

**POSTHUMOUS CORRESPONDANCE
(VOLUME 2)**

Response to Letter C

26 May.

We hope, dear husband, that that isn't all you have to tell us about Duc Multipliandre.

The young woman of the same name that my chambermaid knows has an aunt who is only some two years older than her. They had a single lover, who is the wine-merchant at the end of the Rue Jean-de-Beauvais; the aunt was preferred, as the more mature and the more reasonable. Might the niece, cured of her love, which was perhaps only a childish infatuation, be the little duchesse?

In any case, this is the story that the Comtesse told us.¹ The story contains many other details that were given to her in writing. I'm sending them to you—you can tell us what you think in a fortnight.

¹ No explanation is ever given of how the Comtesse is supposed to know the “facts” recorded in this interpolated document, or why her account of his parentage and the origin of his secret differs from both of the two contradictory accounts that Multipliandre gives himself. It was presumably added to the manuscript in 1796, but when it was written is a matter for conjecture—probably earlier, as a venture in recasting material from the 1787-89 version that seemed hopelessly lost. If it is part of a longer manuscript, that might help to explain some subsequent inconsistencies in Multipliandre's biography.

*The First Isolated Adventures of Duc Multipliandre,
before those Related in the Letters*

Duc Multipliandre had the same origin as Ypréville Xaenion Zaleuquier, the hero of *L'Enclos et les Oiseaux*. He was born as the great grandson of a niece of Cardinal Mazarini. It is believed that the niece in question was Hortense; in consequence, that Duc would have been a Colonne if he had not been the natural son of Louis XV. At any rate, that great-grandson had emerged naturally from the womb of a beautiful canoness of Mauberge, with whom the young Duc Multigyne or Polygyne, his father, had fallen madly in love while he was serving in Flanders. The Canoness was named Isabelle d'Egmont; she was a beautiful blonde of five feet eight inches, made like the Graces and having the majesty of Juno, especially when she traversed the courtyard with her high heels² and her trailing robe—for the former increased her height by four inches, taking it to six feet, and the latter made her look like a Greek princess or a Roman Senatress, such as they are represented in our tragedies.

That beautiful person brought a superb infant into the world! And although the father, a veritable fop, had dumped his mistress as soon as he had found that she was pregnant, the new Cornélie³ did not lose either courage or hope. She brought up her son, initially nourishing him on her own milk; she taught him herself to read Latin, Greek, Sicilian, Flemish, German, English, Polish, Russian, Danish, Swedish, Turkish, Persian and Arabic.

When he was fifteen years old, she said to him: “My son, you are of distinguished birth, but you are a bastard. That is not harmful to courage, and you have that. Go find your father, who is in Rome. This is what you need in order to be recognized: As him what he has done with a certain unintelligible Memoir found among the papers of Cardinal Mazarini. He will give it to you, for you are strong enough to force him to do so. Read it, and understand it. Afterwards, do what prudence dictates to you.”

Multipliandre, then named, like his father, Multigyne, obeyed exactly everything that his mother the Canoness had instructed him to do. He left for Rome, found Constable Colonne, his father, had himself recognized by showing him bracelets and a ruby with his cipher, which he had given to the Canoness while he was impassioned for her, demanded the Memoir written in Arabic characters but really composed in the Sicilian language, read it, understood it, and then said to his father, in good Italian:

“Well, Monsieur le Constable, I'm a bastard. That displeases me. You're my father; you were free, when you fixed me in the womb of the Canoness, my mother, also free; you have since been married to a princess of the Ursini, but you're now widowed. As I was born a bastard *ex libero et libera*, I can be legitimated by subsequent marriage; I therefore indicate to you that you should depart immediately to go to marry my mother and debastardize me. Otherwise, I declare to you that this Memoir has just given me the means to constrain you to do so, if necessary.”

Prince Colonne was very surprised by the tone and the boldness of his bastard. He called him insolent, and threaten to call for help to have him thrown out of the window.

“Oh, so that's the tone you take,” said Multipliandre. “I'll show you a specimen of the power that your memoir has just given me.”

Immediately, he attacked his father's soul through all his senses at once, and expelled it from his body, introduced his own there, caused his father's soul to enter his body, and left it there, astonished by the shock. As the Constable, he ordered his people to take the greatest care of the young man he left to them, and to nourish him very delicately. He left for Mauberge, informed the Canoness, married her, legitimated himself, left again, arrived in Rome, sent all the Constable's gold to Mauberge, resumed his own body, returned the other to his father, and then went straight back whence had had come.

² There is a misprint in the text here that might well be deliberate, *cour* [courtyard] being rendered as *coeur* [heart], thus lending a striking ambiguity to *talon* [heel, or talon].

³ The reference is to the daughter of Scipio who, when widowed young, devoted her life to the education of her two sons, on principles established by Solon.

Now Multipliandre was rich, for Constable Colonne had a secret treasure of more than six hundred millions. Multipliandre bought superb lands with it, and had himself recognized in France as a descendant of Hortense, and Prince Colonne. The Constable, known under the name of Multigyne, who thought he was going mad, did not say a word, for fear of being ridiculed. His son did not want the name of such a father and changed it, having himself called Multipliandre, as the last Colonne had called himself Multigyne or Polygyne, a Greek name.

The fortunate trial that he had just carried out of the instructions contained in the Sicilian memoir written in Arabic characters caused him to regard that manuscript as a treasure. He was not yet sixteen years old. He wanted to have treasures in order to amuse himself without touching his capital. He adopted that first means that occurred to his imagination. He went to the houses of aged millionaires, introduced himself into their brains, and had considerable sums taken to a place from which he removed it when he had returned to his own body. The old men did not raise any obstacle to his enterprises, for they—which is to say, their souls—were so astonished to find themselves young, handsome and vigorous that they took a long time to collect themselves, and when they were ready to reflect, Multipliandre gave them back their old body, with the consequence that they thought they had been dreaming.

When Multipliandre had enough riches, he wanted to enjoy himself. Now, rich as he was, there were difficulties in abducting girls and women of whom he became amorous. He therefore adopted the strategy of entering into the bodies of their lovers or husbands while lodging their souls in his own. As I have already said, it took those astonished souls so much time to orientate themselves that Multipliandre had enough to carry out his coups before they could abuse his body (like the Jesuit of whom there is question later) or even to convince themselves that they were not dreaming.

Several days went by like that. Multipliandre had not yet thought of putting those souls in animal bodies in order to have his own body occupied by the soul of a bird, such as a canary, which would not subject it to any fatigue. Brought up in the principles of Christianity, he was foolish enough to believe that animals do not have an individual soul emanated from God, like those of humans—an error that nearly doomed him, as we shall see in the adventure of the Jesuit.⁴

The first young person of whom Multipliandre became desirous was the then-Dauphine Marie-Antoinette. He sought information in order to introduce himself into the body of the man she loved most. It was that of a handsome page about nineteen years old. He therefore expelled the soul from the brain of the page and put his own in its place. The page, stunned by the shock, no longer knew what to do. The Multipliandre soul, by contrast, followed the memory traces of its new body. He knew by that means that he had a rendezvous, of which Princesse Lamballe was the intermediary. He went there, was received and introduced. The blonde beauty extracted from him all the advantage she could.

He then took good restoratives indicated by the Sicilian memoir, of which a friend of Mercier's named de Fournel, an old man 112 years old, who is nevertheless the father of two pretty children three and seven years of age, is now the possessor. Three days later he was to return, but he observed what the soul of the page was doing; it was beginning to get its bearings and although it did not understand how it came to be animating a body that was not its own, and could not follow the traces of the Multipliandre memory, which only confused it, it was nevertheless about to commit a major imprudence by going to the rendezvous in an unknown body.

The Multipliandre soul locked it up, and went to where he was awaited. By a singularity, however, he was desirous of the introducer. "Tell her," he suggested, "that I'm ill, and let's stay together."

The lady consented to that. That caused the beautiful blonde and her confidante to fall out, because the whole Court found out about it.

After that adventure, Multipliandre returned the body to the page, and took back his own. The page soon collected himself, and thought he had been demented for five or six days. He naturally attributed that to his excessive ardor for the Blonde...

⁴ These anticipatory references to another story are anomalous, but the mistake pointed out in the next footnote might indicate that this section of the narrative was initially part of Multipliandre's narration, which would remove the anomaly.

The second beauty for whom Multipliandre had desires was Mademoiselle d'Orléans. He did not know what body to take in order to have that princess. He entered into hers. He was agreeably surprised to find in the beauty's memory that it was himself, seen twice, who had pleased her. He resumed his own body, paid court to her, and succeeded.

The third or fourth was Mademoiselle de Condé. He did the same thing, and entered her brain before going elsewhere. She had not noticed him. She loved d'Artois. Multipliandre immediately took the body of that libertine; he did not find in his memory any keen passion for the princess, but a frantic desire to possess her. Multipliandre possessed her, employing prudent means, but it was necessary to hurry; d'Artois would soon have debauched his own body in exchange.

Multipliandre did not find that the Dauphine and the Princesses were very superior enjoyments. Those women treated men as the monks in *Justine* treat women. He resolved to attach himself to individuals that were more lovable and loving.

One day, he perceived a superb brunette with a delightful smile in a goldsmith's shop on the quai. He sought information. He was told that the beauty was keenly courted by an exceedingly ugly, but amiable and sufficiently young aristocrat, who had not yet obtained anything because the young person thought she was pretty enough to be espoused by a rich suitor. One ought to add, too, that she had a mariner brother who had made a fortune in the Indies, from which he was coming back, and who had demanded that his sister not be married because he wanted to give her a dowry.

Multipliandre entered the body of the beauty in order to discover her inclination. She tolerated the aristocrat by virtue of ambition, but she loved a handsome young man who often came to look at her in the evening, by candlelight, whom she had glimpsed while chatting with the lord, and for which young man she felt a very strong inclination.

Multipliandre returned the beauty to her own body and entered into that of the handsome young man. He was very astonished to find that it was that of the brother, arrived incognito, who had fallen in love with his sister without knowing her as such, his parents only having occupied the shop on the quai for six months, and was thinking, after having recognized her after seeing their mother with her, of taking advantage of an absence of fifteen years, changing his face and his name, in order to make a wife of the adored sister...

I⁵ resolved to realize everything, being equally amorous of the young woman, and then to leave the brother to tangle the thread by giving him back his body, assuming that he would lose his taste for his wife. What Multipliandre had not yet fully understood, by reading the Mazarini memoir, was the means of conserving and augmenting beauty. He therefore expelled the brother's soul from his brain, but the Multipliandre body in a safe place in an agreeable house, and, after having lodged the soul of the brother therein, under the name of Polyandre and with all the mariner's fortune, he paid court to Mademoiselle Agatine Berthoud.

He was welcomed by the beauty and by her parents, and when he had articulated his fortune, all realized, the aristocrat was sent packing and the marriage to the pretended mariner agreed. The dismissed lord, however, on seeing a rival preferred, did not fail to enquire into his origin. That took time, and in the meantime, the marriage took place. Polyandre was very happy with his new spouse, whom he adored. Far from wearying of her, he discovered new charms in her every day. She became pregnant, without being any less attractive; on the contrary, it embellished her.

She was in her sixth month of marriage when the aristocrat, by dint of his research, discovered that the rich mariner who had returned from the India was not called Polyandre, or Agard—the false name he had taken on embarkation—but Berthoud. He had then discovered that the Berthoud in question, whose parents had once been established in the Rue Bourg-l'Abbé, was the brother of the beautiful Agatine.

⁵ The use of the first person here rather than "Multipliandre" suggests that this interpolated story might originally have been written in the first person before being wedged into its current frame, and adapted in consequence. There are other instances in which the author has omitted to make the adjustment and left the first person in place, and he occasionally makes the same slip in other passages where Fontlhète is supposedly the narrator.

Proud of this discovery, he ran to find the goldsmiths of the quai, to whom he revealed that, according to all appearances, they had given their daughter in marriage to her brother.

The astonished goldsmiths examined the series of facts, and found that their son-in-law was indeed their son. They reproached him, saying to him that he ought to have recognized them. Polyandre agreed, but he confessed that he had adored his sister, to whom he would one day have discovered the truth. On seeing, by their response, that his happiness was destroyed, he went to find his prisoner, to whom he had confided his body, resumed that one, returned Berthoud to his own, took him back to his furnished hotel and disappeared.

Berthoud, or Agard, guided by a memory whose traces had remained in the brain of his veritable body, went to see his parents, who recommenced their reproaches. He assured them that he knew nothing about all that, which was like a dream, but they did not believe what he said. He was therefore obliged to quit his sister, of whom the aristocrat took possession. But before he could enjoy her Polyandre occupied his body and reimprisoned his own, into which he had just introduced the lord's soul. In that new body, Polyandre was not as happy as in that of the brother, because the situation of Agatine was no longer innocent; he lost his taste for her. He resumed his material physique, returned that of the aristocrat, and abandoned that adventure.

But the aristocrat astonished Agatine's parents when, at liberty, he came to say to them: "Your son is not guilty! There is something veritably strange in our adventure with Mademoiselle Agatine. I assure you that I have not possessed her. I have been imprisoned in a place that I would recognize if I saw it again, where I had another, very handsome body. It's a prodigy!"

He was thought to be mad.

Multipliandre then understood that it was necessary to make different arrangements in order to be happy and tranquil. While he was occupied by that thought, he went past a fashion boutique at the corner of the Rue de Grenelle-Honoré, where he saw a dozen pretty girls. He noticed that there as a charming young man in the house, a natural and secret son of the boutique-owner, who had had someone other than her husband before her marriage. The young man appeared to be the darling of all those beauties. He followed him when he went out to his employment. He attacked his soul, and having dislodged it from his brain in favor of his own he gave his arm to his own body, inhabited by the soul of the young man, and taking advantage of the confusion the inexperienced soul was inevitably suffering, took it home and imprisoned it there.

He then allowed himself to be guided by his new body's memory, went to the office, did what it was necessary to do, and went back to his new abode above the fashion boutique.

That same evening, teased by the prettiest girls, he realized that his new body had not yet possessed any of them, but that they all loved him. Now, in that number here were three sisters, who saw him as a pretty cousin, but not a brother, and so were the most tender of the twelve; and those three young persons were not the ones who attacked him least vigorously with their teasing. He watched for the eldest that same evening, and slipped into the room where she slept, with her two sisters but in three different beds.

Ametiste said to him: "What! Is that you, Poulot?"

"Shh!" replied the young man. "No noise. I adore you, and I'll caress you as much as you wish."

Ametiste did not say anything more, and Multipliandre, in Poulot's body, profited from her innocence, her amour, her ignorance and their consanguinity to steal her rose. She even acquired such a taste for that game that she begged her cousin to come back as often as possible.

But Poulot-Multipliandre had a keen lust for the second of the three sisters, whose mouth was a rosebud. He alerted her during the day, and the following night, the appetizing Victorine received him as her elder sister had.

After that he had Emeraude, the third, in the same manner, and then all the girls in the boutique: Safirette, a beautiful brunette with lily-white skin; Topaze, a tall pale girl, as beautiful as Venus; Chrysolite, a dainty and rosy boarder; Constantine, a pretty external, who received him in her parents' home; Diamantine, the daughter of a neighboring jeweler, who also admitted Poulot-Multipliandre to her parents' home during the night; Amélie, a young and beautiful Fleming who was mad about the god-looking bastard; Suadele, a little boarder of fourteen, but one of the prettiest and most ardent; Renaudine,

a pretty neighborhood child, whose smile was delightful; and finally Armande, the richest of them all, and the one with the finest figure.

Multipliandre-Poulot had all those lovely individuals for six months—but a terrible catastrophe was in preparation. All of them became pregnant, the three sisters along with the rest. The nine pupils did not take great care to hide their condition. They informed Poulot-Multipliandre of it, having consulted backstreet abortionists. In order not to make them cry after him, the Poulot body promised marriage to all nine of them. Finally, the condition of his cousins—or, rather, his corporeal sisters—became visible. Their mother having perceived it, summoned all three of them to her first-floor apartment.

“How did this happen to you, Mesdemoiselles?”

“But Maman,” Ametiste replied, “We’re like our companions; we’ve all been getting fatter for some time.”

“But...my daughter...you’re pregnant!”

Ametiste was jealous; she had had several quarrels with Poulot on that subject. Exasperated, she replied: “If I am, are Safirette, Amélie, Topaze, Chrysolite, Diamantine, Renaudine and Armande—all of them—too?”

“But your two sisters are as well. You must, then, have slept with a man.”

“Of my God! We didn’t even know!”

The couturiere went down to her pupils. She got them all up. She raised her eyes to the ceiling, without saying anything. When she went back to her sisters she said: “They’re all pregnant! What demon has entered my house? What man? What boy?”

“Maman,” said Emeraude, “can a boy make babies like a man?”

“Yes, Stupid, and better still!”

“Oh, I’m lost!” cried Victorine. “Poulot has been in my bed, and perhaps all twelve! Armande confessed it to me, for herself, today...and I know it for my sisters, as for me.

“Hmm! The scoundrel!” murmured Ametiste.

“Oh, you poor wretches, what have you done!” said the desolate mother, her voice choking. “You’re pregnant by a brother!”

Poulot was listening in when his mother made that exclamation. He went downstairs rapidly, went to his own house, resumed his own body and returned the veritable Poulot to his, taking him to the door, for the young man seemed utterly bewildered.

Meanwhile, the couturiere had summoned the nine pupils. She questioned them all individually about Poulot. They all confessed the truth.

It was at that moment that the true Poulot reappeared. He did not know where he had been, and asked. His mother replied with a slap.

“I’ve had a strange dream!” he said. “I had another body. Don’t beat me, explain it to me.”

They thought that he was playing the imbecile, but finally, he protested so much that they took pity on him.

The couturiere summoned the parents of all the girls by means of a circular. She told them that a stranger who resembled her son closely enough to be mistaken for him had introduced himself into her home by means of that resemblance after having got Poulot drunk and imprisoned him, and had stayed there for at least six months; that it was the stranger who had impregnated her own three daughters and all her pupils. She consulted all of them as to whether it was necessary to make a fuss or maintain a prudent silence.

All the parents were furious to begin with, and then all opted for silence. Armande’s would marry their daughter to Poulot, and all the others would hide the childbirths of their own.

It was thus that the adventure concluded, which might have had the direst consequences for poor Poulot, but for the prudence of the mother, and that of the other parents—but Multipliandre was nearly the victim of it himself.

One day, when he was walking in the Palais Royal in search of a new adventure he was seen by Poulot. The latter, who had been Multipliandre for six months, could not mistake a face that he had had

occasion to see so many times. He cried out. Multipliandre would have been surrounded if he had not escaped by flight.

That rendered him more timid. He only knew, as yet, how to place in his own brain the souls that he dislodged from theirs. He made a decision, however, that remedied the principal inconvenience for the future, that of being recognized. For Poulot told the parents of all the girls fecundated by his double of the encounter he had had in the Jardin d'Égalité, assuring them not to despair of having him arrested. But the couturier's son did not reflect that, because Multipliandre did not resemble him at all, he would only have his own testimony against him. That was also the observation made to him by an advocate, his wife's father.

At that time Multipliandre saw a charming young woman who had just married a clockmaker named Fortin. He became madly amorous, and so jealous that he could not bear the idea that the husband caressed her. Nor did he want to adopt his face, which he detested. He wanted to be loved in person, body and soul.

He was obliged, in order to succeed in that, to enter into Fortin's brain. He knew by that means that the man, horribly large-membered, had not yet deflowered the pretty Perle, his wife; that he was intensely hated by her, but that she loved a handsome young man whose windows faced her own, on the third floor.

Multipliandre made use of the husband's body that same evening to lie in a twin bed next to his wife, but as soon as she was asleep he got up, ran home, where he deposited the husband's body, resumed his own, while returning Fortin's soul to his body, took his keys and went back to get into the beauty's bed, whom he attacked in her sleep. He triumphed, whereupon she woke up. She was surprised only to experience pleasure instead of the accustomed pain. She sighed, however, at being unfaithful to her handsome young man. As he had never spoken to her, however, Multipliandre was not risking anything by telling her that he was the handsome Van Wolxem, her neighbor opposite.

He explained to her that he had obtained from her husband three of his marital nights for thirty thousand francs, which he would give to her in banknotes, asking her not to talk about it because, if he were obliged to give them to her husband, it would be his business. The beauty heard him out, and then complained about his procedure, all the odium of which she nevertheless cast on her husband. That was so sincere that Multipliandre, believed to be Van Wolxem, repossessed her, with a little cunning and force. He went away when it was not yet daylight, putting a wallet in the beauty's hands containing the promised sum.

On returning home, Multipliandre reentered the husband's brain and put the latter's soul in his own, locked him up again and alimeted him carefully. That had a double advantage: there would be no encounter with a face that might be recognized, and the disturbance afflicting Fortin's soul, renewed every night, would maintain him in a kind of habitual imbecility; and in the form of the husband, he could keep watch on his mistress.

Thus, the following night, after having put himself to bed in the form of Fortin, he went to get his own body, and possessed Perle while pretending to be the beloved young man.

The latter, for his part, noticed his beautiful neighbor, and passed by several times in order to see her at close range. Perle, who thought that she had lain with him twice, smiled slightly on seeing him nearby, and the husband, who was there, perceived it. He made a horrible grimace at the lover, and, when the latter, as he passed by a fifth or a sixth time, opened the gazed door to come in, the husband advanced precipitately to ask him what he wanted. The lover was obliged to look at a watch, which the Fortin body told him was only ten louis, although it was worth fifteen—by which Perle was astonished. The young man was obliged to take it, and went home to get the money.

"But that watch is worth fifteen louis," said Perle, "and it would be wrong to let it go."

"I know, Madame, but I have my reasons. I don't want that young man to talk to you. He'll come back ten times for that watch if I don't let him have it so cheap to begin with that he'll have to take it."

Perle blushed and shut up.

The young man reappeared and handed over the ten louis. Then he husband sent him away.

"What do you bet," he said, after his departure, "that he's going to sell it?" And he had him watched.

Indeed, the young man, who had no ready cash, came out of his house again a quarter of an hour later. The pretended Fortin sent his maidservant to follow him. Van Wolxem went into a clockmaker's shop two hundred paces away at the corner of the Rues Honoré and de l'Ambre-Sec. He presented the watch, Fortin's work, which was perfect.

"How much is this watch worth?" he asked.

The clockmakers examined it inside and out, saw the maker's name, and, thinking that Fortin had overcharged for it, replied: "Twenty louis."

"I'll let you have it for fifteen," said the young man.

The clockmaker did not hesitate, and he was about to give them to him when Fortin's maidservant, thinking to oblige her master, spoke up and said: "Monsieur Fortin made a mistake, Monsieur; he sent me after you. He'll return Monsieur's ten louis if Monsieur will take the trouble to call in again. The clockmaker observed to the seller that his colleague's request was fair, and that it was an evident error. The young man went back.

On returning, the maidservant told her master what she had done. The pretended Fortin, who saw that the girl had a good deal of intelligence, and that he might be able to take advantage of that, praised her highly. He returned the ten louis to the young man and took the watch back.

Young Van Wolxem withdrew and Fortin-Multipliandre, seeing him go back into his house, followed him there. He went in immediately after him, attacked his soul, expelled it from his brain and replaced it with his own. During the confusion into which that operation threw the handsome young man—who was, however, less handsome than Multipliandre—the latter followed the traces of Van Wolxem's memory and discovered the state of his affairs, his dispositions, etc.

He was not dangerous. It would have been sufficient to return his body to him immediately, if Multipliandre had not had an idea. He resumed possession of his own, which was occupied by the soul of Fortin, but he put that of the young man in Fortin's brain and the latter into Van Wolxem's brain. By means of that exchange, which rendered them both imbecilic, he saw himself as their master for several weeks, and perhaps for months.

That operation carried out, he went to talk to Perle, with a ring on his finger that he had exchanged with the beauty the previous night. He sat down beside her, telling her that he had something very important to say to her.

"Hey, Monsieur, don't sit so close to me! I have a jealous husband. If he comes in, he'll pick a quarrel with you."

"Have no fear, Madame; I know where your husband is. Just listen to me. Do you recognize this ring?"

"Yes, it's mine."

"And you have one with a ruby between two chrysoprases, which is mine."

"That's true, Monsieur! I didn't dare put it on. Here it is."

"Exactly! You must recall having seen me admiring you as I passed by."

"Yes, Monsieur, I remember you."

"Know that it's me who lives opposite, and who, by means of a certain preparation that I make at home, take on the physiognomy of young Van Wolxem, who bought the watch yesterday. I can convince you immediately, if you wish, by going home instantly, with my true appearance, and returning with his."

"I'd like that, Monsieur."

Multipliandre went home put his soul in Van Wolxem's body, dressed it in the same cloths he had worn to go to see Perle, put on the same jewels, etc., and went back.

"Here I am, Madame. See whether I am the young man opposite. But observe that the sound of the voice is different, and is not that of the young man who just came to speak to you, and that the sound of that other voice is that of the young man who has lain with you for two nights."

"That's true!"

"I am, therefore, the same—but as I want to be loved by you with my true face, which I think more lovable, I'll resume it."

Perle consented to that, and Multipliandre went to get his own body back.

On his return, he asked Perle to grant him a private conversation. She objected again that her husband might come back.

“Have no anxiety,” Multipliandre said. “He’s retained where he is by my orders, and can’t get out without my consent.”

Perle granted him the private conversation, which was very tender, with the consequence that Multipliandre made himself tenderly loved.

He came back in the evening with the husband’s body; then he returned, in order to lie with Perle, with the face of Van Wolxem, not wanting to tire his own body too much—but it was his soul that had the pleasures of amour, physical and mental.

That conduct on Multipliandre’s part lasted until Perle’s pregnancy began to show. Then Multipliandre, wanting to produce a scene, returned the husband’s soul to his body. That soul took six weeks to collect itself. Finally, having reacquainted itself with its own organs, it noticed that Perle was pregnant. He asked Perle whether he had deflowered her

“You must have,” said Perle, “since I’m pregnant.”

“If I’ve deflowered you, then I can possess you—and that will be right away, for I’m burning with the desire...”

“No, Monsieur, for you’ve sworn to me not to see me again so long as I’m pregnant.”

“I don’t care what I’ve sworn, and it will be...”

Now, Perle had a signal by means of which to warn Multipliandre when she had need of him. She made it.

The lover appeared. His presence confused Fortin, who trembled, because he recognized him. He went to hide, but Multipliandre found him, and forbade him, under pain of death, to touch Perle.

The clockmaker promised, but, as soon as he was free, he ran to the Police Commissaire to denounce Van Wolxem—for he believed that it was him who had changed his face and put a spell on him—as a sorcerer. The Commissaire laughed at the denunciation, but nevertheless went to arrest Van Wolxem, now returned to his own body.

Since his intrigue with Perle, Multipliandre had also taken a third floor apartment, directly opposite Van Wolxem’s, in the same building as Madame Fortin. He therefore saw the Commissaire take the young man away, and heard Fortin say: “Monsieur, there’s another face under which he occupies the third floor of my house. Go and seize him there, or at least put seals on it.”

The Commissaire thought that too amusing not to give himself the diversion and went there.

Multipliandre was prepared. As soon as he saw the Commissaire he attacked his soul, entered into his body, and put that of the semi-magistrate into his own. He then reprimanded Fortin severely, sent his escort back to his fiacre and gave the double order to take him home and then take Fortin to prison. When that was done Multipliandre took back his body and returned the Commissaire to his. The latter, disturbed, was like an imbecile for a fortnight.

Perle was tranquil throughout the time of her husband’s detention, which lasted six months, the Commissaire no longer remembering what he had done. In the end, when he chanced to be at the prison, he recognized Fortin there. He asked him what he was doing there.

“Well, you ought to know—it’s you who put me here.”

“Oh yes, as a sorcerer—or rather an imbecile. What has become of your man?”

“I don’t know. He made my wife pregnant.”

“Right! Why couldn’t it have been you? Go on, you can go. But no more of these follies!”

Fortin left prison that same day. He found his wife charming, recovered from her childbirth four months previously. Multipliandre was occupied then; he did not hear the distress signal that Perle made—with the consequence that the husband enjoyed her that same night, albeit with infinite difficulty. As soon as he found out, Multipliandre distanced himself. Thus the adventure terminated.

Multipliandre had already commenced another. In Versailles there were two noble demoiselles who lived with their father, a superb dark-haired man, the most handsome in France. The elder was nineteen and the younger sixteen. The former, called Nesag, was beautiful, very temperamental, dressed with impeccable taste, and warmed up with an infinite grace. The younger, Nimora, was dainty, with a taste for

delightful grisettes, and wore very high stiletto heels.⁶ She had acquired the habit with a Canoness from Riremont, who had become her favorite during a voyage she had made to Luneville to see her grandfather; the taste had become second nature to her.

On seeing those two demoiselles, Multipliandre resolved to have them, certain muffled rumors circulating in high society having given him that fantasy. In order to get to know them perfectly he entered successively into each of their brains. He found that Nesag loved her father, who was still young, much as Cleveland's daughter had loved hers, and that Nimora, whose senses were not yet open, having glimpsed her sister's passion, was striving by means of attentions and coquetry to tip the balance in her favor.

Now Cinquantequinze, the father, loved both his daughters tenderly, and had not yet married off Nesag because she had constantly refused to be. He caressed them sometimes sitting on his knees, without any indecent idea, which was proved by the care he took only to caress them in one another's presence.

One day, Multipliandre read in Nesag's brain that, carried away by her passion, she was going to slip into the bed of the sleeping Cinquantequinze the following night. He resolved to take advantage of it. He entered into the brain of Cinquantequinze after having penetrated into his home. He animated his own body with the soul of Nesag's father, and laid him down during the interval of confusion and imbecility ordinarily occasioned by the exchange. He then had supper with his daughters, and put their father to bed, but before extinguishing his light he resumed his body.

He had only been in bed for a quarter of an hour when he heard light breathing. Someone put her mouth very close to him, as if listening to see whether he was asleep. He feigned the respiration of a sleeper. Immediately, someone climbed cautiously into his bed. As Cinquantequinze's body, animated by Multipliandre's soul, gave no sign of being awake, Nesag inserted a kiss between his lips. He returned it, as if mechanically. Then, pretending to be asleep, he assumed the convenient posture, murmuring: "My dear Nesag! Object of my desires!"

The young woman caressed him ardently.

She seemed so happy with the false Cinquantequinze that he employed all his vigor to renew those agreeable sensations.

Toward morning he sent Nesag back to her own bed; as for Multipliandre-Cinquantequinze, he put the father's soul back into the latter's body and then made his escape. For the rest of the day, the transmigrated was quite astonished by the erotic dream that he thought he had had. Nesag thought that he was overtired; she was even more tender, but decided to let Cinquantequinze sleep tranquilly the following night. The great Cinquantequinze recovered somewhat the second day. That was because the psychic replacement, who discovered in the evening Nesag's resolution to let Cinquantequinze rest, decided to sleep with Nimora, who knew everything, and whom he knew to be jealous of her sister, but with his own body. That was what he did, in the darkness, to the great satisfaction of the ambitious Nimora.

On the third night, not doubting that Nesag would come back, he reflected on what he ought to do. He decided to leave Cinquantequinze in his bed without displacing him, and to go to Nesag in his own body; he presumed that Nimora would stay in her own, fatigued by the night before.

Multipliandre astonished Nesag, who woke up, saying: "Oh! You really love me, for you've come to find me yourself. I'm even happier than the day before yesterday, because this beautiful night is your choice."

Cinquantequinze asked what that meant.⁷ Nesag told him that he knew that as well as she did. He understood that Cinquantequinze was soon going to be instructed, and very astonished, for the passion and naivety of young women would leave nothing unknown—and perhaps, warmed up by their story, that man of ardent passions, who feared no one, would realize what Multipliandre had only simulated...

⁶ It is not a coincidence that two of Restif's own daughters—the two who came back to live with him for a while after his wife had gone back to her father's house—were named Agnes and Marion.

⁷ At this point, the narrative becomes a trifle confused as to who is wearing whose appearance, doing what to whom, where and when. It is possible that some text is missing, or that sections of it have been transposed.

Let us return to Nimora. Labored by Multipliandre, whom she believed to be Cinquantequinze, she firmly believed that he did not want to render one of his daughters happier than the other. In consequence, she made the most ardent caresses. Multipliandre, in spite of the charming obstacles of first youth, possessed her to the extent that she permitted. He withdrew at daybreak and left the château.

The next day, Cinquantequinze, and especially his daughters, seemed pensive. The corporeal traces of the night had remained, like those of a delightful dream, in the father's brain, but were something else entirely in those of the two daughters, who had had the reality. Nesag devoted herself to petty cares and attentions. As for Nimora, who was not in love like her elder sister, but moved by a sentiment perhaps as powerful in women—rivalry, the desire to prevail in credit and power—she was even more agitated than Cinquantequinze, who regarded the competition between his daughters as a natural effect of their sentiments for him. In fact, Nesag was delivering herself with a delirious fervor. Nimora had suffered at first, but, soon compensated by Multipliandre, whom she believed to be Cinquantequinze, she was becoming avid for a sensation that had commenced by being dolorous. Cinquantequinze did not understand what was happening in his house. A very natural result of that was to seek information.

Nesag and her sister ought to have thought that they might be pregnant. They did not think about it, and when they began to suspect it, they had been for six months. Their mother's old midwife informed them. Nesag charged her to inform Cinquantequinze, for whom the news was a thunderbolt. But his surprise no longer had any limit when the old woman added: "Your younger daughter is as far along as the elder."

"Silence with her!" said Cinquantequinze. "But I haven't seen anyone frequenting them. I need to seek information."

When he was alone with Nesag, he said: "my dear daughter, you're pregnant. There's a danger of allowing the truth to be suspected. Let's imagine who we can charge with the pregnancy, if the veritable author can't be named because of his estate."

"I don't know," Nesag replied, "but I'm so proud of the father to whom I've given my fruit that I wouldn't want to change him for another."

"We'll think about that, my daughter, after I've interrogated your sister—for can you imagine that she is pregnant too, without my knowing how or by whom. Hide between my bed and the wall; I want to question her in your presence without her suspecting it."

Nesag hid, and Cinquantequinze summoned Nimora.

"My dear child," he said to her, after having sat her on his knees, "I'm anxious about you. Are you hydroptic or pregnant?"

"I'm like my sister, who is the second. I thought I couldn't do better than imitate my sister. I saw that you had just lain with her, and that she had welcomed you. I welcomed you; she went to lie with you, and I did likewise. I heard that she caressed you ardently, in her bed or yours; I did the same, and perhaps better."

"Well, Madame, if that's the way you became pregnant, it was someone other than me; I've never been in your bed, nor that of your sister, and if I've ever touched you, for I love you both passionately, it was only in a dream. Now, one can't make a child in a dream."

"It wasn't in a dream that you touched me, and my condition is the proof of it. Although, if I emerge from my crisis by means of a dream, I'll be able to believe that it was by means of a dream that I entered it."

That reasoning was unanswerable.

Cinquantequinze responded: "All this is beyond me. I've had dreams approaching the truth! Let's keep watch on one another in order not to be betrayed. Let's hide a nightlight in my cabinet, and the first time anyone comes into your bed, make a signal; I'll come out immediately with the light, and we'll see the sycophant."

Nimora consented to what Cinquantequinze proposed, and as I was not informed of it, I could not prevent the coup.

“You’re pregnant, like your sister,” Cinquantequinze added. “It’s necessary to cover for you both. When we’ve discovered your impregnator, we’ll see we can have him admit it, and have both the children baptized in his name.”

Nimora promised to follow all her father’s orders. Cinquantequinze sent her away in order to bring Nesag out of her hiding-place.

“What! You haven’t had me!” she said to Cinquantequinze. “However, I haven’t yielded to anyone except you. But that inconceivability furnishes us with a means of getting out of this embarrassment. It’s another, at least, who lies with my sister. But who is he? It’s necessary not to make any fuss, and simply put the two children in his name. It’s even necessary to let him have my sister, if he demands it.”

Cinquantequinze thought his elder daughter’s advice very wise.

As for Multipliandre, always more amorous for Nimora, whose voluptuous footwear excited him, he did not fail to come the following night, employing his usual means. But he was no sooner in Nimora’s bed than she gave the signal.

Cinquantequinze, intimidated by Nesag’s observations, after having picked up his light, advanced quietly, penetrated into Nimora’s room without appearing to look at the bed, and opened a window, saying to her: “I don’t know what I’ve just heard in here.”

She pretended to wake up, propped herself up on her elbow and uncovered the face of a man who was hiding. Cinquantequinze recognized him immediately as Multipliandre and, sensing danger, withdrew, as if he had not seen him, leaving the light for his daughter.

Then Nimora, pretending that she had only just perceived that she had the company of a man, uttered a little cry.

“Oh, Monsieur! Who are you?”

“Your lover, pretty Nimora, who has lain with you without your knowing it every night for six months. Let me lie here, now, with your knowledge. I might, perhaps, be of use to you, for your father is in a great embarrassment with regard to the situation both of you are in, since he is being accused in society of being responsible for your sister’s pregnancy, and even of yours. I’m the only one who knows the whole truth.”

Cinquantequinze appeared then, and as his two present daughters, since the establishment of an older one, were lost children, he left Nimora in the power of Multipliandre. No one knows what became of Nesag, who has since died in Rome, where Nimora retired with her, after she was unable to doubt Multipliandre’s passion for Julie Labranque...

I thought those final details, obscure as they are, necessary to give you a notion of a person who plays a major role in Monsieur de Fontlhète’s letters.

By virtue of this account by the Comtesse, no lacuna any longer remains in the preliminary history that concerns Duc Multipliandre. I will add that that gives us the unappreciable advantage of having confirmation of the verity of all your stories, dear husband—for after all, the Comtesse has not drawn upon the same sources as you, and now, at a single stroke, everything that you have recounted to us is confirmed.

I have one point yet to reveal, which you have forgotten, my love: the Comtesse reproaches herself for not having given us the commencement of the story of Yfflasie and Clarendon; she wanted to make up for it here, either by certain memoirs or imagination—for she has a great deal of that! This is the commencement of what she has given us. Is it true? Has she invented it? Will you tell us some day?⁸

⁸ At this point, the story of Yfflasie and Clarendon’s mortal life is repeated, exactly as it was narrated in the letter of 28 February; I saw no point in repeating it here. The reason for the duplication is unclear, but in collating scraps of manuscript to add to the 1796 version, Restif might not have realized that this one was already incorporated into the 1787-89 version, much as he had earlier attributed the same “previous lives” to different individuals without apparently being aware of it.

The Comtesse, on finishing the story of Cinquantequinze and his daughters, agreed that it was unintelligible for those who did not know the secret, but she is sure that it contains the refutation of a calumny that has run around concerning Cinquantequinze and his daughters. At any rate, the children of Nesag and Nimora, a boy and a girl, have only reached adolescence.