

Letter from Claude de Saint-Martin to Jean-Baptiste Willermoz
Paris, Sunday evening, July 3, 1775

Since Friday, T. C. M.¹, when I received your letter of the 21st, I have reflected, prayed, read the Gospel to obtain surer illumination concerning the topics which currently concern us and above all never to lose sight of the impressions of charity and gentleness. I hope that my prayers won't be rejected, and therefore the common enemy will withdraw from his endeavors against us, covered in confusion.

I am indeed misfortunate or clumsy, T. C. M., if I led you to believe that I absolutely want to make you think like me. I strongly withdraw anything which, in my letters or my conversations, may have indicated that requirement, that obstinacy; and I only ask God ever to give me the ability to persuade with truth, but not to demand. I committed an even greater wrong if I dared to judge the harm which the *affair in question* could do to you, and attribute that judgment only to my fears that it might, and attribute the manner in which I expressed them to the haste in which my letter was written. No, T. C. M. I don't judge you, and I wish only to judge myself. I believe you have the purest of intentions, and I believe your soul is at peace, and God forbid me ever to disturb it. The reproach you have given me about this is a lesson too painful and too sad for me to expose myself to such sorrows, and I will instead make every sacrifice in my power. So, I look without bitterness at the alternative you offer me. I look for the motive, and I find it just and commendable. It is enough for me to reflect further and to try to listen to a better master than self-esteem. For that same reason I will ignore some other passages which may have inflamed me at other times, but which today, and coming from you, will only make me humbler about myself, more attentive and wiser. I repeat, then, I will forever cherish your tranquility, and if it is still impossible for me to have views *on the subject in question* which are as calm as yours, I will keep them to myself and wait for time to come to my rescue. Besides, this discussion is connected with circumstances which are so contrary to me, and you have such a fine game against me, that I can only torment you and harm myself all the more in your mind because of the mistakes I have made on this issue, which you must leave me with for the rest of my life. Thus, silence is in every respect the one true approach which suits me. I condemn myself in this letter, even it is in complaining that I have been forced by you to break it.

But, T. C. M. , if your peace is dear to me, it is only natural that mine should be to me as well, and that I should seek every means to preserve that which is given to me, and which I am sure to enjoy when I can move forward in complete freedom. This is a point on which my weakness is so great that there is not the smallest precaution which isn't necessary for me, because there is no neglect of it for which I don't suffer. A thousand cruel experiences have taught me how much I harmed myself when I relied on my own strength for a moment, and how much I still needed to be far away from obstacles before I was brave enough to dare to confront them. This truth has indeed been confirmed to me by the subject which divides us. I made a hundred efforts to reconcile it in my mind, and a hundred times it was as if a lightning bolt toppled them. If through prayer and taking care of myself I managed some rest, at the first

¹ *Très Cher Maître* – 'Very (or Most) Dear Master'. Saint-Martin is using Willermoz' official title but modifying it to be more affectionate by substituting 'Puissant' (Powerful) with 'Dear' – PV.

word, the first gesture it was all taken away from me. That's the truth, my Dear Master; even the situation in which I found myself. I wish with all my soul that it were otherwise, but I dare not believe that the time has yet come. I feel how careless it would be for me to expose myself to such danger again, I might lose the rest of my strength. For your part, your kindness would no doubt commit you to make yourself even more annoyed in sparing me from suffering: that is to say that, living in duress, we wouldn't enjoy one another's company and we might come to the point of harming our relationship. This is a truth of which we unfortunately have too much proof, and we must only look at the past and the present to predict what we could expect of the future if we didn't put it in order. So, I'll admit, T. C. M. that, for our common wellbeing I must despite myself sacrifice your home, all the amenities of the sweetest society that any family can provide, and all the benefits which your ingenious generosity provided in abundance. When I say for our *common* good, it is because I have the belief that yours will be there, and for mine I have no doubt, for I am not afraid to confess to you that the order to make such sacrifices has been given to me spiritually, and that the benefits of this have been promised to me in the same manner, not only for me, but for many others. However, this is still not sufficient, for in seeking to do our good we must carefully avoid the concern of our Brethren, which would surely occur if we were to separate completely in their eyes, and if we had no apparent motive to serve as a pretext for the plan I am about to suggest to you.

I believe I'd expose our Brothers to remarks that were very prejudicial to the good of the order if I left Lyon at that time, and especially if they suspected that it might be the cause of my flight. I can spare them this concern by spending the rest of the agreed time in their city, perhaps longer; but by living in my home and with the complete freedom I need so as not to lose anything of myself. As for a pretext, Chemistry serves us well. I would appear to have taken an intense taste for it, eager to be more within reach to follow Mr. Privat in his operations, and to that end had deemed it necessary to take up accommodation in his neighborhood. I even looked at one property from here, and if my proposal doesn't seem foolish to you, it is you that I will come so we can visit it and lease it if you find it suitable; nothing would compensate my walk more than if you would deign to participate. The house where I would like to stay is a new building at the top of the new road, on the left side before the slope which leads to the Gourguillon.² I often saw a sign, saying 'houses for rent'. If there are any left, I would ask you to look at them. I would like a bedroom and a *physical area*.³ If there was a study as well, that would make it even better. You have the requirements for the *physical area*. But since those who build don't know about them, I don't expect to find everything, and I'll settle for what I find. Animal life wouldn't be an obstacle, there is a caterer in the canton, I would set something with him, and it would cost me less than a housekeeper and would be much less embarrassing. Finally, it seems to me that this is quite feasible, and for any pitfalls necessarily attached to such things of life, I believe that the benefits I expect from this project would make me easily forget them. The first of these benefits would be the peace that we'd both enjoy, being able to free ourselves from any uneasiness about our

² A hilly district of Lyon on the left West side of the River Saône – PV.

³ In French *un local de physique*. This is a simple phrase, yet full of meaning. I consulted with Bro. Mathieu Ravigat, and this is a summary of his answer: It probably comes from a scientific term which made its way into the vernacular since in the science of Physics in French, a theory is called a *locale physique symétrique* ('a symmetrical physical locale') when the parameters of transformation of the theory depend on a particular place in time and space. It seems to me a good blind for referring to the personal Temple in which to practice Theurgy or other spiritual experiments can happen. Pasqually's Theurgy necessitates a symmetrical room oriented on the cardinal points.

personal opinions. We would be free but near each other; we would be alone but not separated. I would frequently go down into the city wearing a smile, because I would be happy in my own way.

We would perhaps see ourselves as much as if we lived together in your home, and it would surely be more beneficial for both of us. It would steal my heart to be near my good mother⁴ once more, who, for all the trouble I must cause her, would still have enough love not to close her arms to me. The assemblies would be run as you judge necessary.

In a word, I would make sure that everyone was happy without anything going wrong, and I believe that I can achieve that by being happy myself. In the absence of that precaution you saw in me a completely different being than I am. I ran the risk of losing your friendship, and it takes a soul as beautiful as yours to have continued it even after seeing me in such detrimental states. Also, I must have surely lost your trust, having done so little to deserve it. If I continued, I might come to the point of losing your esteem, and all these misfortunes would come from us not understanding one another. Oh, judge what victory that would be for our enemy! No, let's not let it win, let's excise the evil while there's still time! Perhaps when you see me completely, you will share all the sentiments you could withdraw from me right now, without me having any right to complain. If this compromise is to your liking, T. C. M. you will be happy to tell everyone we know that I wish to fill my leisure with the business of Chemistry and above all to engage in some major operations of this kind with Mr. Privat, and that it requires me to lodge near him, as he never goes out, and that it was you I asked to find a place in your lost moments and vacation days. You could consult with my mother first and if you both agree, you will make everything far simpler and more natural in their eyes. As for furniture I will need so little that I will not need much effort, nor much money to purchase them; besides I wouldn't be embarrassed to receive them in the form of a loan, a chair from one person, a table from another, a shovel, etc., if they could deprive themselves of them for a period without inconvenience.

I have already prepared Périose for this Chemical project, and I will prepare Bruysffet⁵ when he's in Paris; it will be easy for you to prepare the others and everything will be arranged for the best. I do not speak to d'Hauterive about seeing Privat. He's a man more geared towards the language of the human sciences, but if he wants to go there in eight to ten days, I will let him know, and I think he will be sufficiently prepared concerning the subjects we wish to cover.⁶ I am not surprised, T. C. M., that you find in d'Hauterive all you hope for. He is a model of virtue and knowledge; next to him I'm but the shadow in a painting which better assists the light to shine forth; he is without a doubt the most able person in the Order and from whom there is the most to be learned. I know for myself how useful he can be and how much I am punished for my escapade in Paris, since I use my time and my money unnecessarily and

⁴ It appears that Saint-Martin's mother (or rather, his stepmother since his mother died when he was very young) lives in Lyon at that time, which would have given him an even stronger reason to visit Lyon regularly, since they were very close. Later in the letter we read that his father lives in Touraine, which suggests they were separated (unless he is talking about his grandmother?) – PV.

⁵ This is probably Bruysset, who was received into the Elus Cohen in Lyon in 1775 – PV.

⁶ This is referencing the Lessons of Lyon, where Saint-Martin, Willermoz and d'Hauterive educated the Elus Cohen in Lyon on the teachings of Pasqually which, incidentally, tells us that the meetings and practices of the Temple were far from dead, even if Willermoz had started up a Province under the Rite of Strict Observance by then, despite the implications of the author of this history – PV.

I've deprived myself of such a favourable opportunity to be encouraged by the example of a man whom I love, and to be enlightened by his instructions. But here I am for at least another five weeks. My companion will only be in Lyon for the payment of September 10⁷ unless, however, stronger reasons than he foresees don't keep him there for longer. In the meantime, I spend three and a half quarters of my life in my room which, in parenthesis, is set out in such a way that I can do nothing, being unprotected everywhere, but disadvantages are nothing when we want to do something, and the person who doesn't have the means to do so is not exempt for that, because then he must create them.⁸ I go to Luxembourg every two or three days⁹, and I see the Abbé about as often; as for Savalette, we meet a little more rarely, but he has to be discreet, for if we were able to we would spend the whole day in hand being idle and curious; but for all that I believe his path will be long. We treated him to dinner once. He enjoyed it, but we can't repeat the event as often as we would like.

You see how my time is being used? Every moment I don't give to others I spend on my own, and I need so much of it I'd have to wean myself off so many impediments, and must as much I'd need a place of my own and a kind of life of my choosing; and that is what made me heave a sigh after completing the project I told you about, and for which I sincerely desire your approval. You yourself know that one can have pure motives, and I swear to you mine are, and I hope with God's aid, that the passage of time will convince you in such a way as to leave no doubt. Finally, I hope that after you are able to prevent yourself from blaming me, you will come to the point of only complaining to me, and that will be a great consolation for me; for then I will be sure to be confident in your friendship and for my part there will only be my weakness to excuse, and your friendship will be firmly convinced that I seek only the good of everyone in seeking the good in me, because there is only one meeting point for all men.

The Master of Sere wrote to me to ask me to go and form a Temple in Meaux. It was the Master of Corby who wrote to him about it, and Sere told me to send him my address so he could send me his own summons. I replied to Master Sere that this function would be much better in the hands of d'Hauterive, who has to remain in Paris longer than me. I also informed him that I had little taste for what gives our business a legal and human air, but that, despite that, I was ready to surrender to his orders and desires, but as a result he should have the kindness to manage my conduct on all points, not knowing the first word of what to do in such a case. I await and his reply and the letter from Master Corby, which hasn't arrived yet. We don't know each other from Adam, and I believe that he would have preferred it if the Master of Sere to have addressed it to anyone but me, particularly to d'Hauterive who surely knew him, at least by his correspondence, at Versailles. Please tell him about this business and tell him that for the good of *La Chose*, I believe it would be better in his hands; and as long as he has any desire, I give him in advance all my future powers. At my house this morning I saw his brother the Knight, who made me the honor of visiting me. He is a very sweet young man and whom I find very commendable for not wanting to enter our Order yet, as he doesn't think

⁷ While unclear, this could be a Masonic reference to education which, in some Masonic Orders, is referred to as the workman's 'payment'. Thus, d'Hauterive coming to Lyon to participate in education seems far more likely than a sudden grating reference to finances in the middle of this letter – PV.

⁸ Here Saint-Martin is referring to his ability to do the Cohen rituals, given the lack of space in his room to draw the circles, etc. – PV.

⁹ Seeing that Luxembourg is 240 miles from Paris, this seems unlikely! It is in fact shorthand for the Jardin de Luxembourg, a pleasant park just South of the center of Paris – PV.

he is worthy, given his youth, his dissipation, and the hold that worldly tastes still have over him.

It's more than likely that I won't go to Touraine. I don't hear from my father anymore; and my other relatives write to me as if there we have nothing in common. I will settle my affairs with them from here, and at least save the money from the trip. In the settlement of my affairs, I may perhaps have recourse to your kindness and obliging care towards me; it would be a sum of a thousand Ecu for which I should receive reimbursement at the end of August, in Paris. I wouldn't squander it, but rather invest it since it is a fund, and if my brother-in-law doesn't want to help, I will ask for your advice to invest it in Lyon. You shouldn't doubt that I'd prefer to be indebted to you than to anyone else, but I don't know if your business is improving to the point of taking strange money, so I only propose what might be possible. Goodbye, T. C. M., *Fiat Pax*.

SAINT-MARTIN