

Letter #1

Boulogne, August 7

Dear Miss,

I received your letter and your package, and I'm not thanking you for one or the other. But can I tell you that the beans were delicious? And that the letter... Oh! For that, I am not saying anything because I would go beyond the limits you allowed me.

I am very happy, Miss! We have news of Papa. He has not left Drancy. Do you see how their decisions are all related! Finally, all the better! We can send a package of clothing. I had a lot of work to help prepare it but also, with such joy I did it. I have just carried it to Paris. Naturally, I had the luck to find myself next to people that I do not like, because we are permitted to not like, right? And even to detest, for example, one Claude Reymond?

One of my companions invited me to spend a day in Seine et Oise. I am happy to see that she has not forgotten me and am not displeased to refuse because I would not have been very good company.

Oh! Miss, if you could speak with me again about joy. I am certain that we can only appreciate happiness after having suffered, but does the suffering ever stop? I end up doubting so.

I kiss you affectionately,

Louise

Letter #2

Boulogne,

August 12

Oh Miss, how you exaggerate! Will you let me tell you that, since it is the first thing that I thought when I saw your second parcel? Yet I'm not hiding from you that I am very, very happy. I will not thank you, only because I wouldn't know how! Besides, you understand me, I'm certain of it.

Monday, we sent a food parcel to Papa. The weight is limited to 3Kg, but we can cheat up to 4Kg. I hope that we'll be able to continue to correspond in this way, one card every 15 days and one food parcel each week. Papa likes garlic so much and asks us for it. Now, we can put a little bit of it in for him. You guessed right! The arrival of the mail interrupted me... I'm reading and rereading your letter in the absolute calm of my bedroom. I have peace... for the moment.

Yes, you're right, Miss. God alone can help us and I have faith, I firmly believe [in God] despite having long struggled with this. So many things displease me in people who believe and practice religions! My grandmother, for example, would surely fall ill if she knew that we are writing on a Saturday. And all these practices established in other times and which have no reason to exist now!

To see fights between people who believe in one God and whom we teach to love their neighbors.

To see such wicked people practicing "material" religion.

Above all, not being able to understand the little things that no one explained to me. All of this has displeased me so much that I have long hesitated. But you have convinced me, I believe that God helps us, but I don't believe that He listens to us. I believe that He comforts us by ourselves since our prayers are comforting. And that His justice is also exercised through us, since when we believe, when we pursue with sincerity the path of goodness, we are happy. Whereas the wicked don't know joy with its sweetness and its strength...

Miss, I am saying to you something that I have never said to anyone, but I love and admire you...

I hope that I didn't annoy you, and that you will excuse my frankness. Tell me, I beg you, if I take advantage of your friendship.

I send to you all my affection...

Louise

>Letter #3

Boulogne, August 31

Dear Miss,

I've been bored since your letter. So, I'm writing to you to compensate a little.

I've already read a few passages from your book – it's truly very beautiful, and there are so many topics, all that one can desire, I believe. But I'll talk to you about it again later. This reading has given me the urge to read the Pastoral Letters, by Maman's grandfather. Papa and I thought you might enjoy reading this book. I know my great-grandfather has without a doubt glorified our religion too much, as he was certain to hold the truth, and he addressed it to fellow believers. Anyway, I think these letters would please you because they are beautiful.

I asked Papa why women aren't valued much among our people, and this is what he replied:

"The woman, in my opinion, has a very beautiful role in our religion. She is the one who must watch over religious practices in the home. Above all, it is her job to take care of raising the children to love God and their neighbor. It is true that in the services, the woman is considered impure. That probably goes back to Eve's sin (this is Papa's assumption).

Here we are Miss, before a new week, and before a brand-new month, the last month of vacation. I think I'll use it to read, if I obey you and don't work. I wish I could read and read, stopping only to think about my reading.

I hope that you will take nice walks during the month of September, and that you will rest well in the pretty house that I know now, thanks to your young artist. Three windows upstairs and all the wood in front.

I embrace you affectionately,

Louise

Tuesday, September 1

Yesterday, I went to your house hoping that you would come by. But your concierge told me that you didn't intend to. I really regret it, all the more so because Maman doesn't dare hand her book over to the post office. I'm almost angry at Maman. I will bring it to you when you return.

You live in a beautiful neighborhood, Miss. I took a pleasant walk with papa from Place de l'Etoile to your house. There I was very disappointed.

With affection,

Louise

>Letter #4

Paris, September 9

Dear Miss,

Thank you for your letter that I waited for impatiently, just like this winter's moral action class. I was waiting for it like I would for comfort that I really needed. What a beautiful subject you have chosen for us! I hope that my classmates will be happy. As for me, I think of it every night, in my bed. I think that the utmost source of joy is, as you have told us, to live and to see clearly. I think that the Greeks were right to consider the greatest suffering that of not seeing the sunlight. Oh, of course! The ability to breathe in the smell of the grass, to see the sun in the field and, at the very least, to see the sunsets in Paris, and to admire the stars, this is truly the utmost joy. And then there is the joy of the duties one must accomplish each day. The joy of feeling that in the family and in society one holds a place, that one can be useful, agreeable, and liked by those who surround you. Joy is truly within us. Whatever the degree of our suffering, we can always find a little more of it in thinking that our task is never-ending. I understand now this Latin text that I translated in fifth year and from which I can only recall this: a man having lost his property, whose girls have been taken into slavery and who said, "they did not take my wealth because my wealth is in me." Yes, I very much hope that my classmates will be happy.

I almost forgot to tell you why I am writing to you from Paris. My grandmother broke her arm – I don't think I've told you this yet. So, we had to come and help her, and as I have an aunt who lives near my grandmother, I just spent a few days with my aunt. I'm already bored since arriving at the house, and I've been here since last night! I've set myself up on the balcony. It's a lovely afternoon and the view is beautiful from here – not fields, but the sky. We can see the sky, far, so far, from here, and innumerable rooftops.

Maman is overjoyed to meet you. Papa has taken up his life again, as you know, Miss. We need him. He needs us. We have now resumed our normal life that I had to stop, but not for too long. I have neglected my reading a little. I read the first chapter: God, the All-Mighty Father. I love the simplicity and grandeur of it. The author conveyed that well. Two things come out above all: the wisdom of God and his all-powerfulness. But the chapter on the light. I am eager to read it. It must be sublime. The light is so beautiful.

I embrace you respectfully,

Louise

Letter #5

Paris, September 17

Dear Miss,

My brother just brought me your letter because I am still at my aunt's house. I hope to return home tomorrow. I already spent our two days of celebration [for Rosh Hashana] there last Saturday and Sunday. I was very, very happy, but here I am bored. I believe that the term "bored" is not accurate because I am busy all the time, but I cannot think of a better one. The joys of family life. They are numerous and very real. I feel them all the more now. To understand each other! To know what makes others happy. To love one another – what joy – and then to be able to speak freely, without resorting to the obligatory lies when one is in the presence of a stranger, to enjoy the happiness of those who surround you.

I am eager to reach the month of November to hear you talk about friendship. Is it necessary that friendship be mutual? Does one love someone who does not love you back? These are some questions that burden me. While reasoning, I tell myself, "One loves someone for themselves, for their qualities, not because they love you." And the reality? I do not believe that one becomes deeply attached to someone who has no feelings of sympathy for you. Would you like to give me your opinion? It's true that I should be more patient and wait for the month of November. If it is necessary that friendship be reciprocal, does one find many friends? For if I answer yes to the question, "Do you want her to be superior to you?" There is one of the two friends who will inevitably be inferior to the other. Then what will the latter have? So, if friendship must be reciprocal, the two friends must not be alike, or have the same tastes. An ideal friend? It seems to me that she must be more serious, more intelligent, frank but forgiving and above all that she must love you. But with these qualities, how can she give affection to someone who does not also have them? Here's a question that I've been asking myself for some time but that I had not dared to ask you. How does one find a friend? Let's imagine that I have found one. Should I tell her about her flaws? Of course, if I see any in her. Should I bare it when she tells me mine? Oh no! Not bare it, but desire it earnestly. What greater service can one do someone than to reveal to her the faults she often may not see in herself? Ah! How interesting the month of November will be. Can one have several friends? If one finds many, I do not see why one would choose only one. But does one find many? I already find a great happiness in having one. Friends are very rare. In my three years of high school, I have not had a single classmate that I could call a friend. Could it be that I am too difficult and too selfish? That is possible, and I wish for my companions classmates that they have "some" friends.

Benevolence? I do not speak of it. It is the most delicate and I believe that it cannot be learned. Your programme summarizes it all. I see nothing there to add. The joys of family, of friendship, of nature. And then, crowning it all, the joy of education, of seeing, of reading, of understanding. You thought of everything. Now I'm beginning to hope I will be able to return to school. Still 15 days to go. There is time to prevent me from going back. But this idea has come out of my head and I can't put it back in. I can already picture myself among my classmates. I try to make myself useful, to appear happy. I think I've succeeded, because my grandmother told me this afternoon: "It surprises me that you are so happy at your aunt's place, and away from your own. I thought you would be bored." My grandmother is doing better. She is beginning to go out and we have less work to do for her. I have got to know my grandmother better and I recognize that I judged her badly. She has a book by my great-

grandfather that I have wanted to read for a long time. But of this book there exists only one copy and she does not want to lend it. However, she told me the other day. "You know, I regretted not lending you the book for the last holidays, but I will lend it to you for the next ones." Thus, I was wrong to reproach my grandmother for not wanting to lend you her book. I am sad, here, especially yesterday evening. You told me: We have only to love one another. By that, you mean between different religions and if I tell you Miss, that in the same religion, we don't love one another, that we are jealous of each other, because one is spared the suffering of the other. In a time when we suffer so much, all of us, jealousy dominates. I am obliged to see it here. I cannot wait to return home, to forget everything and resume my studies. In reading your letter, I thought that I had already read what you wrote to me. It is on pages 219, 220, [and] 221 of the 1st volume. I had noted them before because it fits so well with what I think. Unfortunately, at our home, I have not yet found anything like this.

Light, all is beautiful. I noted paragraph 35. I read a beautiful passage on light: the first light is the thought of God, faith in God, unwavering trust in Him. "God is light." As soon as you think of God, as soon as you pronounce His name, the light surrounds you, in your mind and in your heart. "In the middle of the night, the light will burst out." All the somber problems of life, all the doubts will disappear, all the trials and pains of existence will fade away. The darkness of the tomb itself will disperse because behind the grave, you will see the bright world of heaven. That is why the devout men always walk in the light, whereas the ungodly who have banished the thought and belief of God from their hearts wander in the night and darkness for eternity. So, let your motto be: God is my light.

Truth is also a light. Our wise elders said: "The seal of God the Almighty, blessed be He! – is the truth." Lying is darkness; it comes from hell and leads those who engage in it to hell. Truth comes from above the heights of light and leads to it too; it is bright, precious like a diamond. Truth before all: often it must fight against lies and falsehood, hypocrisy and dissimulation, which, donning the mask of truth would like to force it from its throne; but truth always comes out of the battle victorious, just as the sun always triumphs over the fog and the light over darkness. That is why we always pray with the Psalmist: "Send us your light and your truth so that they may lead us to the sacred regions!"

And virtue is also a light. Sin is darkness. Sin is always allied with the darkness of night; it fears and flees light and hides from men's eyes. But can it also hide from the discerning eye of God? Can the sinner hide from himself? Virtue lights its torch in the midst of the darkness. Even from beneath the cloak of poverty, it shines like a queen and transforms poverty-riven shacks into palaces. Like the rays and warmth of the sun, it heals all wounds.

Science, isn't that also a light? The perpetual lamp that man lights like a pontiff in the temple of the spirit. According to the words of our prophets, God says, "I love the lights lit by Aaron, the great priest, more than those I have put in the sky." Yes, like faith, truth, and virtue, science is a genius from on high. Light wraps itself around it like an overcoat, a diadem of rays adorn its head and with celestial wings, it takes off to the highest heights.

I don't need to tell you how happy I am that you thought of sending me the programme of for our moral action class. It seems to me that by thinking about it so long in advance, I will understand it better.

I embrace you most affectionately,

Louise

Letter #6

Boulogne, September 19

Dear Miss,

I've been at home since last night, and I received your package. "These beans aren't good - but delicious," said my little sister. Everyone spoke about you. In fact, that happens a lot.

Tomorrow, we are not allowed out after three o'clock.

I read a lot today. I finished the reading for the first volume. What beautiful texts! I don't know which I prefer. They are all beautiful. All express gratitude for the blessings of God. They also note the usefulness of all creation. But what stands out everywhere is the generosity, the goodness of God. Paragraph 98 summarizes it all. What a beautiful poem at 123. I believe that the chapter on the sun and the stars shows best all the greatness, the immensity of God. In paragraph 170: He is All. Where would we find the strength to praise Him? He is the All-Mighty, superior to all his works. At 263, yet another beautiful prayer. 290 shows the role of the woman well. And the day of the Lord, the day of prayer and of contemplation.

Miss, I want you to tell me why did the day of rest not stay on Saturday?

I embrace you, dear Miss, most affectionately

Louise

Letter #7

We have all been arrested.

I'm leaving you the books that are not mine, and some letters that I would like to recover if I ever come back. I'm thinking of you, of the Father, of Miss Arnold, and I embrace you.

Louise

Letter #8

The morning of the 26th

January 1944

Dear Miss,

I've just come out of the U. G. I. F. (not 69, but 60 Rodier Street).

No possibility whatsoever of communicating with Drancy since the change in command.

No connection with the camp.

No packages – maybe a package of clothing. But the family must have taken what was most useful to them.

We are absolutely cut off from Drancy. We know nothing.

Deportation is most likely. They have arrested the “foreign” Israelites because their recent naturalizations don't count anymore. They are “denaturalizing.” And it's enough for one family member to be foreign for the entire family to be arrested.

I'm going to look elsewhere to see if I can learn something, but I don't have much hope.

One must pray that all this suffering becomes redemptive.

I will talk to you on Saturday, Miss, and I give you all my love.

Colette