, old men and children, the quarrelsome and the peaceable — innumerable dogs, both large and small, ran barking. For at least half of the prisoners had brought their dogs with them.

Whenever the weather permitted they were allowed outdoors. In the evening they assembled in the large common room, or 'salon.' Inscriptions on the walls proclaimed: 'The ideals which all true patriots cherish remain the same in every situation: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.' Or again: 'The free man loves freedom, even when he is deprived of it.' Under it was posted the bill of fare for the following day.

The salon was the place for all kinds of social activities. There were games of chess, tricktrack, and cards. The women made lint, some people read, someone played the violin or gave a recitation, others made gallant conversation with the ladies. The daily happenings in La Bourbe were given a thorough review. Every day brought something of interest, and the prisoners' imaginations, stimulated by confinement, painted the garish events in even more garish colors.

Every evening someone would read aloud from the *Moniteur*, the government's official organ, and there would be a general political discussion. Though it was common knowledge that there were a number of *moutons* among the prisoners, no one was overly cautious. The debates between democrats, moderates, and those whose Royalist sympathies were hardly concealed became quite violent now and then. At such times the more discreet ones would try to pour oil on the troubled waters, or else would withdraw from the argument. Occasionally the conversation would reach a high level and wax philosophical. But frequently it would end in a vulgar squabble and a general exchange of home truths of a personal character.

Winter came. The snowfall was greater than in past years and there were merry scenes in the garden. The prisoners rode about on little sleds, snowmen were built and snowball fights fought, dogs and children enjoyed themselves noisily.

But for all the apparent gaiety and color of life at La Bourbe its inmates knew that they were under the shadow of the axe. The fact was kept constantly before their eyes. Prisoners were fetched away daily to appear before the revolutionary tribunals, and in two cases out of three the trials ended in death sentences that were carried out within twenty-four hours. The population of La Bourbe changed rapidly.

When the hand of fate struck, when the summons to the tribunal came, depended on the whim of a judge or a juryman, of a deputy town councilor or a petty clerk, or perhaps even on no more than the file number of a document. La Bourbe was an anteroom to the guillotine. The waiting grated on the nerves.

The prisoners endeavored to deny the danger. They threw themselves into the daily routine at La Bourbe, took up social life and made much of their friendships and little feuds. Inner tension discharged itself in foolish squabbling. They quarreled over imaginary affronts and injuries, over inequitable distribution of food, and similar trifles. Each party would try to recruit sympathizers, witnesses, and referees. Sides would be taken on every issue. The fact that they could not escape from each other's company heightened the general irritability.

There were absurd rivalries growing out of the grotesque desire to shine in the pathetic company in which they found themselves. For example, the salon was the scene for evening parlor games; one of the favorites was the composing of verses based on peculiar and farfetched rhymes. The prisoners included men whose poetry was famous all over Europe, such as Florian or Vigée. They took part in these foolish games, first in the spirit of fun, then with passionate seriousness. As a rule, however, it was not they who won but a certain lawyer called Delamelle who had no literary reputation whatever. The poets took their defeat hard.

There were two famous actors, Fleury and Dugazon, from the Théâtre français. The battle for leading roles which had been fought venomously between them had been the talk of Paris for the past ten years. Now they were seen on terms of friendship, frequently arm in arm. In the salon it did not take much coaxing to get them to recite. But if only one of them was given a chance to perform, then the resentment of the other was past concealing. Once, after such a slight, Monsieur Fleury came into Fernand's dormitory, twisted the conversation until he could insert an anecdote concerning a perform-

ance of *Mithridate* and proceeded to recite the famous soliloquy.

Yet all efforts to banish the thought of the dark fate hanging over them were of small avail. It was there, breaking through again and again. And in their hearts most of them were preparing for a courageous exit.

Monsieur de Nicolai, who had been a minister in the cabinets of Louis the Fifteenth and Louis the Sixteenth, was summoned as he sat at table. "Let the gendarmes wait till I have finished my dinner," he said. He ordered his coffee and liqueur as usual. Doctor Dupontet asked him if he would like his rheumatic shoulder massaged. "Thank you," answered Monsieur de Nicolai, "but it would scarcely be worth while. The trouble has spread to my neck now, and when the one goes the other will go with it."

Such brave wit was highly esteemed in La Bourbe. In fact the prisoners could not pass up an opportunity for smart repartee even when they knew their remarks might cost them dear. Colonel Lepalu, for example, complained to Councilor Dupommier in the presence of other prisoners that he had already been waiting for almost a year to discover what charges were being brought against him. "Patience, Citizen," the Councilor told him soothingly. "Justice is just. This detention won't last for ever. Have patience!" "Patience is a virtue for donkeys, not soldiers," retorted the colonel. After that he did not have long to wait; within a week he disappeared.

Citizen Delamelle, the lawyer, was called while in the midst of one of those rhyming games at which he so excelled. He tarried to finish his verses, highly pleased that his usual brilliance was in no way dimmed by the sudden news. Everyone admired his composition. He thanked the company, and observed to the poet Florian, who had taken part in the game without success, "Tomorrow evening you will have less competition, monsieur." To the ladies he expressed the hope that the game would continue to amuse them. He bowed and departed, forever.

The people in La Bourbe took a lively interest in how each individual comported himself on the way to the scaffold. Most of them remained calm. Almost all had followed the example of the ancients in preparing last words, and many actually managed to deliver these last words with composure.

Allain, the baker's apprentice, was proud of belonging to the *canaille* and liked to ridicule the aristocrats and their fancy manners. But once when a report came in on the courageous bearing of yet

another aristocrat on his last journey, Allain was heard to remark with a mixture of mockery and respect, "You *ci-devants* never learned how to live decently, but you do know how to die."

Chapter 2 *Death Then Is Nought to Us'*

FERNAND, WHOSE accounts had been blocked, noticed with concern that he was beginning to be short of money. Equality was all very well, but there was no doubt that even in La Bourbe money could procure comforts and prestige. The artisans in the place, the tailors, shoemakers, hairdressers, and clockmakers served the well-to-do more rapidly and efficiently; they expected to be paid not according to the value of the work, but according to the income of the client. Moreover, many fellow prisoners asked financial help from Fernand, who was known to be a rich man, and he did not like disappointing them.

So that it came most opportunely when a considerable sum of money was handed to him on the sly, with an indication that Monsieur Robinet was the sender.

In general Fernand was not often troubled by thoughts of Latour and Ermenonville and life outside. Curiously enough what reminded him most strongly of the past were the numerous dogs. From memories of Lady and fat, snorting little Pompon his thoughts would turn to the people who were near and dear to him.

Yet when he was troubled by melancholy recollections they were quickly blotted out by the rather absurd little joys and sorrows of everyday life at La Bourbe. For he took just as lively an interest as everyone else in the daily doings in the prison. He would resent it with the rest when there was bean soup again for dinner, would be as animated as they in discussing the pleasant and unpleasant characteristics of the warden Besnard, would join them in poking fun at Citizen Boyenval's embarrassing habit, when someone was telling a good story, of interrupting and ruining the point. When he came off well at the rhyming game in the salon of an evening he would have a

feeling of gratification, and he was often sorry when the nine o'clock bell rang and the salon had to be cleared.

There were pretty and even beautiful women in the prison, and with some of them it was possible to conduct an agreeable conversation. Men and women could meet each other without restriction, and Citizen Duvivier had no difficulty in showing the ladies his tattooed lilies. Circumstances made privacy impossible and induced a certain shamelessness; but good manners were observed.

A new head warden was appointed — a rough, square-set, upright man by the name of Thirion. He made a speech to the assembled inmates of La Bourbe: "Citizens! All of Paris is cracking jokes about this institution of ours. They say it deserves its name, La Bourbe, that it is nothing but an enormous brothel. I have been installed here to see that you don't escape; your morals are none of my business. But I would like to draw your attention to one aspect of the matter. Many of you have reason to expect a speedy end at the hands of Republican justice. If I were in their place I would devote my last days to the pursuit of virtue rather than of idle pleasure. I wish you good morning."

In spite of this admonition there continued to be a good deal of philandering and gallantry in La Bourbe, a certain amount of jealousy, and perhaps a little love also. The enamored couples were more than ready to regard their relationships as grand passions, even if these were little more than an escape from the evils of their morrow.

Fernand regarded the amorous activities that went on around him with understanding and amusement. Sometimes he was horrified by it, however. Looking at his fellow prisoners he saw the mark of death upon their faces; the men and women who were dallying and making love turned to dancing skeletons before his eyes. This did not stop him from participating in their enjoyment.

After a few weeks he found he had adapted himself to life in La Bourbe just like the others. Completely taken up with trivial cares and petty curiosities he would wander restlessly about the great building and in the extensive gardens. His wounded foot was giving him more trouble; yet Doctor Dupontet's advice that he should exercise it as much as possible was to him a welcome excuse to go from one prisoner to another like everyone else.

Fundamentally, however, he felt he was better than the others, and when on occasion he found himself behaving like them he was conscious of surprise, almost of shame.

He really was different, in spite of all, and there were days when

the enforced companionship of his fellow men was torment. In such moods the society of others, which normally he sought after, would suddenly become unbearable. He even felt distaste for people whom he especially respected and liked. Nowadays he could understand why Jean-Jacques, for all his love of people, should have fought so desperately for solitude.

On days like these Fernand would do his best to isolate himself. He would go out to a garden bench with a book, implying as clearly as he could that he wished to be alone. The hint was not taken. Not only would he be distracted by the loud conversation of passers-by, but people made no bones about addressing him directly. They came to him with all sorts of confidences, asked him to settle some dispute, or expected him to take sides. Fernand noticed that the faintest attempt to withdraw offended the others and was considered a sign of pride and selfishness.

Even at night he could not be alone. He slept with seven others. Visitors from other cells would come. Candles would be lit. The inhabitants of La Bourbe were afraid of sleep; they did everything they could to avoid it. They would rather talk of things that had been discussed a thousand times already. They knew that their days and nights were running out, that each night might be their last. Still they preferred to fill it with idle chatter than with solitary reflection. And when at last all was really dark and quiet, then Fernand found the anxieties of the others beginning to weigh upon him. For at night the fear of death, suppressed by day, found voice. The prisoners talked in their sleep and tossed in their beds. It was plain that their dreams were bad.

Sometimes as he lay on his own fairly comfortable bed, Fernand too was overcome with fear. That brave phrase: 'The revolution is right, even if it destroys me,' was of no avail. He was gripped by the fear of death as never before in the bitter nights of the American campaign. He was filled to bursting with rage at the senselessness of what was being inflicted upon him. He felt suffocated. He gasped for air.

Also detained in La Bourbe at this time was a certain Monsieur de Riouffe, a quiet elderly man who had devoted a large part of his time to translating Lucretius into French. The translation was long since finished. It had been published, then republished in an improved version. It had been gone over and polished a tenth and last time. And now, undisturbed by the noise of the prison, Monsieur

de Riouffe was going over it for the eleventh and really final time, touching it up, perfecting it. His one anxiety was that he might be summoned before this definitive edition was ready. He had grown particularly attached to Fernand, who was a good Latinist. Every other day Riouffe would come to him in happy excitement over a pretty nuance he had just hit on.

Again and again Citizen Honoré Riouffe would recite Lucretius — both the Latin original and the French translation. His favorite passages were those clear, profound verses concerning death. These verses aim to prove that the soul dies with the body and that it is therefore senseless to fear death, for it leads us to nothingness, where there is no more pain. Once dead we can no more participate in the sufferings of the future than we can feel the despair of those days when Hannibal stood at the gates.

*Nil igitur mors est, ad nos neque pertinet hilum
Quandoquidem natura animi mortalis habetur.*

Death then is nought to us, nor does it concern us a whit
Inasmuch as the nature of the mind is but a mortal possession.

Fernand, lying in bed unable to sleep, would repeat the lines to himself, the strong, deep Latin and the slow, smooth, undulating, lulling French. He felt himself plunging into a vast black wave of sleep, felt his self-awareness melting as his body sank away from him. For a moment or two he was able to taste the bliss of entering into nothingness, into sleep.

Chapter 3 Man Is Good

A DETACHMENT of ten men of the National Guards had taken up their quarters in Château Ermenonville. Their leader was Corporal Grappin. In accordance with their orders they did not let the suspect out of their sight. A guard was stationed in Girardin's room, and he could not sleep or even relieve himself in private.

Apart from this, the soldiers of the guard were amiable fellows. They inquired after Girardin's state of health, spoke their minds about the weather, and did not take it amiss if he replied monosyllabically or not at all.

He was allowed no visitors. Nor could he write or receive letters. He was however permitted to walk in the gardens. He visited Jean-Jacques's grave daily. One of the guards would row him across the lake while another sat under Jean-Jacques's willow tree.

At this time Girardin underwent a profound and shocking change. He visibly deteriorated. He who had always held himself erect, who looked every inch the soldier, now shuffled along with bowed shoulders. He gazed into space or at the ground, and jumped if one of the guards addressed him.

Why should all this have burst upon him?

He had been aware that there were dangerous elements in Jean-Jacques. Again and again, burningly clear, there came to him a memory which he had done his best to erase, the memory of a marginal note in the manuscript of the *Confessions*. '*Thelo, thelo manenai* — I am willing, I am willing to rage,' Jean-Jacques had written painstakingly in Greek characters. Yes, Girardin should have recognized the element of danger in Jean-Jacques, of night and madness. He *had* recognized it and had concealed his knowledge of it from himself and from others. But now that madness had seized the whole country.

He was horrified by the turn his thoughts had taken. Was it fair to blame Jean-Jacques for the insane violence of the Parisian tyrants? Was he not being disloyal to the Master in harboring such thoughts?

He stopped before Jean-Jacques's bust. The failure was his, Girardin's. He had failed as custodian of Jean-Jacques when he was still alive, and failed even more as custodian of the dead man's heritage. What was happening now was retribution. He was pursued by the Furies because he had failed.

He was afraid he might go mad himself. He began holding debates with himself. 'Truth springs from thesis and antithesis,' he told himself, raising his finger in the gesture of a schoolmaster. Or he would quote with a sly sarcasm that other saying of Jean-Jacques's: 'Man is good.' The guards shook their heads over the crazy old fellow.

His concern for Fernand tormented him even more than his own fate. Mastering his disinclination he asked the guards what had happened to Fernand. They shrugged their shoulders; they knew nothing.

After a week Monsieur Gerber was allowed to see him. "What has happened to Fernand?" was Girardin's first question. "He is said to be still in prison," Gerber reported. "He is alive?" Girardin anxiously sought reassurance. "Yes," replied Gerber simply. "Monsieur Robinet says so, and he is well informed."

Gerber began to talk with Girardin in German. The guards at first objected, but then they let them talk. Girardin was monosyllabic like a sulky, obstinate child. Gerber sighed, but continued to accompany him on his walks.

On one such walk Gerber, as if only for his own pleasure, began to recite from his beloved Lucretius: "All of man's life is lived out in darkness and ignorance, and we, like children at night, are fearful by day of shadows and ghosts whose terrors are no more real than the ghosts that children dread." Girardin responded for the first time in several days. "Their terrors are more real," he observed with quiet grimness. Then, after a pause, he added crustily, "Perhaps you could help me read Lucretius, monsieur. I am not sure that my Latin is up to reading it alone."

Thus both Fernand in La Bourbe and Girardin at Ermenonville sought consolation in Lucretius's verses. In these hard and bitter times many people in the land read the writings of Lucretius. Four new editions of his work *On the Nature of Things* were published in Paris in a single year.

Over and over again Monsieur Gerber cautiously tried to make Girardin talk of his own lot. But the Marquis retorted sharply that there was no sense in talking; indeed, not even Jean-Jacques's words had been fruitful; they had brought harm. Monsieur Gerber gave him a sad, reproachful look. "Am I not right?" Girardin asked more gently. To which Monsieur Gerber answered quietly but firmly, "No, sir, you are not right. Even in your circumstances I cannot let you abuse the noble wine simply because some people have got drunk on it."

That day Girardin tried to work again for the first time in a long while. He returned to his essay 'On the Ratification of Laws by the General Will.' The work took hold of him. A few days later he asked the faithful Gerber, "Tell me, shall I expand my essay into a major work — 'The Significance of the General Will in the Body of Jean-Jacques's Teaching'?" Gerber looked up happily. "Now you have fought your way through, sir. Now you will feel as I feel: The Temples were turned into stables, but the gods live on. Oh, I am so happy."

At first Girardin was diverted by his work. But then again he had

hours of brooding depression. He was once more permitted to read the newspapers and the reports cast him back into terrible despair. He read of the butcheries committed by the Royalists in the provinces and of the even more dreadful ones decreed by the Convention in order to deter the rebels. He read of the destruction of whole cities.

He read that Queen Marie Antoinette had been executed after a brief, grotesque parody of a trial. The news was late in reaching him. For more than a week now the Queen's corpse was being consumed in the pit of quicklime.

Her death stirred him more deeply than other, wilder, more baleful happenings. With great vividness he remembered the Queen's visit to Jean-Jacques's grave. She had decked the grave with wild flowers, thereby helping to keep his memory unsullied. She had not been a clever woman, Marie Antoinette of Hapsburg. But pain and suffering sharpened the wits — he was discovering that much for himself. Had she realized, in her last hours, what a part Jean-Jacques's works and legend had played in bringing her to the guillotine?

Then came the day when Girardin's warden, Corporal Grappin, a cheerful grin spread across his face, announced, "Good news, *ci-devant*, here's a visitor for you." And there in the doorway stood old Robinet.

Girardin longed to turn the importunate fellow away. But at the same time he was painfully aware of how few people he had left. There were only three: the dead Jean-Jacques, the living Gerber, and his dear son Fernand who was neither dead nor living. Under the circumstances Girardin should welcome even a Robinet.

For Monsieur Robinet, too, the past weeks had been unpleasant. Gilberte lived in the vacancy of despair. She declared herself to blame for the Girardins' misfortunes; it should have been her duty to persuade Fernand to escape. She would hear no word of reason or consolation. Robinet fretted and grieved at his helpless position. He saw no way of coming to the aid of the Girardins. He could only be thankful the bloodthirsty Parisians had not got hold of him. He felt as old as the hills.

But he pulled himself together. A Robinet did not let himself be defeated so easily. He began by finding a way of getting through to the suspect *ci-devant*. He not only dressed up as an old peasant, he *was* one, and Corporal Grappin and his National Guards, peasants themselves, allowed him to pass.

Wrinkling his already wrinkled face in a crafty smile, he stood

before Girardin. "*Ça y est*," he said. "So here we are." And looked at the seigneur of Ermenonville. The Marquis made an effort to recover his military bearing but to no avail. He struck Robinet as old and feeble, and Robinet was smugly aware that he was younger than the *ci-devant*.

Girardin inquired hungrily after Fernand. Yes, Robinet had news of him. Fernand was still in La Bourbe, and of all the remand prisons La Bourbe was the best. And Robinet had taken the liberty of sending some money in to the young Count — a few thousand livres. "I shall repay the sum as soon as possible," Girardin said haughtily, but added almost immediately with genuine emotion, "I am very grateful to you, monsieur."

Robinet repeated his visits. Gilberte wanted to go with him. He almost had to restrain her by force. That would surely be the end. A pretty young woman could not help attracting attention. She would be endangering herself and him and making Girardin's position worse than ever.

On the other hand Robinet sometimes brought his great-granddaughter Marie-Sidonia on these excursions. The old man and the child had become great friends. The little girl had grown accustomed to going about in the simple clothes of a peasant child. She felt at ease in them. The only thing that remained to her of her former life was the little dog Pompon, old, fat, and lazy. The old man and the child usually came in a country cart loaded with potatoes or similar produce. Robinet pretended to be on his way to market and stopping to say good day to a friend.

The guards were fond of children, and liked to banter with Marie-Sidonia. Once they were at table when Robinet arrived. Several of them were from the south of France, and they were eating rabbit stew, strongly flavored with garlic. They offered a plateful to Robinet and the child. The old man enjoyed his portion, but Marie-Sidonia demurred, unused to such highly seasoned dishes. Laughingly the men insisted that the child eat and also drink of their cider. They threatened that otherwise they would not let them into the château. Finally the child forced herself to eat, to the men's great enjoyment. She vomited, which made the joke still better.

Girardin, hearing of the incident, was plunged into even deeper melancholy.

Robinet tried to cheer him up. "This evil dream will pass, Marquis," he told him. "Faster than you think. Believe the words of an old man

who has seen a good deal of life. And when that day comes," he went on, half in jest, half seriously, with a sly smile, "then I am going to ask a great favor of you. For then I shall restore Château Latour, and you must help me lay out the gardens in your style. Back to Nature, my dear Marquis!"

Chapter 4 A Link in the Chain

TO HIMSELF AND his friends Robespierre quoted a saying of Montesquieu's which Jean-Jacques had also cited: 'Perhaps posterity will find that we have not shed blood enough, and have spared too many of the enemies of freedom.' This same Robespierre who had voted for the abolition of the death penalty was now compelled to use the weapon of terror with increasing ruthlessness. For it seemed that closer investigation was revealing more and more people, hitherto regarded as harmless, as enemies of the Republic. Those who were too moderate were enemies, and those who were too radical were enemies. Enemies were those with too much faith, those who had too little. With grim imagination Robespierre scrutinized men's heads and the opinions they might hold.

The first to be dealt with were the leaders of the moderates in the Convention — the Girondists. Twenty-one in number, they were brought before the court, condemned, guillotined.

Newcomers to La Bourbe told of the Girondists' last days — how bravely and with what eloquence they had defended themselves before the tribunal, not thinking of themselves but only of the Republic; how on the eve of their execution they had held a symposium which recalled the banquets of the noblest Athenians; how they had sung the anthem of the revolution as they walked to the scaffold.

Fernand listened eagerly to these reports. He had known nearly all of the twenty-one; some had been his friends. These so-called 'moderates' had not been moderate at all. In the Legislative Assembly to which Fernand himself had belonged they had formed the radical

wing. They were the men who had framed those bold, proud clauses on which the constitution stood. They had declared war on the monarchies of Europe. These men had never, Fernand was convinced, let cowardice creep into their hearts. True disciples of Jean-Jacques, they had had the most luminous minds in France.

But those others, who had sent them to their deaths — were not they, too, loyal followers of Jean-Jacques? And would the verdict of history declare the victims or the killers to have been the better disciples?

The men now ruling, Robespierre and Saint-Just, condemned the Girondists for being halfhearted because they had debated with their political opponents instead of killing them. It was certainly true that the Girondists could not have brought about the unity of the Republic, for their justice was too just. It was true that the Girondists had failed. And Robespierre and Saint-Just branded those who failed as enemies of the country and exterminated them. They exterminated all the nation's enemies, even those who meant well. Their logic was the guillotine. Perhaps a revolution had no other.

Fernand himself — he now admitted it — belonged, at bottom, to the Girondists.

Of course he had vehemently maintained that the revolution must come from the people. But inwardly he had hoped, just like all the other educated men, that the revolution could be brought about from above, without the people. Yes, in spite of all his protestations and declarations of love, what he had inwardly felt for the people had been benevolent contempt, just like the others. "True," he reflected, "we of the educated classes meant well, but we were condescending. We patted the people on the back but we never made any attempt to learn the people's language. We imposed on them our classical heroes, our Gracchus, Spartacus and Cincinnatus, and smiled indulgently when the people failed to understand. And now the people have thrown us unto the dung heap. With good reason. For our highly cultivated cleverness has proved ineffectual. The revolution has been carried through, and history has been made, by the clumsy, primitive wisdom of the people."

No, Fernand thought, he had failed to understand the people. He had not understood Jean-Jacques either. Jean-Jacques, though isolated by his genius, had not lost touch with the people; he had remained humble for all his knowledge of his own greatness. Humility was something that was denied to himself, Fernand thought. He

had arrogantly imprisoned himself in his own ego. He had perhaps subdued his pride of birth, but only in order to put spiritual pride in its place.

More prisoners, of a new type, were being brought to La Bourbe.

For after the suppression of the Girondists, Robespierre had acquired the undisputed leadership and he and his followers clambered unfaltering up the steep and narrow path of virtue. He had long been offended by the excesses of the fanatical rationalists. He had had to stand helplessly by while these creatures forced the Convention to sanction their blasphemous 'Cult of Reason.' As Jean-Jacques's faithful disciple, Robespierre believed devoutly in the Supreme Being. Anyone who denied the Supreme Being was denying Jean-Jacques, the father of the Republic. Now that he had the power, Robespierre declared atheism to be aristocratic, vicious, counter-revolutionary. He set to work to repress these *énergumènes*, these *enragés*, these fanatics who were inciting the people against the Supreme Being.

Some of these enemies of the Republic were brought to La Bourbe to await trial. There was Deputy Riquet, for example. The Republic was doomed, he angrily observed, if it was going to be ruled by people who trusted in a Supreme Being instead of using their own — admittedly limited — powers of reason. Then there was Citizen Bausset, who went about swearing that as for that wretched halfhearted Robespierre with his middle-of-the-road mediocrity and his guillotine, he could kiss his arse.

At this time there also turned up in La Bourbe men who had a peculiarly ugly connection with some of the prisoners. For these newcomers, themselves but recently in power, had been responsible for sending these prisoners to La Bourbe, and had brought relatives of other prisoners to trial. And now here they all were, shut up together, the persecutors and their victims. The tension in La Bourbe increased; in the confined space of the salon, the well-mannered, gentle ironic old world collided with the vehement, violent, ill-mannered new one.

To La Bourbe came also Deputy Chaplaine, the former Capuchin, Widow Rousseau's patron. He had long been a thorn in Robespierre's side. He was chiefly to blame for the Cult of Reason. His lewd, blasphemous eloquence had given rise to the most outrageous orgies. Nor was it only his militant, treasonous atheism that Robespierre abhorred; he felt a puritanical hatred for the obscene, disorderly man

himself, reproaching him for his personality and conduct even more than for his ideas. Chaplaine, he charged, had embezzled money during his liquidation of the East India Company and in other official capacities and had enriched himself by appropriating a number of costly relics when the royal graves were destroyed.

And now Chaplaine was in La Bourbe awaiting trial.

He complained indignantly to the other prisoners about Robespierre's idiotic jealousy, about the ingratitude of the Republic and the fickleness of the people. This former preacher was a marvelous orator; whenever he spoke, a crowd would gather and listen to him enthralled. On one such occasion one of the prisoners, a peddler suspected of Royalist tendencies, crossed himself and said, "You have edified and consoled me, comrade," and offered him a piece of his sausage.

Chaplaine noticed that he had attracted Fernand's attention. He tried to explain himself, to justify himself to Fernand. Unlike most of the leaders of the Republic *he* had not let his humanitarianism be withered by rigid adherence to theories. He enumerated the many people whose lives he had saved, even enemies of the Republic like Abbé Sicard. Sicard had written that wonderful essay on Augustine's use of Latin, and the truth was that he, Chaplaine, had always had a weakness for intellectual achievement. That was precisely why this monomaniac Robespierre was trying to deprive him not only of his life but of his posthumous fame. Because Robespierre was incapable of following him onto the heights of a humaneness which was the more glorious for having dispensed with God, he accused him of base passions, common greed. All right, he had accepted gifts — works of art that would otherwise have been lost, fine books, perhaps sometimes even money. What of that? Had he thereby sacrificed one iota of his ideas? Had it been greed which had prompted him to storm the Christian heavens and turn out the Christian gods? "Are the truths I proclaim any less true," he asked indignantly, "because I love life and a certain luxury and plenty? I am no puritan. Books and pictures warm my heart. What will have become of those noble objects," he lamented, "with which I have filled my house? The barbarians do not appreciate them. Even now one of them may be wiping his behind with paper on which Jean-Jacques's hand has inscribed immortal words."

When Chaplaine asserted that he had saved people's lives in moments of generosity, he was not lying. He did not mention, how-

ever, that in moments of petty malevolence he had also had people killed. He had been thin-skinned from childhood; in his thirst for revenge he overlooked not even the smallest slight, and when he came to power many had had to pay dear for wrongs they had done him and already half forgotten. There was Justice of the Peace Larivière, who, on instructions from the authorities, had issued a writ for Chaplaine's arrest. There was Father Venance, who had written lampoons about Chaplaine while he was still a Capuchin. Both had atoned upon the scaffold.

Unluckily for Chaplaine, among the prisoners at La Bourbe were a cousin of Larivière and a nephew of Father Venance. It delighted them to find Chaplaine a fellow inhabitant of their sad home. They teased him; they interrupted his would-be orations with catcalls and mockery. They were always devising new torments for him.

The inmates of La Bourbe were fond of enacting gruesome little farces in which they made fun of the tribunals, the guillotine, and of themselves. Venance and Larivière now induced several of their fellow prisoners to make Chaplaine the victim in one such burlesque. They came upon him in bed, haled him before their 'revolutionary tribunal,' found him guilty, executed him. Then they made him appear before the judges in Hades. Here he had to justify himself for the murder of men whom he had sent to the guillotine from motives of personal enmity. Chaplaine was high-strung and moody, and while others would have taken such jokes in good part he trembled in his nightshirt and stammered — he, the eloquent orator. Altogether he cut a lamentable figure. He was sentenced to be pursued by the Furies, and a number of prisoners, singing the chorus of the Furies, chased him down the corridors.

The fat, thin-skinned Chaplaine, who had remained calm and collected in real perils, never recovered from his adventure of that night. He had been looking forward eagerly to the day when he would appear before the revolutionary tribunal. What a grand speech he was going to make on this, his last appearance. He meant to accompany his departure from this world by a magnificent display of fireworks. Now he was unable to endure the few days that still remained. He took poison. But it worked too slowly. He howled in agony. Everyone ran to the spot. The good Doctor Dupontet administered an antidote. Even his attempt to escape from the world had turned into a farce.

Chaplaine had done good work in establishing and consolidating

the Republic. He had a feeling for the arts and sciences. He had coined a number of pithy phrases to describe the phenomena of the revolution; and these phrases — both the lofty and the low ones — had entered the vocabulary of every European language. With good reason he had assumed that his death would make him a figure of tragedy for all time. And now this insipid joke by a couple of wretched boors had made a buffoon of him, so that his memory would always bear the taint of ridicule.

He was tried the following week. The public prosecutor did not even take the trouble to present the charge in a formal speech. Instead, in a few contemptuous, careless phrases he called on the citizen-jurors to give this 'swindler and speculator Chaplaine' the sentence he deserved, namely death. When Chaplaine drew himself up and started a noble, flaming oration, the president told him not to waste the jury's precious time with his drivel. On the way to the guillotine the people of Paris indulged in gay, senseless mockery at the expense of this fat man whom they had so often applauded. He laid his eloquent head upon the block without a last word.

The inmates of La Bourbe heard of his tragicomic end with mingled feelings of anger, pity, horror, and scorn. But within an hour a foolish incident within La Bourbe itself drove him and his fate entirely from their minds.

For the ninety-one-year-old Citizeness Prévôt was robbed of her watch — a small gold timepiece set with diamonds. The lively old lady had been merrymaking in the salon, the watch being left behind in her dormitory. Thefts were a rarity in La Bourbe. There was a strong sense of solidarity among the prisoners — for one of them to steal from another was regarded as an atrocious crime. Thus the general indignation mounted when the thief turned out to be elegant, handsome Duvivier, the young revolutionary with the royal lilies tattooed on his back, the darling of the ladies. He had always behaved as if he had money, had not been sparing in delicate attentions to his lady-loves in the way of flowers and bonbons, and now he had stolen poor old Citizeness Prévôt's watch! A storm of hatred and contempt broke loose. The authorities themselves declared that the theft reflected upon Duvivier's character and thereby upon his civic qualities. His case was brought up for trial. No stock was taken in his revolutionary sentiments. The evidence of the tattooed lilies was considered in its most damaging light. He was condemned and guillotined. The inmates of La Bourbe approved the verdict, and the

ladies who had let him flirt with them felt ashamed of themselves. Old Prévôt herself, on the other hand, exclaimed, "But that is terrible! The poor young man! If I had as much as dreamed of such a thing I would not have breathed a word about my watch." She was sharply reproved for her softheartedness.

Fernand had been deeply stirred by Chaplaine's significantly senseless, ironically tragicomic end. But as was the case with the rest of the prisoners, his acrid sorrow over Chaplaine was wiped away by the sensational theft of the watch. He was angry with himself, as the others were, for having been taken in by the tattooed one's agreeable personality. Like the rest he felt even a faint satisfaction at Duvivier's execution.

He was shocked to observe these feelings in himself. Chaplaine had been a person of stature; for all his weaknesses and absurdities he had been a genuine revolutionary who had rendered good service to the new France. And now he, Fernand, Jean-Jacques's pupil, the detached spirit who had always prided himself on his independence of thought, found himself more roused by the fate of a petty commonplace rascal like Duvivier than by the remarkable and significant end of Chaplaine, the politician and scholar. His mind had been poisoned by the others, so that in the space of a minute his sublime melancholy had turned to vulgar revenge and petty anger.

He was concerned over the instability of his feelings. But slowly this concern changed to acceptance. And then to a kind of happiness.

So he was not different from the others after all. He felt as they did. They were a community here in La Bourbe, a homogeneous mass, of which he was part. He could, through the exercise of reason, see the mass as individuals, but it was still a mass and he was a member of it.

People in La Bourbe were often mean, and he had let himself be infected by this meanness. But that was a good thing. They were a community in La Bourbe, in good as well as in evil. They were united in their contempt for cowardice and their admiration for courage, be it the courage of *ci-devant* or of radical. They were pathetic and inane. They jeered viciously at each other's opinions without understanding them. They took more interest in the theft of a watch than in the conflict between the partisans of Reason and those of the Supreme Being. They looked daggers at anyone who had been given a larger helping of soup. But all were passionately loyal French-

men, *ci-devants* and Jacobins alike, when it came to lamenting the Republican army's defeats and rejoicing at its victories.

They formed a unity here in La Bourbe. They were the people, with all its contradictions.

And he belonged to it.

Chapter 5 *The Goddess of Reason*

ONE EVENING IN the salon he heard someone exclaim behind him, "You here, Fernand!" Recognizing the voice he spun around. It was Eugénie Maillart, Lepeletier's friend and his own. She laughed and cried, amazed and delighted.

He wondered what evil chance had brought the martyred Lepeletier's friend and confidante to La Bourbe.

She explained. Remarkably enough, it was Chaplaine's fall that had proved her own undoing. It seemed that before the great 'Festival of Reason' Chaplaine had come to her and had asked her to take the part of the Goddess of Reason. "The fat, dirty fellow disgusted me," she told Fernand, "and of all the stupid roles I've had to play this was the stupidest. But how could I refuse? I should almost certainly have been charged with hostility to the regime, and I felt I wasn't cut out to be a martyr. Michel would have understood me, I'm sure."

Fernand understood her too. This woman knew the world and the strange contradictions of thought and action. She had the spirit of Lepeletier. She accepted calmly the irony of her situation — having to pay for something her whole being had rebelled against doing in the first place.

Later on she told Fernand about her adventure most vividly, laughing yet repelled. Chaplaine and the other marshals of atheism had wanted their great celebration in a hurry. The participants in the 'Festival of Reason' were allowed barely three days to get ready. Citizens Gossec and Gardel, chief composer and ballet master of the Opera, were ordered to rearrange the ballet oratorio '*Homage to Freedom*'

into an *'Homage to Reason.'* The pageant was to take place in Notre Dame, to which stage, scenery, and properties of all kinds were hurriedly brought from the Opera. The cathedral was rechristened "The Temple of Reason." A mountain peak was knocked together in the choir, upon which stood the "Temple of Reason." It was all highly makeshift, and when Eugénie, in a white tunic and Phrygian cap, with a pike in her hand, came out of the temple and sat down on the throne she was afraid the whole thing would collapse. She was even more anxious when four porters from the Halles, dressed in priestly garb, carried her and her throne down the green-carpeted steps of the artificial mountain: the structure creaked ominously. The triumphal procession through the streets of Paris was also a trial. The rain was streaming down, her thin white tunic was immediately soaked through. She was miserably cold on her throne. Still more miserably cold was her retinue of dancers and singers, who were even more lightly clad than she and had to march through the rain and mud in their thin ballet slippers with ecstatic smiles on their faces. Then, wet to the skin and certain that she had caught a severe chill, she had to sit for hours in the Convention being speechified to and kissed until finally she was carried back to Notre Dame.

Though Eugénie spoke lightly, Fernand could sense the shame, disgust, and despair this woman must have felt. She was lighthearted by nature and had learned from Lepeletier to derive amusement from all sorts of absurd situations. But she loathed any kind of vulgarity. There was no laughing at all the filth and stupidity she must have had to endure, the kisses from members of the Convention, the patriotic pawings of a lascivious public.

Eugénie told of another grisly farce in which she had been compelled to take part. She had had to preside at the church of Saint-Denis, still on her throne and garbed as the Goddess of Reason, at the desecration of the royal graves. With Chaplaine as their ring-leader, a merry throng had broken open the tombs of those kings of old, the princes spiritual and temporal with whose names the history of France was studded. They had made sport with the thigh bones, played bowls with the skulls of the Louis' and François', the Philippes and Henrys. Remains of every kind — embalmed corpses, bones, scepters, crowns, bishops' staffs, and other attributes of power had been thrown onto a great heap and everyone had danced about on it, trampling and destroying. Chaplaine appropriated coronets, royal signet rings, and similar souvenirs for his collection. At first they

had wanted to spare good Henry the Fourth: he was in a particularly good state of preservation, having been embalmed in the Italian manner, and was altogether a popular figure. But the high priests of Reason would not hear of it and had that body thrown into the enormous lime pit to be destroyed with the others. One corpse only was spared, that of Field Marshal Turenne. So far as Eugénie knew, the beloved general's body had been transferred to the Natural History Museum and there it no doubt stood, among strange stuffed animals. When the last body had disappeared into the lime pit Chaplain had announced, "The era of monarchy is now finished once and for all. From now on the world will reckon according to the calendar of the Republic."

The inmates of La Bourbe admired and pitied Eugénie. The *énergumènes*, those unflinching radicals, maintained that she should be proud to have been selected for the sublime role of Goddess of Reason. A little discomfort was not too high a price to pay for a glory like that.

Everyone, even her political opponents, was fond of Eugénie Maillart. Her presence made La Bourbe a brighter place.

Many of the men sought to win her favor with gallant attentions, some clumsy, some refined. But she made it quite clear that she preferred Fernand. She was with him whenever possible; she tended his lame foot and had tender, sad, and playful conversations with him. The love that evolved between them was strong and gentle, delicate and wise in face of the death all around them and before them.

They were not bothered by Michel Lepeletier's memory. On the contrary, it brought them closer to each other. They smiled when they saw the bust of Lepeletier set up in the prison. The stone face wore a look of high-minded emptiness. How utterly different the real Lepeletier's clever, ugly, benevolent face had been!

There was the memory of the dead man in Fernand's and Eugénie's love, and there was also the threat of the immediate future. In the morbid atmosphere of La Bourbe their love gave them buoyancy and warmth, a sense of gaiety and irresponsible happiness. Their love was such that the others respected it, forbearing to intrude upon it by so much as an allusion.

Every day fellow prisoners of theirs would be taken out into the darkness, and Eugénie was fully aware of the danger hanging over her. "Of course I shall defend myself by pointing out that it would

have meant death to have refused to play the goddess. But that won't help much with the tribunal. The Brutuses will answer, 'Then you ought to have died, Citizeness.' " On another occasion she remarked, "If they take me, the fine burial spot I had made as a copy of Jean-Jacques's will go to waste. They will scarcely treat me more gently than they treated the dead princesses."

That was how she would talk. But Fernand noticed that in her heart of hearts she did not really believe Fate could strike her. The truth was that the two most confident people in La Bourbe were young Eugénie and ninety-one-year-old Citizeness Prévôt.

Once, willy-nilly, Eugénie put her faith into words. One day, she told Fernand, she had seen a bird-catcher with a rich catch of birds in his net. She had bought the lot, and while the bird-catcher shook his head, had set them free. The joyous fluttering with which the larks, finches, and thrushes had flown off into the sky was one of her happiest memories. "That's how it will be when they release me," she told Fernand.

Then, one morning, Eugénie disappeared, as suddenly as she had come. To Fernand the shock was as great as if the blow had fallen on himself.

Later he discovered that she had been transferred to another prison. Later still, news reached him that she had been set free.

He recovered only slowly from the initial shock.

He missed Eugénie. He continued as before to take part in the life of La Bourbe, but he felt more strongly than ever the dreary emptiness of it all, and he longed more often and more violently for solitude.

He fell prey to a deep, fatalistic despondency. He had been mistaken. He was not like the others. He was miserably different. Bitterly he repeated to himself, *Impares nascimur, pares morimur* — we are born unequal, are equal only in death.'

Chapter 6 'Arduous Are the Paths Along Which Mercy Guides Us'

THE JACOBIN ARMY, doubted, sneered at by experts the world over, the conscript army, 'the pathetic army of Terror' was victorious. One after another, reports of victory reached Paris from the fronts.

There were celebrations in Paris.

And there were celebrations in La Bourbe. The prisoners assembled in the garden beneath the tricolor; busts of Jean-Jacques and Lepeletier looked down on them. They sang a hymn composed by the poet Vigée, one of the inmates of La Bourbe. Warden Thirion made a speech, as did several of the prisoners. There were numerous quotations from Jean-Jacques. One prisoner, a lawyer by the name of Brognard, an *enragé* whose conviction was certain, cried out, "*Respublica! Morituri te salutant!* Republic, we who are about to die salute thee!" And everyone chimed in.

There were also celebrations at Ermenonville.

Girardin knew well that a victory for the allied armies would have released him and his Fernand from their deadly peril. Yet he was sincerely glad of the Republican victory. And when his guards sat down to their festive meal he sent them the best wine he had in his cellars and asked permission to join them.

There he sat with the National Guards, sturdy lads, if a little uncouth. "This is fine wine you're serving, *ci-devant*," one of them told him appreciatively. "Suspect you may be, old man," said another, "but you're a good one," and he clapped him on the shoulder. Girardin listened to their coarse, simple-minded jokes, thought of the General Will and felt himself to be a true pupil of Jean-Jacques.

Citizen Vincent Huret, the fanatically suspicious mayor of Senlis, was highly indignant when he heard of this fraternal celebration.

He had reason enough for ill humor as it was. He had made no secret of his admiration for Deputy Chaplaine, and now they had seen fit to behead Citizen Chaplaine, as an enemy of the country. That might have serious consequences for himself.

Therefore he became more superpatriotic than ever in exercising his official duties.

As soon as he heard of the National Guards' laxness he hurried to Ermenonville. He vehemently harangued Corporal Grappin and his men on the subject of Republican vigilance, and threatened to report them to their superiors. In the future they were not to allow the suspect Girardin any contact whatsoever with the outside world.

This accomplished, Citizen Huret walked through the park to pay his respects to the great Jean-Jacques's grave. He felt he had done well to see for himself how things stood here. Why, this Ermenonville, the park as much as the château, was a veritable bastion of reaction. The whole landscape was full of monstrosities from the bad old days of tyranny. Everywhere stood statues of splendidly got-up men of the old regime. Some of them had suspicious names, outlandish, aristocratic names, suggesting that they were connected with the foreign tyrants who had invaded the Republic. And all this as close as you please to where Jean-Jacques lay buried!

On his return to Senlis, Citizen Huret called upon the sovereign people to put an end to this disgraceful state of affairs.

Two hay wagons full of patriots from Senlis drove to Ermenonville. With them they took a supply of suitable implements: hatchets, pikes, axes, also a keg of cider. They invaded the park, trampled on the flower beds and, to start with, knocked the noses off a few of the stone aristocrats. Then they rolled up their sleeves and set to work exuberantly on their main task. There were two buildings in particular which enraged them: the Pyramid of the Bucolic Poets and the Temple of Philosophy. Both structures were covered with outlandish busts and inscriptions, these last in foreign tongues and certainly hostile to the state. With lusty shouts of "Down with tyranny! Long live freedom!" they proceeded to reduce the heads of Greek, Roman, English, and German poets to fragments. The pillars of the Temple of Philosophy were solidly constructed and it was no easy matter to destroy them, but in their enthusiasm the people from Senlis succeeded even in this. Their labors over, they held a victory celebration on the toppled columns, rejoicing in duty done, in the beautiful view, and in the keg of cider.

Goodman Maurice had witnessed these doings with consternation. He ran to Ermenonville village and gave the alarm. The gardens were the pride of the village; the famous Jean-Jacques had loved

them, and strangers were always coming to see them. Goodman Maurice managed to rouse a good dozen men to action.

With them at his back he marched up and told the men from Senlis that the park was a sound Republican affair; Jean-Jacques had spent his last days here, and there was nothing the matter with all this stonework either. The patriots remained unconvinced. The Ermenonville villagers were obviously still serfs of the *ci-devant*, they still thought like slaves. The men of Senlis believed in their mayor, Citizen Huret; moreover they were full of cider and in the majority. When Goodman Maurice plied them with more and more arguments and quotations from Jean-Jacques they at first laughed, then told him to shut up, and when he persisted in his bombastic talk they took a canvas out of their wagon, threw the fat innkeeper upon it, and tossed him in the air and caught him again. He struggled, screaming with fear. It was a great joke.

Badly mauled, shaken, and exhausted, Goodman Maurice was left slumped on the ground among the fallen columns, bitterly reflecting on the wickedly stupid interpretations which Jean-Jacques's doctrine of the General Will sometimes had put upon it.

Meanwhile the people from Senlis set out to pay a visit to the *ci-devant* himself.

In the hall of the château Monsieur Gerber came to meet them.

He had observed from afar the events in the park. So the barbarians were breaking in here too; like the Goths and Huns they were turning temples into stables for their horses. A painful analogy occurred to him: just as the people in Paris had destroyed Jean-Jacques's doctrine of the state, making a grotesque caricature of it by their misdeeds, so here they were laying waste the gardens which had been his last source of happiness, his 'Nature.' Not even this modest fulfillment of Jean-Jacques's dreams was allowed to endure. Monsieur Gerber's heart was torn with anguish. He sought to deaden it by repeating to himself a line of Aeschylus: 'Arduous are the paths along which Mercy guides us.'

But now that the men had penetrated into the château itself he could no longer hold his peace. He went toward them, pale and dignified. "Be temperate, gentlemen," he told them. "Remember this fundamental principle of the Republic: One citizen's freedom ends where another's begins. I tell you, citizens, in the name of Jean-Jacques whose spirit hovers round us all, your freedom ends on the threshold of this house."

He stood there, thin, feeble, much older than his years. But his eyes did not waver; they stared at the vandals with burning determination, and his voice was deep and compelling. He looked absurdly like Jean-Jacques, and perhaps the men of Senlis were dimly reminded of pictures of Jean-Jacques they might have seen somewhere. For a moment they hesitated.

But then one of them said, "Cut the speechmaking, you clown!" And another said, "He's a former priest, a hireling of superstition. You can tell from his cant." But they were good-humored; they did him no harm, merely stuck the red bonnet of freedom on his head, poured him some cider, and made him drink death to the aristocrats whose stone images they had destroyed.

After having been reprimanded by Citizen Huret, Corporal Grappin had not felt justified in restraining the sovereign people from their attempt to set things to rights in the park. But he was responsible for the life and person of his suspect. He posted his guards at the door to the inner apartments and urged the men from Senlis to go home. They, wearied by their patriotic exertions and the subsequent celebration, allowed themselves to be persuaded.

Chapter 7 Voices from the Mire

THE JACOBINS were vigilant. Since they believed they had discovered conspiracies in the prisons they had forbidden the prisoners all contact with the outside world.

The inmates no longer heard of what was going on outside, except the news that the head warden read aloud to them every evening from the *Moniteur*. Even the resourceful Monsieur Robinet could no longer smuggle news in to Fernand. Fernand did not hear about the vandalism at Ermenonville.

Extremely strict new regulations were introduced. The prisoners were forbidden to receive additional food from outside. They were forbidden to make music. The dogs had to be removed. There was

no longer lighting in the dormitories. Anyone who broke the new regulations was put into solitary confinement. The veneer of gaiety disappeared from La Bourbe.

The dirt increased with the severity of the regulations, and La Bourbe revealed itself in all its misery. Fernand suffered bitterly from the filth. Because of the morale of the inmates, too, La Bourbe, the swamp, he thought, was living up to its name. Their commerce, and intercourse with them, was no longer a comfort, a source of inspiration; the everlasting presence of others was galling and irritating; it made one feel somehow sticky and dirty.

As if deliberately to mock the prisoners, the authorities made them continue to assemble toward evening in the salon. The right of assembly, the head warden declared, was one of the fundamental rights of the Republic. So they sat there chatting, playing cards or checkers, squabbling; and the grand inscriptions on humanity and human rights looked down on them from the walls. Nowhere more powerfully than in the salon was Fernand struck by the complete senselessness of life in La Bourbe. Senseless the incessant furious arguments among the prisoners; senseless the fate which overtook them; and senseless the doctrinaire suspicions of the men who were responsible for their imprisonment.

The whole country was spinning senselessly in a vortex.

So as not to go out of his mind himself he tried to see sense in this senselessness. Greatness was unimaginable without a trace of madness, he thought. There was a verse by an English poet which he could not get out of his head:

Great wits are sure to madness near allied;
And thin partitions do their bounds divide.

Because the whole world had persecuted him for his boldness and wisdom, Jean-Jacques had from time to time taken refuge in madness. *'Thelo, thelo manenai.'* Now the whole world was persecuting the people of France because they were trying with astonishing courage to build up a state on the basis of reason. Why should they be denied the occasional convulsions of irrationality as an escape? Just as in Jean-Jacques's life, so now in the history of France, brilliantly reasonable achievements were interrupted by acts of madness. But with sure instinct the people always found their way back to sanity.

In spite of his own difficulties Fernand was making a tremendous

effort to be just, not to allow his view of the whole to be distorted by his personal misfortunes.

To be sure, the irresponsible act of a malevolent and stupid man had brought him to this pass. But to the Republic struggling for its life, everything was permissible that could serve to discomfit and destroy its enemies. The Republic was dependent on the services, even of subordinate officials; it could not afford to be delicate. Robespierre, Saint-Just, and Martin Catrou were right; in such a situation cruelty became a virtue and anyone rejecting the rigorous measures of the Republic from softheartedness thereby became its enemy.

Here and now, here in the depths, he had to prove himself. If he let his personal wrongs change his views, if he did not stick by the Republic with all his being, even by this Republic of Terror, he would be forfeiting his claim to be accepted by the people as their brother.

In Latour meanwhile anxiety mounted. Robinet had to let Gilberte know that he was no longer in touch with Fernand. Gilberte could not bear the inactivity. She wanted to go to Paris, to see whether she could help Fernand herself.

Monsieur Robinet pleaded with her not to be foolhardy. Under the new regulations *ci-devants* were forbidden to stay in Paris. If Gilberte moved away from Latour she would merely be increasing the danger to herself without helping Fernand. But all Robinet's entreaties and arguments were in vain. She traveled to Paris.

First she must speak to Martin Catrou. It was inconceivable that he would allow his best friend to be doomed. The obvious explanation was that he simply had not heard of Fernand's arrest; such arrests were so commonplace nowadays that people scarcely noticed them. She must tell Martin.

Her supposition that he knew nothing of Fernand's imprisonment was confirmed. At the Convention she learned that he had gone on a special mission to the Vendée. Nevertheless, she must act. The revolutionary tribunal worked with appalling speed.

She sought out Martin's wife, Citizeness Jeanne Catrou; found herself standing in that dwelling overcrowded with furniture. Jeanne inspected her mistrustfully. Gilberte had carefully prepared what she was going to say: that Jeanne knew what great friends Martin and Fernand were and that surely it was inconceivable that Citizen Catrou would have accepted the friendship of an enemy of the state. Fernand's arrest must therefore be due to some incomprehen-

sible mistake, and would Citizeness Catrou please let her husband know what had happened.

Jeanne had never liked Fernand, had mistrusted him from the first. Now it seemed that others shared her mistrust. She was gratified to hear of his arrest, and secretly pleased that Martin was not in Paris; the one matter on which she did not see eye to eye with Martin was his friendship with that little count.

"Deputy Catrou has gone to the Vendée by order of the Convention," she said, "to punish the defeated rebels so that they will never again try treason. Such work demands a man's full attention. Do you seriously expect me to take up his valuable time, Citizeness, with a petty personal matter like this? I don't understand you, Citizeness. Have you no faith in the justice of the Republic? Do you want anything besides justice? Are you looking for pity? Pity is not a Republican virtue."

Gilberte could not bear to go back to the forced idleness of Latour. She stayed in Paris. She went to La Bourbe and sought an opportunity to pass Fernand a note or to receive some word of him. There were friends and relations of other prisoners haunting the neighborhood of La Bourbe with the same intention. Gilberte knew that money achieved much, and money she had with her. But security regulations in La Bourbe had become extremely strict. The guards were surly, and there were innumerable spies. Gilberte was warned that an ill-considered step on her part could imperil both her friend and herself.

She brooded day and night on Fernand's possible fate.

She went so far as to attend sittings of the revolutionary tribunal to see the men on whom his fate depended.

There sat the same judge and jury whom Fernand had seen on an earlier occasion. But they themselves had changed, and so had their methods. It had been impressed upon them that their function was to excise the cancerous growth that was eating at the guts of the Republic, cut it out thoroughly and speedily. Most of the measures for the protection of the defendants had been abolished. The jurors were instructed not to weigh with petty precision what a defendant might or might not have done, but to follow their own intuition. They were to abide by Jean-Jacques's doctrine: 'Conscience is a divine voice which unerringly guides even the ignorant.'

The defendants no longer appeared singly, but in groups of twelve, fifteen, on one occasion even twenty-seven. They had been arbitrarily

lumped together by some subordinate official as, for instance: 'Citizen Dupont and twelve other conspirators.' Strange conspiracies. For example, members of the high nobility were said to have conspired with small shopkeepers who had violated the price controls. To such a group might be added a prostitute whose cursing had sounded Royalist, a former tax-farmer, and the proprietor of a marionette theater who was under suspicion of having used his puppets to poke fun at the Republic. According to the indictment all these had conspired together, in the Luxembourg prison, to betray their country and support the enemy tyrants.

With eyes sharpened by fear Gilberte observed the tribunal and those on whom it was to pass sentence. She noticed how apathetic and at the same time nervous the jurors were. Their functions had clearly become commonplace to them, however important they might consider them to be. Gilberte did not regard herself as being particularly clever, or gifted with insight into the souls of men, but her fear gave her the power to divine what was going on in the minds of judge and jurors. From the Convention, from the Commune of Paris, from the Jacobin Club the exhortations came: 'Do your duty! Rid us of the pollution of treason! Exterminate the guilty without mercy! Better that some healthy tissue be lost in the process than that anything rotten should remain in the body of the Republic!' And so at ever shorter intervals and after ever more cursory investigations, prisoners would appear before the court. The jurors were so overtired that they scarcely distinguished any longer between one defendant and another. Moreover, the public would interfere, would abuse the prisoners and call out to the jury, "Faster, faster." Suspicion was rampant. Everyone distrusted everyone else. There were rumors that even the tribunal itself was venal. In such an atmosphere mercy became a crime and every acquittal was suspect. Gilberte could imagine how the jurymen must feel in such circumstances. They might be kindhearted by nature, but they were obeying their 'intuition' which said, 'Guilty, guilty! Death, death!'

Undoubtedly many of the prisoners — in fact the majority, it seemed — were guilty, or at least ready to harm the Republic should the opportunity arise. But some were obviously indifferent to all politics, concerned only for their own skins and a few comforts. Occasionally such prisoners would be acquitted, but this was purely a matter of chance; it depended on the mood of the tribunal, on that same 'intuition' which would rather say 'guilty' than 'not guilty.'

Gilberte imagined Fernand sitting with the other defendants. Superstitiously she looked for omens. She identified him with Citizen Usson here, or Citizen Renard there. Whatever their fate would be, his would be. She was chilled to the marrow when Citizen Usson was sent to the guillotine; she exulted at Citizen Renard's acquittal.

From the tribunal she hurried to the prison, and from the prison to the Convention. At the Convention she asked whether Deputy Catrou had returned. When was he expected? She made inquiries in the neighborhood of La Bourbe as to whether after all there might not be a guard who would be willing to act as go-between. And again and again, horribly fascinated, she returned to the dreadful sittings of the tribunal.

Meanwhile, in spite of the severity of the regimen, the inmates of La Bourbe had found a way of communicating with the outside world. They had discovered that certain latrine pipes conducted sound waves to and from the underground sewers into which the pipes issued. They could hear what was being said in this underground world and could speak with it.

It was an experience both touching and grotesque to hear the voice of a friend, a wife or lover rising up from the mire; exciting to imagine how the speaker had climbed down into the filthy, evil-smelling depths and had waited for hours till his voice reached the person he was seeking.

Every day, with the utmost secrecy, prisoners would be summoned to the latrine to hear the voices of their nearest and dearest emerging from the sewer.

One day, to his surprise and joy, Fernand, too, was called to the latrines. On his way there he played a sort of hide-and-seek with himself, pretending that of course it was Eugénie who wished to speak with him, for he was unwilling to admit to himself whose voice he was expecting.

Then it came, the voice — Gilberte's voice. The words she spoke were few and very simple. She said, "How are you?" and, "All kinds of things are being done for you. I mustn't tell you the details. But it's sure to be successful." And she added, "Don't be afraid."

There Gilberte stood, his girl Gilberte, knee-deep in excrement so that he might hear her voice and she his. It was glorious and heart-rending. What she was doing was sheer folly. It could only endanger herself; she couldn't possibly help him, and what she had said was pure invention, just to comfort him. And it did comfort him. Her

words, enveloped in stench, foulness, and incongruity, came to his ear and heart more sweetly than the sweetest music.

His imprisonment in La Bourbe ceased to oppress him. He was able to sleep soundly again. He knew her words were a dream-wish, yet her message brought him hope and tranquillity.

Lepeletier had once remarked upon Nature's prodigal way of destroying on an enormous scale in order to produce something new and better, and if you considered the history of the world that was how the progress of the human race appeared. His friend had been right. Fernand believed, knew, that from these petty, senseless, horrible events something great would finally emerge: the new France — the France of Jean-Jacques.

Above the folly and misery of La Bourbe he heard Gilberte's voice. The stench out of which the voice arose was blown away. The clear, confident voice remained.

Chapter 8 Jean-Jacques's Revenge

IT CAME TO PASS just as Citizen Vincent Huret, the mayor of Senlis, had gloomily predicted for himself at the time of Deputy Chaplaine's downfall. He himself was investigated and found wanting. He was removed from office and placed under house arrest.

Goodman Maurice was delighted. The time had come to settle accounts with the barbarians who had played him such nasty tricks. Goodman Maurice went to the police. He took with him witnesses from Ermenonville who were able to corroborate and enlarge upon his report of how the people from Senlis had been urged on by their wicked atheistic mayor to desecrate the God-fearing Jean-Jacques's favorite haunts. An exhaustive dossier was drawn up.

It so happened that Maximilien Robespierre regarded the great campaign against the goddess as his personal concern. He made a point of seeing every document bearing on the question. In this way he came to hear of the devastations in the park at Ermenonville.

His sallow face went even paler. The gardens in which Jean-

Jacques had walked, in which he, Maximilien, had had an unforgettable conversation with the Master! The gardens where he had taken that vow which was to have such historic, fateful consequences! The birthplace of the revolution! Barbarously laid waste! But he would atone for the outrage. He would make reparation to the dead man. He already saw what was required.

His face cleared. This propitiatory act would also give him a chance to demonstrate anew to his friend Saint-Just his fraternal feeling and esteem.

This was a good time to do so.

For in the next few days Saint-Just would be off to the Rhine. As political commissar he was to supervise the Commanders of the field armies on the spot. It was a dangerous mission. More than once refractory generals had simply had these interfering observers eliminated. Maximilien was dispatching Saint-Just to the front with pride and some anxiety. By telling him of his decision he would admit that on that past occasion his friend's judgment had been better than his own.

He told Saint-Just of the mischief committed by the atheists of Senlis. "Ermenonville is no worthy resting place for Jean-Jacques," he went on. "You were right, my good Antoine, that time that we visited the grave together, and I was wrong. We shall, as you suggested, transfer the precious remains to the Panthéon."

A flush spread over Saint-Just's fine-skinned face. Had one of the great men of the world ever admitted a mistake more candidly than Maximilien? How generous of him to give his friend the credit for the prospective act of homage to Jean-Jacques. After all, it was Maximilien who had dedicated his life to Jean-Jacques's greater glory.

Once again Saint-Just was overwhelmed by the realization of Maximilien's tremendous achievement. What the Roman Republic had achieved in five centuries, he had done in five years. The world's stage had stood empty since the time of the Romans; Robespierre had filled it with purpose and action.

Saint-Just would have liked to take part in the great state funeral. But in four days at the most he had to leave for the front, and Jacques-Louis David, the artist, declared that he would need weeks to prepare the plans for the obsequies which at Robespierre's wish were to be finer than for any monarch of France.

At least Saint-Just could supply a very capable helper — his friend Martin Catrou.

Martin Catrou had at last returned from the Vendée. He had done a good job there. Even Robespierre, normally so sparing of praise, expressed appreciation. He had promptly agreed to Saint-Just's suggestion that Martin should go along with him as Second Commissar. Before following Saint-Just to the front, however, Martin was to do something toward the state funeral. As a native of Ermenonville he was to restore order there and prepare for the transfer of the body to Paris.

Martin was happy to have been able to serve the Republic in the Vendée. He was elated at the prospect of serving under Saint-Just on the Rhine. It was a crowning satisfaction to have been assigned the task of repairing the wrongs committed at Ermenonville.

The first thing he did — for the revolutionary tribunal acted swiftly — was to give orders for the suspension of the case against the Girardins.

Then he traveled to Senlis.

He interrogated Huret personally and directed that Huret should stand trial before the tribunal in Paris rather than the more lenient one of the department.

Next he sought information concerning Jean-Jacques's widow and her 'business manager', the former stableboy of the *ci-devant*.

This is how Nicolas and Thérèse had fared meanwhile:

Nicolas had smelled trouble the moment the campaign against the godless began. Not that he cared which got there first, the Goddess of Reason or the Supreme Being. He just had a hunch that his friend and patron Chaplaine would be paying for his jokes about God the Father and the Holy Ghost. In fact it wasn't long before that unpleasant fellow Robespierre, in an important speech against the atheists, referred pointedly to Chaplaine. Nicolas read the speech, whistled through his teeth, and told himself, '*Sauve qui peut!*' He had Thérèse dress up in dignified style and with her on his arm limped off to the house of his erstwhile friend, the fallen legislator.

He was not a moment too early. Officials of the Republic were already at work there putting everything under seal. "What are you thinking of, citizen-officials!" he challenged them. And pointing to the manuscript of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, he declared, "These papers belong to Jean-Jacques's widow. Speak up, venerable widow!" he prompted, turning to Thérèse. "These citizens had better realize that they are violating the rights of the Master's companion." And Thérèse repeated the lines he had drilled her on: "These papers are only

here on loan. The criminal Chaplaine took me in for a while, just as he did the Republic." The officials were impressed. There stood Jean-Jacques's widow in the flesh. To do her harm would be to draw down Robespierre's wrath. They handed over the manuscript.

Nicolas shook the dust of an uncongenial Paris off his feet without delay. He took Thérèse and the *Nouvelle Héloïse* and headed for Plessis and Citizen Bessat's thatched-roof cottage. He was even poorer now than when he had left it.

Thérèse obscurely felt that their new reverses were Jean-Jacques's revenge. She was scarcely settled in Plessis when she went to his grave. She should have stayed by its side as her mother had told her. She should never have gone to Paris. She and Nicolas had climbed too high and now Jean-Jacques called her back. Humbly she asked his pardon.

So there they were again, squatting in the midst of Jean-Jacques's household goods. At least Nicolas, like the smart fellow he was, had saved something from the catastrophe — the papers. They lay in the chest as before. But there wasn't much comfort in that. Nicolas grumbled and cursed. In his bitterness he declared that only the stupid were lucky and so it was damned well up to Thérèse to have a bit of luck, if nothing else.

And in fact it began to look as if Thérèse's luck would come through. Rumors travel swiftly. Even before Martin Catrou appeared in Ermenonville it was whispered that Jean-Jacques's body was to be transferred to Paris. Dawn seemed to be breaking. Nicolas, with his faculty for putting two and two together, recognized that the removal of the body would not take place without colossal celebrations. They could hardly do without Jean-Jacques's widow, who would be fetched out of her corner and restored to the place of honor. The Jacobin gentlemen would see that the widow's *homme de confiance* had to be on hand for the coming solemnities. Hurrah! John Bally rode again!

He rejoiced too soon. Deputy Catrou came, saw, and censured. So this female had the impudence to go on playing the role of Jean-Jacques's loyal spouse — when all the time she was knocking about with this fellow of hers who had put Jean-Jacques into his grave. And the Convention in its innocence might go and give her a place of honor at the state funeral. Martin would put a stop to anything like that.

On the other hand this was scarcely the moment to stir up memo-

ries of Jean-Jacques's unhappy end by an exposé of this couple. There was a hard smile on Martin's face as he recalled with scorn the way the seigneur had wavered and hesitated and had not dared lay hands on the pair of murderers. Martin was of sterner stuff. He would see to it that the vermin would not poison the great day with their presence. He would drive them back into the darkness where they belonged — and all this without a shade of scandal falling upon Jean-Jacques.

Had not these persons been on good terms with the condemned atheist Chaplaine? Had they not been members of his set? Was it not therefore as good as certain that they had been in on his intrigues and swindlings?

Martin's first step was to have the couple pronounced suspect. He ordered that their house be searched and they themselves held under strict arrest.

So the Procureur of the Republic appeared at Citizen Bessat's thatched cottage, and while Nicolas looked on in helpless rage the manuscript of the *Nouvelle Héloïse* was carried away, chest and all, and guards were posted at the door.

Inside the damp, dreary house Nicolas observed grimly, "They pinch everything we've got — the papers, and even the body." "Jean-Jacques always used to say: 'The whole world is against us,'" Thérèse reflected sadly. Then she gave a sigh and added consolingly, "At least we've still got my mother's grave."

This was too much for Nicolas. He stood up with a groan and limped menacingly toward her. She stood there waiting for him, paralyzed. He came up to her and struck her resoundingly in the face, first the right cheek, then the left.

Chapter 9 *The Body Snatcher*

MEANWHILE MARTIN CATROU was inspecting the gardens at Ermenonville. He recalled every nook and cranny, and he looked sadly at the devastation around him. But he did not admit his melancholy to him-

self. No, he himself cared nothing for this kind of nonsense, he thought. What angered him was that the *enragés* had destroyed things Jean-Jacques had loved.

The park must be restored. And the best person to do it was the Marquis himself. An impatient smile crossed his square face as he realized that he had suddenly thought of Citizen Girardin as the Marquis again.

Only in Senlis he had learned that Fernand had been taken to Paris and that only the elder Girardin was left at Ermenonville. This was a disappointment. His reason for suspending the case against them instead of setting them free at once had been that he wanted to inform them of their release in person. Now, on his way to the château, he felt more strongly than ever the piquancy of being able to confront his former seigneur as an equal and as an emissary of the Republic generously bringing him word of reprieve. Alas, his proud anticipation was mingled with a feeling of embarrassment. He had informed generals and high officials of the Republic of their impending execution with as much indifference as if he had been asking for a bed for the night or a plate of soup. It was not going to be quite such an easy matter for him to tell the Marquis that they were planning to exhume Jean-Jacques's body and remove it. The Marquis undoubtedly believed firmly that he and he alone was entitled to be the dead man's custodian.

Girardin was lying in bed, spent and emaciated, when Martin reached the château. It had been simply inconceivable to him that the barbarians had not even spared the gardens of Ermenonville — Jean-Jacques's gardens, the holiest spot in France. He had summoned all his strength to go out and inspect the damage. But he had been unable to bear the sight. After a few steps he had had to turn back. Moreover, in conformity with the order of the mayor of Senlis, just at this time of black despair he had been cruelly alone. Only during the past few days, since the mayor's arrest, had the faithful Gerber been permitted to visit him again. There had been times when the brave old soldier Girardin had seriously considered putting an end to his life, and to protect himself against this impulse he had again and again turned to the *Nouvelle Héloïse* in order to read Jean-Jacques's stern warning against suicide.

Now, when it was announced to him that Deputy Catrou wished to see him, he was panic-stricken. He believed that this fellow Catrou, who had been a rebel and his enemy even as a boy, was

bringing him his sentence and he was suddenly overcome by a terrible fear of the death he so recently had longed for.

A moment later he was entirely composed, once again the old soldier, the victor of Hastenbeck. He called to mind the great examples of antiquity, Socrates and Seneca, to reinforce his own stoicism. Trembling with weakness he had himself dressed in his best. The messenger of ill tidings should be received with proper dignity.

He confronted the representative of the Republic with cold politeness, with the hauteur of the seigneur of Ermenonville. "With what bad news are you entrusted, citizen-legislator?" he asked.

"I am glad to be able to inform you," Martin said dryly, "that there is not any question of doubt about your loyalty. I have given orders for the guard to be withdrawn and for the seals to be removed from your estate." "Thank you, monsieur," said Girardin.

"It has come to our ears," Martin proceeded, "that some of the statues in your gardens have suffered damage due to an excess of patriotic zeal on the part of certain citizens of Senlis. The Republic regrets this, particularly since the incident occurred in the neighborhood of Jean-Jacques's grave. The Republic has reprimanded the culprits and intends to make reparations." He concluded, not without a certain affability, "If you wish you may supervise the work of reconstruction yourself." "Thank you, monsieur," Girardin repeated.

But there his self-control gave out. In a strangled voice he asked, "And what is to happen to my son?" A little too quickly, almost crossly, Martin answered, "Of course Fernand will also be released."

The Marquis had not believed that life could ever look so bright again. His shoulders lifted. His heart soared. He could almost have embraced this offensive messenger of glad tidings.

But Martin did not give him a chance to express these emotions. He hated displays of feeling. Abruptly he passed on his third, and disagreeable, piece of news. "You will understand that the Republic does not wish to expose Jean-Jacques's remains to further risk. It intends to take these precious remains under its own protection."

So brusquely snatched from his happiness, the Marquis swallowed and had to sit down. "What does this mean?" he asked with an effort.

Martin's brow reddened. He had not expected the Marquis to take it so hard. Apparently he himself was not yet sufficiently disciplined. He was too softhearted. He should have let the Marquis know through the usual official channels that his detention was over and

that Jean-Jacques was to be buried in the Panthéon. In the Vendée, even under the most trying circumstances, he had let himself be guided by reason alone. No sooner was he back in this stupid Ermenonville than he found himself giving way to a sort of sentimentality more befitting a *ci-devant*.

He thrust his head forward. "The body is going to be transferred to the Panthéon," he declared, his strident voice raised authoritatively.

Girardin — who could not easily distinguish between the old Martin and the new — pleaded, "You can't do this to me, Martin! Send me to the scaffold, but leave Jean-Jacques here! He stood up. "I absolutely forbid this criminal act!" he cried, gesturing with his cane.

With a mixture of pity and contempt Martin admonished him, "The rapid changes of the recent past have upset your balance. I shall not attempt to argue with you. But remember this: it is not Citizen Catrou whom you are speaking with, but the Republic." And with marked patience he told the feeble old man, "You must try to understand that the people have a claim to Jean-Jacques. Jean-Jacques is not a private possession of yours, Citizen Girardin. Jean-Jacques belongs to the Republic."

Girardin had supposed that his sufferings of the past weeks were sufficient punishment for his sins of omission. But no, the punishment which Providence had devised for him was only now revealing itself, more cruel than anything he could have imagined.

He commanded himself to be reasonable. He thought, 'Here stands this boy, so young, so uncouth in his ridiculous three-colored scarf and his ridiculous plumed hat, self-important and proud of his ghoul-ish mission, dense as this wall and without an idea of what he's doing. And yet, he has read Jean-Jacques. There must be words to make him understand that he was committing a crime against Jean-Jacques!'

"Do try to understand!" he both pleaded and commanded. "It was Jean-Jacques's own wish that his remains should rest here, in Nature's bosom. '*Autòs épha*' — those were his very words, spoken to my face. Here he wished to rest, beneath the open sky, the vault of heaven, not beneath the vault of some gloomy building. It was Jean-Jacques's last request." Girardin spoke rapidly, urgently. Feverishly he sought some way of turning the young man from his gruesome designs.

He must abase himself before him, that was it — he must abase himself to this vain, stupid, self-important youngster, just as Priam had abased himself before Achilles in pleading for the body of Hector.

"Leave Jean-Jacques here!" he implored him. "Do not lay hands on him! Leave him here!" He spoke very softly. He tried to kneel, but found he had not the strength to do so.

Martin was weary of this distasteful scene. He had more important things to do than comfort this poor old fool. "Adieu, Citizen Girardin," he said, and left.

Ought he to go and inform Fernand personally of his release as he had planned to do? he asked himself. In three days he was to leave for the front. He was up to his neck in duties; could he waste time on a personal whim?

But it was more than a whim. Whenever he had an argument with his strange childhood friend, he seemed to find the right word for the things that troubled him, and his duty became clearer.

He went to La Bourbe.

Fernand was startled when he was told that Citizen Catrou was waiting for him in the salon. Did Martin come to bring his release? Or had his strange friend come to explain with Republican logic that the welfare of the state demanded his death?

By daylight, and empty of its usual crowd, the salon looked large and bare. Martin sat square and sturdy at one of the tables. He was wearing his tricolored scarf. His plumed hat lay on the table before him.

He said immediately, "I am here to tell you that you are free." Fernand answered, "It is good of you to take the trouble to come and tell me yourself."

He knew they were on the brink of an argument of supreme importance to them both. Not only the words would be important, but the tone in which they were spoken, down to the smallest nuance. Fernand was determined not to lie, neither by words nor by silence, not to falsify anything, either by gesture or facial expression. It was as though his entire life would culminate in this conversation. He must justify himself to Martin, his friend and foe, this representative of the people. He must make it clear that his release was not an act of mercy but of justice. Of course there were times when he had been weak, and he was prepared to admit to his weaknesses and mistakes. But he had fought his way through, he had stood his ground in direst extremity. In the face of death he had declared himself ready to accept his fate and to submit to the Republic no matter what it might do.

Sure enough, the first thing Martin said was, "I suppose you

think you have been treated unjustly?" Fernand replied, "I can see that I must have seemed suspect to certain people." He could not resist adding, "In any case what I think is a matter of no importance." "It is of importance," Martin answered belligerently. "If you think you've been treated unjustly you're guilty." "I have not been treated unjustly," Fernand replied, and this he felt.

Martin persisted. "In these times of stress," he declared, "the rights of the individual must yield to the rights of the whole community. I suppose you'll admit that much?" "Yes, I admit it," Fernand answered patiently. "How kind of you," Martin said sarcastically. "But tell me," he went on, "would you have voted for Louis to die? Would you have voted for the extermination of your moderates?" "I don't know," Fernand returned. "Probably not," he finally admitted.

"There you are, you see!" said Martin triumphantly. He sprang to his feet and began to walk up and down between the empty tables, addressing Fernand as if he were a vast audience. "Anyone who works for the revolution with half-measures is digging his own grave and that of the Republic as well. Oh, you gentlemen of learning!" he broke out. "You fainthearts! You desired the revolution, but you only half desired it. When the cards were down, when severity and terror were necessary, you turned cowards and took refuge behind your stupid 'humanity'! If it had been up to you the Republic would have been defeated and done for by now. You traitors!" His voice filled the room. He thrust out his face at Fernand.

Fernand strove to maintain his composure. There was a thread of truth in what the other was saying. He had had the same feelings himself when he had pondered the fate of the Girondists. "Why are you letting me go if I'm a traitor?" he asked quietly. It was not the logical reply, but he knew Martin would understand.

And so Martin did. He said more quietly, though with some irritation, "That's what I've been trying to explain to you for the past sixteen years. You don't understand us. Your birth prevents you from understanding the people. You are incapable of understanding them. And because your kind couldn't understand, you did everything by halves. Everything you did turned out to be wrong."

Then, remembering a former conversation of theirs, he planted himself in front of Fernand and without preliminaries, in a matter-of-fact tone, yet with a certain triumph, announced, "I've drafted a new law for the abolition of slavery in the colonies. The Convention has voted for it. Slavery has been abolished and without any ifs and buts."

Fernand should have been pleased. He was not pleased. He was conscious of nothing but anger. Martin was standing there and rubbing it in: 'I took action where you and your educated friends failed.' And it was true, Martin had acted where they had merely talked, and slavery was abolished.

But that was just what annoyed Fernand. Everything about Martin, the way he stood there so sturdy and impudent, his downright yet sarcastic manner of talking, vexed and annoyed Fernand. Jean-Jacques's portrait in stone looked down at them out of large deep-set eyes and seemed to affirm the truth of what Martin was saying. All the patriotic inscriptions — "The free man loves freedom even when he is deprived of it," and all the rest of the high-flown nonsense which ranted from the walls — seemed to become sense and tell Fernand that Martin was right. Fernand's breath came heavily with rage. He became a boy again. The shopkeeper's son was once more taunting the son of the seigneur and sticking out his tongue at him. Fernand was not going to stand for it any longer. In a minute he would hit the other in his square, grinning face.

He pulled himself together. The shopkeeper's son was right and he must admit it, however hard it was. He took a deep breath. There was even a certain warmth in his voice as he said, "You have done a valuable and necessary piece of work, Martin."

Martin knew what such an admission must cost. He was placated, even moved. He would have liked to say something friendly and kind.

But he was a Republican, and sentiment was not for him. "One thing more," he said. "I suppose the news hasn't reached you in here that a few hotheads have been misbehaving themselves in Ermenonville. No, nothing has happened to your father," he quickly reassured him, seeing Fernand's shocked surprise. "But the disturbance has made Robespierre come round to a decision which as a matter of fact is long overdue." He stated flatly, "We are going to transfer Jean-Jacques's body to the Panthéon."

Fernand knew what a sad loss this would be to Ermenonville, and what a cruel blow to his father. But he kept his face expressionless and said nothing.

This was not what Martin wanted. With some awkwardness he went on, "I suppose you will be going to Ermenonville. But if you would prefer to remain in Paris I'll see that you get a special permit."

As Fernand still said nothing he went on heartily, almost pleadingly, "Why don't you say something? Have you made any plans?"

A sudden impulse came to Fernand to reveal what he had kept wholly secret up to now: "I had reported for duty with the army, but they wouldn't have me."

Martin was disconcerted, but only for an instant. He glanced at the other's lame foot and thought to himself, 'Well, naturally.' Another thought leaped into his mind: 'A *ci-devant* has no business in the people's army.' Aloud, he said, "There is a regulation allowing *ci-devants* to be employed in the service of the Republic if they're useful."

Fernand looked up. "Do you mean you would be willing to back me if I reported a second time?" he asked.

After the briefest possible reflection, and with an effort to speak casually, Martin said, "In a few days I shall accompany Saint-Just to the army on the Rhine as political commissar."

Fernand's warring emotions were clearly reflected on his thin, expressive face — his pleasure at the high honor that had been conferred upon his friend, his anxiety for his safety. "That's splendid," he cried. Then he added with genuine concern, "But it's a dangerous business."

Martin did not seem to care to discuss the point. "I might be able to find some use for you in the army of the Rhine," he said thoughtfully. "I know I can," he added with increasing warmth. "I'll start putting the matter through before I leave for the front."

He observed his friend's excitement and thought it best to moderate it. "It will take a little time in any case," he said. "There's no sense getting you down there until I know what I'm going to do with you."

A deep flush of joy had flooded Fernand's face. Not caring to show his own emotion, Martin said teasingly, "But you mustn't mind if we keep a strict eye on you." "It couldn't be stricter than it is here," Fernand cheerfully remarked and added, "Thank you, Martin."

Chapter 10 Ermenonville Deserted

UNANNOUNCED, FERNAND drove straight to Ermenonville.

He walked through the neglected gardens, saw the broken statuary, climbed up to the ruins of the Temple of Philosophy. Uncomfortably seated on one of the broken columns, he looked out over lake and park and was surprised to observe how rapidly the manicured park was degenerating. Trees and shrubs grew unchecked; the paths were covered with grass and weeds.

Disloyal thoughts began gently to assail him. Now that 'Forest' and 'Wasteland' were less artificial, the buildings in ruins, and everything overgrown and choked with weeds, Ermenonville appealed to him more deeply than before. Perhaps if Jean-Jacques himself had known the great broad plains of America and her endless forests, he would have looked at the refined and playful 'Nature' at Ermenonville with different eyes. Perhaps even without any knowledge of America, Jean-Jacques might have looked for another kind of Nature had he lived to experience the revolution.

Fernand went to his clearing and found that bushes and undergrowth had made inroads upon it. He had no desire to test the echo. He remembered how he and the Master had once playfully vied with each other in testing it. "Freedom and Equality," Jean-Jacques had cried, and the echo had been confused, distorted, and menacing.

He took the path to the château. On the way he heard the thin sound of violin music and followed it. Then he stopped short, aghast. There stood Jean-Jacques playing the violin.

Yes, Monsieur Gerber, a man in his middle years but prematurely aged, now looked incredibly like the Master. "Fernand! My Fernand!" he cried. "Permit me to embrace you." And he laid aside his violin and embraced Fernand.

Together they went on through the ruined park. "When I was forced to look helplessly on while the vandals did their work," Mon-

sieur Gerber confessed, "I was seized by a quite unphilosophical rage. Later, of course, I remembered that Jean-Jacques teaches us there are times when brutality is permissible, and I suppose those people from Senlis mistakenly assumed this to be such an occasion."

With a vague gesture at the gardens Fernand asked, "How did my father ever bear all this?" "At first it seemed he would never survive it," Monsieur Gerber replied. "Now he has become gentle, almost too gentle. He is very emaciated. You must not be shocked at his appearance."

He reverted to his philosophy. "Meanwhile, I imagine, the course of events has provided an unequivocal demonstration to every thinking person that humanity cannot be taught humaneness without bloodshed. Yet, though I know this from my Jean-Jacques and my Lucretius, not to speak of my own experience, I am still infuriated every time I read about the arbitrary act of the government in Paris, and my obstinate heart says no while my mind says yes. At least," he concluded with a sigh of relief, "no one expects me to take any part in it. Happy the man who does not need to act."

Over on the lake, Jean-Jacques's gravestone gleamed softly among the poplars. At the sight of it Monsieur Gerber observed with bitter contempt, "Unimaginative men, men who are incapable of higher feelings — Voltairians — maintain that it is a man's work that matters, not his aura, and certainly not his remains. But I tell you, everything connected with a great man is sacred — the paths he trod, the trees beneath which he walked. And thrice sacred is the place where his remains are laid at rest. Anyone capable of removing Jean-Jacques from his grave does not deserve to wear a human countenance. Perhaps history will condone some of their other excesses, but that they are going to snatch this man from his grave brands them forever as barbarians."

In a matter-of-fact tone Fernand asked, "Does my father know what is to happen here?" Monsieur Gerber told him, "The Marquis has decided to leave Ermenonville before they exhume the body. He does not intend to return."

They had reached the shores of the lake. With profound reverence Monsieur Gerber regarded the grave that still held the body of the Master. "Here lies the greatest mortal who has walked the earth since Lucretius," he said, and softly, with deep emotion, he recited the lines in which Lucretius paid homage to his master:

Out of the darkness and night you are the first to have raised high above all a great torch shedding light on the wonders of life. Following humbly your path, my immortal Master, is all the meaning my own life needs, and the Golden Words you have spoken will provide my soul's only nourishment.

"You must forgive me for going on like this," he said, "but all this time I have had no one to talk to apart from your father." Fernand pressed his hand.

Then he asked him to prepare his father for his coming. Gerber left him and Fernand rowed himself across to the little island.

He felt little emotion. He remained strangely indifferent, here where he had so often stood or knelt in a tumult of visions, grim or pleasant dreams, and lofty resolutions. Monsieur Gerber's sublime enthusiasm was denied him.

By the time Fernand reached the château his father had got up; he did not wish to receive his son in bed. He embraced him. "My son! My Fernand!" he greeted him in a voice grown sadly feeble. "That I should have lived to see you again! And in Ermenonville! And free! I trust you have your certificate of loyalty?" he asked anxiously.

Though forewarned by Gerber, Fernand was stunned to observe how weak and emaciated his father looked, and how he trembled. He begged him to lie down again. Dismissing the servant, Fernand himself helped his father undress.

The joyful excitement had told on Girardin. He lay for a long time with his eyes closed. At last he said, "Did you have a very hard time?" Sitting by the bedside, Fernand answered, "It was hard sometimes." Still with his eyes closed, Girardin went on, "I have tried to overcome the horror of it by working. I have expanded my essay on the General Will into a philosophical treatise." He opened his eyes and raised himself slightly. "I shall read aloud to you from it," he announced. "Not today. The joy of seeing you again has been hard on me."

He smiled and lay back on the pillows. "Of course a soldier has no business to say such things," he said, closed his eyes, and fell asleep.

Chapter 11 Tomorrow, the Day After, and the Rest of Our Lives

TWO HOURS LATER Gilberte was there. She had been waiting for Fernand, waiting as she had never waited before in her life.

They stood and looked at each other as if seeing each other for the first time.

His picture of her had changed since her voice had come up to him out of the filth and muck. His imagination had created a dream image to fit this voice. And now Gilberte stood before him in the flesh — still the Gilberte of the old days, and perhaps the Gilberte of his dreams too, but also an entirely different person, much firmer, more robust, dependable. A Gilberte in rustic clothes: a girl of the people — solid, tempting, and wholesome as our good daily bread.

He, too, differed from her imaginary picture of him. Thin and angular, his face and body even looked a little shabby. But he had been weighed in the balance and not found wanting.

Very slowly they took each other by the hand, but they did not embrace. After a while Fernand raised her hands to his lips, gently, first one and then the other, and kissed the rough, uncared-for skin.

Together again after so many vicissitudes, they exchanged only a few words, and those very commonplace. She said he looked better than she had expected, but very thin; that she would have her work cut out for her to put some flesh back on him. He asked whether she did not find it difficult living at Latour with no one but her grandfather, who must be getting more and more crusty. Their conversation was slow and awkward, but to them it did not seem so.

Shortly afterward it was announced that the exhumation of Citizen Rousseau's body would take place on the eighteenth Messidor and the funeral ceremonies in Paris on the twentieth.

Fernand received orders to report for duty with the staff of the army of the Rhine on the twenty-third Messidor.

The first person he informed that he was going to the front was

Monsieur Gerber. It was obviously a shock to Gerber, but he said bravely, "I can appreciate your decision to fight on the side of the barbarians. Often when I reflect upon Citizen Robespierre's acts of terror I seem to hear a voice within me saying, 'Get thee behind me, Satan,' but then when I consider how many of Jean-Jacques's sayings this Robespierre can cite in his own support I beg Satan to stay."

He said, as though to himself, "So the Marquis will be leaving Ermenonville on the seventeenth Messidor, then you, too, will go, and I shall be left alone by the empty grave. It won't be easy."

He could not resist this last opportunity to pour out his heart to Fernand. "Next to Voltaire!" he lamented. "They are going to place him next to Voltaire. I still cannot grasp that they are forcing this defenseless dead man to share his last resting place with that fool of logic. And that precisely was Jean-Jacques's greatness — his perception that the universe does not conform to the laws of human logic. And now they are going to bury him beside that ape of reason!"

When Fernand told Gilberte of his impending departure she grew deathly pale. "So you're going to America a second time," she said. He stood uncomfortably before her, his long arms dangling, shifting his weight back and forth from his good foot to his lame one. His expression was troubled but resolute. Quickly Gilberte added, "No, no, I'm not telling you not to. This time you *must* go. I understand that." And she made a pathetic attempt to smile. Rather rashly Fernand said, "That other time, too, I had to go." "But it was a pity — perhaps you will admit that," was Gilberte's reply. Suddenly she was in his arms and they were kissing passionately.

After a while Gilberte said, "This time no Grandfather is going to ask: 'And what will happen if she's left a widow with a child?'" "I want more than anything to marry you, Gilberte," Fernand said, "and with the Republican authorities there's no long petitionary pilgrimage. But it would take a couple of weeks all the same." "Who said anything about marrying!" Gilberte said indignantly, and: "Do you want me, Fernand?" she asked.

Youth alone was left in Gilberte's melting features; all traces of that tiny hard smile had vanished.

Afterward they lay side by side sensing the delicate interlacings of each other's thoughts and feelings, and suddenly they both laughed because they had taken such endless, unnecessary detours in order to come together.

Later Gilberte asked, "I suppose you're going to Paris for Jean-

Jacques's state funeral?" Fernand replied that he was, and she said without hesitation, "I shall not go with you." With honesty and courage she declared, "I am jealous of Jean-Jacques and of the people." Fernand answered, a little lamely, "But you belong much more to the people than I do." He understood that she wished to leave him to himself on this great and trying day.

"I feel so sure that all will be well," she said as they parted. "Ours is no short, capricious happiness, of that I am certain." And Fernand said, "Tomorrow, the day after, and the rest of our lives."

He did not speak to his father about going to the front.

Nor did he say anything to him about Jean-Jacques's exhumation. But two days before it was to take place Girardin suddenly brought up the subject himself. "So, day after tomorrow the crime will be committed," he said. "These gentlemen were gracious. They offered to entrust me with the reconstruction of my gardens. But I cannot stay here if they take Jean-Jacques away from me. I cannot do it." And bitterly he informed his son that he would leave Ermenonville forever the next day and move to Monsieur Robinet's Latour. "He has offered me asylum many times," he explained. "It won't be easy to live with such a cantankerous person. On the other hand he has come to appreciate Nature and good taste in his old age. He's forever telling me I must remake his park in my manner. Though it may cost my last remaining strength, I intend to oblige him. I shall accept no favors from him."

Fernand could not hold back any longer. "I shall not stay here either," he said. "I am going into the army, Father."

Shaken with emotion, the Marquis tried to draw himself up. "They are taking you into the army?" he asked. "Those men?" And now he could keep it to himself no longer. "And they turned me down!" he burst out. "It was Lafayette and Rochambeau who turned me down."

Fernand could guess something of the confusion of feelings overwhelming his father. Gratification that even in this war a Girardin would be fighting, great anxiety for his son, a faint hope that out of the present chaos and wanton caricature of a government might yet emerge the France of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

"Count Brégy," his father said at last, "I am proud that you are fighting for France. But I have doubts whether a Girardin should serve under the command of these gentlemen." He was silent for a moment, then went on in an altered tone, "Well, I had doubts too when you went to America. Later I came to see that I may have been

wrong after all. I have become an old man. I no longer know which of the two of us is closer to Jean-Jacques. And now, please leave me alone. I am exhausted and would like to rest."

Fernand understood that his father did not wish to show his conflicting emotions, and withdrew.

He decided to leave Ermenonville early the next morning, immediately after his father's departure. He did not belong here any more. Moreover, he had affairs to attend to in Paris: he must get his equipment and he must make certain arrangements in case he did not return.

He rowed over to the little island, stood for the last time at Jean-Jacques's grave. He thought of those hours of dreadful fascination when he had sat in the pavilion reading the *Confessions* with Thérèse moving back and forth behind him while he greedily devoured that mad, magnificent work. Today he realized that Jean-Jacques, the greatest man of his time, had been just as much a prisoner of his own personality as was he himself, insignificant, humdrum Fernand Girardin. Jean-Jacques, in spite of his passionate desire for truth, had created his own imaginary heaven, which was his alone, and his own hell, from which no one could release him — his desperate delusions.

Fernand, whose unfortunate good luck it had been to know Jean-Jacques intimately, was aware of this. But others could approach Jean-Jacques only through the *Confessions*, and for them his heaven was the only heaven, his hell the only hell.

All at once Fernand perceived — in a sharp, painful flash of realization — that Jean-Jacques's physical entity had been swallowed up by his work. He was no longer there. He was absolutely dead — as dead as those who had been executed in his name, whose bodies had been swallowed by the lime pit. Monsieur Gerber was wrong. Jean-Jacques the man, these gardens in which he had walked, the woman with whom he had slept, the bones beneath this gravestone — none of these any longer had a connection with his work. Knowledge of Jean-Jacques the man and his wretched life merely detracted from the understanding of his work. The *Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Émile*, the *Social Contract* and the *Confessions*, each one of these books began its life anew with every new reader, lived a life of its own apart from the man who had created it. What life of his own he had put into it was only seed. It went on growing and proliferating independently, a monstrous tangle of madness and reason. It was overrunning

France and the world beyond as he had intended it to — and also in ways quite different from what he had intended.

On the following day Girardin told Fernand he would rather not have his son accompany him to Latour.

They spent the last hour together. Already dressed for the journey, Girardin sat thin and weak in his wide armchair. On a small gilt table beside him lay the manuscript of his work on the General Will — loose unbound sheets. "I have been meaning to read to you from it," he said, "but I have not got around to it. Only yesterday I thought I might do it today, but I am afraid it's too much of a strain. But there are a few passages I should like to draw your attention to." With a trembling hand he held out a page to Fernand, a second, then a third. He looked at Fernand expectantly.

Fernand realized that he himself was to read them aloud. He did so.

The pages contained quotations from Jean-Jacques's books, and Girardin's interpretations. For example, 'The General Will is always right; if I am in disagreement with it then I am wrong.' To which the Marquis had appended his comments. Or again, 'The General Will is the union of power and freedom on the highest plane. Will and law become one; passion is silenced by the voice of reason.'

Fernand managed to read in a clear, matter-of-fact voice unblurred by emotion. His father listened, smiling and nodding with satisfaction.

"The book hasn't turned out badly at all," he observed. "Of course it needs touching up here and there, but I do not know whether I shall ever get to it. I have to whip the gardens at Latour into shape, and I fear I am older than my years. Give me the pen," he interrupted himself impatiently, and at the bottom of the last page wrote, 'Finis.' "Take the manuscript," he told Fernand, "read it, and before you leave Paris give it into the safekeeping of Doctor Lebègue. He is to publish it when the time is ripe." Fernand tied up the manuscript while Girardin watched and tried to help him.

When this was finished, Girardin said in a matter-of-fact tone, "I can well imagine that you will be very busy out there. But if you find time, do write me occasionally. You were not very communicative while you were in America."

Fernand took him to his carriage. Embraced him.

An hour later he himself left for Paris.

Chapter 12 Jean Jacques's Transfiguration

ON THE FOLLOWING day Jean-Jacques's coffin was disinterred.

The gravediggers were dressed in their heavy Sunday clothes. They sweated as they worked. Neither Girardin nor Fernand was present. But members of the Convention and other dignitaries attended the solemn act, and from the small point of land Monsieur Gerber watched the outrage, his features stiff and pale as death.

Over at Latour the Marquis knew that at this hour the dreadful crime was being committed. Gilberte had begged him to take a sleeping potion, but he had refused; he had declined all assistance, all companionship. He crept into bed and lay huddled, a pitiful heap of suffering.

Their work done, the men filled the grave again and put the altar back in place so that nothing appeared changed. The coffin made the brief journey across the lake, and the deputies of the Convention and officials of the Republic took turns carrying it through the park to Ermenonville. Monsieur Gerber followed, tears coursing down his face, choked with sobs. At Ermenonville the villagers were waiting to escort the dead man to Paris. Almost none were missing. Several of them were weeping — loudest of all, Goodman Maurice.

From all over France deputations were on their way to attend the ceremony. Geneva, the new France's young sister republic, was sending a sizable delegation.

Meanwhile, all along the road to Paris, members of the Convention and of the government were waiting their turn to carry Jean-Jacques's coffin. Thus, from shoulder to shoulder, the dead man progressed through towns and villages specially decorated in the great, simple style of the Republic by the painter David, France's foremost artist. New bands of mourners continually joined the procession until, when it reached Paris on the nineteenth Messidor, it numbered many thousands.

In the garden of the Tuileries a small artificial lake had been constructed, and in the middle of it a replica of the island of tall poplars. Here the coffin was deposited, surrounded by torches, and all night long crowds passed along the shores of the lake to pay homage to the dead man.

By a happy coincidence news of victories on the northern front arrived that same night. The army of the Republic had been fighting from the air too — a true novelty in the history of war. To the strains of the 'Marseillaise' a huge yellow sphere had risen over the little town of Fleurus — a captive balloon, a *montgolfier*, which had done useful service in spotting the enemy's movements. Glorious victory had been won out there in Flanders. When next morning the painter David told the Convention assembled in the Tuileries that the funeral procession was ready, the president was able to announce to the enormous crowd from the balcony of the Tuileries that once again the war had taken a turn for the better. Paris was now free from danger once and for all.

The members of the Convention left the Tuileries and joined the funeral procession. Rimmed by huge red, white, and blue streamers, the large group of legislators marched along. Borne aloft in front of them was the manuscript of the *Social Contract*.

The whole population took part in the procession. Arranged in groups, laborers and scholars, peasants, artisans, and artists marched along. Banners bearing inscriptions fluttered; posters and busts of all kinds were carried.

A large tablet inscribed with the rights of man was borne in front of representatives of the Commune of Paris. 'He was the first to demand these rights,' its attendant banner proclaimed. A statue of Jean-Jacques towered aloft from a carriage. It was surrounded by an escort of citizens from Montmorency, Grolay, Franciade, whose banner boasted: 'In our midst he created *Héloïse*, *Émile*, the *Social Contract*.' The banner of the Agricultural Institute declared: 'In the study of Nature he found consolation for the injustice which men had inflicted on him.' The banner of the Genevan Republic announced boldly: 'The Geneva of the aristocrats sent its greatest son into exile. The new Geneva has built a state by his precepts.'

Slowly, endlessly the procession marched, to the surging of music, the firing of guns, the cheering of onlookers. It was hard to see the houses behind the masses of tricolored Republican flags. Even the carved stone saints on the churches had their tricolors.

Jean-Jacques's friends walked together in a small, silent group. They were eyed with some curiosity. Many expected to see Jean-Jacques's widow, and some looked for the elder Girardin. These figures were absent; perhaps they had died. But Ducis was there and Doctor Lebègue, Pastor Moulou from Geneva, and the young Girardin.

Fernand had dressed plainly. It was lovely weather — a few clouds of glistening whiteness sped across the clear sky, and a gentle breeze tempered the warmth of the sun. Yet Fernand was not enjoying the day. The procession crept along at a snail's pace. In the course of it, his lame foot had begun to pain.

He was full of rebellious thoughts. The Jacobins who were paying tribute to Jean-Jacques would have no commerce with his greatest book, the *Confessions*. The all-too-human voice of this book was drowned out by the flourishes of bugles and trumpets with which they hailed the *Social Contract* and *Émile*.

They had substituted their Republic for his *Confessions*. And rightly. For greater than this greatest of Jean-Jacques's books was this, his last work — the Revolution. It was his most terrible, most monstrous, his most glorious work. It was entirely his, bearing every one of his features. It took after him in being guilty of the same sin — the great, beneficent sin of drowning reason in the deluge of the emotions.

Since this was the case, was it not farcical to bury Jean-Jacques next to Voltaire? Voltaire would grin as he lay in his coffin, and Jean-Jacques would grin grimly back at him.

There were still people who regarded Voltaire as the father of the revolution. But his acerb, brilliant logic had reached only to the select few. It had never had any effect on the people. Voltaire's teaching was a cold flame, shedding light but no warmth. Jean-Jacques had glowing warmth. Jean-Jacques had laid the kindling and now the whole world was on fire. The uncontrollable force of his emotions, breaking the bounds of reason, had set the masses on the march, swept away the old order, brought into being the fourteen armies which were at this very moment shaking the world to its foundations and setting it free.

Since this was so, were not the Jacobins entitled to remove Jean-Jacques from his resting place in an aristocrat's pleasure grounds and place him in the people's hall of honor? Let Monsieur Gerber say what he would. The right was theirs!

And there was a logic, too, in placing Voltaire and Jean-Jacques

side by side — though it disturbed his, Fernand's feelings. For if Voltaire's biting intelligence had not combined with Jean-Jacques's passion, the revolution would never have been carried out.

Gradually along the march, Fernand ceased to analyze and pass judgment. His thoughts became vague, merged with the emotion of the people.

Today pride and joy moved the people. This was a very great man they were bringing back, and he belonged to them — the people of Paris. He hadn't been a general or a statesman; he'd fought no victorious battles and made no grand speeches. He'd only been a writer, a philosopher, and they weren't quite sure what that was. Certainly not one in a hundred of them had read his books. But a word or two, a phrase or two of his had struck home to them in a critical hour — and such was their ring that a man had no choice but to march, a man had no choice but to fight when he heard them. So they had marched and fought. And they had been victorious. The outcome of it was that this dead man's books were worth more than the general's artillery and the statesmen's palaver. Today in their hundreds of thousands they felt an intimate bond with this great mind, and in their bond with it, they felt themselves ennobled.

So the dead man was borne in triumph through Paris, through the very streets down which he had been hounded in his lifetime. The same people who had derided him as a fool now bared their heads in homage to the wise man.

There was music and singing on all sides. But above all rose Rouget's popular song brought from Marseille by fighters for freedom, and recently proclaimed the anthem of the Republic by the National Convention — the 'Marseillaise.' The bands in and outside of the procession played the music and the tens of thousands of marchers together with the hundreds of thousands of spectators roared out the words: "*Allons enfants de la patrie, le jour de gloire est arrivé.*" Blaring triumphantly from every side, the rousing song of the Republic seemed to be powering the procession toward the Panthéon.

Whenever the marchers rounded a curve Fernand caught a glimpse of Jean-Jacques's huge sarcophagus. He had seen the triumphal hearse which bore the sarcophagus in the Tuileries. It was drawn by twelve white horses. Its coachmen were dressed in costumes copied from antiquity. Its four enormous wheels were of solid bronze. Antique candelabra surrounded the granite sarcophagus containing the coffin with the body. The air about it was full of incense and perfume.

Upon the lid of the sarcophagus was placed a couch fashioned in the style of the ancient Romans; on it, in a reclining position, his hand supporting his head, was a monumental waxen image of Jean-Jacques. The figure hulked against the sky.

Fernand was disconcerted to find that after seeing this sculptured likeness he was unable to summon up the appearance of the real Jean-Jacques at all clearly. He struggled to fix it in his mind, but his recollection of the living man was overwhelmed by the solid waxen idol borne along at its towering height in a cloud of incense. And amidst the chords of the 'Marseillaise' the real Jean-Jacques faded into the farthest distance, entirely out of reach. Fernand felt an intense physical sensation at the disappearance of the true Jean-Jacques. Whatever had been ordinary about Jean-Jacques sank away, no longer existed. Whatever was unique and eternal about him emerged — to ride aloft up there, for all to see.

The procession reached its destination. Here, in the reign of Louis the Fifteenth, a church to Sainte-Geneviève had been begun. The site was the highest point of the old city on the left bank. But the church had been a quarter of a century in the building. Louis the Sixteenth had been dethroned before it reached completion, and the National Assembly had converted it into a pantheon for the burial of eminent men.

It was a magnificent building surmounted by a lofty dome. The procession reached the splendid portico, and passed through it into the interior.

After the din and bright sunlight outside, one was enveloped by the cool solemnity, the twilight peace within the vast pillared hall. Group after group entered the building — the crowd within grew ever greater. A narrow path down the center was kept free, and now the catafalque came swaying in, borne on powerful shoulders. It was carried up the aisle and set down.

A small figure in a blue coat detached itself from the crowd, walked up the aisle, and under the gaze of the multitude mounted the steps leading to the catafalque.

Maximilien Robespierre stood beside the coffin. For almost a minute he stood motionless looking at the silent crowd. He thought of the vow that he had taken after his conversation with Jean-Jacques, of the pledge he had entered in his journal to destroy the old structure and build a new one along the lines of Jean-Jacques's teachings. The new France — Jean-Jacques's France — was already in being.

True, there still were hosts of enemies, and they craftily schemed against him, Maximilien. In fact it was more than possible that he might perish before the fight was over. But that would not be too high a price for what had been achieved.

"Had Jean-Jacques been merely the greatest writer of our century," he began at last, speaking without raising his voice, so that his hearers were forced to keep absolute silence — "had he been no more than its most eloquent mouthpiece, we would leave it to posterity to assess his worth and honor his memory. But he has been more than that; he is one of the immortal prophets of humankind. He founded the Kingdom of Reason and extended the domain of Virtue. He was more than a human being — he was the instrument of Providence. As a boy he beheld the peoples down on their knees before crown and sceptre and he dared say to them: Arise. He had the courage to carry the message of freedom and equality. Godlike himself, he aimed his burning words straight at men's hearts and achieved what no one had ever achieved before: the peoples rose."

Fernand listened, awe-struck. Robespierre, this uncanny man, had followed all the dark recesses of Jean-Jacques's soul, knew what Fernand had thought he himself was alone in knowing. 'Godlike himself.' Robespierre had sensed that in the mad depths of his despair, Jean-Jacques had been 'susceptible to no further shock, like God.'

And yet this man Robespierre saw only one side of Jean-Jacques. He made a god of him, disregarding the Jean-Jacques of the *Confessions*. He refused to see the Jean-Jacques of the *Confessions*; he tolerated none of the human aspects of the man whose greatest pride had been that he was human.

"Like Socrates," Robespierre went on — and now his voice, loud and incisive, reached to the farthest corners of the great hall — "like Socrates he brought philosophy from heaven down to earth, into the cities, into your homes. He forced men to reflect upon their lives, upon society and the state, justice and injustice, right and wrong. He taught us to anchor ourselves not in the past but in the future."

These were noble words. And for all the differences between Fernand and Robespierre, they shared a common doctrine, a common faith, a common goal.

Robespierre had finished speaking. The coffin was lifted down from the catafalque, to be carried the short distance to the vaults.

For a brief instant Fernand had a vision of the body lying there in

its coffin with that gaping wound in its temple. And he saw the corpse with its head caked with blood, as it had lain on the bed in the pavilion. Then the corpse came to life for him. He saw Jean-Jacques sitting in the clearing in mute despair; he saw Jean-Jacques sitting contentedly with Thérèse; he saw the fervent faith that glowed in his face as he declared, "Man is good"; he saw the madness in the eyes of the Jean-Jacques who believed himself at once the foremost and the least of mortal men.

But now the coffin began to move toward the vault, and at this moment, unbidden and as if by prearrangement, the whole gathering began to sing the 'Marseillaise.' "*Aux armes, citoyens! Formez vos bataillons! Marchons! Marchons!*" they sang. The song filled the vast building as if it would burst through roof and walls. It roared in from outside, from everywhere, as if all Paris, the whole of France, were singing this most audacious of all songs.

The thunder of the song, the spectacle of the procession with the coffin, swept aside Fernand's visions. He was carried away, forgetful of everything but the moment. With a great surge of joy he became aware that his sense of self was melting away, fusing with the emotions of the crowd. He was no longer an outsider — he was at one with the singers. All that was about him pervaded him. He became more than himself; he became a living part of the whole, became part of the people.

"*Aux armes, citoyens! Formez vos bataillons!*" The song was within him and all around him, battering him from all sides.

There was a last glimpse of the coffin, hovering for a moment above the vault. The song ended abruptly.

The sudden silence broke the spell for Fernand. He was cruelly, agonizingly reminded of the crimes these brutal new disciples of Jean-Jacques had committed in the dark intoxication of their faith. But this sharp stab of reason and skepticism lasted only a moment. '*Marchons quand même,*' he told himself, 'let us march nonetheless.' He could almost have shouted it into the silence: '*Marchons quand même.*'

For one miraculous moment he experienced the transcendent harmony which grandly and meaningfully linked the *Nouvelle Héloïse* with the *Marseillaise*, the noble simplicity of the island grave with the solemn vaults of the Panthéon. He shared in Jean-Jacques's superabundance, in that superknowledge which is greater than reason itself. He saw the significance of his own life. As Jean-Jacques's humble pupil he had had to pass through disappointment, suffering, despair,

to be worthy of this one moment of fulfillment. And this moment, alone, justified his existence.

The coffin sank lower, lower, sank out of sight.

The song arose again. "Onward, onward!" it sang, while forgotten and unforgettable Jean-Jacques disappeared into the vault and into fame.

Lion Feuchtwanger was born in Munich, the son of a wealthy industrialist. He was educated there and in Berlin. His early literary activity was chiefly in the dramatic field. As an avid traveler, he was in Tunis at the outbreak of World War I. Interned by the French, he managed to escape to Germany, where he was promptly taken into the army. In 1933, as a novelist of international repute, he was forced into exile by the Nazis who confiscated his fortune and vast library. With the invasion of France in World War II, he again became a victim of the Nazis, who condemned him to death. Reports indeed reached the outside world that Mr. Feuchtwanger had been beheaded. But he managed a perilous escape to the U. S. via Spain and Portugal. Since then, he has been living in his beautiful California home overlooking the Pacific Ocean, where he owns one of the finest private libraries in the country.

LION FEUCHTWANGER's international fame dates back to the publication of his first novel, *POWER* (JEW SUESS). His reputation grew and spread steadily with the publication of his other novels, *THE UGLY DUCHESS*, the *JOSEPHUS* trilogy, *SUCCESS*, and more recently *PROUD DESTINY* (a Literary Guild selection) and *THIS IS THE HOUR* (a Book of the Month Club selection). 'TIS FOLLY TO BE WISE will be published almost simultaneously in seventeen countries.

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