Claudine Alexandrine Guérin de Tencin,
The History of the Count de Comminge,
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INTRODUCTION

One of the most fascinating biographies of Claudine Alexandrine Guérin de Tencin (1682-1749) described her as a "scandalous woman"[1], because of her secret son, the much more celebrated d'Alembert, her several lovers (many were cardinals), and most importantly because she was the leader of a renowned political and literary coterie and chased power for herself and her brother Pierre with all the means—legitimate or illicit—that could be available to an eighteenth-century French *salonnière*. Although in the last period of her life Claudine de Tencin was able to carve out for herself the image of a pious and redeemed woman, indeed her *personage* is still now remembered mainly because of some eccentric and disreputable episodes of her life, such as her supposed abandonment of her son upon the steps of a church in 1717, her active participation in political intrigues, and even the suicide of one of her lovers, Charles-Joseph de la Fresnaye, counsellor of the King of France, who shot himself in her house. Her *persona*, however, was often different from the one-sided portraits that at times biographers have sketched of her. Claudine de Tencin's mind was lively and rebellious, and her yearning for freedom and emancipation would influence her attitude towards friendship, love, and the establishment itself, nurturing an intellectual movement around her salon that was already laying the foundations for revolutionary ideals.

Labelled as impudent and cynical, Claudine de Tencin was impatient with any social constraint of class, religion and especially of gender, and refused to embody the passive positions of obedient daughter and partner to pursue instead a leading role as a female intellectual. As further proof of her brilliant mind, Tencin published several novels that underlined her ambiguous position as an intellectual woman suspended between persona and character, both within and beyond the conventions of the establishment. *Mémoires du comte de Comminge* (1735), *Le siège de Calais, nouvelle historique* (1739) and *Les malheurs de l'amour* (1747) exemplify Tencin's own passion for writing and, although protected by anonymity[2], earned her

[1] René De Castries, *La Scandaleuse Madame de Tencin (1682-1749)*, Paris: Perrin, 1986.

[2] Tencin's three novels were attributed to her after her death by Guillaume-Thomas-François, abbé Raynal, but she was known to be the authoress, at least

wide success, in France and abroad: notwithstanding her tumultuous biography, the acclaim that welcomed her novels demonstrated that she could also be appreciated as an authoress in her own right.[3] Tencin's decision to publish anonymously should thus be considered cautiously: as far as *Mémoires du comte de Comminge* is concerned, "by taking a man's name in the title of her memoir, Tencin produced an oblique fiction of dissent: a feminist critique of masculine privilege."[4] On the other hand, however, Tencin's own ambiguous opinions towards publishing her name vouched for both her anxiety about being read and the intimate pleasure in actually being so.

Right from its publication in Paris in 1735, *Mémoires du comte de Comminge* became a widespread success. Following its popularity, in 1764 François Thomas Marie de Baculard D'Arnaud transformed it into a play[5], and subsequent translations of Tencin's short novel into other languages have often mistaken the authoress of the original *Mémoires* with D'Arnaud, as happened to an English translation entitled *Memoirs of the Count de Comminge. From the French of Monsieur D'Arnaud* which was published in London by G. Kearsly in 1774.[6] The first translation of Tencin's *Mémoires*, here reprinted for the first time, had however already appeared in 1756 in *The Memoirs of the Countess of Berci* as a sort of "insertion" within the translation, or rather, the adaptation, of Vital d'Audiguier's *Histoire trage-comique de nostre temps, sous les noms de Lysandre et de Caliste* (1616), by Charlotte Lennox (1729?-1804).[7] Lennox's

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among her circle of friends. See Louis Simon Auger, *Notice sur la vie et les ouvrages de Madame de Tencin*, in *Œuvres complètes de mesdames de La Fayette, de Tencin et de Fontaines. Avec des notices historiques et littéraires par Auger*, 5 vols., Paris: Lepetit, 1820, vol. III, pp. 1-18.

[3] Tencin also wrote *Anecdotes de la cour et du règne d'Édouard II, roi d'Angleterre*, published posthumously in 1776 and completed by Anne-Louise Elie de Beaumont, and *Histoire d'une religieuse écrite par elle-même* (publ. 1786).

[4] Nancy K. Miller, "1735. The Gender of the Memoir-Novel", in *A New History of French Literature*, ed. Denis Hollier, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1989, pp. 436-441 (p. 438).

[5] François Thomas Marie de Baculard D'Arnaud, *Les Amans malheureux, ou le Comte de Comminge, drame en trois actes et en vers*, The Hague [Paris]: L'Esclapart, 1764.

[6] Another translation of Tencin's *Mémoires*—and not of Baculard's play— was published in Dublin in 1781, with the title *The fatal legacy; or memoirs of the Count de Comminge. From the French of Monsieur d'Arnaud* (Dublin: printed for C. Jackson, 1781).

[7] [Charlotte Lennox], *The Memoirs of the Countess of Berci. Taken from the French by the author of the Female Quixote*, 2 vols., London: A. Millar, 1756.

interest in Tencin's *Mémoires* was then further confirmed by her decision to publish her translation *The History of the Count de Comminge* in her distinctly feminist magazine *The Lady's Museum*, a periodical wholly devoted to women's literary and cultural education.[8] Interestingly, in 1764 James Hoey junior published *The History of the Marquis of Lussan and Isabella*, where the Marquis of Lussan is the Count of Comminge, and the Adelaida of Tencin's novel turns into Isabella: Lennox's name appears in the title page as the *authoress* of the novel.[9]

Lennox did not mention Tencin's name at the time she translated *Mémoires*, nor may one argue that she definitely knew that Tencin was the authoress, because her name officially appeared in the first edition of her works only in 1786.[10] Yet during the years after the publication of *Mémoires* in France, Tencin's name was generally associated with the novel, and the intellectuals gathered around her salon could all acknowledge for her authorship. It might be likely that Lennox received a copy of the novel through her friends in London: many of them were in fact travellers and writers themselves, could speak several languages, and frequented intellectual coteries in France, Italy, Germany, and Britain. Lennox's activity as a writer and a translator, an activity that was strongly prompted by her perpetual need for money, had in fact allowed her to broaden her acquaintances, which included novelist Samuel Richardson, Samuel Johnson, who positively reviewed her first novel, *The History of Harriot Stuart* (1750-51), Giuseppe Baretti, who probably taught her Italian, and David Garrick, who produced her comedy *Old City Manners* (1775) at Drury Lane and assisted her in the publication of her most famous novel, *The Female Quixote, or, The Adventures of Arabella*, which appeared anonymously in 1752.

Tencin's *Mémoires*, which Lennox translated as *The History of the Count de Comminge*, appears in vol. II, pp. 135-251. Lennox's translation was first acknowledged in *The New Novelist's Magazine; or, Entertaining library of pleasing and instructive histories, romances and other exemplary little novels* (2 vols., London, 1786-87), where it appears as *The History of the Count de Comminge. Supposed to be written by himself. Translated from the French. By Mrs. Lennox* (vol. II, pp. 275-301).

[8] [Charlotte Lennox], *The Lady's Museum. By the author of The Female Quixote*, 2 vols., London: Printed for J. Newbery […] and J. Coote […], 1760-61. *The History of the Count de Comminge* appears in vol. I, pp. 122-128, 190-192, 298-305 and 379-387, and vol. II, pp. 449-455, 538-551, 609-626, and 673-685.

[9] *The History of the Marquis of Lussan and Isabella. By Mrs. Lennox, Author of the Female Quixote, and Sophia*, Dublin: Printed by James Hoey Jr., 1764.

[10] *Oeuvres completes de Mme de Tencin*, 7 vols., Amsterdam, 1786.

An aspect of Lennox's literary career that has never been properly researched involves her translations from Italian and French.[11] In 1747 she had married Alexander Lennox, an employee of the printer William Strahan, but throughout the years their union revealed to be particularly unfortunate, especially as far as concerned money matters.[12] Lennox's work as a translator may have thus started as a mere way to overcome the distressed financial situation of her family. Her periodical *The Lady's Museum*, which Lennox started in 1760 and published monthly from March 1760 to January 1761[13], and was then continued by Oliver Goldsmith (until 1763) and by the reverend Charles Stanhope (from 1786 to 1795 with the name of *The New Lady's Magazine*), besides the serialization of her *History of Harriot and Sophia* and numerous philosophical and historical essays comprising "a Course of Female Education and Variety of Other Particulars for the Information and Amusement of Ladies"[14], also contained most of her translations. Among them, Fenelon's *Traité de l'éducation des Filles* (1687, translated as *Treatise on the Education of Daughters*), selections from Celio Malespini's *Ducento Novelle* (1609), which inspired Lennox's own *History of Bianca Capello*, *The History of the Princess Padmani*, an oriental tale in turn inspired by

[11] The only critical contributions that deal with Lennox's work as a translator are Edward Pitcher, "Charlotte Ramsay Lennox's 'History of Bianca Capello'", *American Notes and Queries* 14:9 (1976), pp. 130-131, and Frederick W. Vogler, "Vital d'Audiguier and Charlotte Lennox: Baroque Studies, Women's Studies, and Literary Resurrection", *Romance Notes* 36:3 (1996), pp. 293-299.

[12] For biographical details on Charlotte Ramsey Lennox, see Miriam Small's standard biography *Charlotte Ramsay Lennox: An Eighteenth Century Lady of Letters*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935, reprinted 1969.

[13] *The Lady's Museum* was published anonymously, but it then appeared in two volumes towards the end of 1761 "by the Author of the Female Quixote". According to Kathryn Shevelow, however, a year before the publication of *The Lady's Museum* Lennox had begun working on another magazine, which would then converge into the *Museum*. In fact, in September 1759 the first issue of *The Lady's Magazine or, Polite Companion for the Fair Sex* appeared in London: the name of "Mrs. Stanhope"—probably a pseudonym of Lennox—was printed in the title page. In the second issue of the paper "Mrs. Stanhope" published a letter where she discusses the education of women and outlines the characteristics of a magazine devoted to the issue of female education: the letter is dated 22nd September 1759, and is signed "C—L—". *The Lady's Magazine* was then a sort of a "trial run" for *The Lady's Museum*, probably to try the public's taste, or more plausibly, to start looking for subscriptions and contributions. See Kathryn Shevelow, "C—L—to Mrs. Stanhope: A Preview of Charlotte Lennox's *The Lady's Museum*", *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 1:1 (1982), pp. 83-86.

[14] *London Chronicle*, 19-28 February 1760.

the outstanding success of the *Arabian Nights* throughout the whole eighteenth century, and *The History of the Count de Comminge*, in a version that differs very little from the first translation she provided in *The Countess of Berci* in 1756.

Tencin's *Mémoires* is conceived as a short novel, without chapters, nor parts or sections, and its shortness indeed increases its intensity. Written as a memoir with the structure of a novel, a feature that did not escape Lennox's attention, who in fact translated the *Mémoires* as a *History*, a story told by Comminge himself, it invites the reader to believe the truth of the facts narrated by the young count of Comminge. Tencin also renders her narrative truthful through the expedient of the "Avis au lecteur"[15] and by accentuating the geographical accuracy of its settings.

Comminge, the narrator of his own *Mémoires*, is a young count whose father seeks revenge for the humiliations endured when he was a child, and lives in a consuming jealousy towards his brother. His resentment, however, which even causes him the highest "transports of rage and fear" and "a dangerous fever", does not influence his son. When the young count is sent to gather all the documents which would prove his father's rights to inheritance, he meets and falls in love with Adelaida, who happens to be his cousin, the daughter of his father's hated brother. But the count is a rebellious character, and as such, he decides to burn his father's papers: his act is indeed accompanied by a strong feeling of happiness and relief that testimonies the young count's romantic attitude against submission to authority. Even the mere thought of his father's harshness "gives him courage" to burn those precious documents, and he keenly tries to convince Adelaida not to "subject ourselves to the tyranny of our parents: let us leave them to hate each other, if they will do it, and let us fly to some distant corner of the world, and be happy in our mutual tenderness, which we may make a superior duty to that we owe them."

If the young count embodies all the features of an eighteenth-century romantic hero, imbued with a strong sensibility that yearns for freedom, rebellion, and the fulfillment of pleasure, his counterpart, Adelaida, instead represents a much devoted sense, permeated in turn with a

[15] "Ce manuscrit a été trouvé dans les papiers d'un home après sa mort. On voit bien qu'il a donné des noms faux à ses personnages et que ces noms sont mal choisis; mais on a donné le manuscrit tel qu'il était et sans y avoir rien changé. Du reste, on a lieu de croire que les événements sont vrais, parce qu'on a d'ailleurs quelque connaissance de la façon dont le manuscrit est venu entre les mains de celui chez qui on l'a trouvé", [Claudine Alexandrine Guérin de Tencin], *Mémoires du comte de Comminge*, The Hague [Paris], Chez J. Neulme, 1735.

powerful notion of her duties. From the very beginning of her love affair with her cousin, Adelaida maintains that "she will do all that she can to regulate her inclinations by her duty" and therefore allows her parents to dispose of her own life, consenting to marry an old suitor. Her marriage with Monsieur de Benavides is an imprisonment that symmetrically mirrors the prison where her beloved cousin is trapped by his own father. Once the young count is released, he discovers that Adelaida has become Madame de Benavides, but determines to see her once again, and then retire to a life of solitude and privation in a monastery. The meeting between the two lovers is interrupted by the arrival of Benavides, who is wounded by the count and is supposedly dead. A series of vicissitudes and confinements brings the two lovers together again, in the "abbey of T.", where Adelaida had retired to expiate her guilt, disguised as a monk. The abbey, possibly an autobiographical allusion to the convent of Montfleury where Claudine de Tencin was forced to enter at the age of eight to take her vows, cannot nurture their sentiments anymore, and the count, who had also repaired to the same abbey to find relief for his agitated soul, only realizes Adelaida's presence at the point of her death.

The story of the count of Comminge and Adelaida represents a tragic background situation which develops into a protest against familial order: both the count's and Adelaida's parents firmly use their authority to control their lives and subject them to their will. Their two mothers in particular, although characterized through typical eighteenth-century traits of sensibility—delicacy, virtue, compassion—hypocritically participate in taming their son's and daughter's insubordination.

The love between the couple, described through the conventional mechanisms of waiting, hope, and temptation, with very few allusions to physical love—the only "audacious" scene in the novel occurs when the count takes Adelaida's hand—is only incidental to the main theme of the short tale, that is Comminge's revolt against familial interests and social conventions. The characters of the young count and his lover Adelaida thus must be seen as the two sides of the same coin: on the one hand, Comminge's impulsiveness and passion aim at demonstrating that his compliancy with the temptation of romantic musings subtends the risk of allowing sensibility to dominate over sense. On the other hand, Adelaida's rationality and lack of sensibility portray her indirect defense of the rules and behaviour of her aristocratic status. Both characters become victims of their own passion as well as of the circumstances that surround them: in the end, there is no feasible solution to their situation, no balance between rationalism and passion.

Solitude seems to be the only relief from torment and inquietude: the young count's love for his retreat in the Pyrenees, even though it is a consequence of his father's authoritative and tyrannical punishment, transfigures his sentiments for Adelaida into a platonic love of nature, silence and isolation from society. All these romantic traits contribute to shaping the character of the count of Comminge as that of an unfortunate, melancholic hero, unable to subdue his feelings to reason, and therefore destined to unhappiness.

The huge success of Tencin's novel was due not only to its brevity and the clarity of its style, but mainly to the psychological depth of its characters. Comminge, whose looks are never described, and whose key features reside in his determination to react against social restrictions and in his passionate, unrestrained sensibility, symbolizes his tragic hero-like destiny through his challenge to the paradigms of social respectability that eventually positions him between an enlightened sense and a romantic sensibility.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

Tencin wrote *Mémoires du comte de Comminge* in 1735 and the novel was published anonymously by Neulme in the same year in Paris. Charlotte Lennox's *History of the Count de Comminge* is the first translation of Tencin's *Mémoires* into English, and appeared first in her *Memoirs of the Countess of Berci*, itself a translation of Vital d'Audiguier's *Lysandre et Caliste*. Lennox's *Comminge* was then reprinted in Dublin in 1764 and presented with a different title and characters' names (*The History of the Marquis of Lussan and Isabella*), as well as slight changes. Finally, Lennox included and serialized her translation in several issues of her *Lady's Museum.*

The present text is taken from *Memoirs of the Countess of Berci*. I have retained the spelling and punctuation of the original, except for a few cases in which, in my judgment, my editorial interventions only aimed at simplifying the reading of Lennox's version. All variations from Lennox's first translation to her second edition of Tencin's novel in *The Lady's Museum* and to her *History of the Marquis of Lussan and Isabella* are explained in the notes at the end of the volume.

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THE HISTORY OF THE COUNT DE COMMINGE

Written by himself.[1]

The house of Comminge, from which I am descended, is one of the most ancient and illustrious in the kingdom. My great grand-father, who had two sons, was so extremely fond of the youngest, that he settled some very considerable estates upon him, in prejudice to the right of his elder brother, and gave him the title of marquis of Lussan. The partiality of my ancestor did not weaken the friendship between his two sons, which increased with their years. They would have their children brought up together, but by giving them thus their education in common, instead of uniting them by stricter ties than those of blood, which was their sole view in it, they rendered them enemies almost from their birth.

My father who was always excelled in his exercises by the young marquis of Lussan, conceived a jealousy at it, which soon degenerated into a fixed aversion. They often quarrelled, and my father being always the aggressor, it was he who was always punished.

One day when he complained of this treatment to the steward of our family, “Know,” said this man to him, “that you will have it in your power to repress the pride of the marquis of Lussan, all the estates he possesses are entailed upon you, and your grand-father could not dispose of them: when you are the master,” added he, “it will not be difficult for you to recover your right.”

This intimation convincing my father that he had it in his power to be revenged of his cousin, made him set no bounds to his resentment. Their quarrels became so frequent and so violent, that there was a necessity for separating them. They were many years without seeing each other, during which they were both married. The marquis of Lussan had only a daughter by his wife, and my father only a son by his, which was myself.

As soon as my father came to the possession of his hereditary estate by the death of his grand-father, he determined to follow the advice that had been given him, while he was yet a youth, and which he had never lost sight of: he omitted nothing that could render his claim unquestionable, and rejecting several proposals for an accommodation, commenced a law-suit with the marquis of Lussan, which could not but terminate in the despoiling him of all his estates.

An unhappy rencounter which they had one day in a hunting match rendered them for ever irreconcileable. My father, whose vowed revenge was never out of his thoughts, said several cruel things to the marquis of Lussan upon the despicable state to which he expected soon to reduce him. The marquis, tho' naturally mild, could not help answering with some haughtiness. They had recourse to their swords: fortune declared in favour of Monsieur de Lussan: he disarmed my father, and bid him ask his life.

"I should hate it," answered my father fiercely, "if I owed it to thee." "Yet, spite of thy self thou shalt owe it to me," said the marquis de Lussan throwing him his sword after which he instantly left him.

This generous action did not move my father in his favour, on the contrary the double victory his enemy had gained over him, increased his hatred; and he carried on the suit against the marquis de Lussan more vigorously than before. However when his hopes were highest, he received some accounts from his lawyers, which effectually dashed them. This disappointment threw him into such transports of rage and grief as brought on a dangerous fever, under which he languished a long time[2]; and in this state I found him at my return from my travels upon which I had been sent immediately after my studies were finished.[3]

A few days after my arrival, the abbot de R... a kinsman of my mother's, sent notice to my father, that the writings, which alone were able to prove his just claim to the estates possessed by the marquis de Lussan, were in the archives of the Abbey of R... to which place many of the papers belonging to our family had been carried during the civil wars.

My father was desired by the Abbot de R... to keep this information secret and to come himself for those writings, or send a person for them, on whose fidelity he could have an absolute dependence.

The bad state of his health not permitting him to go himself, he charged me with this commission after many times representing to me the great importance of it.

"You," said he to me, "are more concerned in the recovery of these papers than I am. The estates will probably soon be yours: but if you had no interest in them, I think well enough of you to believe that you share my resentment, and are eager to revenge the injuries I have received."[4]

After giving me some other necessary instructions, it was resolved that I should take the title of marquis de Longaunois, that my business in the abbey might not be suspected, Madame de Lussan having several relations there.

I set out accompanied only by an old servant of my father's, and my own valet de chambre: my journey proved successful: I found in the

archives of the Abbey of R... the writings which proved incontestably the entail.

I wrote to my father, and gave him an account of all that I had done: and as I was only at a small distance from Bagnieres[5], I desired he would permit me to stay there during the season for drinking the waters. My father was so pleased with the success of my journey, that he readily complied with my request.

I still appeared under the borrowed title of the marquis de Langaunois. I had too inconsiderable an equipage to support the grandeur of that of Comminge. The day after my arrival, I went to the fountain: in these places ceremony is laid aside, and an easy polite freedom better supplies its place. From the first day of my appearance at the baths, I was admitted into all parties of pleasure, and introduced at the house of the marquis de la Valette, who that day gave a grand entertainment to the ladies.

I found some of them already come whom I had seen at the fountain, and said some tender things to them as I then thought myself obliged to do to all women. I was engaged in a particular conversation with one of them, when a lady of a good presence entered the room, followed by a girl of surprising beauty: her charms fixed my attention immediately, her graceful modesty won my esteem[6], I loved her from that moment, and that moment decided the destiny of my whole life: insensibly my former gaiety vanished, I could do nothing but gaze on her, and follow her every where: she perceived it, and blushed.[7] A walk was proposed, and I had the good fortune to lead her. We were at a sufficient distance from the rest of the company to give me an opportunity of talking to her upon a subject by which my whole thoughts were engrossed: but I who a few moments before was not able to remove my eyes from her face, had now when we were alone not courage enough to look upon her. Till then I had always talked of love to women for whom I felt nothing but indifference: bus as soon as my heart was really subdued, I found impossible to speak.

We rejoined the company without having uttered a single word to each other. The ladies were conducted to their lodgings, and I returned home, where I shut myself up in my apartment. In the disposition my mind was then in, solitude was most agreeable. I felt a certain kind of joy mixed with pain, which I believe always accompanies a beginning passion: mine had rendered me so timid, that I durst not endeavour to know the name of her I loved. I was apprehensive, my curiosity would betray the secret of my heart: but how did it sink within me when I learned that it was the daughter of the marquis of Lussan, who had charmed me. All the obstacles, that opposed my happiness, rose instantly to my mind. But the fear, that Adelaida (so was that lovely girl called) had been early taught to

hate my name, was what most alarmed me. I thought myself fortunate in having assumed another, and fondly hoped that she would know my passion for her, before she could be prejudiced against me, and that when she knew who I was, she would at least be induced to pity me.

I therefore determined to conceal my true name as long as possible, and in the mean time to use every method to please her: but I was too much in love to employ any other than that of loving. I followed her wherever she went, I ardently wished for an opportunity of speaking to her in private; and when that so much desired opportunity offered itself, I had not power to take advantage of it. The fear of forfeiting a thousand little freedoms, which I now enjoyed, restrained me: but my greatest fear was that of offending her.

This was my situation when one evening, as the company was walking in little separate parties, Adelaida dropt a bracelet off her arm to which her picture was fastened. The chevalier de Saint Oden, who led her, eagerly stooped to take it up, and after gazing on it a moment put it into his pocket. Adelaida at first asked for it mildly; but he obstinately refusing to return it, she expressed great resentment at a behaviour which argued so little respect for her. The chevalier was handsome, some little successes with the fair, had made him vain and presuming. Without being disconcerted at Adelaida's anger, "Why, mademoiselle," said he, "would you deprive me of a good which I owe only to chance? I flatter myself," continued he lowering his voice, "that when you know the sentiments you have inspired me with, you will suffer me to keep what that has presented me." Saying this he bowed profoundly low, and, without waiting for her answer, retired.

I happened not to be with her then. The marchioness de la Valette and I were talking at a little distance: but although I quitted her as seldom as possible, yet my attention was always fixed upon her. I never lost a look, a word, or action of hers, and however particularly engaged, I never failed in any of those assiduities, which others practise to please, but which the excess of my passion made me find inconceivable pleasure in performing.[8]

Hearing her speak with unusual emotion, I approach'd her, she was giving her mother an account of what had happened. Madame de Lussan was as much offended at the chevalier's behaviour as her daughter. I was silent, I even continued my walk with the ladies. When they retired I sent a message to the chevalier, he was at home, and in consequence of my desiring him to meet me, he came instantly to the place appointed.

"I cannot persuade myself," said I approaching him, "that what has happened during our walk today, is more than a mere pleasantry: you are too gallant and well bred to keep a lady's picture contrary to her inclination."

"I know not," answered he warmly, "what interest you take in my keeping or restoring it. But I know that I neither need, nor will accept of your advice." "Then," replied I clapping my hand on my sword, "I will force you to receive it in this manner."

The chevalier was brave, he eagerly answered my defiance, we fought for some time with equal success: but he was not animated like me with the desire of serving what I loved. He wounded me slightly in two places: but I gave him two large wounds, and obliged him both to ask his life, and to resign the picture. After I had assisted him to rise and had conducted him to the nearest house, I retired to my own lodgings, where as soon as the wounds I had received were drest, I set myself to contemplate that lovely picture, and kissed it a thousand and a thousand times.

I had a genius for painting which I had taken some pains to cultivate: yet I was far from being a master in the art. But what will not love accomplish? I undertook to copy this portrait. I spent two days in this employment. Delightful task! I succeeded so well, that even a very discerning eye might have mistaken mine for the original. This inspired me with the thought of substituting one for the other, by which contrivance I should have the advantage of keeping that which had belonged to Adelaida, and she without knowing it, would always bear my work about her.

These trifles to one who truly loves, are matters of great importance, and my heart knew how to set a full value on them.

After I had fastened the picture I had painted to the ribbon in such a manner that my cheat could not be discovered, I presented it to Adelaida. Madame de Lussan expressed herself highly obliged to me. Adelaida said little, she seemed embarrassed, but in the midst of that embarrassment I thought I discovered that she was pleased at having received this little obligation from me, and that thought gave me a real transport.

I have in my life experienced some of those happy moments, and had my misfortunes been only common ones, I should not have believed them too dearly purchased.

After this little adventure I stood extremely well in the esteem of Madame de Lussan. I was always at her lodgings, I saw Adelaida every hour in the day, and although I did not speak to her of my passion, yet I was sure she knew it: and I had reason to believe she did not hate me. Hearts as sensible as ours were, quickly understand each other: to them every thing is expression.

I had lived two months in this manner, when I received a letter from my father, in which he commanded me to return immediately. This command was to me like the stroke of a thunder-bolt: my whole soul had

been engrossed with the pleasure of seeing, and loving Adelaida. The idea of leaving her was wholly new to me. The horror of parting from her, the consequences of the law-suit between our families rose to my thoughts with every aggravation to distract me. I passed the night in the utmost agitation, and after having formed a thousand different prospects, all equally fruitless and impracticable, it came suddenly into my mind to burn the writings which were still in my possession, those now hated writings that proved our claim to the estates of the family of Lussan. I was astonished that I had not hit upon this expedient sooner, since it was the most effectual method I could take to put an end to a suit the consequences of which I had so much dreaded. It was not impossible but my father, who had proceeded very far, might be induced to terminate the affair amicably by my marriage with Adelaida: but altho' there should be no foundation for so pleasing a hope, yet I could not consent to furnish arms against what I loved. I reproached myself for having so long kept papers in my possession, which ought to have been sooner sacrificed to my tenderness. The reflection of the injury I did my father could not stop me a moment from the execution of this design. His estates were entailed upon me, and I inherited one left me by my mother's brother which I could resign to him to procure his pardon, and which was much more considerable than that I was the cause of his losing.

There needed no more arguments to convince a man in love, and already determined. I went instantly to my closet for the little box which contained those papers. Never had I in my whole life experienced so happy a moment, as that in which I committed them to the flames. I was transported into rapture at the thoughts of so effectually serving the object of my passion.

"If she loves me," said I, "she shall one day know the sacrifice I have made for her: but if I am not so happy as to touch her heart, she shall always remain in ignorance of it. Why should I make her sensible of an obligation she would be sorry to own to me? I would have Adelaida love me, but I would not have her think herself indebted to me." I confess however, that after this action, I found myself emboldened to declare my sentiments to her, and the freedom, with which I visited at her mother's, gave me an opportunity that very day.

"I am going to leave you, charming Adelaida," said I, "will you have the goodness to think sometimes of a man, whose happiness, or whose misery you only can make?" I had not power to go on, she seemed alarmed, confused, I thought also that I saw grief in her eyes.

"You have heard me," resumed I trembling, "give me some answer, I implore it or your compassion, speak one word to me."

"What would you have me say to you?" replied she with visible emotion, "I ought not to have heard you, and I ought less to answer you."

Scarce did she give herself time to pronounce these few words, she left me so suddenly. I stayed the rest of the day there, but I found it impossible again to speak to her alone. She avoided me carefully. She had an air or perplexity and confusion: how lovely did she appear to me with that perplexed air, and that sweet innocent confusion: my respect for her was equal to my love, I could not look on her without trembling. I dreaded lest my presumption had made her repent of her goodness towards me.

I should have longer observed a conduct so conformable to my respect for her, and to the delicacy of my own sentiments, if the necessity I was under of leaving her, had not forced me to speak: I was willing to tell Adelaida my true name before I went away: but I dreaded this declaration even more than my former.

"I perceive you avoid me, madam," said I to her. "Alas! what will you do when you know all my crimes, or rather my misfortunes? I have imposed upon you by a false name: I am not the person you think me: I am," pursued I trembling with the violence of my apprehensions, "the son of the count de Comminge."

"The son of the count de Comminge!" cried Adelaida with astonishment and grief in her face, "our enemy, our persecutor. Do not you and your father urge the ruin of mine?"

"Oh! do not wound me with so cruel a thought," interrupted I, tears in spite of myself streaming from my eyes. "In me, charming Adelaida, you behold a lover ready to sacrifice all for you; my father will never injure yours, my love secures him in your interest."

"But, why," replied Adelaida, recovering from her surprise, "why have you deceived me? Why did you conceal your true name? Had I known it," pursued she, softly sighing, "it would have warned me to fly from you."

"Oh! do not, madam," said I taking her hand which I forcibly kissed, "do not repent of your goodness towards me."

"Leave me," said she withdrawing her hand, "the more I see you, the more inevitable I render those misfortunes I too justly apprehend."

The latent meaning of these words filled me with a transport that suffered nothing but hope to appear. I flattered myself that I should be able to render my father favourable to my passion. This belief so wholly possessed me, that I thought every one should think as I did. I spoke to Adelaida of my projects like one who is secure of success.

"I know not," said she with a melancholy air, "why my heart refuses to yield to the hopes you endeavour to inspire. I foresee nothing but misery in the course of this affair. Yet I find a pleasure in feeling what I do for you. I

have not hid my sentiments from you, I am willing you should know them, but remember that if there is a necessity for it, I am capable of sacrificing them to my duty."

I had several conversations with Adelaida before my departure, and always found new cause to congratulate myself on my good fortune. The pleasure of loving and knowing that I was beloved, filled my whole heart; no suspicion, no fear for the future could disturb the tender softness of our interviews. We were secure of each other's affection, because esteem was the basis of it, and this certainty far from diminishing the ardour of our passion, added to it all the sweets of hope, and all the charms of confidence.

"I should die with grief," said she to me, "if I bring upon you the displeasure of your father. I would have you love me, but, oh! I would rather have you happy."

I parted from her at length, full of the most tender and most ardent passion that ever man felt, and my whole soul intent upon the design of rendering my father favourable to it.

In the mean time he was informed of every thing that had passed at the baths. The servant whom he had put about me, had secret orders to observe my conduct. He had left him ignorant of nothing, neither of my love, nor my quarrel with the chevalier de Saint Oden: unfortunately the chevalier was the son of one of my father's most intimate friends; this circumstance, and the danger to which he was reduced by his wound, turned every thing against me. The servant, who had given him such exact informations, represented me to be much happier than I was. He described Madame and Mademoiselle de Lussan as full of artifice and design, as having always known me for the count de Comminge, and had spared no pains to seduce me.

Thus prejudiced, my father, naturally severe and passionate, treated me at my return with great harshness, he reproached me with my passion as a crime of the blackest dye.

"You have been base enough," said he to me, "to love my enemies, and without reflecting what you owed either to me or to yourself, you have entered into engagements with those I hate. And I know not," added he, "whether you have not done something still more worthy of my resentment!"

"Yes, Sir," answered I throwing myself at his feet, "I am guilty I confess, but I am so in spite of myself: at this very moment when I implore your pardon, I feel that no power on earth can tear from my heart that passion which offends you, have pity on me, and oh! suffer me to say it, have pity on yourself: put an end to the hatred which disturbs the

tranquility of your life. The tenderness which the daughter of Monsieur de Lussan, and I felt for each other at first sight, seems a warning from heaven to you. Alas! my dear father, you have no other child but me, would you make me miserable, and load me with misfortunes so much the more insupportable, as they will come from a hand I must ever love and revere? Suffer yourself my dear father to be softened into forgiveness of a son who has offended you only by a fatality for which he could not be answerable."

My father, who had suffered me to continue kneeling during the whole time I was speaking to him, looked on me for a moment with mingled scorn and indignation.

At length, "I have," said he, "heard you with a patience I am myself astonished at, and which I did not imagine I was capable of. I will still preserve composure enough to tell you what is the only favour you are to expect from me. You must renounce your ill placed passion, or the quality of my son: take your choice, and this instant deliver me the writings you have in your custody, you are no longer worthy of my confidence."

If my father had suffered himself to be moved by my supplications, the demand he made of the papers would have greatly distressed me: but his harshness gave me courage.

"Those writings," said I rising, "are no longer in my possession, I have burned them: but the estate I inherit of my uncle's shall be yours, instead of those they would have given you."

I had scarce time to pronounce these few words, my father mad with rage, drew his sword, and would doubtless have run me through, for I made not the least effort to avoid him, if my mother had not entered the room that instant, and thrown herself half dead with terror betwixt us.

"Ah! what would you do," said she gasping with the violence of her fears. "Is he not your son?" Then forcing me out of the room, she ordered me to expect her in her own apartment.

I waited there a long time before she appeared: she came at length: I had no longer rage, exclamation and menaces to combat, but a tender mother who entered into all my griefs, and entreated me with tears to have compassion on the condition to which I had reduced her.

"What, my son," said she to me, "shall a mistress, and a mistress whom you have known so short a time, be preferred to your mother? Alas! if your happiness depended upon me, I would sacrifice every thing to secure it; but you have a father who will be obeyed. He is upon the point of taking the most violent resolutions against you. Oh! my son, if you would not make me miserable, suppress a passion that will render us all unhappy."

I remained some moments silent, how difficult was it to resist such a plea, so tenderly urged by a mother, for whom I had the highest filial affection: but love was still more powerful.

"I would die," said I, "rather than displease you. And I will die if you have not pity on me. What can I do? It is easier for me to take away my own life than forget Adelaida. Shall I be perjured and violate the vows I have made to her? Vows which have engaged her early affections. Shall I abandon her then when I know I have gained her heart? Oh! my dear mother, do not wish your son to become the basest of men."

I then related to her all that had passed between us. "She loves you," said I, "and you, I am sure will not be able to help loving her. She has your sweetness, your candour, your generosity. How is it possible for me to cease to love her?"

"But what do you propose by indulging this passion?" said my mother. "Your father is resolved to have you marry another, and commands you to retire into the country till every thing is settled. It is absolutely necessary that you should appear willing to obey him, unless you mean to be my death.[9] He expects you will depart tomorrow under the conduct of a person in whom he has great confidence. Absence will do more for you than you can yet imagine; but be that as it will, do not irritate Monsieur de Comminge still more by your refusal: ask for time, and I will do every thing in my power, to accomplish your wishes. Your father's anger cannot last always. He will relent and you may be yet happy, but you have been highly to blame in burning the writings. He is persuaded that you sacrificed them to Madame de Lussan who ordered her daughter to require that proof of your love."

"Oh! heavens!" cried I, "is it possible that my father can be so unjust? Both Madame de Lussan and Adelaida are ignorant of what I have done, and I am very sure had they suspected my intention, they would have used all their power over me to have prevented it."

My mother and I afterwards took measures to convey letters to each other; and encouraged by her indulgence, I durst presume to beg she would transmit to me those of Adelaida, who was soon to be at Bordeaux. My mother had the goodness to promise she would gratify me, but at the same time insisted, that if I found Adelaida had altered her sentiments, I should submit to what my father required of me. We spent great part of the night in this conversation, and as soon as day appeared my conductor came to inform me that it was time to get on horse-back.

The estate, where I was to pass the time of my banishment, lay in the mountains, some leagues from Bagnieres, so that we took the same road I had so lately passed through. The second day of our journey we came